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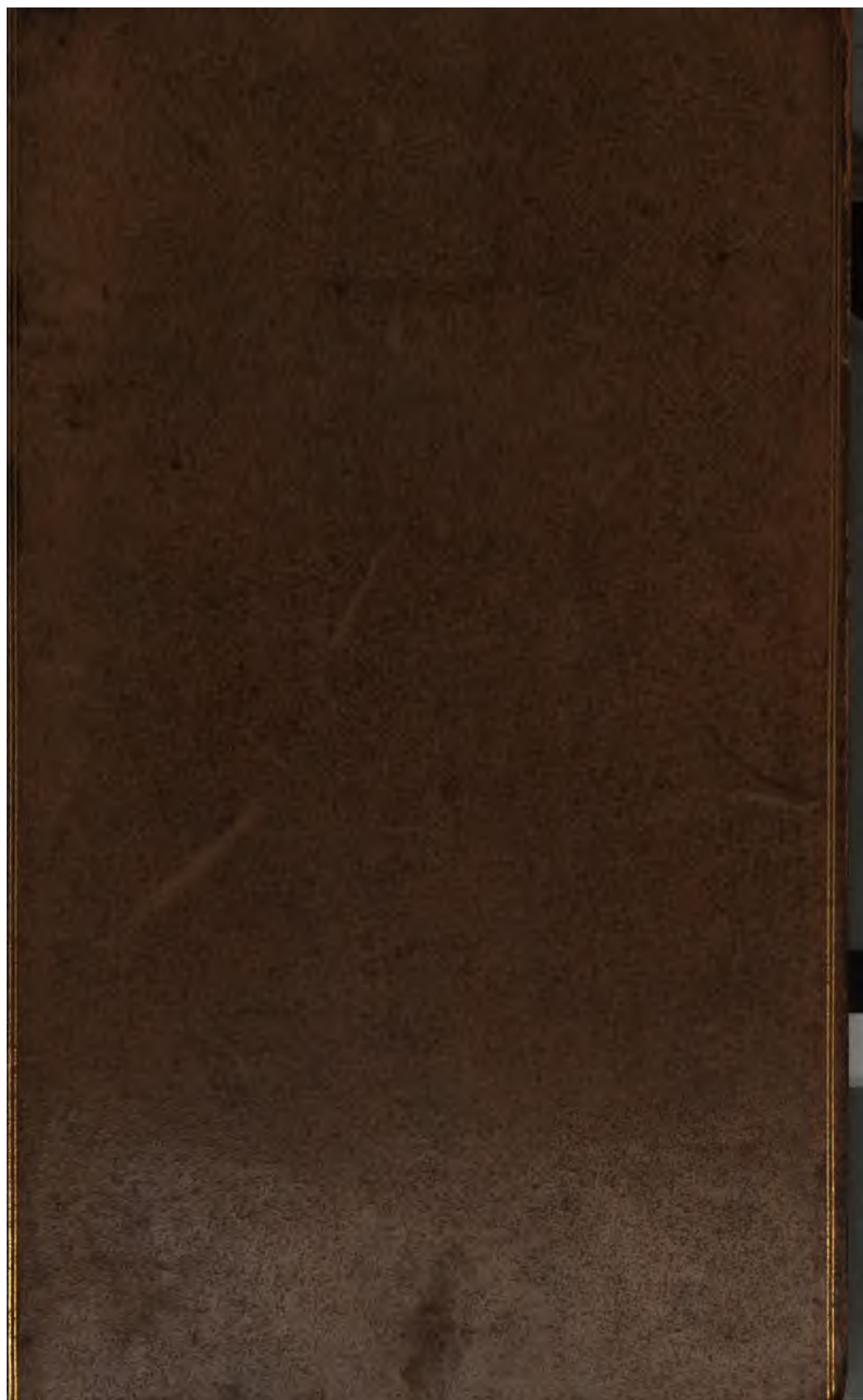
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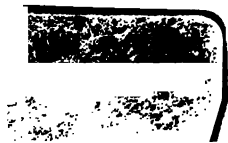
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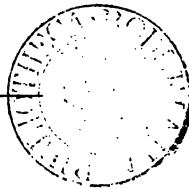
AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
FIRST
EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN,
COMPRIED IN NINETY-THREE SERMONS.

FORMING A SERIES ON EACH OF THE CHAPTERS; AND ON EACH OF THE
VERSES OF THE SAME: SOME OF THE VERSES UNITED; AND THAT IN
PERFECT CONFORMITY WITH THEIR PROPER CONNECTION.

BY
SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, LONDON.

"THY WORD IS VERY PURE: THEREFORE THY SERVANT LOVETH IT."—Ps. cxix. 140.

VOL. I.



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INTRODUCTION.

It having fallen to my lot, in the Lord's holy providence, to become the honored instrument of introducing to the christian world, which I now do, the present highly valuable Work; I embrace with truest spiritual pleasure, the opportunity of bearing, although a humble, yet decided and firm testimony (while its real and great intrinsic worth is its own and best recommendation) to the inestimable treasure it contains—a treasure inestimable; seeing in it is stored a rich sum of scripture-matter, doctrinal and practical: because also, that in this work is manifest much of the sacred anointing of the Holy Ghost in the gift and diffusion of that light, accompanied by deep insight into divine Truth, with which this distinguished servant of the Lord (the Author) was favored—strikingly evident in the spiritual, judicious and instructive manner (to the God of all grace be glory!) in which he has been enabled, ministerially, to open the contents of the important subjects discussed—alike, in faithfulness to divine revealed Truth; and, to the Church and people of God:—so especially necessary in the present “cloudy and dark day,” when alas! the glory of the simplicity and truth of the Gospel is so greatly obscured, its effectual power so little prevalent; yea, and when in many instances “the foundations” (Ps. xi. 3) are attempted, if it were possible, to be destroyed.

The present Work from the pen of this eminent minister of the Gospel, (now in Glory*) I feel confident, cannot but prove most acceptable to the friends and lovers of that beautiful harmony in doctrinal, experimental, and practical Subject, manifest throughout the different parts, and forming the grand aggregate of Scripture-Truth.

Very distinguishedly, through the grace of God, has this servant of Christ been assisted, in his writings already extant—agreeably to apostolic exhortation, to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;” nor less truly, firmly, and warmly, for that vital godliness proceeding from the power and influence of the doctrines of Grace, spiritually received. Yet will the present ample addition to the Author’s former works, be found (I conceive) a sort of completion of system in the ministration of divine and gospel Truth, accordant with scripture method and rule—that while true faith, which enables the soul to lay hold of and close with Christ, exhibits the first grand lines of new-birth feature in the child of God, and identifies in a time state, the object of electing and everlasting love; it is a series of holy communion and fellowship with God the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which conduces to and demonstrates the spiritual growth, strength and *maturity* of the believer—his practical godliness and love in the Spirit, both to God and to the saints, (so copiously enforced in this Epistle, and so evangelically treated of in this Work) affording additional and continued proof of his vital union to Christ:—conformity to whose Image, being the great design of predestinating grace and love. Rom. viii. 29.

These and other important subjects will be found opened and scripturally maintained in the present Work: the perusal of which, will, I trust, through the Divine blessing, prove a sweet and substantial spiritual repast; as well as lastingly instructive and edifying. With a view to which, I beg to recommend to those who may peruse this *Exposition*, particularly to notice, and well digest,

* See “A MEMORIAL, OR TRIBUTE OF PRAISE,” &c., by our Author; published by the writer of this Introduction, in 1829; in which a more particular reference is had to the event of the revered Author’s decease.

the weighty observations contained in the "Prefatory Address" by the Author, to the Reader; in which will be found, a plain, yet luminous introductory description and statement of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul, in enlightening to know, and believe on Christ; with the fruits thereof in all that pertains to establishing grace and vital manifest godliness—subjects forming so essential a part of this Work.

That the whole may redound to the Glory of the Triune Jehovah; and the benefit of the Church of God, is the prayer of

their's to serve, in all love,

in the Gospel of Christ,

WILLIAM HORE.

Islington, January, 1835.

NOTE.

[It is a duty which the son of the sainted writer of the above "Introduction" considers as devolving on him to perform, with a view to the glory of the God of all grace, as also in reference to the courteous reader, and the memory of his beloved and respected parent, to state the remarkable circumstance as viewed in relation to this Work, of his dear Father's decease.

With much labour, but with much strength from the Lord, he had read twice, in the original manuscript, the whole of the Sermons contained in this EXPOSITION, and superintended the Work in its progress through the press; the whole of it was in type—the above "Introduction" very recently written, and the printer's last proof-sheet lying for typographical correction (of which this "Introduction" formed a part)—when it pleased the Lord to remove His servant from this state of sorrow to His bosom on high: leaving his family to joy in the midst of the deepest affliction in Him who caused their dear relative to exult in his dying moments in the faithfulness of his Covenant-keeping God—departing as though falling asleep, with an inexpressible smile of glory beaming on his countenance. His greatest delight on earth was the service of his Lord, and now above, divested of mortality, he serves Him without ceasing, day and night.]

PREFATORY ADDRESS.

Clarendon Place, Edgware Road.

READER,

I am this day, *June 23*, 1817, entered on the seventy-second year of my age; and am as disposed to preach, and write concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, his Person, Love, Incarnation, Righteousness, Sacrifice, and Salvation, as ever I was in the days of my spiritual youth. In the month of *November* last, being at the house of a friend, and joining with him in family prayer, a thought occurred to me, whilst he was in worship, that I would attempt to renew a lectureship at *Shoe Lane*, and go through in the course of it, *The First Epistle of John*. Accordingly, I soon after set forward; and have, through the good hand of my God upon me, continued, so as to have delivered Thirty Sermons on the first and second chapters. I have conceived in my mind, a design to write these out. And under the apprehension, I may, if industrious, live to complete the whole Epistle, I have this morning begun the work, hoping it may be for the Lord's glory, and his Church's benefit. May the Lord be with me, and guide my mind, heart, and affections, so that all may contribute to his praise: even so be it, O Lord.

It may not be amiss to give an outline of the whole Epistle; and the division of it: the casting the same into method and order, may make it the more easy and agreeable to the reader.

The true knowledge of Christ, is the one only key, whereby all the treasures contained in this Epistle can be opened: for this contains a spiritual treatise on communion with Christ, and with the Father in Him; through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. We can have no communion with the Three in Jehovah, but as we have a distinct, scriptural knowledge of the revelation given concerning them in the Sacred record. No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. This Epistle written by *John*, in which he asserts the Eternity of Christ's Person, His distinct Personality from the Father, and by consequence from the Spirit: also, sets forth the real fellowship which the apostles, and saints in that age had with the Holy Trinity, and what all saints in all succeeding ages are to expect and enjoy, in their measure and degree, until the same is consummated with the Eternal Three, in the state of eternal glory. As this Epistle begins with this most sublime subject, so it is pursued throughout the whole of it: in shewing the fruits and effects, which the true knowledge of, and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, produce in the minds, lives, and conversations of such as know Him, and have free and frequent accesses unto Him. Also, how such as were but professors of the same glorious gospel, fell off from the very Truth itself: even into antichristian doctrine, and worship. If the Reader attend to this in his reading the Epistle, it will preserve him from many mistakes: and he will by that means, read the whole, with more real advantage to himself.

I conceive, the whole Epistle may be divided in the following manner. The parts of it may be considered *Three*; and the chapters containing these three distinct parts are, as follows: the first, and second chapters contain the *First* part: the *Second* distinctive part, begins with the third chapter: the *Third* part, begins with the fourth chapter, and includes and closes with the fifth.

The *First* part contains, in the first and second chapters, the following most transcendently glorious, and important subjects—An account is given of the Person of Christ—Of his manifestation in the flesh—Of the true knowledge of his Person—Of communion truly and personally with Him, and the Father in Him: and every thing is delivered to promote this. Our infirmities, be they what they may, are not to be considered as hindrances to our communion with the Lord; because the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. The apostle then

enters on the subject of indwelling sin in *us*, who have communion with the Father and the Son; and he administers the only antidote to them; which he knew to be all-sufficient. This is the subject-matter of the first chapter. In the beginning of the second chapter, he goes on pursuing his former discourse, giving a most precious and blessed account of the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the behalf of his sinning ones. After which he most freely sets forth the true, outward evidence of such and such knowing Christ, and giving proof thereof, in their loving the brethren. And of such and such, though under the same outward profession, as not loving Christ, and giving proof thereof, in not loving the brethren. He then writes to saints, under these different denominations—*as little children; fathers; young men; and babes*: and he expresseth what is most suited to these, and what the perfection of each of these states consists in. He then speaks of the antichrists which were then prevalent in the last hour of the apostolic age. He shews that the preservation of saints from these, was a full proof they had received the true Unction from the Holy One. He exhorts them to abide in Christ, according to the truths and doctrines which they had received and professed concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God: to the end, that at the appearing of Christ, the apostles, and others who were engaged with them in setting forth Christ unto them, might not be ashamed; but have confidence before Him, that these saints, thus written unto, were what they ought to be, in the knowledge of Christ, and in life and conversation, agreeable to the same: as it would ever be found an undeniable truth, that as surely and truly as they knew Christ was righteous, it would be known that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Here, I think, ends the First part of this most excellent Epistle.

The *Second* distinctive part of this Epistle, begins with the third chapter, and ends with it. In which saints are called upon to behold the love of the Father, as expressed in bestowing the title of Adoption on them. He calls them *sons of God*. The apostle would have them consider, what will, and must in the issue, arise out of this title, and the grace from whence it originated. They were now the sons of God. They would one day see Christ as He is. He then shews, what the true knowledge of this produces. He expressly declares, such who are under a profession of Christ, and commit sin, are not to be considered as

having any part or portion in Him. Christ became incarnate to take away sin. Such as are in Him do not sin. Such as contradict this, have neither seen Christ, nor known Him. Sin is the devil's work. He sinneth from the beginning: he never from that instant ceaseth; no, not for one single moment. The Son of God was manifested to destroy his works. Such therefore as are born of God, can never commit the devil's sin. None of them can ever commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world, or in the world to come. The apostle declares the difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. He refers to the message, which he and those he writes unto, had heard and received from Christ, concerning loving one another. He shews, *Cain* was not a lover of his brother. He gives the reason for it—he declares he was of the wicked one. The apostle enters very freely and fully, into the subject of brotherly love. He says, such as do not love for Christ's sake, their brethren in Him, are murderers—That they have not eternal life abiding in them. He expresseth the great love of Christ. He draws his inference from it, to what an extent the love of one another for Christ's sake, should be manifested. He asks a question of professors of the Lord Jesus, who having this world's good, and seeing their brother in Christ in need, could refrain from helping them: How it could be possible the love of God should dwell in them, if they were so unfeeling to the poor and necessitous members of Christ. He exhorts saints to express their love to each other; this would preserve their hearts from condemnation on this point: it would give them confidence towards God, when they prayed before Him, for his favours to be bestowed on such and such: they would hereby have ground for the certain expectation that He would hear, and answer their prayers offered before Him, for His, and their beloved ones: he concludes the chapter, with saying, that the whole of christianity consisted, in believing on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and loving one another: and that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in such, was the fullest evidence of their being in Christ, and of His being in them. And here, I conceive, ends the Second part of this Epistle.

The *Third* part begins with the fourth chapter; and includes the fifth also. The apostle begins this last part, with warning the brethren against false teachers, and antichrists; who were very

prevalent at the time he wrote this Epistle. He points out who they were, and also how they might be known. He asserts of himself, and true believers, that they are of God—That such also as were of God, would be distinguished, by their hearing and receiving the true apostolic doctrine : and such as were not, by receiving the preachers of those heresies as abounded in that day of profession. He exhorts to brotherly love. He sets forth the love of God. He shews how it was manifested in the Person, gift, mission, and propitiation of Jesus Christ. He draws inferences from it for brotherly love. He declares the indwelling of the Father in the saints : who expressed his love, in sending his Son into the world to be the Saviour, and that we might live through Him. He expresses, that God and saints have a mutual indwelling in each other : this is manifest in mutual acts of love expressed towards each other. We, says he, have known, and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. This is carrying the subject to its very summit and uttermost perfection. He then proceeds to make a very glorious, and most blessed improvement of this. He therefore adds, Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as he is, so are we in this world. He proceeds to exhort again to the exercise of spiritual brotherly love, and concludes that this is the sum-total of all which God hath commanded us. He pursues this subject in the following (fifth) chapter : and shews who the true believer is, and by what means he overcomes the world, or antichrist, viz., by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. He brings the Three Witnesses in Heaven, and the three witnesses on earth, to prove this very essential truth—that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that we have eternal life in Him. He gives the reason why he wrote his Epistle. He shews that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save us ; to hear our prayers put up on our own behalf, and for others also, and to answer them to our real satisfaction—That there is a sin unto death, and that such as are guilty of the same, no prayer is to be offered for them. He tells us, those who are born of God cannot commit it. He says of himself, and includes all saints in what he utters, we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in the arms of the wicked one. He, and they, knew the Son of God was come, and were possessed of such a knowledge of the same, as to know Him, and to know they were in

Him, and that the true knowledge of Him was eternal life. He concludes with bidding them to keep themselves from idols. This is the outline of the Third part of this Epistle.

As these outlines of each chapter are sermonized, and the particulars of each of the verses in their true and proper connection are entered on, and properly explained; we shall have most undoubtedly an immense treasury of gospel grace set before us: a great part of which will consist in opening and unfolding Christ in his own glory, as He possessed it, with the Father before the world was. Also the glory in which the apostles had seen Him, during his continuance in his incarnate state. This will most certainly take off our minds from our own natural thoughts of Him, and give us clearly to perceive that all true knowledge of Him, is beyond the utmost conception of the human, natural mind—That we must be possessed with supernatural minds, or we can never receive the true and supernatural knowledge of Christ into them, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It will also be hereby evidenced, that we cannot have communion with the Son of God, but as we are enlightened into the true knowledge of his Person: and it will also stand most clearly connected with this, that as we have really and truly eternal life in our souls, in the knowledge of the Son of God; so communion with Him, and the Father in Him, is the very essence of all christian perfection and blessedness. It will also most clearly appear, that communion with the Lord, is incompatible with living in sin—That such only as are in a state of grace, and live as such, are the persons who have communion with God. And whilst they are in themselves the subjects of sin, and liable to the assaults of Satan, and have manifold infirmities—this is declared for our comfort, that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, is our present and everlasting purification from all sin. It follows in the course and body of this Epistle, what most blessed fruits and effects, the Holy Ghost is pleased to produce in the minds of such as are one with Christ, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

It may be remarked, this Epistle is not so much a doctrinal one: it does not contain a system of gospel truths: while in fact the whole of Truth is contained in it, yet this is delivered in a very direct and immediate manner. We should learn from hence to acknowledge the manifold gifts and graces which the Holy Ghost is pleased to bestow on his ministering servants. There are many

blessed expressions, and declarations of the love of God, which are most truly precious and heart-warming. It differs from all other of the apostolic writings, in treating very particularly here and there, of the distinct fellowship which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are pleased to hold in the souls of believers, and how they possess the minds of real saints with the true sense of the same.

I conceive it will be found very profitable to understand the whole of this Epistle, it being one grand design of the writer of it to promote in the spiritual mind, a full and blessed persuasion, of our personal interest in the Lord Jesus. And surely this is a most blessed excitement to our having and holding communion with Him: and this follows upon our real knowledge of Him. Nor can a real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be content without a spiritual persuasion of this: neither can this be without the Holy Ghost. He it is, whose office alone hath this as His sole prerogative, to take of the things of Christ, and shew the same unto us: nor do all the evidences of grace, and the genuine fruits of faith, in the lives and conversations of the godly, set aside this. They are so many proofs of the same: for no spiritual affection, and holy frame, can be produced in the spiritual mind, but by the Spirit: which is all the fruit of His most divine and most gracious indwelling in us. Neither can the whole of His work, as to what we see, and feel of it, ever produce a foundation for our faith and hope in Christ. If this were the case, it would take us off from the written word; which the Holy Ghost is pleased to make the alone foundation for our faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus. It is a most undoubted truth, that a spiritual perception of Christ, as He is revealed in the word of grace, is the faith of the operation of God—That we receive Christ into our minds, from the revelation made of Him in the written word. It is by it Christ is formed in us. It is in receiving the record which God hath given us of his Son in it, that we believe on Him for life everlasting. All which is by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. So that His Divine Agency is of the utmost importance to us: as we can receive nothing from Christ but by Him. Hence it becomes very detrimental to our real communion with the most precious Lord Jesus, to be looking at the fruits and effects of grace, produced in us, and manifested by us, even though we ascribe the same to the Spirit of God, and overlook this far greater act of His—the glorifying Christ in us, so as

to carry us out thereby, from ourselves, and off ourselves; and exalting the Person of Christ, the love of Christ, the blood and righteousness of the ever glorious, and blessed Immanuel in our view. It is from hence, Christ becomes precious to us. It is hereby we have an inward knowledge, sense, and experience of His blood and righteousness in our minds. It is hereby we actually receive the Atonement. It is from hence we enjoy the peace of God, and the love of God. It is hereby we have real outgoings after the Lord; and it is by the same, we enjoy the outgoings of Christ's love, in the influences and manifestations of these to our own souls. All which is the sole work of the Holy Ghost within us, and upon us; and it is the fruit of his revealing Christ to our renewed minds, and shedding abroad the Love of God in our hearts; which He doth without leading us to view his own work in our own souls. It is this, therefore, I would guard against: as I absolutely conceive, the present age is in an error in these very important particulars—They laying the whole emphasis of what they call the work of the Spirit, on internal grace, and the fruits and effects of the same; and they seem to lay the whole stress of our knowing our interest in Christ, on these: whereas, we must know Christ, abstracted from our personal interest in Him: which latter is the fruit which follows on our true knowledge of Him. And we cannot act faith towards Him, and upon Him, nor believe in Him for life everlasting, but in proportion to our knowledge of Him, and his most truly complete, finished, and everlastingly efficacious Righteousness and Sacrifice; and the Father's acceptance of Him, and his glorious work, contained in his obedience and sufferings. When the Holy Ghost is pleased to give the regenerate mind a true apprehension of this, he draws out the same, into act and exercise thereon: and hereby we receive Christ, believe on Christ, rest on Jesus, and centre in Him: hereby we are led to see that we are in Christ, and that He is in us. This leads us to say, as the Spouse in the Canticles doth, My Beloved is mine, and I am His. This statement of the subject, makes it an act of faith, which being realized by the Holy Ghost in our mind, makes it an act of knowledge and certainty, drawn from the Divine word, in which Christ is revealed, and the Father's record of His Son, is testified. Our Lord himself says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:" John vi. 38, 40. Such persons as are thus taught and led by the Spirit unto Christ, will always be looking out of themselves unto Him. And such who are looking at inherent grace, and deriving all their confidence in the Lord, and comfort therefrom, will be continually poring on the same. I would have such know, that they are, in this, altogether wrong. They cannot live Christ so long as it is thus with them; and to live Christ, is the only life worth living; it is the very life which is only worth living out of heaven; it is the very best preparation for the state of eternal blessedness and glory.

I submit, Reader, to thy own consideration, what hath been dropped. May the good Lord bless the same unto thee! Thou wilt find the work of God within thee, very greatly strengthened, excited, and drawn out into open act and exercise, as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to teach thee how to live on Christ without thee, and without all consideration of what thou art in thyself. May the Holy Ghost bless the following Sermons, to the praise of the glory of his grace, and the real and spiritual advantage of his saints,

is the desire and prayer of

the least of all the servants of his Lord,

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

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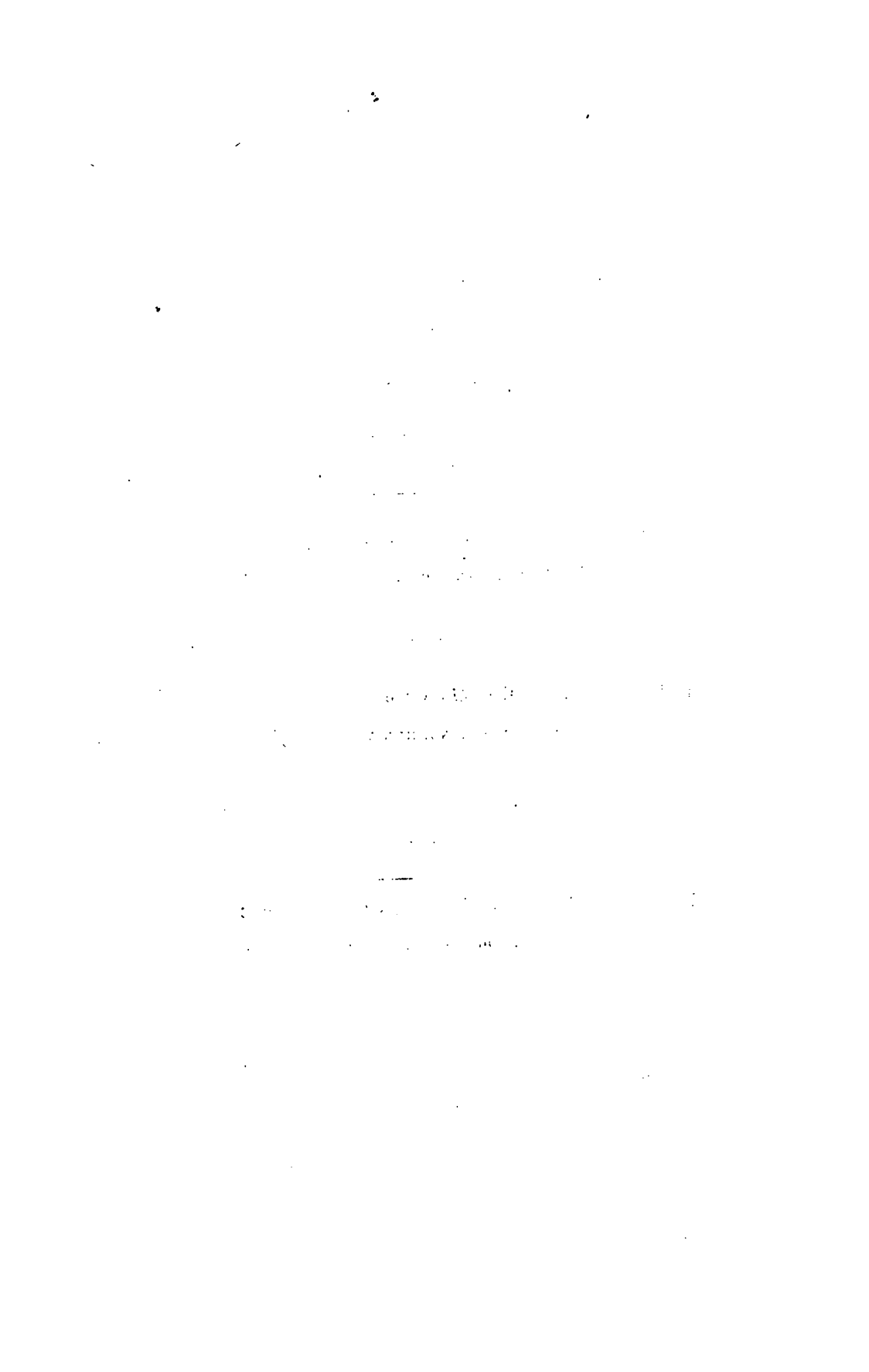
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AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN,
IN A SERIES OF SERMONS.

SERMON I.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life."—1 JOHN i. 1.

THIS Epistle, written by the Apostle *John*, concerns the subject of communion with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, through the grace and influence of the Holy Spirit, which is the very essence and uttermost perfection of grace, either on earth, or in glory. This apostle was in the New Testament church, what the prophet *Daniel* was in the Old. He was addressed by the angel, "O man greatly beloved," Dan. x. 19, and our apostle was known by the title of *that disciple whom Jesus loved*. He was a high favourite with our Lord Jesus Christ. He was admitted to lay in his bosom; and like as Christ lay in the bosom of his Father before all time, and drew out all the love of his Father's heart into his own, and shines in the full splendour of it, and reflects the glorious shine of it on his church; so this apostle, being admitted to such free and intimate converse with our Lord, drew out the very heart of Christ into his own. And he was thereby most eminently qualified to write concerning one of the greatest of all subjects—communion with the divine Persons, in the incomprehensible essence as they stand related to us, and are personally interested in us, according to their own sovereign will and grace.

John was a witness for Christ. He saw him in the flesh; he beheld him on the mount of transfiguration, when he shone forth in majesty and glory, such as carried its own evidence with it, that he was the only begotten of the Father.—He saw him transfixed on the cross.—He saw him in his agony and blood-sweat.—He saw him as he hung a breathless corpse on the tree.—He saw him pierced in his side by a soldier, when blood and water flowed out, in consequence of the bag which surrounded the heart being touched by the spear which entered it.—He saw and conversed with our Lord after he was risen from the dead, and during his continuance in his resurrection state.—He saw him when he left our world, and ascended up on high, and sat down at the right hand of God.—He saw him after his entrance and coronation in heaven, in a vision in the Isle of Patmos, at which time he was so struck with the glory, majesty, dignity, and shine of his visionary appearance, that he says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon

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me, saying, I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. i. 17, 18. When we consider all this, we cannot but see, that this apostle must have been in an especial manner qualified to write on the subject contained in this epistle now before us, which he begins with speaking of the Person of Christ ; the eternity of Christ ; the reality of Christ's incarnation : the ocular proofs and demonstrations he, and the other apostles and disciples, had of this greatest of all truths, *God manifested in the flesh*. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." Thus he begins the first chapter of this epistle. The word *beginning* is the same with *Moses' beginning*—the same with which this apostle begins his gospel—the same of which the God-Man speaks, when he says, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." The gospel of John begins thus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." The professed design of John in writing his gospel, is expressed by him thus : "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 31. His end and design in writing this epistle is thus declared by him, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John v. 13. This sacred memorial of the apostle, is to show how all saints may come to undeniable certainty, and have clear and undubitable evidence of their own personal interest and salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and thus going on in renewed and reiterated acts of faith on him, might also have increasing communion with him. As his gospel was to confirm saints in the knowledge and belief of the distinctive Personality of Christ, of his being co-equal and co-essential with the Divine Father ; of his being the true Messiah ; of his having performed the whole work and office for which he became incarnate ; so this was written by the same apostle, to show the whole church, it was their high calling and privilege, to have, and hold communion with this most adorable Person, and with the Father in him ; and to express to them, the blessed fruits and effects produced in their minds herefrom, through the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost, some of which were openly expressed in life and conversation. This is an outline of the whole of this sacred apostolic letter, which is entitled, *The First Epistle General of John*. It is not directed to any particular person, nor to any particular church. No. It is a Catholic epistle. It belongs to all saints, and that from the time it was written, down to us, and throughout all generations. It may not be amiss, as it may assist the memory, to divide these words before me, into the following particulars.

1. To consider Him of whom *John* is speaking. *That which was from the beginning.*
2. What he says of Him. *He had been heard, he had been seen, he had been handled.*
3. The persons who had thus seen Him.

4. The title he gives this most wonderful one. *The Word of life.* "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life."

I am 1st. to consider Him of whom *John* is here speaking, *That which was from the beginning.*

Beloved, the subject is deep. It is altogether divine. The Lord keep me from saying anything hereon, but what the clear scripture will justify me in. Of all mysteries contained in the revelation the Lord God hath given us in the word of his grace, that which concerns his own nature, and existence, must be confessed to be the deepest and most sublime. In this revelation, Jehovah hath made known himself, as existing as Father, Son, and Spirit, distinctly and Personally in one and the same ineffable Essence, so that the one is not before, nor after the other, neither greater nor less than the other; but they are co-equal and co-eternal in the one self-existing Essence; which is the fountain of the persons. That which distinguishes the Persons is as essential as the Godhead itself. What God is in his nature, persons, life, blessedness, glory, immortality, and eternity, is, and ever will be, incomprehensible. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job xi. 7, 8, 9. The whole scripture openly expresses the self-existence, life, being, blessedness, eternity, and glory of God; and the same scriptures express the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as co-existing by essential union in the Essence, as being the one only true and living God. The first term by which the Divine Majesty is expressed in the Bible is an evidence of this. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is acknowledged by the learned, both Jews and Christians, the word *God* is plural: and it fully appears to be so, as in Gen. i. 26, we read, *And God said, let us make man.* As the nature of God is an infinite fountain of blessedness to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so the Three in Jehovah needed not go forth into any acts to complete their blessedness. Yet out of the immensity of goodness which is contained in the incomprehensible Essence, it pleased the Eternal Three to manifest and make known their nature, persons, perfections, and blessedness, openly and visibly, the foundation of which in the divine mind was by the joint will of the essential Three, to set up one of the Persons in the essence to be God-Man, in one Person, in whom the essence, persons, and glory of the Godhead should shine forth to the uttermost manifestation and display thereof. The Son of God, of the same essence with the Father and the Spirit, was fixed on to be predestinated to be God-Man, in whom all the glory of the Godhead should be manifested, so far as they possibly could, consistent with God's incomprehensibility, to the uttermost. It should be carefully attended unto, that the foundation of all this, was laid in the Son of God. He, as a Person in the Godhead, was the Person who was chosen to be the image of the invisible God. He was predestinated to take into Personal union an individual humanity, consisting of body and soul, by which he gave Personality to it. Thus, he became God-Man from before all time. This great and glorious mystery, contained in the inspired volume, the

first hint given of it, is in these words, And God said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. This image of God was Christ, God-Man. It was after the pattern-likeness of him, Adam, the first man, was formed : and Christ himself is expressly styled *the image of God*, and this as God-Man. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature : for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him : and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Colos. i. 15, 16, 17. The God-Man was chosen for God himself to delight in ; therefore the Divine Father speaks of him thus : *Behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth*. He is revealed as the first and the last, in all the will, thoughts, purposes, decrees, as the one object of God's infinite complacency. In the 8th chapter of Proverbs, he there says, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." He concludes this subject at the 30th verse, saying, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Prov. viii. 22, 23. 30. As Christ, God-Man, was set up from everlasting, as the image of the invisible God, in whom the whole glory of the divine Essence, and the Persons in the same, were manifested to the uttermost, so far as God willed, and to the uttermost of the capacities of intellectual creatures, so God chose the church in him, and created the heavens and the earth, in the intuitive knowledge he had of him. He engaged him to be the Saviour of the elect ; revealed him immediately upon the fall as such ; promised to give him, and send him into the world, clothed with our nature, to save his people in himself with an everlasting salvation. The greatest promise which was ever given, concerned the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into our world. He was to be incarnate. Before which he appeared in Person, in such glory and majesty, as to be testimonials of his eternity and divinity. He was seen by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. He was seen by Joshua, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and that as wearing the insignia of God-Man. And his saints embraced the promise of his open incarnation with unspeakable joy and delight. When the period was full up, *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*. This was one of the greatest events which ever took place, or ever can. Our apostle, and others with him, saw this great sight ; God incarnate. God in our nature. God manifest in the flesh. Immanuel God with us. And of this he is here speaking. *That which was from the beginning*. The humanity of Christ was not a Person, but a thing ; it is so called by the angel *Gabriel*, who speaking to Mary, the mother of it, says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke i. 35. The Person of Christ was from the beginning. He was as God-Man before the world, and had a glory with the Father before the world was. He says to the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." John viii. 58. This most glorious one, who was God-Man before the world was ; who became incarnate in the fulness

of time; who took hold of our nature, and became true and very man, God and man united in one Christ. He was seen by our apostle, who says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John i. 14. John lived in the days of Christ's incarnation; he had the honour to see Christ, the Messiah, and was favoured with his company and communion with him. This was grace and glory inexpressible. Such as we can have no tolerable conceptions and ideas of. Were we but to carry this thought with us, in our reading his writings, that he was one of those persons who actually saw Christ in the flesh, I conceive it would stamp what we read in him, with eternal importance and weight on our minds. I proceed to consider what he says of him.

2. *He had heard, he had seen, he had handled him.* So had others also. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." These various terms of hearing, seeing, looking, handling, are designed to express the reality of our Lord's incarnation. That he had a real body. It was a palpable one. It was seen. It was touched. It was heard. Our Lord spake; his voice was heard. He was looked upon and seen with the bodily eyes of those who conversed with him; he was felt and handled, and found to be as really and truly man, as he was really and truly God. The truth of this was denied by some heretics in the apostolic age. To refute which the apostle expresseth himself as he here doth. There was satisfaction given, and such demonstration given to every sense of body and mind, that Christ had a body like our own, that no greater proof could be given. He was made in all things like unto his brethren. It was in our nature he obeyed. Bore the sins of many, in his own body on the tree. It was in his human soul, he felt and sustained the whole curse and righteous displeasure of his Father's wrath, due to the sins of the whole election of grace.—It was in his body he died the death due to sin.—It was in his body he was crucified.—It was in his body he rose from death to life immortal. He appeared to his disciples in the very same body in which he had been crucified. In the same body he ascended. In it he is glorified at the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. In the same body he will appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. The apostle *Paul* says, "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts xvii. 31. The apostle says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." To realize to those to whom he then wrote, and to the Church of Christ, down to the end of time, the certainty, reality and importance of our Lord's incarnation. All that Christ was from everlasting, he hath manifested it in time. When he became one with his people, by his open incarnation, all the everlasting love of God, in him, to them, shone forth in all its radiancy and glory; in all its majesty and splendour. Christ in laying aside the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was, and taking on himself the form of a servant, fully proved his delights were with the elect sons of men. He hereby became what he was not before.

He was in the form of God. He now laid it aside. He was found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All which *John* saw, in the views he had, of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnate state. It is one of the greatest mysteries in the word, next to that of the doctrine of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, the person of Christ. Which, for the substance of it is this, a Person in the Godhead dwelling personally in the human nature which he took into personal union. Our nature was not, is not taken up into union with the Godhead, but into personal union with a Person in the Godhead. To declare the grace of this, and set forth the full glories of God-Man, of God the Son, dwelling personally in the Man Christ Jesus, and his personal incommunicable glory, which is the very result and consequence of this, is impossible. Neither can his grace expressed in his incarnation, be ever fully explored. The mystery of the incarnation is the wonder of elect angels, as it is and ever will be the wonder of elect men. That the God-Man, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead personally, should come forth from the Father, and come into our world, and take a body prepared for him by the Father, which was accordingly formed, articulated, and framed by the Holy Ghost, is one of the greatest displays of grace, which the mind of God was ever engaged in. Hereby the Son of God, the heir of all things, the brightness of glory, the Lord of glory, the King of glory, was in our world in his open incarnate state. Thus heaven was opened; God was seen; and this great promise made good to the elect church of human race upon earth. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah ix. 6. The incarnation of God-Man, was symbolically set forth by the Tabernacle and the Temple. To live therefore when all this, and the glory contained in these figures, was realized by the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, must have reflected a glorious blaze of supernatural light, upon the enlightened minds of saints, to whom the glory of the Lord was revealed, as he was to the Apostles. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." The Person of Christ is a most transcendently excellent subject. The incarnation of Christ, a deep and most momentous subject. It may be, in no human writings, these are so fully opened, as in the second volume of Dr. Goodwin's folio works, with one or two other authors. For him, who had been in the form of God, and shone forth to the delight of the Holy Three, as the object of their infinite delight, to veil his glories, to suspend the shine of them, to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, to become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and for the riches of everlasting love and grace to be manifested and displayed to the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven hereby, is grace worthy of God. We can only cry out, when we have the real apprehension of it, *O the depth!* I proceed to consider,

3. The persons who had thus seen him, "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." They were the apostles themselves. He speaks in their and his own name here. Not but other

saints beside them saw the Lord in his incarnate state; yet they were not called and appointed to be witnesses of this, as the apostles were. So that here we are to conceive the apostle, by the words he here uses, to include his fellow-apostles, when he says, "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." Not that they all saw so much of Christ as he did. There were but two beside himself, who were present when our Lord raised the daughter of *Jairus* from death to life. There were but the same two, with himself, who saw Christ shine forth on the holy mount, and "were eyewitnesses of his majesty when he received from God the Father honour and glory," when "there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His brother *James*, and *Peter*, were they, who with himself, were witnesses of our Lord's agony and bloody-sweat. When he says in the 14th verse of the first chapter of his Gospel, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," he refers to our Lord's transfiguration; a sight reserved for him, and his brother *James*, and *Peter*. These, with all the rest of the apostles, heard Christ's voice, they saw his Person, they beheld his miracles, they heard his sermons, they looked stedfastly on him, they touched his sacred Person, they handled him: so as that they had the utmost satisfaction their minds and senses, both mentally and by sight, hearing, feeling, and handling, could give them, that our Lord had really and truly a palpable body. This the apostle therefore bears his, and their, testimony unto. This was then, and is to the present, and ever will remain to be a matter of the utmost importance. The evidence the apostles had of his Person, and incarnation, was different from ours. We receive ours from them: and that in a way of believing; whereby we receive into our minds, from their holy and sacred writings, which they have given us, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the true spiritual and supernatural knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ into our minds, and are thereby led to believe on him to the salvation of our souls. They had the evidence of sense as truly as we have the evidence of faith. They saw with their corporeal eyes the Lord Messiah. It was by faith they believed in their minds, from the scriptures of truth, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, they received, believed, and acknowledged him to be the Son of God, who was to come into the world. Yet the sight they had of Christ, and which *John* is here speaking of, is quite distinct and different from that which we shall ever be favoured with. They saw him with their bodily eyes; they heard him with their bodily ears; they looked on him in the days of his flesh; and they bore their testimony to the truth of this. True believers hear the voice of Christ in his word, and in hearing it their souls live. They see Christ in the light of the gospel, and behold salvation and everlasting life in him; but this is with the eyes of their mind. They touch, they taste, and handle Christ mystically and representatively, at his holy table, in their fellowship with him in his holy supper, yet this is quite distinct and different from what the apostle is here speaking. Yet it is as effectual to us for our souls' benefit, as theirs was. Yet notwithstanding this, the different ends answered by the same are so essential, that they ought to be distinguished. The period of our Lord's incarnation was the centre of the close of the Old Testament, and the beginning of the New. Persons were chosen by the Lord, and called to be witnesses of Christ's ap-

pearing in the flesh. They were to record His life. His words. His miracles. His threatenings. His promises. His prophecies. His holiness. His righteousness. His passion. His death. His burial. His resurrection. His ascension into heaven. His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high. His coronation in glory. And his sending down the Holy Ghost from heaven, to prove him to be the Lord's Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Now the apostles who were to be witnesses of all this unto the people, and who actually did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead, could say, as one of them does for all the rest, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." For they saw God incarnate, and conversed with him, and were his companions in his incarnate state. He who shone forth between the cherubim of glory, in the Holy of Holies; whom Isaiah saw in a vision, and of whom he said, *Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*. This most adorable Person the apostles saw with their bodily eyes, in his incarnate state. A sight we shall never behold. It is everlastingly impossible we should. That state being past. We shall see God incarnate. God-Man, in heaven—we shall see him face to face, in the resurrection state—we shall see him as he is—we shall see him in the state of ultimate glory, as he will there shine forth in his personal glory. We see him now, in the glass of the everlasting gospel, as truly and efficaciously as the apostles did, in our measure and degree, though not as they did with their bodily eyes. We see him with the eye of faith, as certainly as those persons did with the eyes of their body, and as truly, yet not so clearly and fully, as saints in heaven do by sense and vision. I would observe, like as all the apostles were not alike favoured with a view of their Lord's glory, when his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white and glistening, so all saints in their present militant state, are not equally favoured, and shone upon by our Lord Jesus Christ, with his manifestative, and influential presence. There is a holy variety the Lord Jesus is pleased to exercise here. I conceive some saints so far surpass other saints, in the communications Christ imparts to them, and the communion he is pleased to hold with them; that there is herein a vast difference in the experiences of the one, and the other.

4. I come to the title *John* gives this most wonderful One. He styles him, *The Word of life*; "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." Our Lord bears in various parts of the inspired volume, the title of *the Word*. In the Old Testament it is recorded of him, that God said, *Let there be light: and there was light*. Which is thus explained, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Psalm xxxiii. 6. We read *the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*. Gen. xv. 1. David says, "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." 2 Samuel vii. 21. In all these passages our Lord bears the title of *the Word*. I mention it, because some conceive it is our apostle alone who styles him so. It is a truth he begins his gospel, with calling Christ, *the Word*. The reason of the title is generally explained thus. The word is the index

of the mind. By it what is contained in the mind is expressed. So Christ as one in the self-existing Essence, speaks out the mind of the eternal Father. It was by his Almighty fiat, the heavens and the earth were created, and all the host of them. It was by him, all the secrets of the Most High were spoken out and proclaimed, and the invisible God brought out of his invisibility. So says our evangelist in the first chapter of his Gospel, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." 18. It is in him the full revelation of Godhead is made known. It is by the personal union of the Son of God, with the man Christ Jesus, there is the clearest evidence given us, of the Trinity in Unity, which we can possibly receive. It is in *the essential word* all the mind of God is opened, all the love of God expressed, the whole of God declared. It is as this essential word, and only begotten Son of God, shines forth as God-Man, in his most glorious person, mediation, work, grace, and salvation, in the everlasting gospel, and enlightens his Church therewith, that they in his light see light. The following scripture seems to be very properly produced; and which I conceive may be looked on as a confirmation of this vast, deep, and most glorious subject. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. It is in the person of Christ, God-Man, all of God shines forth.—It is in his person the fullest display of Godhead is made manifest; so that he is *the light*; *the true light*; *the light of everlasting life*; and as he is styled by the apostle Paul, *the word of God's grace*, he being the gift of the Father's love to the Church; and all the grace of God being revealed in him, and the whole fulness of it treasured up in him, that out of his fulness we might receive grace for grace; so our apostle gives him this title here, *the Word of life*. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." The words of *Paul* which I have referred unto, are his surrender of the elders of Ephesus to the Lord. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts xx. 32. It is not the written word he here speaks of, but the same of whom he says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 12, 13. *The Word of life*, the title *John* gives here to Christ, as God-incarnate, is very emphatical; he is life essentially; he is life manifestatively; he is life communicatively; he is the very fountain of life, as the head of his body, the Church, from whence the very apostles themselves received all their spiritual life, and who would be to them life eternal in the kingdom of glory. Christ might well be styled by the apostle *the Word of life*, he being the life of the whole creation, whether visible or invisible; the life of all creatures is in him, as it is also from him.—He is the life of all the elect angels of his presence in glory.—He

is the life of glory to all his saints, who are in the state of glory.—He is their everlasting Light, and their everlasting glory.—He is the life of this whole church upon earth. He lives in all his called and regenerated members; he continues and maintains life spiritual, and life eternal in their minds; and all the life they will ever enjoy is alone in him. *When Christ our life shall appear, then* (says the apostle to the saints at Colosse) *shall ye also appear with him in glory.* The title, *the Word of life*, is glorious. It is worthy of Christ. He is called *the Prince of life*. Acts iii. 15. It is Peter who there gives our Lord that title; and here John entitles him, *the Word of life*; and says, he and his brethren had found and proved him to be such. *Our hands have handled of the Word of life.* It would be well for us to consider this title; according to it, we can have no true spiritual life in our souls; we receive it all from him; we live it all to him; graces and comforts are but the effects of it; our communion with God, either on earth or in heaven, is not this life, it is only the effect of it. These words of Christ are great; we can take in but a very small apprehension of the same; He says, "*For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*" John v. 26; which I conceive to concern Christ, as God-Man, who lives a life of independent blessedness as such; who is over all, in all, and through all, *God blessed for ever.* Rom. ix. 5. *He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.* As the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in the humanity, which is one person with the Son of the living God, so the fulness of that glory must be everlastingly too great, fully to shine forth on saints, even in glory; so that none can ever fully conceive of it, nor be admitted to the full blaze thereof. I hope I have made no mistake in what I have been delivering on this subject. I do not mean concerning the subject itself. It is fully revealed in the word of revelation; yet the mystery is so transcendently great, it requires very great supernatural light and teaching, rightly to apprehend it. If, therefore, I have not been so clear on these momentous truths, may the Lord pardon me; and by the light and teaching of his holy Spirit, bless what in it is acceptable in his sight. Amen,

SERMON II.

(*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*).—I JOHN i. 2.

WE have a continuation of the former subject in the foregoing verse, in which the Person, Eternity, and Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and knowledge given of the same, were by the apostle declared. This most divine Person sustains the title, *The Word of Life*. The apostle had in his gospel entitled Him, *The Word. The Light. The True Light*. In the words of our present text, he speaks of Him, by the titles of, *The Life. Eternal Life*. He is in the former, and in this verse also, speaking of Christ, as the Christ of God. Of what He is in himself—in his Person, abstracted from all consideration of what He is to his church, as their Head, their Lord, their Bridegroom, their Mediator, their Saviour, their Wisdom, their Righteousness, their Sanctification, their Redemption. The whole of my text is included in a parenthesis; the reason for which I cannot say, unless it be to distinguish the peculiar sight and knowledge the apostles had of our Lord Jesus Christ, in those particulars mentioned in both the verses, beyond the rest of saints. Like as in the 14th verse of the first chapter of *John's* gospel, he includes the following words in a parenthesis. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." As this sight was peculiar to *Peter, James, and John*, it referring to our Lord's transfiguration; so it may be, the same may be here made use of, thus to distinguish the apostles, and their sight, and witness concerning the Dignity, Majesty, Glory, Honour, Incarnation, Life, and Death, from all others. In the words before us, the apostle speaks of Christ's manifestation in the flesh—of his being *the Life*—of his being *The Eternal Life*. He declares Him to have been with the Father before his open incarnation—that himself, and the other apostles, saw Him in his incarnate state: they bear witness of Him; they shewed this truth concerning Him to the people. Yea, they declared most freely this, as the very essence of truth, that he was manifested unto them, which is almost the same with the former verse, which for the sake of its connection, and to preserve the same, I will recite. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)." As we read these verses together, the one seems to explain the other. *He who was in the beginning, was the Word of Life. This Word of Life was manifested. He was that Eternal Life which was with the Father. He was manifested unto us, says the apostle. This is what He was. The Word of Life. The Life manifested. He was that Eternal Life which was with the Father. What He was, He is the same now, and will remain the same to all eternity. He says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come,*

the Almighty." Rev. i. 8. And *Paul* says of Him, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Heb. xiii. 8.

In considering the words of my text, I will cast them into this division.

1. I will consider the Person spoken of; the titles given Him; and what is here said of, and concerning Him. *For the life was manifested, that Eternal Life which was with the Father.*

2. That the apostles had seen this great sight, *God-Incarnate*. *We have seen it*, or rather, we have seen *Him*, as manifested in the flesh. We have seen, and bear witness, and shew the truth of this unto you; in our ministry.

3. What they declared of Him, was from the divine knowledge which they had of Him. They knew He was *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*.

4. This was a very particular part of the witness which they bare of Him—that *He was manifested unto them*. Whilst in reading any text in this Epistle, I shall not leave out the supplementary words, yet I shall not always use them; neither shall I altogether reject them: in the text before us, I shall, however, omit *it*, as being improper, as what is said concerns the Person of Christ. Let this be remembered. I mention this here, as once for all, and now proceed to enter on my discourse, by attending to the divisions already given. And I am

1st. To consider the Person spoken of—the titles given Him, and what is here said of, and concerning Him. It is Christ, God-Man, is the Person spoken of. The titles here in this verse given Him, are, *The Life: that Eternal Life*. What is here said of Him, is, that *He was with the Father*. That *He was manifested in the flesh*. I hope to speak to each of these distinctly, yet I shall begin with giving one general account of this most wonderful and adorable Person, once for all, and afterwards proceed to His titles; of His being with the Father, and of His manifestation by His open Incarnation. *For the life was manifested, and we have seen Him, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*. The Person spoken of is Christ, who is *God over all blessed for ever*. Amen. In Him all the essential glory of the Godhead shines forth, in the uttermost display, and open discovery of the same; and the uttermost of Divine blessedness, so far as it can be made evident, and be apprehended by the supernatural faculties of elect angels, and elect saints of the human race. We must not go higher than this. Whilst the Glory of the Son of God is essential to Him, as one in the divine Essence, yet the Personal Glory of Christ is distinct therefrom; this being wholly of gift. We have the glory of this subject reflected on the church, and it shines forth in, and throughout every part of the word of Truth which the Lord hath given us, yet it is not the Glory of the divine Nature which is the subject; but it is the Glory of Him, who is in the Godhead, One with the Father and the Spirit, who shines forth in the full Glories of the Godhead, in that individual humanity to which he was predestinated; and which, by his Personal union, he is one Person with; and in which He dwells with all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is the subject here. Which glory is a given glory. Our Lord speaks of it thus in the intercessory prayer recorded in the 17th chap. of John. I will select from it what I think should be brought

forward on such an important occasion, as when the Personal Glories of Christ are set forth. "I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John xvii. 4, 5, 22, 24. In which it is evident, Christ had a glory with the Father before the world was. This glory he prays for. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." It could not be the essential Glory of his Godhead. This was as essential to the Son of God, as to the Father, and the Spirit. This was not given to Him. It was his as God the Son, who though distinct in Personality from the Father and the Spirit, yet He, as one in the incomprehensible Essence, was as truly God, as the Father and the Spirit, being one in the same self-existing Essence. He says, *The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.* Which could not be the glory of the divine nature, it being wholly impossible Christ, as God-Man, should receive this, or impart it. He further says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The glory, therefore, which our Lord here speaks of, is not his essential glory, nor his acquired glory. It is a given glory, which he had with the Father before the world was. In which he had shone forth, and been glorified with the Father, in an unspeakable way, and to an inexpressible degree, before the world was. It may be a mean of opening this vast subject for the improvement of our minds, if some questions are asked, and answers returned to the same, to reflect light on so sublime a point as that which is before us. As 1. What are we to understand by the Person of God-Man ? 2. What are we to conceive by the expression, his Personal glory ? 3. What by the gift of this to Him ? This will most assuredly make way for my laying before you my own inward thoughts of this high mystery, concerning the Person of Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. And 1. What are we to understand by the Person of *God-Man* ? To which I reply. The Essential word, or co-equal, co-essential Son of God, united to an individual human nature, consisting of body and soul, which the Son of God was personally united unto, and set up in from everlasting. The Son of God was personally united to the humanity taken into Personal union, Christ is therefore, and thereby, denominated God-Man, because in Him, our nature is united to a Person in the Godhead. Not to the Godhead, but to a Person in it. The 2nd. question is, what are we to conceive by the expression, his Personal Glory ? The reply is this. The glory which is due to that individual Nature which is exalted into Personal union, so as to be one Person with the only begotten Son of God. The 3rd. question is, what is to be conceived by the gift of this glory on Christ ? To this the reply is, there was nothing but grace in the whole of this, to confer this high honour and dignity on this individual thus exalted. And the God-Man, being the fellow of the Lord of hosts, his glory must be a Personal Glory, which was wholly bestowed out of free grace, and everlasting favour : so

that the whole is of gift. This is the statement which the apostle gives of it, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" Now as to my own views of this most profound subject, I conceive from Christ's words, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," that He must have been with the Father from everlasting, as God-Man: that He must have been glorified with the Father as such: that He must have lived the life of God-Man, the man of God's right hand from everlasting. I do not mean his human soul existed from everlasting. I believe his whole Person existed from everlasting. I would convey my ideas on this deep subject thus—The Second Person in the Essence, was with his own will, and the will of the Father and the Spirit, predestinated into creature being and existence. In conjunction with this, He was conceived and brought forth, in the vast, and eternal designs, councils, purposes, and will of all the Persons in God-head, before the foundation of the world was laid. The Second Person was set up to be God-Man, in his whole Person. I conceive He was as truly God-Man, then, as He is now. He wore the glory due to Him; who was one Person with the only begotten Son of God. He says himself, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." John iii. 13. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." John vi. 38. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John xvi. 28. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John xvii. 5. From all these passages, I think there can be nothing more clear than this, as the conclusion of them—that Christ was God-Man in heaven, before the world was—that He was glorified as such, and had the Glory due to his Person bestowed on Him—that He shone forth in the full splendour of it, as the man Jehovah's fellow—that He laid aside this glory, when He became incarnate, and was made in all things like unto his brethren. The glory of Christ's Person is essential to Him. It may, therefore, be well entitled his Personal Glory. It wholly resides in Him. It is incommunicable. It is impossible He should be divested of it. He could and did suspend it. He could and did empty himself of it, so as to humble himself, and take on himself the form of a servant; yet his Person was ever one and the same, though not in one and the same state. He was in his non-incarnate state in heaven, in the bosom of the Father. He had a glory with Him. He was in his Incarnate state in this our world the subject of all sinless infirmities. The apostle says, "Ye know 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.

I will next glance at the Titles given Him in the words before us. He is entitled, *The Life*. He is so most emphatically. He is *the Life*. He being the Son of the living God. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the

living God." This was *Peter's* confession of him, and unto him. Matt. xvi. 16. He is expressly called *the living God*, by the apostle. Heb. iii. 12. He is life essentially.—He is life communicatively.—He is life spiritually.—He is life eternally. This is what Christ is. There is no life out of Him. All life is in Him. He is the life of the whole creation. The life of grace.—The life of glory. And He is all this as God-Man, the Lord, the Creator, the Proprietor of every creature. He is *eternal Life*. His life never decays. He lives in all generations, and his Name and memorial are from everlasting to everlasting. "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands." Ps. cii. "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, or change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." v. 24—27. When our apostle here says, *For the life was manifested, and we have seen Him, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*, he means to set forth Christ as He really is, *The Christ of God*, abstractedly from what He is to his Church, under any consideration whatsoever. It is a real blessing to understand it so—what Christ is in his own Person,—what He is in his essential and original Titles,—what He is in his relation to the divine Father,—what He is in *His* view and esteem, these are subjects of eternal moment: of infinite importance. These are the deep things of God. The knowledge of the same will be our food in heaven: our feast throughout the ages of eternity. I could wish this to be attended unto, and thought deeply on. Christ as the Son of the living God, is *the Life*, and "that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested in the flesh in the fulness of time." This is the wisdom of God in a mystery. Our spiritual and eternal life, cometh from Christ only. He is the fountain of it. He is the Head in whom it wholly resides. The knowledge of Him is our eternal life. Communion with him is the mean whereby the blessedness contained in the knowledge of Him, is imparted to us, and enjoyed by us. It is so, even with the angels, and saints in glory. Christ *the Life*, Christ, "that eternal life which was with the Father," came down from heaven, by his most mysterious and wonderful incarnation. I proceed

2. To the apostles' having seen this great sight, *God-Incarnate*. *We have seen it*, or rather *Him*. We have seen Him as manifested in the flesh. *We have seen, and bear witness*, and shew the truth of this in our ministry of the gospel unto you.

As in the former verse he had said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;" he here says, concerning the same most adorable Person, as follows in the words of my present text, (*For the life was manifested, and we have seen him, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*) The manifestation of Christ in the flesh, included the substance of all the Scripture promises, and prophecies contained in the Old Testament, and may be styled the accomplishment of them. The manifestation of Christ in the flesh was the greatest event which ever took place in our world. Yet we are not

so deeply sensible of this in our minds, as we most certainly ought to be. The sufferings, agony, and bloody-sweat of Christ, with his bearing our sins in his own body on the Tree, and his sustaining the very curse due to our transgressions, seem to fix a deeper impression of his love upon our minds, than his Incarnation doth. Yet there is more love expressed in his taking our nature, and being made like unto his brethren in all things, than we can ever possibly conceive. Out of it the whole execution of our salvation proceeded. He could love us in Heaven with as great a degree of love, as he will to the ages of eternity. But he could not be made sin, and a curse for us in heaven. He undertook on the behalf of his church, before all time. He therefore came into our world in the fulness of time. His coming into it was by his open incarnation. The whole mystery of which, is, I conceive thus expressed by the apostle. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest,*" or as it is in the margin, "*manifested in the flesh.*" The *Son of God, the Life, that eternal life which was with the Father*, was personally united to that body which the Father had prepared for him, and which the Holy Ghost framed and articulated in the womb of the Virgin. The Son of God was hereby manifested in our nature, and born into our world. At which time, we generally refer the following words of the apostle, "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6. There are those, who, from the marginal reading, which is this, "When he bringeth again, the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him," conceive the words concern the second advent of our Lord. It seems to me, both senses may well belong to each part of the subject. The Incarnation of Christ, was a most astonishing proof of his love. He was pleased to manifest himself to his disciples. They saw his glory, and believed on him, as the glorious Messiah, the Anointed of God. Hence one of them said, to his friend, in the name of several of the rest, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," this is the very identical Person. John i. 45. Another said, "We have found the Messiah, the Anointed one." John i. 41. *John* here speaks for himself, and joins the rest of the holy apostles, saying, we have seen God-Incarnate, *For the Life was manifested. And we have seen Him. And we bear witness of Him*, that He hath been in our world—that He was found in fashion as a man—that He was nailed to a cross. He was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem. He is risen from the dead. He is gone into heaven. He is at the right hand of God, crowned with honour and majesty. *We shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* The truth, reality, and importance of all this, was the subject of their ministry: and they were most peculiarly fitted and qualified for the same. They had seen the Lord.—They had heard what he had declared concerning Himself.—They had received their commission from Him. He said unto them, when he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, and shewed them how it was written in them, that Messiah was to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, "And ye are witnesses of these things." Luke xxiv. 48. Ye have seen all written in the scriptures concerning the Messiah realized in me. These, and none but these, except the seventy disciples, and other holy brethren, who lived whilst

Christ was in his Incarnate state, could be outward witnesses of his Incarnation, and what he said, and did in his Incarnate state. The apostles were most eminently qualified for this. When they declared that Christ the life was manifested, that they had seen him, when and where they bare witness to the truth of his Incarnation, to the reality of his Person, to the truth of his word, and miraculous acts, "God also bearing them witness, (and, by them of the same) both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will." See Heb. ii. 4. To have seen Christ, *God manifest in the flesh*, must have been a great sight. To retain the true sense and apprehension of what they saw in Him, and heard and received from Him, must have been to them life everlasting. Their whole ministry was filled up, with giving a simple narrative of the Person, Incarnation, Life and Actions, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension and Exaltation of the Lord Jesus. This they were called to bear their immediate testimony unto. This forms the foundation of the four gospels. And whilst it is by the spiritual apprehension of Christ, as set forth therein, we live, and in which is the life of our souls, yet what hath been expressed concerning the ministry of the apostles, contains *the Truth as it is in Jesus*. Nor must the history, nor the mystery of Christ be rejected, nor neglected by us. The one being the foundation of the other. Therefore the one must be of as great importance as the other. *We have seen him, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* Which sight of Him, had influenced their whole minds; swallowed up their whole hearts; fixed their whole affections; engrossed the whole of their intellectual faculties; and fitted them most truly and completely to bear their witness for Him.—To shew Him forth in their ministry and writings.—To declare Him to be *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*, a distinct Person from Him, yet co-equal and co-eternal with Him, "the Son of the Father, in Truth and Love." This brings me to my next particular head,

3. What they, *i. e.* the apostles, declared of Him, which was what they knew, from the divine knowledge which they had of Him, that He was *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*.

This must be the fruit of divine revelation and inspiration: by which, their minds being renewed by the Holy Ghost, they were, under his further illumination, enabled to receive true and proper apprehensions of the Person, Incarnation, Mission and Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ into their minds. To know Christ as a Person in the incomprehensible Essence, as one in it with the Father and the Spirit, this is beyond all that nature, or natural religion can ever attain unto. This is altogether supernatural and divine. The apostles were under the immediate influences of the Holy Ghost. Their conceptions of divine Truth were immediately from Him. Especially after his descent upon them on the day of Pentecost. They were, as taught by Him, infallible in the Doctrines of the everlasting gospel. It was clearly apprehended by them, the distinction of Persons in the Essence, Subsisting, and Self-Existing. They knew the Personal Existence of Christ in the Godhead was the foundation of his having been set up, as God-Man, from everlasting. They therefore declared Him to be *the True God and Eternal Life*. That He was *the Life*, and *that Eternal Life*,

which was co-existent with God from everlasting. That in Him, and by Him, God had shone forth on his church and people in Him. That by the incarnation of this most adorable Person, and in Him, the Father had expressed his love and grace to the very uttermost. Now all they knew of the love of the divine Persons, in Christ, they declared: with all the acts, and outgoings of the eternal Three towards them in Him. Yea, our apostle goes beyond this here. For he declares what Christ is, in Himself. This is necessary for us to know. Or how can we depend on Him for everlasting life? We must most assuredly know Him to be *life*, and *life eternal*; or how can we trust in Him for the blessings of the same? But whilst the true knowledge of this is everlasting life to us, yet the aim of the apostles extended beyond this: even to what Christ was, inherently, and of Himself, and that in his own Person, as God-Man, the beginning of all the ways and works of God. *As that Eternal Life which was with the Father before the world was.* This was what the apostles declared concerning Him, who is here styled *the Life*, and *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*, that the man Christ existed in Personal union with the Son of God, from the beginning, before all worlds. That He lived as *the Life*, and as *that Eternal Life*, which was to be manifested in the fulness of time, by his open visible Incarnation. That He and the Father had fellowship in, and with each other, in that society which none but the God-Man, will ever be admitted unto. That the apostles knew Jesus of Nazareth, was *the Life*, and *that Eternal Life which was with the Father*. They had seen Him, as Incarnate, in the days of his flesh, when he had a body like their own, some of them once, and but once, shine forth, as none could bear the sight of, or could possibly bear up under, but such as were supernaturally sustained by the Holy Ghost, as the apostles were at that time. Yea, from that shine they were fully convinced, he could only be seen as He was, by saints in glory. *His glory being as the only begotten of the Father.* When I say, the apostles declared of Him, what they knew concerning Him, from the divine knowledge which they had of Him. That they knew He was *that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them*, what proof shall I give you of this? Beloved, I can only refer you to their writings, in which you will find very satisfactory evidence of all this, so far as the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to shine upon the same, and reflect the knowledge of what is revealed, and contained in the same upon your minds. They found real blessedness in the subject. In declaring the same.—In bearing their witness and testimony to the truth thereof.—In shewing forth the eternity, the dignity, the Personal Glories of their, and our Lord Jesus Christ.—In shewing and proving Him to be *that Eternal Life which was with the Father*, before the incarnation of the Word of life took place. Who in the days of his flesh was manifested unto them. So as that they had been eyewitnesses of his Majesty. All which was a peculiar honour put upon them. This leads me to my last Head of this discourse.

4. To shew that this was a very particular part of the witness which they bare of Him—that *He was manifested unto them*.

A very singular favour. Such as I conceive we can form no adequate ideas of. How should we? That age is past. It will never return. All the Lord's ministers and people, and that to the end of

time, will be witnesses for Him, and shew forth the Truths of his gospel, some in a greater, some in a less measure and degree, yet not in the same way, nor to answer the same end, for which the apostles were appointed. Our Lord prayed the divine Father, that from his ascension down to his coming in his kingdom and glory, all the election of grace, might believe on Him, through their word. John xvii. 20. The church is said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Eph. ii. 20. And in the account given by the prophet *John*, he says, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Rev. xxi. 14. I only mention this here, to shew they were singular men. Such as were chosen witnesses. Appointed by God. Nor will their places, nor offices ever be supplied. No. Nor are they needed. Their peculiar blessing was to see Christ in the flesh. To know him Personally, and so to converse with Him, as to be fully persuaded that "He was the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." These lived when Christ made good his promise of sending down the Holy Spirit, and they were hereby endued with power from on high. So that they knew Christ more fully than the whole church without them. They received no part of their knowledge of Christ from the church, but the church received the whole from them. And it may be so said of us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. For the apostolic writings are the foundation of our faith. Every article of which is contained in the same. And by them it is we are led, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, into that knowledge of Christ, which is life eternal. To the apostles our Lord said, speaking of the Holy Ghost, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath, are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 13—15. All which was most completely fulfilled unto them. And a very special and particular witness which they bare, and held forth concerning Him, was, that "He was manifested unto them." So that they could not but give a most correct and divine account of Him, in every particular which they declared of, and concerning Him. This consideration adds weight, and stamps dignity on all they have declared, and set before us, in the New Testament scripture. We have in our apostle's gospel, as also in his epistles, his witness and testimony of Christ. When we read the first chapter of his gospel, he in effect says to us, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Which he very fully and freely expresses in ver. 14, of that chap. thus. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." The Incarnation of Christ, hath enlightened the pages of the New Testament with some glorious rays and reflections of his Personal, Inherent, and Ancient Primordial Glory. Yet what *John* says at the close of his gospel, which he declares is true of our Lord, to which he adds, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written

every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." John xxi. 25. It may be said of the Personal Glory which Christ shone forth in from everlasting—it surpasseth the uttermost which the reflection of it on our minds, even from the scriptures themselves, can give us any comprehension of. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON III.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.—I JOHN I. 3.

THE apostle in the two former verses had been speaking of Christ, and of the Father, as being in each other, as one in each other, and as having communion with each other. For if Christ was from everlasting with the Father, if He was *that Eternal Life which was with the Father*, and was manifested unto the apostles by his open Incarnation, then what hath been expressed is most certainly deducible therefrom. So he here in the words before us, informs the saints to whom he writes, concerning his end and design in his writing on this subject unto them. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* In the vast designs of Jehovah concerning Christ, God-Man, and by the Personal Union of the Essential Word, and Son of God to the Man Christ, a foundation was laid in the infinite mind, for an union and communion of all the elect in Christ, and by Him, and through Him. So that as the Father dwelleth in Christ, and He dwelleth in the Father, and by this most blessed incomprehensible union, the Father is in Christ, and Christ is in the Father, so there follows from it, that communion which is only known to them, and enjoyed by them, and which is wholly incommunicable, and ineffable. Yet as a pattern and evidence of it, the union of Christ as the head of the whole election of grace, with his whole social body, the church, is the foundation of all the communion Christ hath with each, and every member of the same. And from this union, all the blessings of Christ being their eternal head flow down to them. Our Lord saith, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me: the Father dwelleth in me." John xiv. 10. Of his church he says, "At that day. (viz. when the Holy Ghost should be given unto them,) ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." v. 20. Again, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." vi. 57. Where there is union there cannot but be communion. And it is according and in proportion to the union which is the cause thereof. In the words before us, which are a continuation of the former subject, we have the following particulars.

1. The declaration of the apostles, delivered by them, through the mouth of an individual, who spoke for them all. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.*

2. The end and design of the apostle *John* in this. *That ye also may have fellowship with us.*

3. Who they were with whom they had fellowship. *With the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

4. The truth and reality of this, which is thus confirmed. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* That we have this fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is infallible truth. I set my seal to it as such, says the apostle *John*. I am

1. To set before you the declaration expressed in my text: which contains the whole subject of the apostles ministry. Beyond which they could not go. Nor could greater things be expressed. It being the wisdom of God in a mystery. The hidden wisdom of God. The manifold wisdom of God. The unsearchable riches of Christ. The true knowledge of which, in the hand of the Spirit, is the means of comforting the hearts of saints, of "knitting them together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Surely all this, was contained in the preaching of the true doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ by the holy apostles of the Lord and Saviour. This most assuredly is, for the essence of it, contained in this declaration before us. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* They could not declare more than they had seen and heard, in Christ, and from Christ, with whom they had personal converse in the days of his flesh. And all which they had seen and heard in Him, and from Him, they made a full declaration of, in their ministry unto the people. They were his witnesses unto the people. They had seen Him, whom many prophets and righteous men had desired to see, yet had not their desires granted. They had heard Him speak, who spake as never man spake, whom prophets and kings had desired to hear, yet were not admitted to have their ears thus favoured. They saw Him, heard Him, conversed with Him, who was *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Even Him, who said, "I came down from heaven." "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." "Before Abraham was, I am." They had heard our Lord Jesus Christ speak out all his heart. So that they were most abundantly qualified to bear their testimony of, and concerning Him. Our apostle using the plural number, shews that the whole testimony borne by all the apostles, was one and the same. It was one and the same gospel in each of their mouths. What they knew of Christ, they set forth. What they had received of Him, and from Him, they fully expressed. The communion they had with Him, they made known. They did not keep the knowledge of it within themselves; to themselves: and amongst themselves. The declaration which they made of this, was to saints. Not to others. No. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* Who are holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Who are with us partakers of Christ. A most noble instance of spiritual generosity. Worthy of imitation by all the servants and ministers of Christ, in every age, and throughout all generations. They should be as so many mouths, engaged and employed to speak out his whole heart. To sound forth his most glorious praise. To declare his glorious acts. To talk of his power. To shew forth his salvation from day to day. To speak of the glorious honour

of his Majesty, and of his wondrous works. To utter forth the memory of his great goodness, and to sing of his righteousness. They will do so. They cannot but act thus, if they have seen Him : if they have conversed with Him : if they have heard Him : if they have been taught by Him as the Truth is in Jesus. They and we cannot but speak what we have seen in Him : received from Him : and been taught by Him. And to whom will they make their declaration of Him ? To sinners, and saints. To the former they will sound forth this most solemn declaration, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ;" which, when received by the power of the Holy Ghost into the heart, they will add, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life : " and these words also, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life : " then the ministers of Christ will proceed to shew them what they are in Christ. How they stand in him. What views the Father hath of them in Christ. How he loves them in his Son. How he hath accepted their persons in Him the Beloved. How completely saved they are in Christ. That they are blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings. And are called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The apostle here speaks for all his brethren, and in their names he speaks to all saints. Let them be distinguished as they might, by their age, and state in christianity : fathers, babes, or young men in Christ. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* As they had themselves been feasted with a sight of Christ, with his having opened his heart unto them, with the words which he had spoken in their hearing, and personally unto them, so they make in, and by their writings, a free, full, and clear discovery of the same, for the universal benefit of the whole church of God. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* This brings me

2. To speak of the end and design of the apostle *John* in this. *That ye also may have fellowship with us.*

Church fellowship, which is the communion of saints, is an inexpressible blessing. It consists in imparting to each other an account of what the Lord hath done for our souls : how he opened our eyes to behold Him : how he made way for us to receive Him, by giving us to hear his voice in the everlasting gospel, and by that very means entering our hearts, and possessing, dwelling, and continuing to abide in them. We receiving the same truths, enjoying the same spiritual apprehensions of Christ, and loving each other in Christ, by the same Spirit, who revealed Christ in us, and to us, it is hereby we are one spirit with each other in the Lord. We have fellowship with each other in the same Spirit ; with the same Christ ; in the same salvation : with the same God and Father : in the same ordinances. We are one family to the Lord. The apostle sets this forth most sweetly to the saints at *Ephesus*, whom he thus addresseth. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." iv. 1—6. It is said

of the members of the first apostolic church, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts ii. 42. Saints are not all of them embodied into a church state. Yet as saints they have fellowship with each other in Christ, at the Throne of his grace; in praying for each other; in praising and blessing God for what he hath done for each other; and in conversing with each other. And sometimes without having the least knowledge of each other. As they are importunate before the Lord, for his blessing on his church universally. The fellowship our text is speaking of, it is wholly and altogether supernatural and divine. It is with the Father, and the Son. It is with the apostles in their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And this is his very end and design in his writing unto them. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* John and the rest of the apostles, being of one spirit in the Lord, he brings them in, as uniting with himself, in what he here inserts. We is the term he uses. So it was in the former verses. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* Most assuredly, his design in declaring to the saints, all he, and the rest of the apostles knew of Christ, in his Person, as from everlasting He was with God, and was God—of what He was, as God and Man in one Christ—of what he was in his Incarnate state—of what he spake and did in our world, in the days of his flesh—of what He did, and spake in his Resurrection state—and of what they knew of Him, and the communion which they had with Him; now that He was in his exalted state—with the fellowship he continued to hold with them, and which He was most graciously pleased to admit them to hold with Him, must be very interesting to the saints. If it had not been so, it had not been declared by him to them. It is well therefore here to remark, that the Holy Ghost intended by this very epistle, to admit real saints, into proper views and perception of this great subject, and what is contained in communion with God, in all his Persons. And this as suited to the relation they stand in to us. It is a personal communion. It is the very perfection of grace and glory. We cannot reach higher this side heaven. We cannot go beyond it, No, not in glory. It is the very perfection of the life of faith. It is the utmost blessedness of the life of glory. On earth we enjoy it by faith. In heaven by sense. Now, by spiritual perception, then, by supernatural sense and vision. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.* We cannot enjoy God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, any further than we have the true knowledge of them. The saints to whom John wrote and declared these important truths, might know them as truly, and intellectually in their own renewed minds, as the very apostles themselves did. Yet they did not know them so comprehensively. This being the case, the one could impart a

knowledge of these vast subjects, so, as thereby to be improving to the mind, and lead them further and more apprehensively into the subject. Hereby way would be made, for real saints, to be led to apprehend the blessedness, of real, free, open, manifestative communion with the Persons in Godhead, in all their glorious acts of grace, and outgoings of their love, to the church in Christ, from everlasting. This therefore was the great and gracious design of the apostle to effect by this epistle. As also by his gospel, and the whole of his ministry. He, and the rest of his brethren, had but this one end and design. That as they knew Christ, the church might know Him too. As truly, fully, and comprehensively, as to all true spiritual communion as they did. That the saints with them, might have the same holy fellowship, with themselves, and that they might also enjoy amongst themselves, with each other, and in their own souls, the same blessed fellowship with the Holy Ones, which the apostles did. It being their birth-right, their one common privilege, as being of one and the same spiritual community. And God in all his Persons, love, salvation, and Glory, being their portion and inheritance, he would have them to have clear apprehensions of the same, and know themselves as truly invested into right and title to all these blessings, as any of the apostles were. These being the ends and design of the apostle towards them, in his saying, *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us*, is very expressive of the generosity and greatness of his mind unto them. That you, to whom I write may have fellowship with us, in all the mysteries of grace: in all the communicable blessings of everlasting love: in all the riches of Christ's most glorious mediation: in all the efficacy of his most perfect righteousness, and most precious blood-shedding. In his fulness. That there may be a free access to Him, and to the Father in Him, through the gracious guidance and influxes of the Holy Ghost, within you, and upon you. So as that what we have said, concerning his Person, in every particular, may have its inbeing and indwelling in your minds; so as to operate within you, and upon you, and be the very means of drawing out your hearts, affections, and desires after Him, who is the very centre and circumference of all our desires: and of yours also, so far as our account of Him, and declaration made, and given by us concerning Him, have been received, and are embraced, and believed by you. I conceive we may distinguish the real fellowship the apostles had with Christ, from what other saints have. They were favoured with personal converses with Christ. They received their knowledge of Him, more immediately, and intuitively from the Holy Spirit. In consequence of which, their faith was more simple. It was always, at all times, in every case, and circumstance, in act and exercise, after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. All other saints, and we with them, receive the grace of faith and the subject of faith from the written word. That is the glass, and the ordinance of worship, in the which we behold the Lord. It is but at the best, but through a glass darkly. Whilst their sight of Him was most clear. And whilst in his incarnate state, they took in but very imperfect conception of Him; yet when the Holy Ghost came in upon them fully, after our Lord was fully invested with eternal glory, they were then so enlightened into the true knowledge of what they had seen, and heard of Him, as led them into such personal fellowship in a way of com-

munion with Him, as I should conceive, none beside were ever favoured with in a time state. There was an absolute necessity it should be thus with them. They were to speak and write on every article of faith, and state the same, as exactly as it was stated in the mind and will of God. They were to express everlasting love, in all its glorious fruits and effects, and in all the gracious discoveries made of the same by God himself, to the hearts of his people, in the real communion he is pleased to hold with them, and in the gracious manifestations of Himself to their minds. Their writings were to be immutable records of what God is in Christ, and to his Church in Him. And the very way and manner in which it pleases Him to make the same known unto them. Now most assuredly, in proportion to their knowledge of Christ, such must have been their faith in Christ. Such also must have been their confidence in Christ. Such their enjoyments of Him. Such their aspirations after Him. Such their high prizings of Him. Such their valuation of Him. Such their cleavings unto Him. Such their communion with Him. They knew Him to be their supreme life. Whilst we who acknowledge Him to be our life, scarce apprehend what is contained in the very expression. They obtained many blessed interviews with Him, in a way of personal communion with Him, in an immediate and direct way: whilst we are generally looking to our own inherent graces, to encourage, and bring about this holy communion between Him, and us. As they could write fully and freely on this subject, so they had a very large and comprehensive knowledge of the same. The end of *John*, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, in writing as he did, which was altogether under the influence and immediate unction of the Holy Ghost, was, that all the saints in Christ Jesus, throughout the whole world, might have fellowship with Him, and the rest of the apostles in this blessedness, which consisted in fellowship with the Father, and the Son. This brings me to my

3d. Particular, to consider those with whom the apostles had fellowship. I ask, who were they? the reply is, the Father, and the Son. And *truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is now to be particularly discoursed on, to be opened, and explained. May the Lord assist herein. It being a point of vast importance. It may be best in going through this part of my discourse, to speak in a distinct manner on the same. In the first place, the apostle speaks in a very positive manner, and asserts for himself, and the other apostles, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is here to be observed. The sacred writers speak in very positive terms on the most important subjects. They do not go about to explain the subjects they declare. But they utter the same, and there leave it, setting their apostolic seal thereto. Communion with God—it must be the supreme corner-stone of christianity. Yet our apostle does not say what it is, wherein it consists, nor by what means he, and the *we* in whose names he expresses this great truth, enjoyed it. He only says, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* I should apprehend, the *we* spoken of, enjoyed communion with the Father, in the knowledge they had of his everlasting love, which they had clear apprehensions of in the Person of Christ. In the views they had of Christ, as the gift of the Father's love. As his salvation. In whom was all his delight. In whom he shone forth in all the glorious beams of his everlasting love. This they had a real knowledge of. And so they had of the

Person of Jesus Christ. They knew him to be the Son of God. The God-Man, the Head, the Life, the Husband, the Saviour of his church and people. And so they had of the real and actual blessedness of having communion with Him. So that they could most truly say, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* As this was declared for the benefit of the whole church, down to the very end of this present time state, and the blessed fruits and effects of the same will remain in the minds of saints in heaven to all eternity, it may not be amiss to open this truth which is here asserted concerning fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and point out what it consists in. It may here be asked, is not the Holy Ghost a Person in the Godhead equal with the Father, and the Son? Is it not by Him, we have communion with the Father and the Son? Why then is he not named by the apostle? The reply to each of these particulars is this. The Holy Ghost is a Person in the Godhead. He is spoken of by our Lord Jesus Christ as such, again and again in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of *John's* gospel. It is by Him as the sole efficient cause, we have communion with the Father, and the Son, and we read of the communion of the Holy Ghost, in the apostle's benediction. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And the reason why He is not here named by the apostle is this. The Father, and Christ are the Persons on whom our faith is exercised, and with whom we converse. The Holy Ghost his work is all within us. He is an indweller in our souls. It is by his indwelling in us that He puts forth his life and power within us. He reveals Christ to us. He sheds abroad the Father's love in our hearts, He leads us into fellowship with the Father and the Son, therefore it is, He being the author of all this, He is not mentioned. So as that thereby the subject of communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ might not be broken in upon, or interrupted. I would here ask, what is communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ? The answer is this. It is an unity of mind. So as for God to let in Himself upon our minds, as to give us such apprehensions of his love, as afford us a real, spiritual knowledge of and acquaintance with the same, so as for us to partake of the reality thereof. Our fellowship with the Father, consists in having spiritual sensations of his love imparted to our minds. Our Lord expresses himself on this great subject thus. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John xiv. 21—23. The Father, and the Son, possessing the renewed mind, with thoughts of their great love, and this to such a degree, as for the child of God to enjoy the real apprehension of the same, this is for the Father and the Son to have and hold communion with us. And our fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, is the blessed fruit and effect of this. Our minds being thus spiritually enlightened and enlarged towards the Father for his love, and towards his Son Jesus Christ for saving us in Himself, with an everlasting salvation, we have free and blessed accesses to the Father and the Son, in the which we have real fellowship with them in our prayers, praises, and acknowledgements of them, in their everlasting favour and good will towards us. It may here be observed that the union we have with the Person of Christ, is the foundation of all the communion we have with Him

and the Father in Him on earth, or shall be admitted to in heaven, and the Holy Ghost is the manifestor of this union unto us. So says our Lord. He had been speaking of his giving his apostles the Holy Ghost. And he adds, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." John xiv. 20. There is a variety of unions in which Christ and his church are related to each other. There is first an *election* union, which is that comprehensive one, by which Christ and his church were united together from everlasting. He the Head, and they his members. Christ was not chosen for the church. But the church was chosen for Him, and the church was chosen in Him, and this was the first act of everlasting love towards her, and this was before the foundation of the world. This is election union. On this followed a marriage union. Christ and his Bride were set up in Heaven from eternity. The one was given to the other, and solemnly married before the Three in Jehovah before the world began. Hence you have Christ, God-Man, the Bridegroom of his church, thus expressing himself in the viii. chap. of the Proverbs. "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 part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." v. 30, 31. There is also a representative union between Christ and the Elect. He represented them, and acted for them, as their Head, and Surety, in the everlasting covenant. This He gave full evidence of in the fullness of time, when he came into our world, and became thereby one with his people, so that "both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one;" that is of one nature. "Forasmuch 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 him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. ii. 11—14. There is also a grace union. Mr. Joseph Hussey says, "There are three unions in Christ, suited to the three operations of all the three persons in God. I mean three unions of God's children, and all of them before faith. Viz. Election Union, Representation Union, and Regeneration Union. Out of all these ariseth a fourth union which is a union with Christ, distinct from union *in Christ*, this consists in union and cleaving to him by faith." There is also a Glory Union of which our Lord speaks thus; "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. John xvii. 22, 23. This glory union will break forth upon the church in her resurrection state. Now in consequence of all these unions, there is a proportional communion with all the Persons in Godhead, in the Person of Christ, with the Church. And as these unions are made known to the spiritual minds of the saints, so they have likewise in proportion to the light and knowledge of the same, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, real communion with the Father and the Son. So as that they may say as truly as the apostle here doth, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. I would here recite the end of the apostles writing this. It was that saints might know what they had a right unto, what they should seek after, and expect. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us*, in all the truths, mysteries, grace and glory of the everlasting gospel; which contains a glorious revelation

of the Father's everlasting love, and the Essential, Personal, Relative, Mediatorial Glories of Christ, of his Headship to his Church, as her Grace Head, and as her Glory Head, as we the apostles of the Lord and Saviour have. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* We saw him with our bodily eyes, in his incarnate state. We saw him also with the eyes of our minds. We had fellowship with Him, and the Father in Him. This was the case with us, and the blessing bestowed on us, in his resurrection state. Now that He is ascended, and lives in heaven after the power of an endless life, we have further and more spiritual communion with Him. He hath made good his promise to us. "At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." John xvi. 26, 27, 28. By virtue of this having been realized unto us, we know the Father more clearly and as Personally distinct from the Son than heretofore. We have real communion with Him. We can and do declare unto you, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is the greatest honour, dignity, and blessing which we can possibly be favoured with on Earth, or in Heaven. It was the highest attainment to which the apostles themselves arrived. As hereby the Father's love, and Son's salvation were most distinctly and spiritually realized in them, and unto them. The knowledge of God the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ, went first, and communion with them in real personal fellowship followed after. So it will in heaven and glory everlasting. So that to keep every thing in its proper place, the knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is the first and greatest blessing, either in earth or heaven. And communion with the Father and the Son, is the very next unto it, both on earth, or in heaven. All which originate in us, and we receive the same into our minds, from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This was the blessed state to which the apostles were advanced. John was one of these. He as well as they, had fellowship with the Holy Trinity. This must have been in the right understanding of the glorious display made of grace, in their everlasting love to the persons of the elect. In the union of each of the divine Persons unto them in the Person of Christ, God-Man. In the true knowledge of all those spiritual blessings bestowed upon them, as the fruit of God's everlasting love to them, in the Person of Christ. And into clear distinct fellowship with the Father, in his love to their persons in Christ, God-Man, in whom they were accepted. And with Christ Jesus the Son of the Father, in his love to them, and salvation wrought out for them. In whom they were everlastingly complete. In whose work they were everlastingly saved. In whom they shone with lustre, dignity, and majesty, and glory, in the sight of their heavenly Father. This brings me to my last head of this discourse, in which I am

4. To consider the truth and reality of this, which is thus confirmed. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* It is of great importance to us, and we do well to consider it, that our Lord Jesus Christ, sealed every truth he delivered all through-

out his incarnate state, with his own blood. The apostles set their seals, to the truth of all which they heard, and received from Him. And there are a variety of important matters, in their writings, which they have not only sealed, but have left their seals on, to express the immutability and importance of the same, in every age, and throughout all following ages, and generations. There can be nothing of greater importance, than what concerns the Person of Christ. His Incarnation in the fulness of time. The truth and reality of this. Next to it, there never was any thing of more importance to the church of Christ, than the testimony given concerning all this, by these very persons who were eye and earwitnesses of the same. It is from their writings, through the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, we derive all our true knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. We therefore find their positive assertions concerning the eternal and immutable subjects of the everlasting gospel, very supporting to our minds. As they are expressed by apostolic authority. So we also do, when they in their own persons, and from their own knowledge and experience, set their seals to confirm the Truths they have been declaring. Communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells personally in the saints, is a most glorious mystery of grace. Nature cannot apprehend it. Sense must have nothing to do with it. None can have the least conception of the nature, the importance, the excellency, the blessedness of the same, but such as are born from above. No. Nor these either, but as enlightened, inspired, and supernaturally lifted up into the true knowledge and enjoyment of the same. Spiritual Life is a great mystery. The whole essence of which consists in communion with God. The apostles were favoured with it. Therefore one of them for all the rest, says in the words before us. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is, says he, an immutable verity: which we can each of us set our seals unto: and which I declare for your spiritual benefit and advantage also. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This then is made known by the apostle, and declared to the whole church of Christ, for their benefit and advantage, which they should also seek for, and aim at the attainment of—real and distinct *fellowship, with the Person of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ.* They should not look at the privilege as being so supremely great, and so far beyond them, that they have no right to expect so inestimable a blessing. They were to look on it as a blessing of free grace, which they should look on themselves as interested in, and had a right and title unto, as truly as the apostles had. And if they did not enjoy the same, it was because their faith had not attained the true conception and knowledge of it. They were not to expect it in the same way, nor to the same degree as the apostles had it. They having been favoured with fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in such a way and manner, as was personally peculiar to them, and them alone. They could say, each of them, and one for all the rest, *truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* They could freely and fully, from their own enjoyment of this, confirm the truth and reality of it to all other saints. Yet they would they also should know, the way for their having and holding fellowship with the Holy Trinity, was clearly

set before them also. That they wrote on this subject unto them, to express their love to Christ to them. To excite them to the enjoyment of the same inestimable favour. That the apostles and all the church of Christ, might most blessedly share, and partake of this blessing of gospel grace. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.* In all the blessings, benefits, gifts, and graces bestowed on the whole church, in her eternal Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Which belonged to each and every one of them, as real members in Him. *And truly*, says the apostle, *our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* It is without doubt the case with some saints, not clearly to apprehend and discover this blessed fellowship, carried on by the Holy Spirit in their souls. And even when they do conclude it must be thus with them, that they have some real fellowship with the Lord, yet it most certainly is the case, they have not clear and distinctive perceptions of real personal fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Yet there can be no communion with the Father without the Son, nor with the Father and the Son without the Spirit. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the medium of communion. The Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of this communion. The Father is He with whom we have this communion. The God-Man, is the Mediator of all our union and communion with God. The more therefore we eye Him, and have our hearts drawn out after Him, and fixed on Him as our centre; so we the more clearly understand the grace of fellowship with God. What it consists in: how it is enjoyed: what our conceptions of it are: and how we have in our souls at times, clear personal communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, who liveth, dwelleth, and abideth in us. May the Lord accompany what hath been delivered, so far as agreeable with his truth, with his own blessing. Amen.

SERMON IV.

And these things write we unto you, that our, or, your joy may be full.—1 JOHN i. 4.

I CONSIDER these words conclude the first grand subject of this chapter. The next particular subject begins with the 5th, and closes with the 7th verse. Then the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses have a distinct subject. Yet as all stand connected together, they form one whole most glorious system of everlastingly precious and glorious truth. Let it be here observed, as in various Bibles, I read my text in them differently, as thus. *And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* In others, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*, so I have included both words, *our* and *your*, hoping thereby to give the fullest sense of the apostle's meaning and design in the text itself. The text stands entirely connected with the three former verses, which connexion as I greatly value, and always love to preserve, it most certainly reflecting a great light upon the whole, so I consider it is particularly necessary throughout the whole exposition of this very important epistle. The apostle had been speaking of the Eternity of Christ's Person, of his having been visible unto them, so as for their outward and spiritual evidence, of his real and open incarnation. They had heard Him: they had seen Him with their eyes visibly before them: they had looked on Him: they had handled Him the Word of Life. He was manifested to them. They knew Him to be that *Eternal Life*, which was with the Father from everlasting. In whom was all His delight. He being the Son of His love. One in the same Essence with Himself, and Spirit. Who as God-Man, was essentially, immutably, and invariably in his Person, the Image of the invisible God, the brightness of glory, who was in the form of God, the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts. In whom as one personally with the Son of the living God, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth. He was with the Father all this, before the world was. He became incarnate in the fulness of time, and in his incarnate state, was manifested unto his apostles, and others, whom he had chosen. That which *John* and his fellow-apostles had seen in Him, heard from Him, enjoyed in fellowship with Him, they declared to the whole church at large. Their end in the same was most noble and most truly generous. Their end was, that all saints might be the better for it: that they might improve by it: and have the same fellowship, in all the blessings, and reality of it which they themselves had, with the Father, and the Son. All which was written to the whole church of Christ, and to every individual saint therein, that the joy of the apostles might be full. They having communicated unto them, all they themselves knew of these glorious mysteries of grace. And that the joy of these saints, and all saints to the end of the world might be full. As directed into an increasing knowledge of the Person of Christ, and God the Father, and into an acquaintance in what way, and by what means, they were to look for, and expect to participate in the same. Thus you have the outline of these first four verses; which I will now recite, that you may view for yourselves their real coherence and

connexion. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.) That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* So it is in the Bible before me; in others it is, *that your joy may be full.* The words of my text may be thus divided; and considered as containing the following particulars.

1. The things which were before written.
2. The end and design of writing the same.
3. What the joy was which could not but result therefrom, both to the apostle, and to saints. *And these things write we unto you, that our joy, your joy may be full.*

4. What this fulness of joy consisteth in. These are the particulars I am to treat on, that I may fill up the division into which I have cast my text. I am then to begin

1. With the things which were before written. *And these things write we unto you, that our, your joy may be full.*

It does not appear any where concerned with our apostle, in writing this epistle. It seems the Holy Ghost called him, and influenced him to write it, and that under his immediate influence and direction. How then does he say, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full*; or, *that your joy may be full*? My reply to this is, the apostles were filled with, and possessed with one and the same spirit, respecting the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was nothing they knew of Him, but they were of one heart and one soul, in the imparting the same. What they saw in Christ, what apprehensions the Holy Ghost had given them of his worth, and transcendent excellency, they were all of one mind in this very particular, to communicate the full knowledge of, so far as words could possibly convey the same. This being their one desire, our apostle might well use the term, *we*. There being in this but one soul possessing each of them. Again the subject they every where declared was one and the same. Their testimony of Him was one and the same. Their witness and setting of Him forth differed not a whit. Nor did their aim and end vary. It was to make Him known. To gain Him a glorious Name. To spread his fame and renown. That sinners under the operation of the Holy Ghost might be led to believe on Him, they preached Christ crucified. When any of these persons wrote to the churches of the saints, their one view was their real and spiritual good. And all the difference with respect to their particular, and distinct gifts, lay here. They neither of them wrote, but as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He directed them to write as seemed good in his sight. There is no difference in their writings, but this—One is called to write on one particular subject. Another on what the others were not to meddle with. Every epistle is on a different subject, let it be written by *Paul, James, Peter, John, or Jude*. I would add, with a particular end and design also. In these their epistles, there is a difference, just agreeably to what they were influenced by the eternal spirit to engage on. But in their personal testimony of Christ,

they differed not a whit, their end being in the whole, whether by their preachings or writings to glorify and exalt their, and the one only, and common Lord of all the churches of the saints, they therefore sometimes use the term *we*, and *us* to enforce their writings on the minds of saints. You have an example of this in *Peter*. "This second epistle, (beloved,) I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." 2 Epis. iii. 1, 2. And *Peter* and *John* before the senate at Jerusalem, said one for the other, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts iv. 20. It was the will of the eternal Spirit, our *John* should write on the most important of all subjects, which concerns inward, vital, experimental christianity. This is communion with God. He had the true blessedness of it in his own mind. He knew by what means it was begun in his own soul. How it had been maintained therein. That it was still carried on. He was well persuaded all the holy apostles, together with himself, were favoured with having real fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. That they would most cordially join with him, in aiming to promote this, ministerially, amongst all saints. That, were the end obtained by this means, it would afford them, and himself, joy: and it would increase the joy of saints also. He therefore says in the words before us, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy, that your joy may be full.* It may be here asked what are these things which he wrote to attain this end? And what are those special and peculiar subjects our minds must be conversant with, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. fellowship with the apostle, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? I refer to the words of the preceding verse. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that our, your joy may be full.* It is the utmost end and design of the ministration of the gospel, to bring believers into a state of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This was the state of blessedness into which the apostles were brought. That other saints might enjoy the same blessedness, was *John's* aim and design in writing to the saints, this "First Epistle General," which will be continued down to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The things which the apostle had written to attain this blessed end which he proposed to himself, concerned Christ. Who he was. What he was. The Person of Christ, and the Incarnation of Christ, are the glory of the sacred page. The love of Christ is the spring of life to us. The salvation of Christ is our foundation to hope in Him. And to expect most blessed communications from Him. It is from his immutability, and his inexhaustible fulness of grace and glory, we are encouraged to expect to receive supplies suited to all our wants, equal to all our spiritual desires. Grace, now, and evermore, to the closing of a time state with us. And glory everlasting, out of the same immensity of blessedness, contained in the fulness of Christ, God-Man, to constitute us glorious to the ages of eternity. Christ as God-Man, is the Head of his Church. The Life of his Church. The Perfection of his Church. The Glory of his Church. The blessedness of his Church. He is her Treasure. He

is her Portion. Her Righteousness. Her immutable Holiness. Her ineffable Purity. What the apostle had been expressing concerning Him, as the word of Life, as that eternal life, which was with the Father before all time, who became incarnate in the fulness of time, which the apostles were witnesses of, could not but shed its influence on spiritual minds, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It had this very effect on this apostle himself. Therefore he expressed the communion he had, and the reality of the same, with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Which, says he, I write unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us, in the same unspeakable blessing and blessedness. I would next take up the question, what are those special and peculiar subjects, that our minds must be conversant with, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. fellowship with the apostles, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? To this I cannot but reply, they must for the subject and substance of them, be the same with what the apostle has been setting forth in the former verses. He had been treating of fellowship with the Holy Trinity. It is through the God-Man, Christ Jesus, we have blessings inconceivable. These are made known to our minds, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to open our understandings, to know the Father's love to us, in Him, the Son of his love. It is through Him, we have fellowship with the Father, in all the blessings of his everlasting love. All which we enjoy through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It is he alone, who is the manifestor of our union to Christ—of our interest in Christ—of our title in Him to all the blessings of grace, and glory. It is He who is the efficient of all our fellowship with the Father, and the Son, in all contained in the realization of grace and glory, either in earth, or heaven. From hence a joy, yea, a fulness of joy abounds. God himself is the object of this joy. It arises from the knowledge we have of the Holy Three, being the fountain and spring of our exceeding joy. Our Lord says to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John xv. 11. And *John*, speaking after his Lord and master, says, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* So we the Master and the disciple are of one heart in this. The one spoke out the whole of his heart most fully, that his beloved might have the fullest participation of fulness of joy. And the other wrote what he did, concerning fellowship with the Holy Trinity, that they enjoying the same fellowship, might also have a fulness of joy. But to the question. What are the subjects the mind must be engaged on, and conversant with, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?* To this I reply. They must be the glorious truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel. Such as concern the Person of Christ. The Three in Jehovah, as revealed and manifested in Him. The everlasting love of God, to the persons of the elect in Him. His union unto them, and with them, founded on their election in Him, and settlements of grace: with his Personal interest in them; salvation of them, and his presentation of them in his Person, before the Majesty in the heavens: These are the Truths with which the mind must be spiritually occupied, and conversant, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. fellowship with the apostles, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Then it must follow, the ministry of the gospel in our present day, is not calculated to promote, or attain

this end. The general stream of all, goes no further than to reach the minds of the hearers, with an apprehension of their sinful state, and the necessity of a change. If some go beyond this, yet it is not sufficient to fix the mind on Christ. Those who are looked on to be the greatest in our times, they express the terms of "Jesus Christ," and some doctrines of grace, more than they even attempt to open and explain his most glorious Person, or explain one single doctrine of the gospel. They may be said to name him, and some gospel truth. But it cannot be said with Truth they preach Him, neither can it ever be proved, either in this world or in the world to come, they ever were the means of establishing one real saint on Christ, or directing Him ministerially into real fellowship with the apostles, into clear views of the doctrines of God our Saviour, and into fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It is owing to this, many who are saints wander from one congregation to another. Yet with all their goings from one to the other, they do not meet with that which does their souls any real good. They want guides to go before them. Pastors after God's own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding. The mysteries of the gospel must be opened and explained, the Personal Glories of Christ unveiled, the love the Holy Trinity love the elect in Him with, and the communion they have with the elect in Him, these are the subjects which the called of God in Christ Jesus must have their minds fully possessed with, that they may be disposed to seek after real, distinct, and personal communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. But I will proceed

2. To the apostle's end and design in writing on this subject : *These things write we unto you.* What for? The words of the text say, *that your joy may be full.* If we quote the words of the former verse, which may be done with safety, and bring them into this, then the end and design will be this. He aims these, and all saints down to the end of time, might freely and fully partake in their measure and degree, of all the blessings of Christ, and salvation, with themselves. He would they should know it a real privilege and blessing which they were interested in, as truly as the apostles were, to have and hold fellowship with the Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity. They were not to look into themselves for any worth or worthiness, to entitle them to this inestimable grace, but to look to the grace, and in the views of the same, seek for the blessedness contained in this holy, personal fellowship with the Persons of the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ in real, experimental access to, and fellowship with them. Assuring them of the reality there was in all this, by saying, *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* This was most noble. It expresseth their spirit towards the saints. They want them to be as truly blessed as themselves, so far as it was possible, in their knowledge of the Father, and the Son, in their acts of grace towards them, in their relation and union with them, in their love to them, into that fellowship they had most blessedly opened for them, for their satisfying their souls with holy and divine joys, such as were truly foretastes of Heaven and Glory, as might give them the best experience of what those joys will consist in, they would be the real partakers of, when they should be admitted into the kingdom of glory.

All this could not be effected in their minds, but by this as the medium thereof. The supreme and transcendently excellent truths, which concern the deep things of God, The Person, and Glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, how he stood in the Father's sight before all time; how he was conceived in the divine mind, and laid as the foundation of all the eternal decrees, will, council, purposes, ends and designs of Jehovah respecting all things visible and invisible. How he was brought forth openly in his incarnation, as the first-born of all God's vast ends and designs, and He is God's Alpha and Omega, his beginning and ending, in all his displays of love, grace, and glory towards the elect. Now, if these are the subjects which alone can feed a spiritual mind, and increase the spirituality thereof; and if it is by means of the same, the mind is drawn forth towards the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, so as to breathe after, and really to enjoy distinct fellowship, in an apprehensive way, with the Father, in clear scriptural views of his everlasting love to his Church in Christ, God-Man; and so as also to have such blessed scriptural apprehensions of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his Person and salvation, as to worship Him, by acknowledging his distinct Personality with the Father, whilst we confess his coequality in Godhead with the Father and the Spirit, this is that knowledge of the subject as alone can draw out the renewed mind into real affections and desires after communion with the Lord, so as to partake of this inestimable blessing—distinct and personal communion with the Father and the Son. I again repeat it, that to fit the mind for this, there must be a proportionable light, let in from the Lord on the same, to give it a holy relish for it, and draw out the desires after it. Hence it follows, that that preaching which suits this, must be wholly supernatural. It is not preaching Christ's salvation, and how complete we are in Him, is sufficient to effect this great end. No. It must be preaching what God is to us in Christ, above and beyond all consideration of the fall. It must be setting Christ forth in his ancient and primordial glories, and then coming down to his sub-lapsarian state, is the preaching which alone, in the hand of the Spirit can produce this. For a proof of which I only refer you to the three former verses, which issue in our text, in which the apostle says, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy, your joy may be full.* It follows then, the utmost the gospel produces, in the minds of the saints of the most high God, is, communion with him. And that this is the uttermost of its blessedness—personal fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. *These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* To see the gospel as set forth by us unto you, hath produced this, which is the very essence of all its blessedness. That you and we, have real fellowship with the Father and the Son. *These things write we unto you, also, that your joy may be full.* As thereby you, and we, will have matter and cause for increasing joy. I come

3. To speak of what the joy was, which could not but result from the same blessed fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, both to the apostles, and to saints, *And these things write we unto you, that our, your joy may be full.*

Spiritual joy in God, is a most inestimable blessing. It flows from God himself. The people of God are the partakers of the same. And on many and various occasions their souls are filled through and through

with it. The joy which could not but result from being partakers of the same blessed fellowship with the Father, and the Son, the apostles had, must of necessity fill them with the same joys, in a measure, with which they themselves were filled. And this was a fulness of joy. *These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* Here I will open what I conceive may be considered, as the joy which would result to the apostles themselves, from the saints having their minds fully possessed with the knowledge of those truths set forth. Which as the saints fully knew, received and understood them, would yield real joy even to the apostles themselves. For I am not willing to omit the word *our* any more than the word *your*. So that here I am altogether on the joy the apostles themselves would be the partakers of, by the saints enjoying joy to the full by the things which were here written unto them. This is a reality, that there is a mutual joy, in such as communicate knowledge, and those who receive the same. The end proposed by such as are the conveyers of it to others, is their benefit. Those who receive cannot but convey their satisfaction of the same, back again on those from whom they received it. The apostles were the conveyances of the best of all knowledge to the churches. They most highly rejoiced and delighted therein. So that it was an increase of their own personal joy, when they found they had been in their writings, and by them, the means of their increasing the spiritual joy of others. So that *John* might well say, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* This may receive confirmation from what *Paul* saith to the saints at *Thessalonica*, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." And again, asking this question, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" he answers by another question. "Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ? for ye are our glory and joy." 1 Epis. ii. 13, 19, 20. He thus addresseth himself also to the saints at *Phillippi*, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy, and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Chap. iv. 1. Which I conceive is equal with what *our* apostle says in these words, *These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* And again, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." 3 Epis. 4. So the saints were partakers of the joys of the apostles, and they of theirs, as there was an enjoying the one and same glorious grace of the gospel. And this in a very special and peculiar manner, as they had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It was hereby that their joy was full. They having such personal fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, as was as real and true, and so substantiated in their minds as ever it would be even in glory. It might be more highly raised, it might be more enlarged, it might be increased: but it could not be more real and personally enjoyed, either in this world, or that which is to come. The joy, the fulness of joy, which must have resulted herefrom, must have been of the same kind, yet not to the same degree, as what the apostles themselves, in their own souls, were the partakers of. The joy flowing into their minds in their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, must have been purely spiritual, supernatural, and wholly divine: arising from the apprehensions created in their renewed

minds, by the eternal Spirit, of the everlasting love of the Father unto them in his beloved Son. This was opened unto them in their fellowship with the Father, as it could not but be, by all they heard and believed concerning it: because the Father shining manifestatively and influentially on them, in the Person, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, he gave them hereby such intuitive apprehensions of his love to them in his beloved Son, as gave them as true inward evidence of his love to them, as the gift of Christ to them, and for them did. In these intercourses, the Father opened all his heart. Poured out of Himself upon them, in such communications of it to their minds, as they had a real enjoyment of the same. The apostle says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." He says, "we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 5, 11. In communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, the glories of Christ's Person breaking in upon the minds of saints, in real personal communion with Him, must be matter of joy unto them. His opening his heart unto them, his causing his goodness and his glory to pass before them, his giving them glorious views of his righteousness, sacrifice, salvation, perfection, blessedness, and his delight in them, all this must afford joy unspeakable, and full of glory to the minds of saints. Their joy must arise herefrom. It was the same joy the apostles themselves were the subjects and recipients of. They wrote as they did, and as *John* had in the former verses, to the intent that this joy in God and Christ, might be promoted and increased in the saints. This reminds me, of what I once dropped in the pulpit at Chard in Somersetshire. Including the person who was then the Pastor, who is now with God, I said, we preach Christ, exactly and precisely as we do—to answer and attain two ends. The first is, that Christ shining forth in his glory in the ministration of his everlasting gospel, and that light being reflected on your minds through it, you may be attracted and drawn, from a true spiritual apprehension of Him, to trust, and centre in Him alone. And our second end, in our preaching Christ precisely as we do, is that you may have clear, personal communion with Him. So that our ultimate end is to promote fellowship with the Holy Trinity. That you attaining the same, may know, in yourselves, and for yourselves, the blessedness which the apostle *John* speaks of, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. I would add, every ministration of the gospel and its ordinances, which does not aim at this, falls far short of what the Lord himself, hath instituted and appointed these for. And it becomes both the ministers, and churches of Jesus Christ to attend to this, and seek to the Holy Spirit, that they in their own persons, be brought to this. If the apostles were of one heart, and were one in union with what our apostle wrote, then this is sufficient proof of what I have asserted being right. His words are, *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*. As there was a mutual joy, resulting from the apostles, and the saints to whom they wrote, in their fellowship with each other, in this inexpressible dignity and privilege-communion with the Holy Trinity, so I proceed to my last particular which is to shew and express,

4. What this fulness of joy consisted in. *That your joy may be full. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

We read of joy, of exceeding great joy, of joy unspeakable, of joy which is full of glory, in various scriptures. And here we read of a fulness of joy. The Psalmist says, "Rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous, for it becometh well the just to be thankful. Let the righteous be glad: let them be glad before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." There must be good reason and ground for all this, or the Psalmist had not excited others unto it. We have sundry expressions of holy joy in God, one of them is uttered by way of a title given to God himself, who is the fountain of all holy joy and gladness. "I will go," says the Psalmist, "unto God my exceeding joy." It is in God all the fountain of spiritual, and everlasting joy originates. From Him it all flows forth. This was acknowledged by the church of old, who said, "All my springs are in thee." The prophet *Isaiah* expresses an exuberancy of joy, when he breaks out and says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." *Peter* speaks of the saints being "filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory." His words are these. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." 1 *Epis.* i. 8. *John* speaks of a fulness of joy. Which implies it must contain the very perfection of it. He took up what he here expresses from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He had in one of his last interviews with his apostles delivered these words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." *John* xv. 11. He had been delivering out the following truths—that he was the true vine—that his divine Father was the husbandman—that his members were as truly united to him as the branches were with the vine—that there was a real union and communion between Him, and them—that these persons present were clean through the word which he had spoken unto them. He exhorts them to abide in Him. He asserts of Himself, to be the vine, and they to be branches. He informs them as the Father hath loved Him, so he hath loved them. And concludes this part of his discourse with these words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." More comfortable truths could not be delivered. No. Not by the Lord himself. These entering into their minds, and dwelling in their hearts, could not but produce a fulness of joy: yea, the joy of the Lord: so as for the joy of his mind to be their joy, as they would hereby be possessed of it, agreeably with his most holy word. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The apostle says, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Our Lord spake as he did, that his joy might remain in the minds of his beloved, and they might derive a fulness of joy from the same. His beloved disciple who always appears very greatly delighted to express his Lord's words, says, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* This fulness of joy then, must consist, in having such clear and blessed increasing knowledge and enjoyments of the love of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, in real fellowship with them, as could not but feed, and fill, feast, and satisfy the mind to a holy satiety. Which as abiding in them, would at all times be a permanent source and fountain of joy to their mind. And these persons

knowing the love of God was immutable, and the relation between Christ and them indissoluble, might derive a fulness of joy from the real knowledge of this. As also from the consideration of their being as truly interested in the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and as the elect of God, as truly the objects of his love, as the apostles were. So that under every spiritual consideration of the subject, there was matter for joy: for great joy: for holy and spiritual joy: for a fulness of joy. All which consisted in their fellowship with the Three in the incomprehensible Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the person of God-Man, Christ Jesus. This is the medium of this fulness of joy. It is hereby enjoyed. And in the enjoyment of the same, the joy of the saints is full. And that it might be thus with them, the apostle wrote just as he did. I here conceive the first part of this chapter ends. These four verses are closely connected together: so are all the following: yet they do not all contain the same subject with these: I should style them the foundation of the whole epistle: the others, so many glorious fruits and consequences flowing from the same. May what hath been delivered by way of explaining them, be followed with a divine blessing. The Lord grant it for his great Name's sake. Amen.

SERMON V.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.—I JOHN I. 5.

THE apostle here begins a new subject, which extends itself, and is carried on, and ends with the close of the seventh verse: after which another new period begins. He here reminds those to whom he wrote, of the message which he, and his fellow apostles had received from the Lord Jesus, and which they now were in the act and habit of delivering unto them. It was in its own nature, and also in its consequences of the utmost importance, both as it regarded the Person from whom they received it, and the doctrine contained therein. They heard and received it from Christ himself. It was in his Name, and from his command, and his own authority, they declared and delivered it. What they declared respected the purity of the divine Nature, and the incomprehensible glory and dignity of the same. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. This is an essential Truth of the everlasting gospel. The apostle *James* introduces it thus. "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." chap. i. 16, 17. This Truth, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, the apostles, who were with Christ, almost at the very commencement of his ministry, received from him. This they received as a message to be

delivered. This they did to the saints. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* This he begins with here, to shew there is every thing in the revelation God hath been pleased to make of, and concerning Himself, to give full evidence of this. There is not a Truth in his most holy, and written word, but is suitable with the Dignity, Majesty, Holiness, Purity and Perfection of his Essence. Every truth and doctrine of grace, hath an immutable and an inexpressible purity in it. Every purpose and decree of God, is equal to the perfection of Godhead. He cannot will any thing contrary to his Essence and Holiness: so that all his thoughts, will, council, acts, purposes and decrees, his ends and designs towards all things visible and invisible, are all holy, just and good. In his sovereign will in Christ, towards the whole election of grace, He shines forth in the full blaze of light inexpressible. The Essence of God, the Persons in God, the perfection of God, may well be conceived of, as contained in this expression, *God is light.* The word *God* is sometimes expressive of the Essence, and sometimes of a Person in the Essence, who is Personally expressed in the text or context. I conceive here, it may be understood both of the Essence, and of a Person in the Essence. As the Essence is one, and the Persons are distinguished by their relation to each other, and their distinctive personal properties, so I should conceive here, the Essence in the first place may be thus expressed, and a Person in the Essence also. Then it must follow the divine Father is here to be understood, as appears by what follows. I will give you the whole connection of these verses. Then you may judge for yourselves. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* From which it appears to me, it is the Divine Nature in the Person of the Father we are to understand here. And the Son and Spirit being equally possessed of the Divine Nature, they are the one true and living God, in the incomprehensible Godhead. So that they are coequal and coeternal. In the words of my text we have the following particulars, and which I shall aim to set before you under the following Heads. As,

1. The reason why this message, or declaration, is here introduced.
2. The assertion contained in it concerning God. In which we have a positive and negative declaration concerning Him. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

3. How Light and Darkness are made use of in Scripture, to point out prosperity and adversity. The state of sin, and the state of grace. The blessings and benefits of the one, and the tremendous evils of the other. Also heaven and hell.

4. The apostle's end and design in these words. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Of these as the Lord shall be pleased to assist. And that in the order as laid down; as I conceive thereby we shall have the substance of the words laid open before us. And

1. The reason why this message, or declaration is here introduced.

It appears on the very face of it, to be designed to prevent all mistakes, which might arise in the minds of any, who were under a profession of Christ, and his gospel, concerning communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. That whilst it was open and free for all who were partakers of the Spirit of the Lord, to enjoy this most high and inestimable favour, yet unregenerate professors could not. He therefore says, This then is the message which we have heard of Him, the most adorable God-Man, and which we go on still to declare unto you, without adding any thing unto it, or diminishing any thing from it. That *God is light*. Holiness and Purity itself. Such as is Essential, incomprehensible, and unspeakable. Let this, says he, be carried in your minds, throughout your reading this whole epistle. Let this be ever remembered in all accesses at the throne of grace, *That God is light, and that in Him is no darkness at all*. So that you mistake if you conceive him to be the author and cause of sin. The words, *This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you*, are as if he had said, This is the doctrine which he delivered to us, to give out and preach unto you—that *God is light*. Our Lord had said of Himself, *I am the light of the world*. And he came from the bosom of the Father to reveal Him, so as in the light of Christ reflected on the apostles minds, they knowing the Father, from the revelation Christ had made of Him to their minds, might well say to those to whom they wrote, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. Therefore whatsoever we write to you of, and concerning Him, must be pure and perfect. If it be not so, it is not the message which we received from our Lord. Therefore we acknowledge it not. Neither in whole, nor in part. It is our will and practice to deliver unto you, that which the Lord hath delivered unto us. And this is the whole subject and substance of our message from Him, which we have heard from our Lord, and your Lord, and which in his most adorable name we deliver unto you, *That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. I proceed

2dly. To the assertion contained in my text concerning God. In which we have a positive and negative. 1. What God is. 2. What he is not. *He is Light. There is no darkness in Him*. By the one the Purity of the Divine Essence is declared. By the other the denial of all sin is made. He is light without darkness. He is Essentially, invariably, and incomprehensively, Light, Purity, Holiness, Blessedness, Truth and Goodness; such as can never be comprehended but by Himself alone. As this is what God is, and whilst it here seems as hath been before hinted, to belong Personally to the divine Father, yet it belongs equally to the Son, and Spirit; they having one and the same glorious Essence: Hence it follows what God is Essentially, He is Personally: for the Persons are one and alike in the Essence. When it is here said, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, it contains a declaration of what God is. The light is invisible. It is one of the agents of nature. It is extended over the whole creation. It is the manifester of all things. Without it we could see nothing. It penetrates to the very centre of the globe. It is in every direction. It is separated from darkness. It is wholly incomprehensible by us. We know the effects of it. And that is all we possibly can know of it. God himself asks this question of *Job*. “Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness,

where is the place thereof?" xxxviii. 19. Light is air in motion. Darkness is air motionless. We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." Gen. i. 1—4. Thus light and darkness were divided. They cannot be joined, so as to become one. Neither can the Purity and Holiness of the divine Majesty be tarnished with the evil expressed by the term, sin. The *Psalmist* addresseth the Divine Majesty thus, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment." civ. 1, 2. *Daniel* said, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." ii. 20—22. The apostle expresses the Divine Majesty as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. Another apostle speaks of Him, as *the Father of lights*. James i. 17. As light is invisible and incomprehensible, such is the nature of God. Hence the question originated, which was expressed by one of old. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job xi. 7—9. Whilst the works of the Lord, in this our world, and in the visible heavens over our heads, and by the which we are surrounded on every side are "great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein;" yet these cannot be comprehended by the most acute searcher, and researcher into them; the outward works of God will never be, fully: and God Himself in his Essence, Persons, and Perfections will never be comprehended. It is wholly impossible. We may know God in all his Persons in Christ, and enjoy everlasting felicity with them in our own souls, but this is not to comprehend the Eternal Three, nor their self-existence in one glorious Godhead. As God is expressed under the term *Light* to express the Majesty, Holiness, Purity, and transcendantly glorious Perfections of God: our text asserts; *That God is light*. Which is the positive part of the assertion. The negative part is this. *And in Him is no darkness at all*. By which is to be understood the darkness of sin. This is not in God. Neither can it ever tarnish the Holiness and purity of God. He is Light Essentially and immutably, and incomprehensibly so. Sin can have no place in Him. Nor can it detract from Him. Hence the propriety of the following questions. "Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and

thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Job xxxv. 5—8. The creatures were once, all of them without sin. Holiness was their happiness and perfection, in their creation state. Yet even then, what is said by *Eliphaz* in the book of *Job* expresses, what was true of all the angels of the divine presence, with all the excellency of their nature and faculties, as well as of man, created once for all, and all men in Him, created in the image of God; there was no immutability in them. "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?" Job iv. 17—19. The angels of God's presence were created to continue in being and existence for ever. But they were not immutable. This is the Perfection of God. It is essential to the Divine Nature to be immutable. Their wills therefore were liable to a change. This the Divine Majesty saw. Therefore in his sight they not being impeccable, He was not as their Creator, and they the work of his hands, bound to bestow this favour on them. He could not in their very creation state, with all their holiness and purity put any trust in them.—He could not but charge them with comparative folly, as knowing if he left them to their own wills, they would fall from that state in which he had placed them. What the scriptures style *sin* came in at this door—the mutability of creature free will. God was pleased to display his sovereignty towards all the angels created by Him. He secured some of these to himself, so as to render it impossible they should ever fall from him, by appointing Christ to be their Head of union and communion with Him, and by so guiding their wills as to render them impeccable: whilst it pleased Him to leave all the rest of the then angels of his presence to the mutability of their own wills. Thus sin received its being and existence. The non-elect angels fell: not through any act of God within them, compelling or inciting them so to do; but from their own free will as creatures: by which exercise of their wills, they rejected God's will in setting up the God-Man, to be the one Lord between God and the whole creation. This was open rebellion against the Divine Majesty. For this they became what they now are. They acted thus as left to the free exercise of their wills. And in the very first instance of the same, it was their free will act. I ground this on the following scripture. "And the angels which kept not their first estate," or principality, "but left their own habitation." Does not this imply their own free will? They "left their own habitation." This most certainly was their act. Not the Lord's. What follows upon it was the Lord's act towards them. "He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Jude v. 6. I might add this scripture also out of *Peter*. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Epis. ii. 4. Observe, sin was first committed in heaven, or these sinning angels could not have been cast out of it. Their being cast out of it, was an act of God's righteous displeasure against sin: which is a transgression of the law. The angels were created under a law. Their obedience to which would have been the perfection of their natures. They sinned against it. That was their crime. Damnation for it, was the righteous and holy expres-

sion of God's indignation and wrath against them for it. So that there is no unholiness in Him. The fall of man was brought about, and effected by the old serpent called the devil. Adam and his wife, were perfectly holy and happy by creation, and in their creation state. They being left to the mutability of their creature free wills, fell from God, on the first temptation, and corrupted themselves, and all who shall ever descend from them. And here it may be proper to ask some questions, which may be relieving to our minds. As 1st. Is not all which hath been delivered to declare God is the author of sin? To this it must be replied, some of our greatest Divines have asserted this. Yet not with the least intent to detract from the Holiness and Purity of God. In the 2nd place it must be asked, What is sin? The answer is; the least variation from the will of God revealed and made known. It is a mental evil. It originates in the mind. All the evils it further produces, are but the fruits and effects of the same. But say all this, How could sin originate in a pure mind? To which the reply is this. The creatures with all their created holiness and purity, could not continue so, if left one moment to themselves. The Lord God never created one individual, either angel, or saint, let the creature be created either in heaven, or earth, to exist of itself: or, to be a centre to itself: or, to derive happiness from itself: yet all creature wills, in all intelligent rational agents are inclined to seek for all their enjoyments and happiness in themselves alone. It is from hence the origin of sin, derived its being and existence. The mind of those bright intellectual beings in heaven, being left to think of happiness to be enjoyed by them, out of God himself, and it being his declared good pleasure, they should enjoy all blessedness and good out of the fulness of the God-Man, in whom it pleased the Father all fulness should dwell—they not assenting and consenting to this, immediately sought out happiness for themselves. This occasioned the loss of their original purity and holiness: and from hence, out of this as the fountain and original, all their actual beginnings and sinnings began, and are and ever will be continued. They one and all sinned in an Head. Mankind all sinned in an head. Let what hath been expressed be rightly understood, it will appear, nothing in all this reflects on the glory of God's Holiness, nor does it by any means tarnish it. This truth remains immutable. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Sin is in the creatures. Not in God. Sin is in the nature of the creature as fallen from God. It is no part of what the Lord God hath created in it. Sin is a privation of all good; and a positive inclination to all evil. The whole of which consists, let it be in angels or men, in self love. In the pursuit of those gratifications and desires, as make self, our chief end, and aim. It is the principle from whence all these proceed which makes us exceeding sinful. The existence of which is within us. Now God is not the author of all this. Yet God willed all this: or it could not have been. Therefore those great Divines who say, God is the author of sin, very accurately distinguish on it. They say, God willed not sin, as sin. But he willed it for his holy pleasure, and for holy purposes. When they say, God is the author of sin, they mean the fall both of angels and men, from the state in which he created them. Which they make out to be an holy act in God. So that what they say, does by no means set aside what our apostle says in the words before us, when he asserts, *God is light, and in him is no*

darkness at all. They shew there was a necessity for it. That the Holiness, purity, and excellency of what God is, as God, might appear. That the Personal union of our nature to the Son of God, was the alone foundation of knitting the elect, both angels and men to God, as alone could preserve them from sin, or raise them out of it, when fallen by it. That Christ God-Man, was the only foundation, for union and communion with God. That all the blessings of supercreation grace, were to be manifested in the alone and glorious Person of the Man, The Fellow of the Lord of Hosts. In whom, and by whom, and as in union with Him, the Elect angels were preserved from sinning, and whose wills are now rendered so impeccable, as that they cannot sin to eternity. And the elect of mankind, are so secured in Christ, and by Christ, and their sins are all so completely atoned for by Christ, and they so completely justified thereby, as that the Holiness of God, shines forth in its fullest manifestative effulgency and glory. Thus the Truth of our text remains invincible. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* God did not will sin, as sin. Yet without his will it cannot have existence. Nor can it be whilst it hath existence, but in a rational subject. It is only now to be found, in fallen angels, and fallen men. And all proves no creature, can for a single moment, stand before the Holy Lord God, in a state of purity and perfection, on their creation bottom. Neither the Elect angels now in Heaven, nor any of the election of grace, belonging to Adam's posterity, could ever have been beheld by God with immutable pleasure and delight; if he had not chosen them in Christ, and beheld them in Him with delight. And it is only as we are brought by the Lord the Spirit, into the true knowledge of this, from the word of Truth, we renounce all our vain hopes; and glory in the Lord. Here it seems very necessary to introduce the following passage. "But of him, are ye, in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

Having as well as I could, set forth what is contained in the solemn assertion in my text, respecting God, of whom *John* says, *That He is light, and in him is no darkness at all*; I proceed

3dly. To show how the terms, Light, and Darkness, are made use of in scripture, to point out prosperity and adversity. The state of sin, and the state of grace. The blessings of the one, and the tremendous evils of the other. Also Heaven, and Hell.

Light is a very marvellous and delightful substance. Its motion is said to be extremely quick. It is said to move about ten millions of miles in a minute. It renders other bodies visible and agreeable. Hence *Solomon* says, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Eccl. xi. 7. The Lord God, after he had formed the Heavens, and the substance of the earth, he formed *Light*. It may be it was, in a kind of luminous cloud, moving round the earth, or having the earth moving round it, he divided it from the darkness. As it was in the first creation, so it is in the new and spiritual creation. *God said, Let there be light: and there was light.* Without it there could be no discovery of any one object. So the apostle speaking of the new creation says, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God is*

light. He is essentially pure, and glorious. His nature is a fountain of all essential blessedness and glory. He is the fountain of all being and well-being to his creatures, both visible and invisible. He is in the Light: that is, he invariably and incommunicably possesses his excellencies, and from the full knowledge he has of the same, his blessedness is continually maintained. Christ is the Light. He is as God-Man, the fountain of nature, grace, and glory. He is the fountain of all light and knowledge, and Truth, natural, spiritual, and eternal. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. ii. 3. Light is with us, the sensation and perception and apprehension of the same. As it respects light and darkness, as emblematical of prosperity and adversity, the Lord himself speaks thus. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." Isa. xlv. 7. So the state of sin, and the state of grace, is expressed by darkness, and light. As also by death, and life. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Eph. v. 8. So with respect to the state of unregeneracy, and a translation out of it into the state of grace, the apostle says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Col. i. 13. The apostle *Peter*, speaking of the state the saints are in by regeneration and conversion to the Lord, expresseth himself thus. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Epis. ii. 9. Our apostle says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." iii. 14. This is expressing the state of sin, as death; and the state of grace, as life. The passage from the one to the other, is by regeneration. And also by a translation "into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Which consists "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sin is a work of darkness. And the renewed people of God are thus addressed. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Rom. xiii. 12. Afflictions are expressed by the term darkness, as prosperity, either spiritual, or temporal by that of light. The state to which the body is reduced by death, as it lies in the grave is expressed to be "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Job. x. 22. So is *Hell* expressed by the same term. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxv. 30. So Heaven, glory, and a blessed immortality, is expressed also by its opposite term. It is styled, "the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. i. 12. Heaven is *the inheritance of the saints in light.* The state of blessedness, glory, and immortality, is expressed by *white robes*: by *mortality being swallowed up of life*: by their being "before the throne of God, and serving him day and night in his temple." Rev. vii. 15. The state of the church in the spiritual reign of Christ, is thus expressed, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." Isa. lx. 19. The state of the church of Christ, in the new heavens and new earth is thus expressed. "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple

of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. xxi. 22, 23. And when the Lord addresses his church to shine out of obscurity, He says, "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isa. lx. 1—3. The passages which have been quoted, are sufficient to prove, that all good is expressed by *Light*, and all evil of every sort, by *Darkness*. And the Divine Essence and Majesty is declared by *John* thus. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. There is nothing but sin in fallen angels, and fallen man. Yet it is not in them as creatures of God's forming, but as fallen from that state in which he created and placed them. Their wills are the whole seat of their sin and sinfulness. And all their actual sin and sinfulness proceeds from the activity of their wills. As *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, so his word, truths, doctrines, ordinances, are all pure and holy. Every part of the revelation he hath made of Himself, in his most holy word, is worthy of Him. It is all light, purity, and perfection. It is as pure as the light. His saints as they are brought out of darkness into his marvellous light, they walk in the light. They are as an apostle declares, *the children of light and of the day, they are not of the night, nor of darkness*. Hence the same apostle exhorts them, to *walk as children of light*. Their renewed wills are the seat of all habitual grace. The spiritual activity of their minds is the fruit of this. Their object and subject on whom, and on which their spiritual minds are exercised is God in all his Persons, as revealed, and shining forth in everlasting Love, in the exceeding riches of grace, salvation, glory, and Life eternal in the God-Man, from whom it is reflected on them. And all they have the inward knowledge of, and all they enjoy in real communion with the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, everlastingly proves, and demonstrates this immutable verity, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. That he is of purer eyes than to behold evil. That He is the fountain of Essential Purity. That "there is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Him, neither is there any rock of salvation, but Him, and the Lord our God." All the holiness of all the saints and angels in heaven, is communicated unto them. It is not of, and from themselves. It is bestowed upon them, and continued in them, and their wills are rendered impeccable in holiness, and they cannot will to sin, no not for evermore. Yet all this is of free favour. It is not essential and natural to their nature. But God is Essentially Holiness itself. It is the very perfection of his Godhead. He can no more cease to be Holy than he can his being what He is. *God is light, and there is no darkness in Him*. I come

4thly. To the apostle's end and design in these words. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*.

Most assuredly one end and design was, to keep up and retain in their minds unto whom he wrote, a reverence of the divine Majesty. That they might consider, as light cannot mix with darkness, so they could not converse with God, but as they had a suitable frame, and proper

apprehensions of Him, as the Holy, Blessed, Glorious Lord their God. *This glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD*, was to be before them in their accesses unto Him: which would be the means of possessing their minds, hearts, wills, affections, and memory, with such proper conceptions of his Majesty, as would help and assist them in their worshipping Him, and in their walking before Him, and in their holding communion with Him. Another end of the apostle might be, to give all, who should come in succeeding ages and generations, and be brought to believe and profess the truths of the everlasting Gospel, to know that the Holiness of God shines in, and throughout every part, truth, doctrine, and ordinance of the same. Again it might be, to anticipate to their minds, that this was a part and branch of that truth he was about to pursue, in filling up his present subject. He therefore prepares their minds for the further and fuller reception of the subject. As this is contained in the next two succeeding verses, which will each be separately opened and explained, as the Lord may be pleased to assist, and impart light, and shed his Spirit, as the Spirit of grace, in his gifts, graces, and anointings, I shall say nothing more at this time. May it please the Holy Ghost, to shed his sacred influences on what hath been delivered in the present sermon, so far as will be for your profit, and His praise and glory. This I must entirely leave with his Majesty. It being with Him alone, to bless, or to withhold a blessing. I will therefore close with the following Doxology. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; be honour and glory for ever and ever." Amèn, 1 Tim. i. 17.

SERMON VI.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness; we lie, and do not the truth.—1 JOHN i. 6.

IN the former verse the apostle had expressed an immutable truth, concerning God; which he received from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, from the very beginning of his being admitted to be one of his disciples and apostles, and which he was commanded to declare unto all saints:—*That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Which he makes use of, to speak on the subject of having fellowship with him, of walking before Him, of doing the truth from the heart. He here asserts in the most positive terms, that such as say they have fellowship with God, and are in a state of sin, are liars. So are those also who live in any known sin. So are they also, who walk in the course of sin. It signifies not what they know: what they profess: what they are in the Church by office. The apostle puts in himself, and the rest of the apostles, including them all in the word *we*. Denying this to be a truth of them, or any others: whosoever, or whatsoever they were; let them profess Christ the Essential Word, who was constituted by the will of the Three in the Essence existing, to be the Mediatorial Word, in consequence of which,

He became the Incarnate Word; yet if they walked in darkness, in a state and course of sin, it was not speaking the truth, to say they had fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This was contradictory to the message which the apostles had heard of Christ: which they received from Him: which they declared in his Name. It was directly and positively contrary unto the same. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Thus you see the introduction of the words, and from the same may have some general insight into the true and proper meaning of them. To open them, so as that the general and particular meaning of them may be clearly understood, I will divide them into the following particulars.

1. We have a positive declaration, we have no fellowship with God, whilst we are in a state of sin. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

2. What it is to walk in darkness, and what we are here to conceive of the same. Darkness is here opposed unto light: walking is a progressive motion. It is therefore expressive here, not only of being in a state of darkness, but of a walk according to that state. *If we say that we have fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and walk in darkness, we lie, even in so saying.*

3. To walk in darkness, and say we have fellowship with Him, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. This is not to walk according to the truth. Such do not the truth. The truth of God is not in them, neither are they even externally influenced thereby. I think these particulars if properly opened and explained, will give us a full and clear account of the subjects contained in these words: *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* May the Lord himself help and guide me through each of these particulars, so as to do justice to the text, give you satisfaction, and glorify the Lord. To which I say Amen. For without him we can do nothing. I am

1. To set before you, that which we have before us. A positive apostolical declaration. Which is this: we have no fellowship with God, whilst we are in a state of sin. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* This is delivered by our apostle, in the name, and as the universal acknowledgment of all the apostles, that it was wholly incompatible with the grace of God, to have fellowship with God, whilst any remained in a sinful state. And the Lord Christ himself had expressed the impossibility of it, when he said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. But this being a truth which seems to be universally acknowledged by all sorts of persons, and our apostle using the word *we*, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*, I conceive it does not, nor is it designed, to express the state and case of sinners in their unrenewed and unprofessing state, but it must belong to such as made a profession of Christ, and might make a boast of having communion with the Holy Trinity. Which subject he had been writing on, to this very intent, that the persons written to, might have the same blessed fellowship with himself, and the apostles in this un-

speakable grace. His words are these. "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." He could not write thus to unregenerate persons: it could neither suit him, nor them. Therefore it must be saints, or such as were connected with them in church communion, and by a Gospel profession, whom he must have his eye, and design upon, when he says, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* So that such as are designed by the apostle, most certainly were under a profession of the same truths, the apostles declared unto them. They professed the knowledge of the Person of Christ—of his eternity—of his incarnation and manifestation in the flesh—of his being the Essential Word—of his being *That Eternal Life* which was with the Father, before all time. They also professed they had received the knowledge of Him, and that they had communion with Him. It may here be observed, it was in *John's* time, as it now is. The outward visible church of Christ, was constituted both of persons who were born again of God, and who were not. The former were partakers of Christ: the latter not: yet what they were, was with the Lord, and not known to themselves, and others, until it was manifested by outward conduct; or by a defection and a departure from the truth. And this declaration of the apostle contained in our text, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,* might be designed in the first place, to prevent real saints from being careless and remiss: to arouse their minds: to reach their hearts: to express how the best of them, had need to watch their hearts: to be careful of their walk: to avoid in themselves, and others, every thing which tended to sin; seeing it would interrupt them in holding and maintaining communion with their heavenly Father. He being Light, Purity and Holiness, there could be no communion held with Him, if the mind was impure. No. Holiness becometh the house and worshippers of the Lord for ever. As also in the second place, to declare that such persons who were under the influence of their own sins, and corruptions, could not, so long as this was the case, say what they might, have fellowship with the Lord. To shew the impossibility of the same, he expresseth the subject thus. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Were we, the apostles of Christ, to be found walking in darkness, and at the same time were we to say, we have fellowship with God the Father, who is Light, and in him there is no darkness at all, we are liars: we tell lies: *we lie, and do not the truth.* The *if* here, is not to express it to be a possible case thus to act. No. They were established in the immutable truths of Christ's Person and salvation, and the love of the Father in Him to them. They were most immutably fixed in their knowledge and evidence, that they had communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and had in their own souls the evidence of the real blessedness of the same. They knew the influence and effect which it produced in their hearts, tempers, frames, lives, and conversations. In their walk with God, and in their holy warfare against self, sin, the world, and devil, they knew the blessed

effects of what flowed into their minds, from their fellowship with God. It was a preservative from sin: it saved them from it: their hatred against sin was increased by it. They could therefore set, and leave their seals on this as infallible truth, which concerned themselves, and others also. *If we say that we have fellowship with him,* (God the Father is the predicate here,) *and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Fellowship with God, and walking in sin, will never agree together. So that it may be here brought in by the apostle, by way of discrimination, to distinguish between one professor and another. The law of God is the holy will of God: by the which all sin is forbidden upon pain of eternal damnation. The gospel is a revelation of pure grace: yet it connives at no one sin. It has no provision for the commission of any one sin, or any one act of sinfulness: whilst it contains a full, free, and glorious pardon of all sort and manner of sin. Yet this is founded on the sacrifice of Christ. And such as are effectually called, are, before they know Christ, and his salvation, brought by the omnipotent agency of the Holy Ghost, out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And on their being led to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, they hate sin with an eternal and an invincible hatred. It is a truth somewhere expressed by *Dr. Goodwin*, "*that the gospel is more holy than the law.*" Not to contradict that most excellent Divine, how that can be I cannot say. For the law is holy: yea, it is immutably so: it is the will of God, and a transcript of his holiness. The gospel is as holy as the law: it being wholly and all of it from the Lord. Therefore the Doctor means most undoubtedly this—that there is a greater shine and display of God's holiness in the one than in the other. And this will be most readily admitted of. It contains the utmost shine of God in Christ, upon an elect world: it unfolds the glories of the Divine nature, and the Persons in God, beyond what the law doth: in it the Father shines on his Church, in the face of his anointed: and all the secrets of everlasting love, and divine clemency are declared. So that as the grace of the Gospel is unspeakable: so sins committed immediately and expressly out of opposition to it, are the most tremendous. And even such as are under the profession of the same, should be very careful of their walk and conversation: as should such as are the partakers of the grace of the gospel. It is not impossible but the apostle might have in his eye what is too commonly a sin committed by persons under a profession of Christ in our day. Many will be bold and forward, they will put in their claim, and will insist on it, they have communion with the Lord, when it is evident by their whole walk and conversation, they have not. I do not here mean, such as are actually known to live in sin: I mean such as, as it respects outward things, are naturally religious, and devout: yet they know not Christ spiritually. His glories have never been supernaturally reflected on their minds, so as to have true and spiritual apprehensions of them: yet they will not acknowledge this. They are so far from this, that they will presume, and venture to assert they are as well acquainted with what is contained in fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, as any of the saints, be they who they may. Now it may be to knock off the fingers of such, the apostle expresses himself as he doth here; with an *if*. For there were the same spirits in professors in *John's* days, as are in ours. He might well write such a sentence to such, as this before us. *If we say that we have fel-*

lowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. It implies, some would confidently affirm this to be their case, who were destitute of this grace and blessedness. They would not stand on telling a lie, that they might pass for saints on the highest form in the school of Christ. Yet their very want of spirituality was a witness against them : yea, it was full proof, that they did not the truth : they neither walked in the truth, so as to give evidence of their having communion with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. So that their affirmation was real and substantial evidence, that the truth of this assertion could not be proved by them. Finally I conceive, the apostle writing thus, was to clear it to the very end of that age in which he lived, and down to the very end of time, that no unholy sinner could have fellowship with an holy God. Our Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now where the Holy Ghost hath created a new and spiritual mind, and illuminated the same with the true knowledge of God the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ ; by this means it is suited for communion with the Lord ; as without this it is not : so that it remains a truth, and an immutable one, that *If we say that we have fellowship with God, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all :* yet walking in darkness at the same time we make this declaration, we lie, in so doing, and the truth of Christ's doctrine is not in us. I hope I have said enough to clear these words from any ambiguity. Therefore I will proceed to my next particular.

2. To state what it is to walk in darkness, and what we are here to conceive of the same. Darkness is here opposed unto Light : walking is a progressive motion. It is therefore expressive here, not only of being in a state of darkness, but of walking according to it. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* We lie in so saying. This therefore is to add sin to sin.

I am under this head, to set forth and state what it is to walk in darkness, what we are to conceive of the same. I have in the former head suggested, it is not here to be considered as referring wholly to an unregenerate (or unprofessing) state ; which is indeed a state of darkness : and such as are in it, cannot but walk in darkness. And they walk on, and proceed, they being alive to sin, cannot but so do. But as what is here spoken, belongs to such as are in the visible church of Christ, the darkness here is to be applied to the inherency of sin, and to the power and prevalency of the same on the mind, so as to have its awful influence, and produce its sad effects on the heart, life, and conversation. Yea, this may be the case, where there are no outward evidences of the same : for sin being a mental act, it may put forth abundance of its effects on the mind, which are only discernible unto the allseeing eye of God, and which the mind alone is conscious of. The best fruits and effects of grace, which are produced in the minds of saints, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Heavenly Father in Him, are only known to the Lord. They are all in his sight. It is but seldom we have the spiritual discernment of them : so with respect to sin which dwelleth within us : it puts forth, and produces ten thousand acts in our minds, which serve to damp our affections, and draw off our hearts from the Lord, *the fountain of living waters.* Now there may be an abundance of heart departure from the Lord, when the outward walk, and deportment, may have no irregularity in it. Yet even

this cannot but be accompanied with a neglect of communion with God; which can only be maintained in us, as we give our hearts to Him. He can hold communion with us, when we cannot with Him: but we cannot hold communion with the Lord, if we regard iniquity in our hearts. I would here observe in the words of our text, *darkness* is here opposed unto *light*. So that by the term *darkness* here, we cannot but understand *sin*: as by *light*, as here set in opposition to darkness, we must naturally and necessarily understand *grace*. It must be so for this invincible reason: in the former words the apostle had said, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*.

The *darkness* spoken of in my text, is the darkness of sin. It is not in God, it is in us: it is our fallen nature: it is there it hath its sole existence. Out of it spring all the errors and heresies which ever were in the human mind. And I conceive errors in judgment, concerning spiritual and eternal things, are comprehended in the words of the apostle, who says, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*. We cannot have fellowship with God, who is light without darkness, and walk in darkness. As the *darkness* in the words before us must mean *sin*; so the *light* which is opposed to it must therefore be the *light* of grace, which is communicated unto us, in and with that new birth the Holy Ghost is pleased to produce in us, by his omnipotent power, when he brings us out of darkness, into his marvellous light. As hath been already hinted, every doctrine of men, every thing which is contrary to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, all such as are derogatory to the honour and dignity of Christ's Person, and opposite to the glory of the free grace of God, in Election, Predestination, Salvation, Effectual calling, Perseverance in Grace, and eternal Glorification, all such are mental errors, and are sins in the sight of the Lord and before Him. He hath given us his truth, not for us to pass our own judgments on the same, but for us to receive into our minds with all submission to his own revelation thereof. And there can be no communion between the Lord and us, but in the belief of the truth. When, and whilst at any time, we walk in the reception of any thing contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, we cannot have fellowship with God, who is light, and in, and with whom there is no darkness of error. It may may be this darkness of error, may be designed by this phrase, *we lie, and do not the truth*. Paul says to the *Thessalonians*, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God, for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Epis. ii. 13. The whole life of faith consists in living in the belief of the truth. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*. This is fully expressive, that at such times we are not walking according to the truth of the gospel, nor in the belief of the same. I am further to observe, that *walking* is a progressive motion. It is therefore made use of here, not as expressive of a state of darkness, but of walking according to the same. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness*. None can walk with God, and have fellowship with him, who are in a state of sin: neither can such as walk in the ways of sin: neither can such as go on, and proceed in the commission and practice of sin. Such as are under the influence of sin, cannot have fellowship with God, who is light, and in whom is no

darkness at all: nor such either as are alive to sin, for such will most certainly live in it, and walk in it. Neither can such as live in the habit of any one sin: nor such as walk in a course of sin, and willingly and wilfully commit it, walking after their own heart's lust. Nor can such as walk, and live in any doctrine contrary to the gospel of the grace of God. It is by the truth of the everlasting gospel, we can only live to the Lord. It is only, as the glories of Christ's Person shine in upon our minds, and the love of God is enjoyed in our hearts, we are drawn into communion with the Lord. It is the true knowledge of the same, which make us rejoice in the Lord. It is as the Holy Ghost is pleased to reveal Christ unto us, and in us, by taking of the things of Christ and shewing the same unto us, and thereby glorifies Jesus in us, and sheds abroad the Father's love in our hearts, that we rejoice in Him and have fellowship with God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. If therefore we abide in the darkness of sin; walk in the ways of sin, secretly, or openly, let us say, and think, let us profess and express whatsoever we may of God's everlasting love, and concerning the Person, work, and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ: yet we have not, we cannot have any fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, if we are not born from above. If we are walking in darkness, this being our state, and case, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, who is light, and in whom, and with whom there is no darkness at all, we lie, and do not the truth.* The truths and doctrines of Christ, are all like God himself: they are light: they are pure and perfect: they are according to godliness: they promote it: they increase it: they administer such motives for the true practice of it, as carry all before it. They are only properly received, through the channel of regeneration: it is in the regenerate mind they work effectually. It is by the truths of the everlasting gospel, and those which most immediately concern the glory of the self-existing Three in the self-existing Essence, with such as have an immediate respect to the Person, Worth, Glory, Excellency, Perfections of Christ, his love and salvation, which the Holy Ghost is pleased to work most immediately by, so as to lead real saints into real and actual communion with the Father, and the Son: by these he works effectually. It is in the true knowledge of these, he produces faith, and all "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." The Holy Ghost lets in spiritual and supernatural light, into the renewed mind, so that "the path of the just is as the shining light; which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." I proceed to my last particular.

3. I am to shew, that to walk in darkness, and at the same time to say, we have fellowship with Him who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all; this is not to walk according to truth: such do not the truth: the truth of God is not in them. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

Darkness and light can never become one: they are essentially distinct bodies: they cannot unite: it is contrary to their nature, properties, and qualities: the absence of the one, is the cause of the other. Sin and holiness are contraries to each other: there can be no communion with each other. Purity and impurity can have no commixture. Truth and error can never agree. There can be no walking in the truth, and at the same time living in that which is contradictory thereunto:

we cannot be true men, and at the same time utter lies. This appears to me to be the sum and substance, of the apostle's declaration and assertion here. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* We neither speak the truth, nor do we act the truth, nor according to it. As every thing which is not true must be falsehood, it must consequently be a lie. So the apostle avers such are liars, as make a profession of having communion with the Lord, who walk in sin, who embrace erroneous and bad doctrine, and are under the influence of the same. It might here be observed how clearly the apostle here speaks to the case. He is not speaking to such as made no profession of the Lord Jesus Christ, but to such as did.—He is not here upon the subject of free grace, but upon the glorious fruits and effects of it. He has been speaking on the very tendency of the truth, and what the truth of divine knowledge produces in the soul—Joy in God: yea, a fulness of joy. This is actually enjoyed in the spiritual mind, in communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: the apostles enjoyed this: they would all the saints might partake of this inestimable favour: it being that unto which they were called. To this very end, and for this very express purpose, *John* wrote this Epistle to the saints: well knowing, their personal purity and holiness would increase and more fully appear, as they lived in real personal fellowship with the Lord. So that the words before us, may be considered, as designed to remove all impediments out of the way of real saints, which might prevent them from this holy fellowship with the Lord, as well as prevent such as were only professors from professing they had this blessedness in their souls, whereas they had not, by saying, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Suggesting hereby, that they should consider every unholy affection which might arise in their mind, if indulged, and given way unto, so as that their affections might be influenced thereby; would be a preventive to their enjoyment of this most holy communion with Him, who is Light, Purity, and Holiness, beyond the uttermost of our conception, and who said to the saints under the Old Testament dispensation, and continues to say the same, under the present dispensation of grace, *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy.* So it most certainly became them who called on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, to pass the time of their sojourning here, in this present time state, in his most holy fear. It might also be intended to put them on their guard, so as they might be preserved from receiving into their minds, that which might be the means of leading them off Christ. As for instance, such as have not with their hearts believed unto, or into the righteousness of Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, can never aim after, nor desire to have fellowship with Him, who is the Lord our Righteousness—with Him in whom all saints centre; and of whom they all say, "In the LORD have we righteousness and strength." We are made the righteousness of God in Him. Yet if any error in judgment, arises in our minds to darken this, we cannot, so far as it prevails, have fellowship with Christ, as Jehovah our Righteousness before the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens. It must be so in, and as it respects all other branches of eternal and divine truths. It can only be in the true

and clear knowledge of them, we are kept from those errors which are contrary to them : and it is by our true knowledge of them, we only can have communion with God in the belief of them, by the sacred influences which attend the reception of them into our minds. To be preserved from errors in judgment, respecting the glorious truths of divine revelation, is an unspeakable mercy. We only receive the knowledge of God ; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost into our hearts, as we receive the same in, and from the doctrine thereof set before us, in the word of inspiration in the sacred scriptures. The Holy Ghost teaches us nothing contrary to them : He teaches us nothing which is not contained in them : He neither leads us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, nor into fellowship with Him, and the Father in Him, but as he is pleased to make the written word the mean thereof. So that it is hereby we are most blessedly preserved from sin, and error, and are more and more advanced into true and real fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Thus I have endeavoured to open the text before us, in the most comprehensive way and manner I could ; and I am not conscious of having done any injustice to it. For as it most assuredly must be confessed it must belong to the church of Christ, so it follows it is delivered by way of discrimination : which must be expressive here, not of saints, and open (or unprofessing) sinners, nor of saints as saints, so as to make a distinction between them as such : that is not the case here. It must therefore intend to point out some essential distinction between real saints and such as were merely and nominally so. We generally express ourselves on such a subject thus : we say, such are professors only : such are possessors. By the which we mean, such are only and merely professors of the doctrines of the gospel : such are the actual partakers of the grace of the gospel. Yet even the latter dare not say, if they walk in darkness, if they fall into sin, if they act and transact it in their minds, they have fellowship with God. He is light. So that even saints as saints, if they walk in the darkness of sin, and error, let it be ever so transiently, cannot say, at such times, and whilst in such cases, they have fellowship with Him. This is a truth worthy of the gospel. It sets a lustre on it. Therefore it should be in its place insisted on : yet not in the common way in which it is generally treated. We are generally disposed to insist, we must be holy that we may be interested in Christ : whereas holiness is the fruit of our being in Christ, not the cause of our being in Him. Our being in Christ is the fruit of God the Father's everlasting love to us, in Christ, God-Man : we being in Him, is our everlasting foundation. On this we are immutably fixed. From Christ, God-Man, as our Head, all the communicable blessings of the Holy Trinity flow forth in a way of communication to us. Nothing can put a stop to this. When we clearly apprehend this, and fully believe this, we have the real enjoyment of the same. When we live to ourselves in any instance, we drop our holy fellowship with the Lord. He being light without darkness, so there can be no fellowship on our parts, when we in any instance, be it in thought, word, or deed, act, or walk in the darkness of sin ; or receive, entertain, and maintain any thing contrary to sound doctrine, of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Neither by such as have not received the Lord Jesus Christ, into their minds, hearts, consciences, and affections. To say, profess, or preach otherwise, is to declare a lie : it is to prove to a demonstration, that which is contrary to the truth ; we do not the truth :

we are not acting according to the truth : we do not agree with the truth : *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* May the Lord seal and settle this as truth in our hearts, so as that at all times we may act under the influence thereof : so as to be kept from every thing which may mar and interrupt our communion with the Lord, and from acting, or saying that which is contradictory to his Truth, and so be chargeable with a lie, and not acting according to truth. Amen.

SERMON VII.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.—I JOHN i. 7.

THE two former verses, as connected with this, contain one entire subject. This is most easily perceived, and may be fully confirmed, by the first word in the present text ; which is the word *But*. Which knits it with the former verses. It will therefore be necessary they should be recited : seeing the true connection of these, will be one means, of seeing the harmony, dependance, and influence the one hath with and upon the other. The subject began thus. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth : But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* The whole contains a most important text and context. Such as is no where to be found, on the subject, which concerns that holy, blessed, and free communion, which the apostles had with the holy and ever blessed Trinity, and which is here expressed, by way of excitement to all saints. That they might look out for, and have their hearts going out after, with holy longing, to have, and hold, to expect, and to receive and enjoy in their own souls, fellowship with the divine Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, through his indwelling in them. As this blessed intercourse with the Three in Jehovah, according to the revelation which they had been pleased to make of themselves, in the glorious gospel, was a part of their message of grace, which was delivered by Christ to *John*, to be delivered to the church, so he informs them of the same : one grand article of which was, the Essential, and Manifestative Light and Purity of God. This he expresses thus. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” From this it most clearly follows, that such as have fellowship with Him, must be such as are pure : or, without it, an holy God could never converse with them : but none of Adam’s posterity are in and of and from themselves, clean and pure in the sight of God ; where is there any purity to be found, in, or throughout any amongst them ? The reply is, in none out of Christ. But if such as are

in Christ, are clean in the sight of God, why then did the apostle put in these words, as a remora? "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." The answer is this—It is one thing to be pure in the sight of God from all sin, by the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a distinct part of the same subject to know this, and to live in the belief of the same. And to live and act in the belief of this, is the effect and fruit of believing it. Such as are professors of Christ, and such as truly know Christ, are thus distinguished—The one walk in darkness, the other in light. Such as walk in darkness, are such as are under the influence of sin, and under that sort of doctrine, which is not the same with the faith once delivered unto the saints. Such cannot have, and hold fellowship with the Lord. No. Nor believers either, if so be they step forth into any act of darkness. It is a saying attributed to what is commonly called the primitive church, "Holy things belong to holy persons." It might have been founded on our Lord's own words. He says, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matt. vii. 6. It is an immutable truth, God holds fellowship with his beloved people, as he brings them into a state of fellowship with himself. The apostle speaking to the saints at *Corinth*, says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. i. 9. And our apostle says, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* These two verses are contrasted with each other: they are set in opposition with each other. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." I have opened these already, in the former sermon. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* These words are now before me to explain. It may be fully and with the utmost confidence pronounced, these words contain as great a cordial for the spiritual mind, as is to be found in all the Book of God. I shall endeavour to open and explain my text, hoping thereby, to give a full and clear outline of the whole substance of it, as contained in the following particulars. I will propose

1. What we are to understand, by walking in the light. With the connexion this hath with Him, before whom, and with whom we walk. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light.*

2. That which proceeds therefrom. *We have fellowship one with another.* By which I understand as included in the *we*, the apostles, and the rest of the saints: intimating hereby, that they had one, and the same holy and blessed fellowship, one with the other, in the same grace, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Not it may be to the same extent and degree: but the same as to the reality of it. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* Even with Him of whom it hath been before asserted, that "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

3. I would take notice of the blessed relief for our minds, to carry us above all our sinful infirmities, and all, and whatsoever we are the

subjects of. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

4. How we receive and enjoy the efficacy of this truth into our minds. These are the particulars I mean to pursue, which will bring me to these words, *and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* May the Lord most graciously guide me through the same. Amen. I am, beloved, as the

1st. Particular of my discourse, to shew you, what we are to understand, by walking *in the light*. With the connection this hath with Him, before whom, and with whom, we walk. *If we walk in the light as he is in the light.*

To walk with God is an high privilege. It is an honour which is conferred by free grace, on some; not on all; to walk with God is a progressive spiritual motion, which consists in going on in the ways of the Lord, and abounding therein. There is a twofold walk with God. The one is internal, the other is external. That we may walk with God inwardly and spiritually, we must be of one mind and will with God: we must know his truth: receive his truth: be well pleased with his truth: and rest in the same, and walk before Him in the belief thereof. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. The mind must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. He must also enlighten it into the knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ, or we cannot have fellowship with them. I would here observe what we are to understand by walking *in the light*. It having been in the past Sermon what it is to walk in darkness, it will, I think, be very easy for us to conceive what it must be to walk in the light. If to walk in a course of sin, and error, is to walk in darkness, by the which we are disqualified to have fellowship with God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all: then it is such alone as walk in the light of grace and truth, can walk with him. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 23. Such only as walk agreeably with the doctrine of grace, and under the influences of the same, and in concert with the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel, are the persons who walk with God. And to walk in the true spiritual knowledge and acknowledgment of the doctrine of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, this must be to walk in the light. The apostle writing to the Colossians, speaks of their knowing the grace of God in truth. It is the knowledge of the grace of God in truth, fits us for walking with God in the true light of the same. As we walk in the true knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, our minds are spiritualized, and raised up into communion with them, under the sacred influences and energy of the Lord the Spirit. It is as God shines into us, and upon us, in the Person of God-Man, Christ Jesus, our Head, Saviour, and Lord, that we approach him with holy pleasure and delight. It is as we have communion with Him, we walk before Him: we are made light in the Lord. We have a spiritual inherent faculty, suited to the apprehension of the nature and grace of God, so as to receive into our hearts the revelation He hath been pleased to give of the same in his holy word: we have therein, and thereby communion with Him. From this springs our walking with Him, and our walking before Him, unto all well pleasing. This is an everlasting truth, that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." As we walk with God in the purity of his Truth, he lets in the true knowledge of Himself, in his

Persons, and perfections, as he hath manifested the same in the Person of the God-Man, so as that our understandings are possessed with the truth of the same. As he gives us to know, how he stands related to us in Christ Jesus, we are led to apprehend the fixation of his love upon us. All this is internally, spiritually, and supernaturally. Our hearts and affections are influenced and drawn after the Lord hereby: so that as we go on to walk with God, and in the real light of faith, to behold the real blessedness of walking in the light, as he is in the light, we prove to others hereby, that we have communion with Him, "Who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all." Our Lord saith, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. Our walk with God, with Christ, with the Spirit, is wholly from the Lord alone. It is wholly from the Three in Jehovah. When the apostle is writing to the saints at *Corinth* concerning church communion, he asks the following questions. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" The answer must be, None. He adds, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 2 Epis. vi. 14. 16. All which belongs to the Holy Spirit: who is the living God, equal with the Son, and with the Father, as one in the same infinite self-existing Essence. So that He is Light without darkness, as also the Son, and Father are: consequently such as have fellowship with Him, and such in whom he dwells, and directs their hearts into the love of God, and into a patient waiting for Christ, cannot but be such as are children of the light and of the day; who have put off the works of darkness, and have put on the armour of light. If we walk in the light of faith, purity, and holiness, we give outward evidence that we are in the state of grace. This *If* is used, as it was in the former verse. To substantiate the truth contained in the assertion. Not by any means to weaken this most solemn and positive assertion, or make it doubtful, but to shew there can be no walking with God, who is *Light*, but as we renounce and avoid every false way; and walk in the truth, in the light of it, and under the sacred energy of the same. This brings me to speak of that which proceeds from this—

2nd. Which is contained in the words following, *if we walk in the light, as he is in the light—we have fellowship one with another.* By which I understand, as included in the *we*, the apostles, and the rest of the saints. Or, if you will, all the saints: as intimating hereby, that they had one and the same holy fellowship, one and the same grace, and transcendent privilege: and with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Not it may be to the same degree and extent; but the same as to the reality of it. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* Even with Him, of whom it hath been before asserted, that "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all." This is the present particular which is now, if the Lord please, to be filled up. May it be so, to his praise, and our benefit. Amen.

Fellowship with God, and saints, is what proceeds from walking with God, and it is most truly enjoyed as we walk in the light of holiness and righteousness before him. The apostle puts himself into the number of those he writes unto here, in the word *we*, as he did before, even from the very beginning of this chapter. This you will easily perceive by looking

back to the first four verses. All is expressed in the plural number : and it comprehends there the holy apostles of the Lord and Saviour, and them only. What they knew of God-Man, Christ Jesus in his Incarnate Person, and state, they declared and made known to saints, that these also might have fellowship with them, in all the mysteries of grace and salvation. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And these things, concerning our real fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, which we are honoured with, we write to you ; that ye may have a fulness of joy, in the participation. Now let us bring down this to the subject here before us : we shall then see a glorious agreement and union in, and throughout the whole. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* We apostles, with you the brethren and followers of the Lord and Saviour. There is but one and the same way of access to, and communion with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for us, and you : we have access by one and the same Holy Spirit, unto the Father, and the medium of that access is one and the same Lord Jesus Christ. If we as apostles say, we have fellowship with God our heavenly Father, and walk in darkness, we, as well as you, lie, by such an assertion, and do not the Truth. But if we, and you also, walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another : you with us, and we with you, in the knowledge and enjoyment of these eternal and divine realities, contained in the Person of God-Man, and the Father's immense, infinite, and everlasting love to Him, and to us in Him. I think I have so linked all this together, in a glorious coherency and connection, as may give complete satisfaction respecting the same : as also shew that the apostles, and primitive believers had a mutual union and communion with each other in the same truths. It is expressly said by the evangelist *Luke*, respecting saints on the day of Pentecost, or rather after it, (yet it begun on that day,) that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Acts iv. 32. It could not be otherwise, if they received the Lord Jesus Christ, by one and the same doctrine. The apostle knowing the great importance of this, addressed a whole church thus. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i. 10. A unity in the faith, is no small blessing : it is only from it there can be a communion of saints : and it consists in knowing the same truths, in receiving the same into their minds, and in walking and centering in the same. The apostles and the whole church were one in Christ : they were one and the same as the objects and subjects of the Father's everlasting love : they were one and the same as the subjects of the Holy Spirit : they had an equal right and title to all the blessings of grace and glory. The apostles were but in Christ, and the whole election of grace were equally in Him—beloved by Him. The apostles had the true knowledge of Christ ; so had the saints likewise. The apostles had fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit ; so had the saints likewise. It might be, and most assuredly I conceive it must be so, that the knowledge the apostles had of Christ, and their personal communion with Him, must far exceed all other saints whatsoever, or whomsoever : it having

been their case of receiving their knowledge of Christ from Himself; and their communion with Him, was equal with their knowledge of Him. All other saints receive their knowledge of Him, and of the Father, mediately by the Word and by the Spirit. Whilst the reality of this knowledge is the same, yet it is not such an immediate knowledge, it not being received into the mind in the same way: nor can the communion be so free, intimate, and particular as theirs. As ours is by intuition, from the word, and in the use of ordinances. Here I conceive, we may, and ought to allow a difference between them and us. Yet in all the Truths, and ordinances of the gospel, in all the graces, benefits, and blessings of Salvation, there, they and we are all one. So also we are in the reality and personal blessedness of communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. *If we, and you, says the apostle, walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,* in the same inestimable grace—with the same most divine and essentially blessed Persons, and in the enjoyment and comfort of the same blessings and blessedness. Out of the which consideration, an holy joy flows into our souls, and yours also. This is the fellowship of saints. And we have also fellowship with the Father, as God our Father. *Who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all.* Of whom it hath been before said, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Therefore *if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* We with you, and you with us: and we and you also with God in the Person of the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: in the which we enjoy all the true blessedness which we possibly can, out of heaven. This I conceive is the true and genuine sense and meaning of the words before us. I have been constrained to go over this again and again, to make it the more clear and easy to the spiritual mind, and of becoming thereby the more useful. These words then are to confirm the saints in right apprehensions of what the apostle had written, concerning the fellowship he, and the other apostles had with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: so as they under right apprehensions of the subject, and knowing there was no obstruction to their full and free enjoyment of the same, might be thereby confirmed in it. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,* in this same fellowship with the Father, and the Son; and the blood of Jesus Christ is our everlasting purity before the Divine Majesty. Our fellowship with the Father, consists in clear apprehensions of his love to us, in the Person of Christ, and in a real sense and enjoyment of the same. Our distinct fellowship with Christ, consists in clear views of Him as God-Man—of him also as our Head—of our union to Him—interest in Him—of our complete salvation by Him. It should ever be remembered, the fellowship of the Holy Trinity with us, and our fellowship with them, are distinct subjects, and should be treated as such. The former is the cause, the other the effect. It is a display of everlasting love and favour. The apostle *Paul* pronounces this benediction to the saints at *Corinth*. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” And our apostle invokes grace and peace, on the seven churches in *Asia*, thus, “Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his

throne; and from Jesus Christ." Rev. i. 4, 5. Here all the Three in Jehovah are acknowledged, and that in their economy of grace. And thus I close the second particular of this Discourse. I therefore proceed,

3rd. To take notice of the blessed relief provided for our minds, to carry us above all our sinful infirmities, and all, and whatsoever we are the subjects of. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* This contains ineffable consolation.

As the apostle had been before making a discrimination who had not, and who had, communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and declared they only had, who walked in the light of truth and holiness, it might lead saints to question the reality of their being of the blessed number of such, seeing they could not but be fully persuaded, they were in themselves unworthy of such an unspeakable favour; to come before the Lord in the character of sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty: to present themselves before his divine Majesty: to view themselves as clothed upon with the righteousness of Christ, and made clean from all their sin before Him, by the most precious blood and sacrifice of God-Man, Christ Jesus. It ought not to be so, that any one of the children of the most high God, should look on themselves, or to themselves, or within themselves, for any thing to recommend them to the divine Majesty. Such a thought, as not being worthy, or unworthy, ought never to come before them: because communion with God and them is wholly a matter of grace. There can be no such thing as worth or worthiness in saints, either on earth, or in heaven: it is utterly impossible there should: yet we all find false thoughts are conceived by us: these produce their miseries within us. Therefore we have such a most blessed cordial as this before us, provided for our use, *The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.* In our very walking with God, we have our sinful infirmities oppressing us. Such as walk in the closest fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, cannot but be humbled at sights of their own inherent sinfulness, and coldness and deadness, which they have the inward sense, and experience of. Some saints lament how little their hearts are spiritually affected in prayer: others of the deadness and formality of their minds, when exercised therein; others on account of their daily infirmities: and some on account of the sin which most easily besets them: which frequently interrupts them in their fellowship with God as their heavenly Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; to whom they should continually fly and resort. Here is an antidote for such: exactly suited to all their case and complaints. And as these words stand here, and are considered in their proper place and connection, they do not concern sinners, but saints: the greatest as well as the least: we commonly take them up, I do myself, and in speaking to sinners concerning the everlasting efficacy of our Lord's most precious bloodshedding, we inform them by quoting these words, *that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin.* Beloved, observe and mark, and remember what I say: I am not to set aside the truth contained in these words, but to set them in their proper place, and shew the true and right connexion of them: and that is in this present discourse absolutely necessary. The apostle is writing to saints: he includes himself, and all the other apostles, and speaks for

them, saying, *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* The *us* are real saints—such as had fellowship with the Father and the Son. These persons were the subjects of sin, or they could not have needed cleansing. It was the blood of Christ was their purity. It was his relation to the Father made his blood so efficacious. This is noticed. The whole emphasis of the text rests on it. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* Christ is, as one in the Godhead, personally and essentially, as distinct from the Father, his Son. He is the Son of the living God: He is God-Man, He having taken our nature into Personal union. He became Incarnate, and as God and man in one Christ, he gave himself for us. His blood hath all the virtue and perfection of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, contained therein. By it he hath washed, cleansed, purified and sanctified his whole church. They are without all sin in Him. They are presented by Him a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And the Father beholds them, in his Person, and finished work, complete in Him. And the blood of Christ maketh clean, and keepeth clean from all sin. The *us*, the Church, the whole mystic body of Christ, are washed in the blood of Christ: they are now, and evermore clean from all sin thereby: no sin is, in consequence of this, imputed unto them: and they are every moment, pure and clean in the sight of their heavenly Father from all sin, because the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, is their perpetual purity. To express this, the word is used in the present tense, *cleanseth.* *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.* All that Christ is to his church, all he hath done for his church, was of the Father's own will and appointment. It must be, therefore, everlastingly well pleasing unto Him. He will have Him and it, in everlasting remembrance. Nor should it ever be overlooked by us, the vast extensive efficacy of our Lord's blood. *It cleanseth us from All Sin*—*us* who have fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, have this most divine Truth declared to us, in the everlasting gospel—that “The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in Truth and love, cleanseth us from all sin.” This is to encourage our minds in all our approaches to God; in acts of fellowship with God. We cannot but desire it. One of old said, “one thing have I desired of the Lord.” This one thing I prefer above and beyond all others. “That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty,” or the delight, “of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” The God-Man, Christ, is taken up into the mount of Personal communion with God. He is one Personally with a person in the Godhead: though not Personally one, in the unity of the Godhead. His communion with the Three in Jehovah, is agreeable with his union to them, as God-Man. He is our Head, and we are his members. His communications to us, and our communion with Him, are according unto the union which subsists between Him, and us; as he is our Head, and we are members in Him our Head. It is by virtue of this that we have communion with the Father in Him. All which is manifested unto us, and we have the knowledge and the enjoyment of the same in our renewed spiritual, and enlightened minds, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The true and realizing knowledge of this most glorious subject, made one of old express himself on the same thus. “Blessed is the man whom

thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Ps. lxxv. 4. For God as our own God, to open all his heart to us, and to admit us to open all our hearts to Him, and before Him; it is in this consists the whole of this blessed fellowship. Our communion with the blessed Trinity, is agreeable with our union to them, and interest with them, of which the God-Man is the sole foundation. We shall enjoy this communion in glory, to the very uttermost perfection thereof: it will consist in the uttermost manifestations of the Father's everlasting love, to our persons in Christ; to us, so as for us to be swallowed up in the full enjoyment of the same. But whilst this fellowship is, and will be all the season here below, by some blessed visits and refreshings from the presence of the Lord, and many of these most suitable to our present case and circumstances, yet I am not disposed to enter into these, so much as I am to give some scriptural proof, there is such a communion between God and his saints: and that their sinful and natural infirmities should be no discouragements unto them, because *the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth us*, now this moment, and every succeeding moment, *from all sin*. I proceed to my last particular, which is this;

4. To shew, how we receive and enjoy this truth, which is declared here, in our minds—*The blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin*. We must most certainly receive and enjoy the benefit of it, before we can rejoice and be glad in it. There can be no doubt, or dispute concerning this. It is amongst the first truths we receive into our minds, when we first are led to know the gospel—that Christ died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. In the belief of this, we received Christ into our minds; and this made way, by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit, to receive the knowledge of the Father's everlasting love into our hearts. In the belief of which the Holy Ghost shed abroad the sense thereof: so as for us to have an actual enjoyment of the same, by the further light and teaching of the Holy Ghost. It was herefrom and hereby, He was pleased to lead us into fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. And he opens our minds to receive this most important Truth, concerning our purification from all sin by the blood of Christ; and in believing apprehensions of the same, he realizes it, in us, and unto us. Our receiving the atonement is by faith, or a spiritual and gospel apprehension, of the infinite worth, efficacy, and virtue of the same: with the Father's free acceptance of it, of his delight in it: and of his setting it forth, by the word of the gospel, to be the true propitiatory sacrifice for sin: as all-sufficient, and everlastingly acceptable unto him: He himself on the immutable truth, saying, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins, and your iniquities will I remember no more." All which must be received into the believer's mind, before he can walk, and have communion with God. And it must be also maintained in the mind, so as that the believer being brought into a manifestative communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, may persevere therein. Our state of communion with the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit is immutable: but our present enjoyments of it are not. All our enjoyments of the same, are as we have the spiritual apprehensions thereof by faith. By which as the mean, it is, we receive and enjoy this most cordial and reviving Truth into our hearts, that *the*

blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. The true knowledge and right apprehension of this in our souls, is of the uttermost importance. I was once in company, where one asked, "Is there not such a scripture, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin?" I was answered, "Yes." Then it was asked, "How does the blood of Christ cleanse from all sin?" The reply was, "By imputation." Then I thought if so; we who are the Lord's, are everlastingly pure and blessed. It is by our believing this, we have blessed freedom in our accesses unto God, and in our communion with Him. The Lord bless his Truth to us. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.—I JOHN 1. 8.

THE apostle having delivered himself, most gloriously on the former subjects, is disposed to pursue a subject most closely connected with them. To acquit the conscience from all sin and guilt on gospel grounds, and thereby to raise up the mind of a real believer to such apprehensions of the virtue and efficacy of the blood of Christ, as to encourage the saint to hold communion with the Father, in the clear and full apprehension that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth him from all sin, this is most noble and divine. Even in the very ministerial end and design of the same. Yet the apostle, being in his own mind vastly comprehensive, lest there should be any mistake on the great subject he has been delivering, enters on a new one: which concerns believers, himself, and all who profess to have communion with the Father, and the Son, and who believe this most precious and fundamental truth of the everlasting gospel—that they are pure and clean from all sin in the blood of the Lamb. Whilst this is as true as God is true: and it is by the belief of this, they can approach their heavenly Father, and enjoy fellowship with Him, notwithstanding all their infirmities, and all they feel, and are the subjects of: yet he would not have them to conceive, the blood of Christ cleanseth their unholy nature, and makes it pure from sin: or makes their sin purity. No. Whilst they were clean from all sin in the blood of Christ, and had liberty and boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus: they having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water: yet the inbeing of sin existed in their fallen nature: yea, it was that very nature: in it dwelt no good thing. Therefore, not to call back the truth which he had delivered unto them, which was an essential truth of the gospel, and as true as God is true, and in the knowledge and belief of which they alone could have victory and triumph over sin; yet he would they should

clearly understand, and distinguish, between what they were inherently in, and of themselves, and what they were in Christ; and not so blend the subject, as to conceive because they were pure from all sin in Christ, they were without all sin in their natures. This was so far from being the truth, that he says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

With a design to open and explicate these words, I will set before you the following particulars.

1. Shew the speaker, and of whom, and to whom he speaks. It is the apostle is the speaker. He includes himself, and the rest of the apostles in what he here expresses. Those who are spoken to, are such as had fellowship with the Holy Trinity: to whom he said, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2. What he here saith unto them, concerns the inbeing of sin. He asserts it is in them. If we say that we have no sin in us, we do not say true.

3. It is self-deception, and such are mistaken ones, who say they are sinless in themselves. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*

4. The Truth of God is not maintained by those who say, there is no sin in them: it being contrary to the scriptures, to experiences, and confession of all saints; who have all been of one heart and one soul in the acknowledgment of this. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Having given you the plan, I proceed to fill it up, as the Lord may most graciously be pleased to assist me in the same. I am

1. To shew the speaker, and of whom, and to whom he speaks. It is the apostle. He includes himself, and the rest of the apostles, in what he here expresses. Those who are spoken to, are such as had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: to whom he had said, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The speaker is the apostle *John* himself. One who was an high favourite with our Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks here in his own name, and also for all the rest of the apostles, as he had in all the former verses. He uses as he before had done, the term *we*. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* He speaks to saints. Those he speaks unto are such as had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. These had fellowship also with the apostles, in all the blessings of the everlasting gospel; which contains a fulness of blessings. He here writes to those, to whom he had said, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And here in the words before us, he says to these very same persons, *If we say, If I myself say, If any of you say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* But if it be so, how are we to understand the former assertion, concerning the cleansing virtue and efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Our apostle had affirmed, the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. And here he says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the*

truth is not in us. How do both these assertions agree together, that is the present question? To which the reply is—The blood of Christ is our everlasting purity in the sight of God. In it we are cleansed body and soul from every spot and stain of sin. Our purity cannot be fully conceived by us: we are without all sin in the eye of God's justice: He having transferred all our sins from us, and laid them all on Christ; who was sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Yet this hath not removed the inherency of sin out of us: our old nature remains in us. The blood of Christ hath no influence on it. We are in our nature-selves what we ever were, and so we shall ever remain; so long as we are in the body, we shall have sin in us. It may be the following observation may reflect light on our minds. Our Lord Jesus Christ had once, all our sins on Him. He was made sin: yet there was no sin in Him: yet all the sins of the whole election of grace were laid on Him. So we, to whom his righteousness, blood and sacrifice are imputed, are discharged from the imputation of all our sins thereby: and are in the sight of God, perfectly holy, righteous, and pure from all sin, by virtue of the imputation expressed. Yet we are not freed from the inbeing of sin hereby; any more than our great Surety, Christ Jesus, was defiled with the inherency of Sin, by the real imputation of sin to his Person. I conceive this rightly considered is a proper reply to the question, concerning the apostles assertions. As 1st. How the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin: and 2nd. How this assertion is agreeable with truth, and by no means contradicts the former. This the apostle *John* declares was his own case. It was alike true of all the apostles. It was so with those very persons included in the *us*, who had fellowship with the apostles, and with the Father and the Son, and whom the blood of Christ had purified, and who enjoyed the benefit and sense of the virtue of the same in their own souls—that they were notwithstanding all this the subjects of sin. They had it inherently in them. To deny this was to prove themselves liars. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* This brings me

2. To observe that what the apostle here saith unto them, concerns the inbeing of sin. He asserts it is in them. If we say that we have no sin in us, we do not say the truth.

We are all one in the first Adam, and have derived from him, the whole inherency of sin, which is the total corruption of our whole nature. This we received in our natural birth, and we have the whole of it existing in us. It is a very mortifying consideration, and should at all times humble us, before the Lord; we being in our nature-selves always one and the same as it respects our fallen nature. The assertion of the apostle, no doubt, hath a very deep and good design in it: surely it fully clears up this to our minds, that we are to look without us, for our present and everlasting purity from all sin before the Lord. That it is not in us: nor even in the new creation and workmanship which the Holy Ghost hath wrought within. Not that there is any impurity in the same. No. There is no sin in the new creature. Yet we are to look for purification from all sin to the blood of Christ: and we need always to be looking there, and to be continually receiving this truth into our minds, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin, because sin is always in us. Nor can we get above the influences and effects of the same, but as our spiritual minds are engaged in real

fellowship with God, and in the true apprehensions of what is contained in this most precious, and everlasting efficacious remedy. It would be of no advantage to know our sinfulness, if we were not at the same time, directed to the Healer. Nor could we be borne up under our inherent sinfulness, without some blessed views of what we are in Christ, and of our being everlastingly complete in Him. It is the knowledge of the one, is the only mean of carrying off from the other. We may also well conceive, the apostle foresaw what false conceptions might arise in the minds of some, in that, and after ages, concerning perfection in the flesh. This might, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, be a motive with him, for saying, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* And most especially it might be with this end and design delivered, that the saints might not think their own cases such as none but themselves had the experience of. No, says the apostle, it is not. I myself, who was so blessedly and personally acquainted with our Lord Jesus Christ, and all *we* the rest of the apostles, have sin in us : so that here, you and we are the same : we are but sinners saved by free grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and you are just the same. If sin be in us, we have nothing inherent to boast of : we have then all evil in us : then we are what the apostle *Paul* speaks of himself, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." There is nothing but evil in our fallen nature. No. Nor will there ever be. Our apostle, as such, declares and positively asserts the inbeing of sin, in saints : in such as had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son. Of these, whom the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, he positively asserts, sin was in them. He does not say they were under sin : he does not say, sin reigned in them, and over them : neither does he say, sin had the dominion over them. He could not say this of the saints of the most high God. Sin is in them, but it doth not reign and domineer over them : yet it often threatens so to do : but it is incompatible with the state, the saints are brought into by regeneration that it should thus prevail. As we have sin within us, it cannot but follow, we must more, or less, have the evidence of the same in our own experience. Therefore to deny this truth is to be guilty of a lie. It would have been so in the mouths of the apostles : it would have been so in the saints our apostle here writes unto : it would be so in us : and in all others. The words are an apostolical assertion ; which will be found true in all ages, and throughout all generations. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* It is well for us therefore to acknowledge this to be the truth : to be humbled for it : to carry about a sense of it within us : so as to feel our continual need of looking off it continually to Jesus the Rock of our Salvation. We should make this use of it—To renounce ourselves, wholly, and entirely—To be making continual use of Christ, in all our communion with the Father, in Him, the glorious Mediator—To maintain this truth in our renewed minds, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. That as sin hath its present and momentarily existence in us, and we are never without it, No, not in our highest acts and outgoings of our souls, in holy fellowship with the Lord : so neither is there a moment, in which there is not the present virtue and worth of the blood and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, put forth for us, and on our behalf. It is always present with, and before the Lord, to cleanse us in his sight, and

before Him, as sin is inherent in us, and consequently present with us. I view this as what follows on the apostle's assertion, and as containing the improvement of the same. I would therefore proceed to my next particular which is

3. To shew, that to say we have no sin, is self-deception; and that such, and all such as say, they have *no sin in them*, are mistaken ones. They are self-deceived. They are self-deluded. They are liars. The truth of God is not in them. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

How can it be otherwise, seeing all have sinned and come short of the glory of God? If we all sinned in Adam, and received our natures from him, we being in his loins by creation, as we proceed from our immediate parents by generation, how could it be, but we must in our very conception and birth, be the subjects of, and derive the whole contained in sin into our persons, as his descendants? It is expressly said of Adam, "That he lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Gen. v. 3. He could beget in no other image than his own. It was his sinful image he only could communicate and beget in the likeness of. For "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." It is wholly and everlastingly impossible: therefore it is not to be expected. This being the case, there cannot be the true knowledge and experience of it in the mind, and that which is contradictory to all this be expressed; for none of all the sons of men, be they saints, professors, or sinners of any sort or kind, can say personally, or individually, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin." No. They cannot. So that if any are so bold, and fool-hardy as thus to express themselves, let them be saints of the very highest attainments, and which may shine forth as stars of the first magnitude, they are liars. They neither know the truth of God; nor do they abide therein: nor are they acquainted with their own hearts: nor with what is passing continually in, and within themselves. If they did, it would be more likely they would cry out, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." No one that knows himself to be a sinner, but must be a self-deluded person to conceive himself to be without sin. He must be evidently so, who dares say openly, and declare it to others, that he is a sinless person, and that there is no sin in him: it matters not who he is, or what he is, either in his own eyes, or that of others; or what his walk and conversation may be, but he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. This is declared by our apostle in our text. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* The words are so expressly declared, we cannot mistake them; hence it must be positively a wilful lie: it must be self-delusion: it must be self-deception. We are chargeable with this, whoever we are, who dare affirm we are inherently without sin. Nay this is not all: we are charged here by the apostle, with giving the lie to the Holy Ghost, who here declares we are not without the inherency of it. It seems almost incredible any under any sort of a profession of Christ, should hold and maintain sinless perfection in themselves, seeing every man living is altogether vanity. And even the best of men, those who are real saints, it is said of them, and it belongs to them, such a declaration as this, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness and glory of man, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower

thereof falleth away." That it should be so—to maintain such erroneous notion, is a manifest proof of the self-righteousness of the mind; or how otherwise can it be accounted for?—that a mind of itself, naturally sinful the whole essence of which is sin, should be sinless? Why it is a contradiction in terms. Indeed, Sirs, it is. Yet it even starts up in the minds of real saints at times: and it appears it does so, by their aiming to strive, and seek for that in themselves, from which they may draw their evidence of their being in Christ, instead of receiving Christ into their minds from the word of the gospel, and the revelation and testimony which God hath given therein concerning his Son. This is also another proof of the self-righteousness of the heart; the propensity of looking for evidences of grace and holiness in ourselves short of and separate from Christ: whereas, none of them are to be so found there. Whilst this does not amount to saying, we have no sin in us, yet it is from hence it originates. All those who ever were so bold as to declare this, it originated from the self-delusion of their own minds. Those who in these latter days, I mean since the apostles' times, have dared to give the lie to the Holy Ghost, who here says, by the apostle, in the name of the whole church of Christ, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*; have been found amongst the *Papists, Mystics, Quakers, and Wesleyans*. It is not worth my time to take notice of them: many of whom their lives have proved them most detestable sinners: some of them having been guilty of the most monstrous sins, and sinning. And what hath the very design of the devil himself been, in setting these on making any such a profession, so contrary to truth, and in direct opposition to the Holy Ghost? I reply, to set aside Christ, and to prove that men may be holy and good without Him—that it is all mistake that we need Christ as the scriptures say we do: or the Holy Spirit either—we can be holy without him—it is only for us to attend to such and such workings in our own minds, and by our own thoughts, workings, and exertions, we shall be inwardly holy; yea, far beyond what the gospel treats of. This is Satan's delusion: with which I may be bold to say, he has corrupted the minds of many under the profession of what is styled Christianity. And all to depreciate Christ, and to lead off wholly and entirely from Him: whilst he allows those to have the sound of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ in their mouths, and even to attribute great things to Him, and his Spirit, he at the same time, corrupts the mind, so as there is a secret and an entire renunciation of Christ, under all their confessions of Him, and the Holy Ghost. Some of these self-deceivers, and self-deluded ones, the Devil hath so inwardly wrought upon, as that they have seen visions, been filled with raptures, and so transported with ecstasies, as have had the appearance of the marvellous in them, and been taken for such. And all this the more effectually to deceive these self-righteous ones: all of whom have fancied themselves to be pure ones: holy ones: pure ones in their own nature: sinless ones. All which hath arisen from the self-righteousness of their own minds; wrought upon, stirred up, and drawn forth into act and exercise, by the devil; who turns himself into the appearance of an angel of light to suit them the better; and act the more powerfully and effectually within them, and upon them. It would be well for believers in Christ Jesus, never to be taken with accounts from any, and every quarter, given of the holiness, purity, walk, and conversation of any, who

are not savingly acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. No. Nor with what may be recorded of such as these, any further than it is evidenced they walked as saved sinners, with the Lord, in an entire dependence on Him alone, to keep them from the evil of their own hearts, and from the sin which most easily beset them. In the true account of such, we shall have the grace of Christ realized in them, and towards them. Yet we shall not have persons without sin: but we shall have sin in them: and who needed Christ every moment, and for every thing; and who without Christ could do nothing. I proceed to my next and last particular.

4. To shew the Truth of God is not maintained by those, who say, *there is no sin in them*. It being contrary to the scriptures: to experience: and also to the confession of all saints recorded in the word: who have all been of one heart, and one soul, in the acknowledgment of this truth—that they were the subjects of sin. Then sin must be in them, or they could not be the subjects of it, so as to be inwardly defiled with it, and afflicted by it. Here then comes in our text, with all its weight and authority, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*.

If our asserting, *we have no sin in us*, is not to be supported by the holy scriptures of truth, then we do wrong to maintain an assertion which is not agreeable with them. Now that there is no part thereof, in which can be found, or by which it can be made to appear, sin is not in the saints of the Most High God, then to assert the contrary, must be to sin against them: it must be to deny the authority of them: consequently it must be, yea it is to sin against them—to assert that we are without sin, seeing they all declare and testify we are not. Not one saint is mentioned in them, but was a sinner. *Noah, Job, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel*, and all the saints had sin in them; or how came they to sin? I need not instance their particular acts of sinning: yet this I would observe, as their sins are not recorded for us to practice the same: so neither are they for us to insult their characters. Which I conceive is done, when we too much expose them, and beyond the truth also. I look on it as well spoken by one, who says, *Noah* is no where called a drunkard, nor *Lot* an incestuous person, nor *David* an adulterer, nor *Solomon* an idolater. And why are they not? It is not because they were not guilty of these sins: but it is because these were transient acts. They were not what they lived in and pursued. They only fell into them. And soon eluctuated out of them. Yet they could not have fallen by them, though but transiently, had it not been for the inherency of sin within them. *Noah* is called an Elder, and mentioned in the catalogue of believers, and *Lot* is styled just *Lot*, in the New Testament, and no notice taken of the sins they fell into. So are *David* and *Solomon*, without the least stigma on their persons. Should it not teach us to speak with reverence of those who are gone to heaven before us? I think so. It is expressly said in the scripture, “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” Eccl. vii. 20. By a just man, is here meant, a justified man. One made righteous in the righteousness of Christ imputed unto Him, and that by the Lord himself. So it is just equivalent to the words of the apostle before us—That such as were cleansed in the blood of Christ from all sin, and had fellowship with the Father and the Son, yet they had sin in them, and would tell a wilful lie if they were to have said

otherwise. We have *Abraham* falling into the same sin, again and again; in the denial of his wife. He confesses himself before the Lord to be but dust and ashes. *Job* a saint high in God's estimation, of whom he is pleased to make his boast: yet he falls down before the majesty of Jehovah, and cries out, *Behold I am vile*. He saw and felt himself to be so, or he had not spoken the truth. What made him vile? the indwelling of sin in his nature. *Isaiah* cried out, of and concerning himself, *Woe is me! for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts*. This had not been if he had been without sin. The apostle *James* tells us, even that great prophet *Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are*. No perfect character in the word of God, no not amongst all the saints. Some of them fell by sin: others cry out by reason of their inherent pollution: some confess their exceeding sinfulness before the Lord. And so it is with saints in the New Testament also. None could ever express the heartfelt bitterness of indwelling sin, more than holy *Paul* doth in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. So that it is contrary to scripture, to experience, to what is recorded of real saints in the Bible, yea of the greatest of them, even of *Moses* and *Aaron* the saints of the Lord, to say any of them were without sin. Our text therefore is by all this confirmed to contain a most unquestionable truth in it. Which is this, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. We must act contrary to our feelings, when we so think, or say. It cannot be that we exercise our judgment, or speak agreeably to what we are the subjects of, if we at any time say, we are free from the inherency of sin. Were we so to do, it is to contradict all recorded of the saints under the past, and present dispensation of grace: it is to discountenance all recited of their experiences in the written word. It is to sin against God's own testimony concerning this: which is absolutely to give the lie to the Holy Spirit. We deceive ourselves in so conceiving. It is to contradict matter of fact. "The just man falleth seven times a day, and riseth again." It is not our being kept from outward acts of sin, nor our being preserved from a course of sinning, frees us from being the subjects of sin. So that our being kept near the Lord, favoured with his most gracious presence, admitted into free, open, blessed fellowship with Him, and his Son Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin,—this does not give us, at any time warrant to say, we are without sin in us: for the whole body of sin is in us, let our sense, feelings, and perceptions of it be as they may. I will acknowledge there are seasons, in which believers are so favoured in actual fellowship with God, and with such believing views of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are so swallowed up, as to forget the whole of sin, and to have no apprehensions of the same: yet this does not expel sin out of them. So in the very article of Death: it is the case of many saints to be so swallowed up in God, and Christ, as to forget themselves for evermore. Even let it be thus, yet it does not eradicate sin. Nothing but the actual separating stroke, which rends asunder the union of the soul and body, will ever free us from the indwelling of sin. It is well for us to know and rightly apprehend these truths from the word of God—to be taught all which appertains to the same, from the word, and by the Spirit—to be settled in the clear understanding thereof; as hereby we are enabled to walk in the belief of the same: we are also hereby preserved from many, very many mistakes.

It would be well here, if real saints did not attend too much one to the other, concerning these points, but be more concerned to know, how these subjects are stated by the Spirit of the living God in the written word. That should be our directory. We here should never lean to our own understandings: these are matters of too great importance. To the law, and to the testimony we should repair. We are all prone to self-deception: we should therefore give up our own judgments to the word of God, to be guided and influenced by the same. To have true scriptural views of sin, of the inbeing of sin in us, is of vast importance. To be delivered and discharged from the whole, in God's way, as stated in the everlasting gospel, and set forth therein, for our present benefit, and salvation, is of the uttermost importance to our minds. To know this by the inward teachings of the Holy Ghost, this only renders it effectual unto us: and by it we are saved from sinful guilty fears, and from innumerable errors. May the Lord the Holy Ghost bless what is here set before you, if he please. Amen.

SERMON IX.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—1 JOHN i. 9.

THE apostolic writings were immediately from the Holy Ghost. They are the great bulwarks of the church of Christ. The very walls of salvation which surround the city of our God. They are ever to be treated with the utmost reverence. They are wholly Divine. They are immutable. The truths contained in them will outlast the world. They will remain in our world immutably the same; let our various apprehensions of them be what they may. And our greatest wisdom consists, in our giving up our minds to such right apprehensions of them, so far as the Spirit of God may be our teacher, as to understand them rightly, and properly for our advantage, and the Lord's glory. The apostle has been aiming to assist saints in their communion with the Lord, by removing from their minds, any, and every thing which seemed to them to obstruct the same. As they had sin in them, and therefore must have as the consequence of the same, their sinful, as well as their bodily, and natural infirmities; and as these would, and could not but produce in their minds, such effects as naturally followed from them; so he prepared a most noble remedy to ease their minds from all this, by saying to them, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Lest any mistake might arise in their minds, concerning the cleansing virtue of Christ's most precious blood, as if it actually so cleansed them, that they were never to expect to see, and feel any sin, or sinfulness in themselves any more, he immediately adds, "If we say that we have no

sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It will prove us to be self-deceivers so to say, or think. It being to be contradictors of what is recorded in the scriptures;—of what is recorded in them of all the saints. Their confessions of their own inherent sinfulness, and their experiences of the same, were full proofs to themselves, of sin being in them. We are the same inwardly, and in our fallen nature as they were: therefore to affirm of ourselves, that we have no sin in us, is to deceive ourselves—to contradict the scriptures—to tell a lie. And this is incompatible with truth. We ourselves, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, have sin in us. We are not without it: so neither are you. If so, it may be asked, do we not sometimes fall by it? most assuredly we do: it cannot be otherwise: for if it dwells in us, if we are the subjects of a body of sin and death, it cannot but be, we must sometimes be under the partial influences thereof. Therefore the apostle proposes a relief suited to this part of our spiritual distress. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* In these words, we have a most blessed direction how to act when in, and under sinful cases: so as to improve for ourselves that most blessed cordial proposed to us, by the apostle in these words, *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* As we go through our present text, this will be further elucidated. In speaking on these words of my text, I will propose to set before you the following particulars.

1. That the saints are at times, in various cases, and circumstances, in which the only remedy for them is, to confess their sins to the Lord. *If we confess our sins.*

2. How this is to be done.

3. The benefit of so doing. We have the forgiveness of them.

4. From whom we receive this forgiveness, and the faithfulness, and justice of God made known therein. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

5. The perception of this grace; which is thus expressed. *And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* O glorious grace! It is wholly and altogether from above. It is everlastingly divine. I will for the preserving the connexion quote the former words. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The former words having been opened, it is the latter which now lie before me to explain; of which I have given my plan of division, and which by the Lord's blessing I am now to fill up. And my

1st. Particular is this—That the saints are at times, in various cases, and circumstances, in which the only remedy for them is, to confess their sins to the Lord. And this is here proposed by the apostle. *If we confess our sins.*

Whilst all saints are in an immutable state of grace, and the work of grace within them is invincible, and can never undergo the least change; yet the minds, the frames, the cases, and circumstances of saints are not so. If they have sin within them, they will feel it: yea, and this cannot be but they will be afflicted, and affected with it. They will in consequence of it, lose their sweet frames. Their free accesses to the Lord will be broken in upon: their minds will be distressed. Their

cases will be various. Sometimes the remembrance of sin will fill them with holy disquietude; sometimes circumstances in a providential way, will greatly agitate and embarrass their minds: sometimes they will be in a sinful case: their old besetting sin will overcome them: this will most sorely distress them. They will write bitter things against themselves: they will refuse to be comforted: yea, they will confound their case with their state, and say it may be, on such and such accounts, that their state is a sinful state. This cannot be. Their case may be a sinful one: they may have fallen into sin: they may have fallen by their iniquity, into that very sin, which most easily besets them: they may have the guilt of it on their consciences; the pollution of it on their minds. It cannot but bring with it great sorrow and grief into their hearts: yet all this is quite distinct from their being in a sinful state. No: none of the Lord's regenerated ones, can ever be any more in a sinful state: yet they may over and over, be in a sinful case, and sinful circumstances. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider, sin liveth and dwelleth in them—Satan hates them with implacable hatred—all the world out of Christ, are watching them, and every snare is laid in their way, and set before them, to turn and divert their minds from Christ. It is also to be considered, they cannot support themselves: inherent grace can do nothing for them. It is the Lord alone who can uphold them. He leaves them at times to themselves, in various, and a variety of particulars, to the intent they may know their own inherent sinfulness, and weaknesses, and find to a demonstration, that without Him they can do nothing. It is the Lord's will, they should bewail all this, and confess all this before Him, to the intent, that by their own words, they may more sensibly apprehend their own personal, and peculiar, and particular cases. And there are seasons, in which they find, the only remedy for them is, to go and confess their sin before the Lord. One of old said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." Ps. xxxii. 3—6. There is no case more distressing to a real saint, than a sinful one. He cannot get relief from it, but by going to the Lord. He cannot have access unto the Lord, but he must open his griefs, and confess his sins, and sinfulness: and this is what the Lord himself will bring him to. Then he finds, as one of old did, and acknowledges the same, to the praise and glory of free grace; and says, "Thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Ps. lxxxvi. 5. The Lord is pleased thus to address himself, saying unto them, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you:" they hearing his most blessed voice, rejoin, "Lord, to whom should we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." He says again to them, "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Such scriptures as these suit us, when we are in peculiar cases, and sinful ones, and distressing circumstances, arising from our inherent sinfulness and actual defilements. Such passages as have been quoted, had not suited the cases of those to whom the Lord speaks them, had not their cases been

sinful ones. They are on the Lord's part strong memorials of his grace: and on the part of those to whom they are spoken, they are very solemn testifications of their alienation in heart and affections from Him the fountain of living waters. One whose case was a sinful one, said in an entire agreement with all this, and with the whole of the subject now before us, "Iniquities prevail against me, as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Ps. lxxv. 3. This, as I conceive of it, fully proves, that saints are at times in various cases: in a variety of circumstances. They have various frames and feelings: it will not do to conceal them in their own minds. They must if they would be relieved, pour out their hearts before the Lord. If oppressed with sin, their own sin, and inward sinfulness, it is not sufficient to confess the same to one the other. There is no remedy for them, but to confess the same before the Lord. This is the only remedy: and it is exactly suited to their case. This is that which only can do them good. It is true the apostle James says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Yet most assuredly, he means matters which may arise against each other; the best remedy for which is, to confess the fault, one saint, to another: so as they may both share equal blame, so far as each may deserve, and thus mutually settle the difference on both sides. Yet that is not the subject here before us: so that it hath no place here. It is our sinnings against the Lord, and our confessions of the same before Him are the subject. And also, that this is the only remedy for real saints, in some particular cases, and circumstances: as hereby the glory of God is advanced. I would here mention the words of Joshua, who said to one who had sinned in the thing occurred. "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." vii. 19. It appears to me, the whole contained in all this, is opened in the following scripture. "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Ps. li. 3, 4. Sin as sin, is an act immediately against God. It is an offence against his majesty. A transgression of his law. He only can pardon it. To him we must therefore go for the pardon of it. Which brings me

2. To set forth how this is to be done. "If we confess our sins." Which implies we are so to do. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* But what comes before me, in this second head of discourse, as connected with the former, concerns the confession of sins. Of which it hath been before said, that there is no remedy for saints, in some particular cases, and circumstances, but by a confession of their sins. And this remedy is now to be spoken of. The question therefore is, how is this confession to be made, and unto whom is it to be done, so as that saints in their sinful cases, may receive relief. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* To confess sin is our act: the right confession must be in the faith of the everlasting efficacy of the propitiatory sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth us, now, and evermore from all sin. The confession is to be made to, and before the Divine Father. He is the Person intended in these words,

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. With respect to each of these particulars, I know not how I can set them forth more completely before you, than by reciting what was transacted by *Aaron*, and all the congregation of Israel, on the great day of Atonement. You have the account of it in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. It was to be a day of solemn fasting and humiliation. *Aaron* the High-Priest, who was the representative of the church, and a type of Christ also, was to act as follows. He was to lay both his hands on the head of the goat called the scape-goat, and confess over him, all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of all the people of Israel. Not any thing belonging to their iniquities was to be omitted. I will quote the passage that you may see it for yourselves. "And *Aaron* shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat." A very strong figure to set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, as the substitute of his people, to whom the Father transferred their sins, and all and every thing contained in them. So that He bore our sins in his own body on the Tree. It is the true knowledge of this, makes way for our true and proper confession of sin. It consists in our total renunciation of all we are, or ever shall be; acknowledging our exceeding sinfulness, and resting, pleading and confessing before the Divine Majesty, our expectation of receiving everlasting life, pardon, health, cure, and purity, for the whole contained in our inherent sinfulness, and every effect thereof, from the virtue contained in the one sacrifice of Jesus: which is so complete that He hath thereby for ever perfected the putting away of sin. Now as the High-Priest, and people, both in his own name, and in theirs also, as representing them, made a confession of their sins, iniquities, and transgressions in all their sins, before the Lord, and thus laid them on the head of the scape-goat, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ—so we New Testament saints, when we have fallen into sin, and have to lament our sinful cases, are to come before our heavenly Father, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and laying our hand on his head, as our true and only sacrifice, confess before the Divine Majesty, what, and wherein we have done amiss. And this is our only remedy. I have said, we are to lay our hand on his head. It is impossible for us so to do: the meaning is, we are to rest all our dependance on the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, before his Father and our Father, his God, and our God, for our everlasting life and salvation. I conceive no one can be more inherently defiled than myself: nor can have been more deeply sensible thereof, and in experience seen themselves more vile. And this is the way I have been often led in real spiritual practice—to come before the Lord—to place myself in his view—to beseech him to look on me in Christ;—to pardon me influentially and manifestatively, in the full knowledge he hath of the worth and perfection of Christ's everlastingly efficacious bloodshedding. And I have in the real exercise of faith trusted before Him, on the finished work of the God-Man, for everlasting health, cure, purity, and salvation from every spot and stain of sin, on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ: not looking at any thing good or bad in me; but looking wholly without me, to the free grace of the Divine Father; who hath revealed his Christ in the gospel, and set him forth therein, as the propitiation. Beloved, I have, as I conceive, opened the

apostles meaning unto you. We are to come in, and we are to come with, all our sinful cases to the Lord, our heavenly Father. We are to confess what we feel, and what we have done amiss before Him. We are to act thus, in the faith of Christ, his blood and righteousness. If we thus confess our sins, we may be sure we shall find this an allsufficient remedy for us; let a sight and sense of the same be to our own apprehensions what they may, it is the blood of Jesus Christ, now, and evermore cleanseth us from all sin. And in a true spiritual conception of the same, we have a complete cure for all our wounds: yea, an infallible remedy for our every case, be it what it may. We coming before the Father, with all our inward wounds, and wants, confessing our inherent and actual sinfulness, this makes way for our being benefited in so doing: which

3. Is this—we have the forgiveness of them. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

This is what we approach Him for: and it is an inestimable blessing. The true apprehension of the same received into our minds, is present life and salvation to us. It is because we feel our present sinfulness, we confess it before the Father. Nothing can be a present cure and antidote for us, but his free and full forgiveness. It is recorded of Him, by one who had full proof of the truth of it in his own mind, and who therefore spoke it out, that He might be glorified thereby; “Thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.” Ps. lxxxvi. 5. It is in the realizing of divine mercy to our minds, we are deeply impressed with it: have real apprehensions of it: and are again and again, filled with holy admiration at the same. It was a great display of mercy on us, when the Lord first opened the eyes of our minds, to apprehend the salvation he had provided for us, in his beloved Son. We did not then first look to Him, but he looked on us, in Christ. And he having revealed Christ unto us, we were then led to look unto Him: and we found in Him everlasting life; with all the blessings of a free, finished, and an everlasting salvation. We then were most divinely overcome with it. We did not expect to have ever felt and found that in ourselves, which we now do, and have since done. We need Christ to the present moment: we shall need Him the next: we shall need Him in our last moments: nor shall we need Him then, more than we do now. It is our various and sinful cases prove the truth of this to our minds. We are never without sin: we have never more, nor less, the inherency of it in our fallen natures. It is true we see, and feel its influence and operation within us, more at one time than the other: yet as it respects the inbeing of it in us, this is always one and the same. We scarce believe this. To prevent our mistakes concerning it, the apostle says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* But if we have no sin in us, if we never commit sins, we cannot confess them. It follows that the Lord’s people have sins to confess. It must therefore be that they are sensibly affected, and afflicted with them; or, this had never been prescribed as a true and proper remedy for them—to go to the Lord and confess them. Nor would the benefit consequent thereon have been thus freely and fully pronounced—the forgiveness of them. *If we confess our sins, he is*

faithful and just to forgive us our sins. An old Puritan divine, *Mr. Bridge*, expresses himself on our present subject thus. "*God*, (says he,) *hath set up a Pardoning-office.*" It is really so. And any of those who are believers in Christ may repair to it. His title is *a God of Pardons*. See the margin to these words, "*Thou art a God ready to forgive.*" Neh. ix. 17. To this, sinners, even such as have tasted that the Lord is gracious, may repair: they may give in their bills: they may confess their sins: they may particularly specify what they are: and say, each for himself, I have sinned. They will on this receive the following answer. "I will heal your backslidings. I will love you freely. For mine anger is turned away from you." Sometimes it will be individually to one of these, *Thy sins which are many, are forgiven thee. Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.* This is all, and evidentially true, in the real cases, experiences, and minds of many of the Lord's beloved: who find the truth of this in their minds, and can set their seals to the truth hereof. And it serves to set the apostles words before them, in a true point of view. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* This is the blessed fruit which follows on the confession of sins: of our sins before the Lord. We his children, going, and confessing before Him, our present sin, guilt, and defilement, and pleading the Person, blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, are discharged in our minds, by his royal free and sovereign pardon; which he is pleased to give us a renewed sense and apprehension of, so as that we enjoy an inward sense thereof, rejoice in him, and bless him for the same: saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." We are hereby sometimes so refreshed in such experiences as these, of the forgiving grace of our heavenly Father, as to be lifted up in love to, and communion with Him, more than we were, when he first manifested himself in Christ Jesus unto us: and no marvel, because it is such a proof to us, that he delighteth in mercy, as makes way for a more full reception into our minds, of what he saith—"With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." It is well then for us, to come before our heavenly Father, in the Person, Name, blood and righteousness of his coequal Son, with all our fresh cases, wounds, sins, and miseries: to confess them: to sue out a fresh pardon for them: and never to forget this is our only remedy. *If we confess our sins*, this is what will follow thereon. *He will forgive us our sins.* It is but to ask, and we shall receive the same. This is the gospel way for us to be discharged. It is the present way for us to obtain relief for our present, and particular cases. It is agreeable with what the Lord saith, and puts us upon in the following words, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified." Isa. xliii. 25, 26. This leads me

4. To consider more particularly from whom we receive this forgiveness, and the faithfulness and justice of God, made known therein, and thereby. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

As the benefit, saints reap, by confessing their sins before the Lord, in the way and manner as hath been expressed, as agreeable with the words of our present text, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and*

just to forgive us our sins, hath been opened; so we are now to consider Him from whom this blessing comes—who is said to be *faithful and just*. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. This is the Divine Father. It is before Him we confess our sins. It is to Him we apply for the pardon of them. It is *He* who hath been included in the text, and throughout the whole context: of whom it is here said, *If we confess our sins*, God, even He who “is light, and in whom is no darkness at all,” of whom it hath been declared, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is even *He*, of whom it is here said, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. So that the whole of this grace here thus divinely expressed, flows from the covenant transactions between the Father, and the Son. Hence *Mr. Romaine* once said, in my hearing, “I do not,” said he, “know any scripture so calculated to settle the peace of conscience, as this, *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*.” It is an act of justice in God to pardon the sins of his people, as truly as it is an act of mercy. I would here ask, whom is God just unto? In answer to which question I would reply, to his Son Jesus Christ: and to his people also. In the everlasting council and covenant, the Father promised the glorious Surety and Representative of the elect, that if he would “make his soul an offering for sin, He should see his seed, the travail of his soul, and the pleasure of the LORD should prosper in his hand.” It was also promised to Messiah, in the same everlasting covenant, that the Father would be ever mindful of his covenant to, and with Him; and to his seed also. He says, “My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 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 the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips, once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.” Ps. lxxxix. 28—37. You have here, the Father’s covenant faithfulness to his Son, the glorious Mediator thereof: and to his seed, and saints also. The Father is not only merciful in the pardon of our sins, and in the revelation and manifestation of the same to us, on our confession of them, unto, and before Him; but he is just also. It is with Him an act of justice, as truly as it is in Him an act of mercy. Our sins having been laid on Christ; they have thereby been removed from our persons; and also out of the sight of law and justice: and all this upon the footing of the oblation of the worthy Lamb. The Father’s law having been hereby magnified, his justice satisfied, his holiness most gloriously displayed, and He having accepted the Mediator, and his most glorious work of mediation, He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus. He therefore says, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” And again, “I will cleanse them from

all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me, and will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." Jer. xxxi. 34., and xxxiii. 8. This is the open display of the exceeding riches of his grace: such, as when received into the renewed and spiritual mind, by the power of the Holy Ghost, cannot but be very relieving, and efficacious to the hearts of the people of God. Thus I have endeavoured to open to you these words, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, in a manifestative and influential way, which most assuredly, and evidently, is the meaning of the apostle here. Otherwise, as it respects pardon of sin, it is an act of the Divine mind. It was solemnly declared over and over, under the Old Testament dispensation. It was fully expressed when our Lord made peace by the blood of his cross. It was most freely and fully published by the apostles, in their preaching the everlasting gospel, as it had been by all the prophets before them. Hence *Peter* says, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him, shall receive remission of sins." Acts x. 43. And *Paul* says, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Acts xiii. 38. He also writing to the saints at *Colosse* speaks to them of this forgiveness of sins, in the past tense. "Having forgiven you all trespasses," ch. ii. 13. It is the manifestation of it to the mind is what is intended in the scriptures cited, and also in the text before us. And, as the Lord's called ones, going to our heavenly Father, with our sins, wounds, disease, and maladies, He most graciously compassionates us. And by creating such conceptions in our renewed minds, how he stands related to us, as our Father in Christ Jesus; that he hath ever in view and remembrance, the everlasting covenant, which hath been fulfilled, ratified, and sealed with the blood of his Son, He is pleased to shine upon us in Him. Our heavenly Father thus manifests, and makes known afresh his pardon and forgiveness to our minds. In so exercising himself towards us, He proves himself to be what he is, *faithful and just*. He is hereby faithful to his Son. He is just in the fulfilment of his promise unto Him; and He is just and faithful to us in Him, in exercising himself towards us, agreeable with his covenant relation to us, and his promises of grace, which are set before us, in his most holy word. And this is the substance of what is expressed, and set before us, in these words; which are designed as a means of consolation. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*. It is the knowledge of this, is to support us under all the miseries, and infirmities, which cannot but arise, from the inherency of sin in us. I come

5. To notice the perception of this grace, in the spiritual mind, which is thus expressed. *And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

We have access to the divine Father, spiritually and mentally. We come before Him with our complaints: we deeply bewail what we are in our fallen nature: we confess before Him the prevalency of sin: we express what our cases are: we recite before Him, what the glorious Mediator hath been, and done, and completed. This is performed under and by the inward energy of the Holy Ghost within us. The Father is pleased to open our minds, and let in upon them, such blessed concep-

tions of our precious Lord Jesus, as carry us before we are aware, from all our sins, and miseries. He gives us such clear views of the eternal dignity of the Person of Christ, as fills us with holy admiration. He admits us to entertain such thoughts of the everlasting worth and perfection of his righteousness and offering, as lead us off entirely from ourselves : and off from sin too : so as that we clearly apprehend in our own minds, the value and virtue of Christ's most precious blood : by means of which we have the Lord Jesus Christ so inwardly made known to us, by the secret and imperceptible operation of the Holy Ghost, within us, and upon us, that we see ourselves to be in the sight of our heavenly Father, clean from all sin in the blood of the Lamb. And thus the divine Father is pleased to manifest, and evidence to us, the free and full forgiveness of our sins : of our past, and present sinfulness, which we have been bewailing before Him : and to give us fresh light into this mystery of grace, that he cleanseth us from all unrighteousness, in the blood and righteousness of his Son ; which he having once for all imputed unto us, he is continually reiterating his vast mind on. And by the renewing the thoughts of, in ours, we enjoy and feel the blessed effects of. I can say, I know the ruth of all this, in my own case, and in my own mind. Yet it may be, I may not have stated it so as to convey the subject fully to your minds. I must say this, what I know most of in these important, personal, and experimental particulars, I can say the least of. Not for want of the true knowledge of them, but for want of words in which to clothe them. May the Lord bless what is here set before you, and give you the true knowledge of it. Amen.

SERMON X.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.—1 JOHN i. 10.

THE subject of personal communion with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, is deep, and most truly sublime. It proceeds from the knowledge of the Person of Christ, God-Man, and of the Father in Him. It was the will of the Eternal Spirit, that this Apostle should write on it. He being in a peculiar manner qualified for the same. He doth so as to make the same clear and plain. So as that he which runs may read. He shews it is the greatest fruit of everlasting love, of the love which the Three divine Persons in the one boundless and ineffable Essence, have in their infinite mind towards the Elect. The manifestation of which is begun on earth. They know it, believe it, and have the enjoyment of it now. It will be continued in Heaven. In the which, the uttermost manifestation of the blessedness contained therein, will be made known to the saints, agreeable to their enlightened faculties. This great and wonderful expression of grace, concerning fellowship with the

Father and the Son, which had been, and still was enjoyed by the apostles, it being an increase of blessedness to them, the apostle informs the saints of, that they enjoying the same, the joy on both sides might be increased. He then aims to remove every thing which might be an interruption on either side, to this most blessed fellowship. This is stated, and it is also removed. It was the natural, or sinful infirmities the saints were each, and every one of them the subjects of, which could not but be considered by them, as obstructions to this most holy, and blessed fellowship; yet there was a most blessed provision made for the same, in the one everlastingly efficacious sacrifice of the holy and immaculate Lamb. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It was a constant course of sinning, which was full proof that such and such, let their profession, and pretensions be what they might, had no lot nor part in this inestimable favour. To the intent the whole purity contained in this invaluable subject might be preserved and maintained, the apostle adds. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In going through the two former verses, it has been stated, that none of the saints are without sin. They have all, and each of them, their inward constitutional sin, and inherent sinfulness. It is the one and common case, of each, and all of them. They all know in and for themselves, the plague of their own hearts. It hath also been expressed, the one only remedy for them—it is to confess their sins to their heavenly Father. He will deal with them agreeably with the everlasting covenant. He will be gracious and full of compassion. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He will do this, as an act of justice, as it also is an act of mercy. He will create in their minds fresh apprehensions, and open by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, such views of the everlasting perfection of his Son's righteousness and blood, and let in such influences of the same on their minds, as will revive them: and thereby they will be blessed with fresh thoughts of the perpetual virtue and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. Then the apostle closes his present discourse thus. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* This terminates his present subject. He here alters his terms: he before had been speaking of the inherency of sin. This denied, constituted such persons liars. They must be self deceivers. They were destitute of the truth. If sin had being in believers, it must be as the consequence thereof, that real saints must in some cases, be under its corrupting influences, and fall thereby. We cannot confess our sins, if we have none to confess. It is allowed by the apostle, saints have their falls, and actually commit sins. They as considered in Christ, are without all sin. As in themselves, and so long as continued in a time state, they have the whole essence of sin within them, and need the virtue of Christ's sacrifice continually. In our text the apostle says, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (i.e. God) a liar, and his word is not in us.* I will aim with the Lord's assistance to open, and set forth the substance of what is contained in the words of my present text thus:—

1. The apostle's assertion, which is positive. He says that they had

sinned. It was a past act which they could not deny. *If we say that we have not sinned.*

2. What follows on the denial of this. It makes God a liar. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (i.e. God) a liar.*

3. I will shew in, and by what way *we make God a liar.*

4. By such an assertion, that we have not sinned, it most evidently appears, that the word of God is not in us. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* Of these in their order. I begin

1. With the apostle's assertion, which is positive. It includes himself, with all that "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs, and ours." *If we say that we have not sinned.*—We who are on the Lord's side, who have real and blessed fellowship with the Father, and the Son, we should tell a lie in so saying. It is well for us to know what sin is. That it is a mental act. That it wholly and actually originates and springs from its inherency in us. This is the very spring and root of all actual corruption. Inherent sin is a self-acting principle. It is always in act whether we perceive it or not. So that our continued sins, even such of the Lord's people as are most, and best kept from actual falls into actual sin, are above and beyond all conception. It is well for us, the Lord God hath set bounds to our sinnings. That those, and Christ's sacrifice are so commensurate, as that we cannot exceed and go beyond the virtue of his blood. Some, sin most in thought; it is chiefly mentally. Others, by words, the expression of bad tempers, and sometimes by outward corruptions. It is in its proper place, a real blessing to know what sin is. To know the nature of it. To see the exceeding sinfulness of it. And to abstain from all appearances of evil. Sin as it really is, can only be seen in the light of God's word, and Spirit. Such as are most spiritually illuminated into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have the most intimate fellowship with Him, are the only persons who see sin properly; yet all their views of it, and real hatred against it, and, in every particular act, and out breaking of it, do not deliver them from the inherency of it, nor from its sinful influences through which at times they fall by it. Nor does their fellowship with God, and Christ, through the Spirit, save them, so as that they do not fall by their own particular besetting sin over and over again. No saint, let him be who, or what he may, is so saved from his constitutional, and besetting sin, as he may conceive. Some will have it, we are never overcome by the same sins, after conversion, that we were before; but this is a real mistake. If we are overcome at all, it must be by the same. It must proceed from the same cause. And that is the sin which dwelleth in us. Whilst we cannot enter into any hearts but our own, yet most assuredly it must be so, that no saint can sin any other way than he has heretofore. None of us, I say, are saved from sin, so much as we conceive. We are saved from a state of sin, and sinfulness. We are also saved from an outward gross way of sin, and sinfulness. Yet we are not always saved from cursed and carnal affections. Nor from expressions and dispositions which are evidences of our inward sinfulness. Whilst all this is our own, personally and particularly, and each heart knoweth its own bitterness, and it is well it is so; yet so it is, we are taught by the Holy Spirit in the word, not to deny the truth of this. It is not here, "If we say that we have no sin," but it is, *If we say that we have not sinned,*

we give God himself the lie. We must not deny this. Every one of us sins, when, it may be, we perceive it not. It may be, we who are the Lord's, and are now here before Him, may have been favoured with some most blessed communion with Him, and our hearts and affections may have been raised heavenward; yet even such of us, cannot say, *We have not sinned*. No. Nor can we say we have not sinned this morning. No. That we cannot. How is it possible we should? seeing we have at all times within us the same root from whence all evil originates. We have then the close of the apostle's subject concerning sin, and its influence in, and on the saints. It is not only in them, but they feel and are afflicted with it, and at times influenced by it. A remedy for which he prescribed: and for their spiritual support, he said, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The justness of God in so doing, as it respected his truth to himself, to Christ, to saints as one in Him, and with Him, is expressed to sustain the faith of saints, and to increase, and confirm their faith and hope in the Lord. He then says, as having finished what he had expressed in the two foregoing verses, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. So that it fully appears, by writing these three last verses of this chapter together, the apostle would have them know the whole of sin as it concerned them: in its inbeing in them: in its effects within and upon them: in its continuation, and their lapses thereby. He would have them know, and also acknowledge the same, thereby leading them to understand how deeply they were concerned in this subject; which may most truly be considered as a mean of leading them into further and increasing views of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose blood cleanseth now and for ever, all the holy brethren from all sin. To walk in sin, and at the same time to have fellowship with God, this he will not admit of. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness;" this is to utter a lie. If any say that we have no sin, this he will by no means admit of: but declares all such are liars. That such as are in Christ, who hear his voice, and have fellowship with Him, are not free from falls into sin, he admits of: otherwise he had never said, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Saints are not so free from partial falls into sin, as some, it may be then conceived: and it may be as some conceive also in our day. Sin is sin in saints, as truly as it is in sinners; or, why should saints so deeply lament it as they do? If they did not fall by it, they would not daily need manifestative pardons for the same. To close the whole, therefore, of his discourse, he says, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. He is not here contented to say, we have sin in us, therefore we may, must naturally fall by it on some occasions; neither is he contented to say, all this is through the infirmity of the flesh; but he will express himself in the strongest terms: he therefore uses the word *sinned*. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. If we say, we have not transgressed the law of God since we knew Christ, and have been favoured with real fellowship with Him, and with the Father in Him, we make God himself a liar, in so saying. I proceed to my next particular, which is

2. To observe what follows upon a denial of the positive assertion

of the apostle—It is to make God a liar. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him* (i. e. God, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all) *a liar.*

I conceive, we are very greatly mistaken, concerning what we style actual sin. We generally speak on this subject, as if what hath been only mental, does not come under the term of actual sin: yet it should be known, that what is only mental, or in the mind, has its existence there so really, that it actually defiles the mind. It must, therefore, in the sight of the Lord be actual sin. Now if it be thus, and if this be but allowed, then this question comes in—"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" and if none can, then it follows, there is no one can come forward and say, I have not sinned. No. Not one single saint, of all the number of them which may at any time exist in our world. If we are not without sin inherently, then we are not without sin influentially. If it be so, then we are not, we cannot be without falls into it: which if we were, there could be no need of our confession and humiliation before the Lord. Then we could not stand in need of a reiteration of the virtue of the blood of Christ to our minds. We must give up the verse going before our present text altogether, if we have not sinned. We no longer need the propitiatory virtue of Christ's blood and righteousness, if we have not sinned. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Whilst looking at, and living on the Lord Jesus Christ will keep us from ten thousand evils and sins; yet let this be ever so blessedly the case, it will never so completely keep any one of the Lord's beloved ones, that he shall not sin, either in thought, word, or deed. No. "There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not." This is equal with our text. *If we say that we have not sinned.* The apostle speaks here for himself, and all the apostles. If I, or they say that we have not sinned: if any of the saints, who have fellowship with us, and with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ: if we who have sin in us, and have confessed the same before the Lord, and have had in our own souls, a real sense and apprehension in our own minds, of the virtue of the most precious bloodshedding of Jesus Christ, as cleansing us from all sin—should any of us say, that we have not sinned; we should tell lies. It would, in effect, be to contradict the word of God, which declares "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It would be full and present proof against us, that we do not allow his word to be true: we should sin against our own consciences: we should contradict our own experiences of these matters. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* If we saints, says John, let our age, and state in christianity be what it may, say that we have not sinned, we do not utter truth. We should be false witnesses for God, and before Him, were we to assert this. We, says the apostle, who walk in the light, and have personal communion with Him, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and who are cleansed before the Lord, through his most precious bloodshedding, yet we are not without the very present inherency of sin: we have all sinfulness in our fallen natures: we who actually walk with God in holy and blessed communion with Him, are this moment subject to fall and slide into sin. We do so: our confession of sin is the proof of this. In so doing, he is pleased to make known in us, the present and everlasting

virtue, worth, and efficacy of his Son's most perfect offering of himself: so as that we know in our own souls, that we are clean from all sin before Him: yet were any of us to say, that we have not sinned, since we had the knowledge and enjoyment of these most blessed and divine truths in our souls, we should lie to God, and against him. And so, men and brethren, should we do also, were we to say, that we have not sinned since we knew the Lord. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

3. I will shew, in and by what way, *we make God a liar*, in saying, *we have not sinned.*

God is Truth itself. He is Holiness itself. We cannot in a certain sense make God a liar, any more than we can mar the holiness and purity of the Divine Essence. All the sin and sinfulness of men and devils, cannot cast the least blemish on the Divine Majesty: neither can all the errors which are amongst the sons of men make the God of Truth a liar. No. God is immutably holy. He is immutably true. So is his word, and all revealed of Him, and concerning Him in the scriptures of Truth. They may be said to be true as God is true, because they contain the sacred and revealed will of God. They are the testimonials of his mind and will. They very especially concern, and respect his church and people in Christ Jesus: so that they should be very carefully attended unto by all the called of God in Christ Jesus. Such, therefore, as receive, believe, and profess any thing contrary to what is contained in them, and therewith, and thereby confront any sacred assertion in the divine revelation, may be said to give God the lie; seeing the whole volume of inspiration was given by Him. It is an apostolic assertion which is here before us: *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar*: because it is fully set forth in the Book of God, that all men sinned in Adam—that we are all the subjects of the fall—that we are all one and the same subjects of sin and corruption—that it belongs to all the elect throughout the world, what the prophet *Isaiah* spoke in their name and his own, “all we like sheep have gone astray.” Now if we have once gone astray, though the blood of Christ atones, it does not make our impure nature clean; i. e. old Adam nature is still in its essential impurity felt: and if it is perfectly unclean, and if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, how can we say at any time, we are, in our selves, without sin: or how can we, with the inherency of sin in us, at any time say, we have not sinned. Now it being so expressly contrary to the word of God; it is to make God a liar. A most tremendous sin. One would have at once thought none under a profession of the gospel should have ever needed to be put on their guard against it: yet the words before us are spoken to saints, as well as to all under an outward visible profession. If we saints say that we have not sinned, we give the God of truth the lie. It is in our professing what is contrary to the truth of the Lord's most holy word, we give God the lie. The prophet, speaking for the whole church and himself, says, “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” He is here speaking of saints: of real saints: and of himself also. Then if it was so, these persons could never say, *we have not sinned*: and if we say, we cannot deny this, then we are true speakers; but if we say *we have not sinned*, it would be a direct contradiction to this truth. Therefore as it is contained in the Book of God, and therein witnessed as the truth by the Holy Spirit

of God, to deny this to be the truth, is to make the God of truth a liar. If we, any of the saints, say, *we have not sinned, we make God a liar.* Even Him, who is "light, and in whom there is no darkness at all." It most assuredly strikes at the very root of all the self-righteousness in our fallen natures. Therefore these words should not be overlooked by us, who are on the Lord's side, and who are disposed to say, there is no good in our fallen natures; for we cannot but confess when we do not actually perceive the cursed workings and operations of the same, we are frequently led to think better of ourselves than we ought. I would therefore consider these words, as admirably suited to bring down every high thought within us; to lead us at all times to acknowledge the exceeding sinfulness of sin: and thereby to freely acknowledge how seldom it is, we live out of ourselves, and off from ourselves, on the Lord Jesus Christ, independently of any thing in ourselves. In all we do, we sin in one instance or other. We sinned before we knew Christ: we have done so since we knew Him. And it comes to pass, that at times, when we have been most refreshed with his life-giving presence, and had more than ordinary communion with Him, and some peculiar outgoings of heart and affections after him, we have most suddenly and unexpectedly fallen into sin. I must confess I have had the bitter experience of this. Such of the Lord's as have not, are greatly indebted to the Divine favour for not being thus and thus a prey to their own inward corruptions, the snares of the devil, and his hellish blasts, whereby he stirs up inward corruptions. We most assuredly all find and perceive, that we are one moment all alive to Christ: the next all death to him. Surely we do find we are to our shame and confusion of face, tired of holding fellowship with him. We want to be unbent: to have our thoughts exercised on this, that, and the other: what is all this but going off Christ? what is all this but sinning against God in Christ? what does all this prove, but that we have sinned? So that at times we cannot but confess it, and say, as it respects our original apostacy, our inherent, and actual apostacy of mind from the Lord, and the awful proofs we have, and in one instance or other daily and continually give of the same, "the crown is fallen from our head, woe unto us, for we have sinned." We must tell a lie therefore, if we, let us be real saints, yea, if saints of the highest advancement in the school of Christ, if we say that we have not sinned. Our text declares it: we cannot deny the charge. The Lord give us proper views of it, that we may be humbled for the same. May we be truly sensible of what another apostle says, "In many things we offend all." I might add, in a variety of ways: and many a time imperceptible to ourselves. In fact it must be so, as every thing which issues from our nature selves, even though it should wear a religious appearance, must be essentially corrupt. The fountain being wholly corrupted, all which flows from it must be corrupt also. Our Lord says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." All, therefore, which issues from the one, is wholly like the mind from whence it issues; so that sin is not grace, nor grace sin. They are both in the regenerate person, yet will they never coalesce. Hence it is peculiar to them who are born of the Spirit, and to them alone, to know that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that (says the apostle,) ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. v.

17: so that none can say, I have not sinned. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar*, by contradicting his truth, and his word is not in us—If we so say. This brings me to my last particular,

4. That by uttering such a declaration, and giving out such an assertion, that *we have not sinned*, it most evidently appears, that the word of God is not in us. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* This is to sin immediately against the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father; even him who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. His Word, his Truth can have no place in our hearts if we so declare, and assert of, and concerning ourselves. If it had, we could not so say. When the written and revealed will and word of God dwelleth in us, we speak the truth in Christ, and lie not. We acknowledge ourselves to be, what we are therein declared to be; and that the salvation revealed in the same written word, suits us as sinners, and because we are sinners, and shall continue to be such in ourselves to the last moment of our lives. It would be a full evidence against us, that God's truth, the word in which a clear account is given both of sin, and salvation is not in us, were we in direct opposition to the same, to say, *that we have not sinned.* Every ordinance under the Old Testament dispensation was full proof that sin was in the saints: that they could not save themselves in whole, or in part from it. They were therefore directed to the use and observations of such washings, sacrifices, sprinklings, and purifications for cleansing, as were so many memorials of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to make them clean from all their sin before the Lord, by the one offering of Himself. Now had these persons been without sin, if they had not sinned; then to provide means for their purification, could never have entered into the mind and will of God, for they would have been needless: so also had any made use of these, it would have been to contradict the very design of them. If a man had not sinned, he could have no need of the sacrifice of Christ, nor of the memorials thereof; yet as it would have been a lie then, in any one's mouth, to say, I have not sinned, so it would have been to make the God of Truth a liar, to have expressed such a sentence. In like manner under our present dispensation of the same everlasting gospel, it is contrary to the very revelation of grace declared in, and by it, to say, I have not sinned. It being the very essence of it, that "it is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If they had not sinned, they had not been sinners: therefore if we say we have not sinned, we give God's word the lie: and we give full proof that his Truth is not in us. It is also to sin against the very solemn institutions of the Lord and Saviour. What is baptism, and the supper of the Lord for? are they not sacred records of the Person, Sufferings, Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ: and of the everlasting efficacy of his one expiatory offering? surely they are. Now where would there be any use, to put us in continual remembrance of the most precious bloodshedding of our Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin, were we not inherently sinful? If we never sinned, after having received the atonement of Christ, what need was there for these ordinances? are we not directed by, and in the use of them, to Christ, and what he hath done for us as sinners? And is it not the view and appre-

hension of his having died for such as we are, that give us encouragement to rest wholly in him for life and salvation? Then it is plainly to sin against all this to say, I have not sinned. By such an assertion it most fully appears, that the word of God is not in us: that the Truth of God is not in us. By asserting *we have not sinned*, it fully appears the word of God is not in us: we are not speaking agreeably with it. Neither can Christ the Essential Word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever, and who liveth in the hearts of his renewed, and beloved, and called people, by his word, and Spirit, be in such as say, *we have not sinned*. For by such an assertion, we contradict God's testimony giver of us, in the written word. And thus, in a most awful way and manner, we give the God of Truth the lie. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* Let us learn from hence, to speak at all times of ourselves, and cases, agreeable with the word of God: this will be for our own real profit, and for the Lord's praise. Let us never want to force ourselves to be what we are not: it will do us no good. We shall never get above sin, but as we are looking unto Christ. We shall never be in ourselves, but what we now are, so long as we are in this present state. All we want is to see and apprehend how most exactly we are suited to Christ, and how most exactly he suits us. Then to walk in the practical belief of our sinnership, and his Saviourship, this will make way for us to gain an increasing knowledge of our most precious Lord Jesus, and gain a blessed sense of our heavenly Father's love towards us in him. Let us never attempt to speak after others. Many saints are, and ever will be strangers to the views and attainments of other saints. And we, though far below them in knowledge and experience, want to say just as they and others do: this is spiritual pride: this is to commit sin: we sometimes hereby tell lies for God. We sin against the truth, and the word of God, by declaring that it is so and so with us: when at present we are not arrived at such an experience: nor have gained such and such clear full views of the Father's everlasting love to our persons in Christ, as by our own expressions we bolt out, and would have others conceive concerning us. We are never better than when we are contented with what the Lord hath taught us, and made clear and plain to us, and given us to receive from his own word. This is that teaching which makes the simple wise unto salvation, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is one fruit of divine teaching to have low thoughts of ourselves, and all we are in ourselves, whilst we are led to have high thoughts of God, and of his Christ; and prize communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, as the greatest blessing we can possibly enjoy. This will lead us to avoid every thing which would be a means of taking off our hearts from this most blessed fellowship with God, and his Son Jesus Christ. Our apostle has been doing this for us, saying, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* May the Lord the Holy Spirit be pleased to give a clear knowledge of his most holy will, in the scriptures which have been set before us. He only can to any good purpose: and as they all serve in a various way, to disengage the mind from every entanglement which may arise from wrong views of sin, and grace, and of what does, and of what does

not take off, and interrupt our communion with the Lord, may He therefore be so our teacher, as to make us profitably acquainted with the subject. Grant this, thou Holy Inspirer of all scripture. Amen.

SERMON XI.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.—1 JOHN II. 1.

THE apostle here begins, as I conceive, another part of this most important, and interesting subject, which concerns all believers in Christ Jesus; so as they may have the true knowledge how their minds may be fully relieved from guilt and distress, by faith in the blood of Christ, and proceed on in holy fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. To state this most exactly, none was so qualified as our apostle. He says all which was absolutely necessary on it. He says not too much of sin: nor too little. He aims to remove the guilt of it from the mind in a right gospel way. His intent in so doing is to glorify the Lord—to exalt Christ—to do good to real saints—to shew them how they were to persevere in a holy walk, and thus proceed perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He knew this truth must at all times prevail with them, or they could not attain to a steady walk with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, viz. they must receive this truth into their minds which he had before delivered unto them, that the blood of Jesus Christ was their everlasting purity: that they were washed in it: justified, and sanctified, and reconciled, and brought nigh unto God by it: that they were in the sight of God, everlastingly pure and clean from all sin. In the true knowledge and full belief of this, they were to have, and they hereby only could have free access to the Father, and be preserved from every evil which might lead them off from walking before the Lord unto all well pleasing. He had, in the three last verses of the former chapter, insisted on the inherency of sin in the saints. He prescribed a remedy for them, when at any time they were overcome by it. He declared if any of them were to say they had not sinned, this was to make God a liar: and here he proposes a most powerful cordial, to bear up their minds, in the worst case they could possibly be in. If they committed sin, it would be the worst thing which could befall them this side glory. He therefore says, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* I have written as I have, to prevent your falling by sin: to prevent your falls into sin; yet as no man liveth and sinneth not; I cannot suppose you will live so as never to sin. I know the guilt which will be brought into your minds thereby: and the grief it will be the occasion of introducing into your hearts. I know what accusations the devil will also bring in against you, when at any time you fall into sin. With these views of the subject I write unto you. My aim is to prevent your sinning:

to keep you from it : at the same time, well knowing the inward power and influence of sin, and your inability to stand one single moment, by any power of your own, and knowing also the Lord himself may leave you to your wills in the hour of temptation, as he did his beloved *Peter* ; I write to inform you, should any of you, who have fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin ; should any one of us sin, *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* I have here put all these three verses together, because they belong to one and the same subject ; yet in my explaining them, I shall make a distinct sermon of each. My present text contains present and immediate relief, for the worst which can ever happen unto us. There is no evil in the world but sin : and it is in us : we all more or less fall by it. On the consideration of this, the apostle gives the information, that we have an advocate who pleads on our behalf. He had before declared that *the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* Thus he presented sin and Christ's blood together, declaring, how the one exceeds, transcends, and overcomes the other. So in our text, he brings sin and Christ close together : the one as the disease, the other as the Physician ; so that the one hath no sooner given the wound, but the other is present to heal it. This most certainly is the outline of the text, which contains a variety of glorious particulars. Which I will endeavour to open and explain in the following method and order.

1. I will take notice of the words, by which the apostle addresses the saints to whom he writes, together with his end in writing unto them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

2. What he writes to them. It is concerning what very greatly interested them to know and believe. It was also concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The adversary against whom Christ pleads is Satan. The clients for whom he pleads are saints. The Person before whom he pleads, and with whom he pleads, is the Father. It is in consequence of our sin committed, Christ pleads on our behalf. He does not plead on the behalf of sin ; nor does he plead for it. No. It is on the behalf of his people, when they are fallen by it. So that neither the words, nor doctrine of our text, contain the least encouragement for sin.

3. Christ is a *righteous Advocate*. Therefore his plea on the behalf of his sinning people, cannot but be successful. So that they need not despair. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

4. How we receive the benefit of this into our minds. This is by the Holy Ghost : who is styled *Advocate* by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in these words, " But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John xiv. 26. The learned say the word *Comforter* in this verse, is *Advocate*, in the *Greek*. He, to relieve us from the suggestions of Satan, of the world, and our own sinful hearts, pleads the cause of Christ in our consciences, and enthrones Him there. He also " maketh inter-

cession for us with groaning, which cannot be uttered." See Rom. viii. 26. May the Lord lead me, so to fill up these particulars, as may be for your profit. Amen. I am ;

1. To take notice of the words, by which the apostle addresses the saints to whom he writes : together with his end in writing to them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

The words of the address, put me in remembrance of what is by some said of our apostle : who, as he lived to be an hundred years old, so when he came to the christian assemblies all he could say, was, *little children love one another*. I can scarcely believe, our Lord Jesus Christ would keep him out of heaven to answer no other end by him than this amounts to. These words ; *my little children*, seem to express that he had some particular interest in these persons. He might have been their Spiritual Father ; or, he might thus address them, out of the love of his heart, which he bore to all the saints. It is most certainly a very winning way, by which he could not but draw out their hearts towards him ; and thereby make way for them to receive what he had to deliver unto them. I should conceive, this may be looked on as one reason for this address ; and also for the title *children* : and *little children*. No one who has read with attention his gospel, and the 13, 14, 15, and 16, chapters of the same, but must see and perceive how he carries our Lord's Spirit, and sometimes expresses himself very nearly in the same language which our Lord did. As he addresses those to whom he wrote thus most affectionately, with the title *my little children*, so he informs them why he wrote to them as he did. It was that they might not sin. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not*. This was a most noble end. The things written were such as concerned personal fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. If they attended to this subject, they would most certainly be kept from sin. They would lose all relish for it, as they were favoured with soul-refreshing views of the everlasting love of the Father, and the glories of Christ's Person as God-Man, and his complete salvation. Whilst the minds of saints are so engaged, all is well ; sin is subdued, and grace is quickened, revived, excited and strengthened. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not*. Yet he knew they were liable to sin : *Peter* sinned ; yet Christ had warned him. He had prayed for him. If he sinned, it must be expected other saints would also. They could not be more exalted than he was. He had been pronounced blessed by Christ. He had seen Christ on the mount of transfiguration. He had been with Him at his holy supper. He had been with Him in the garden, and beheld Him in his passion and bloody-sweat. Yet all this did not prevent *Peter's* sinning against his Lord. Yea, he sinned grievously, even in the very hearing of Christ. If this was his case, what is there to prevent its being in the substance of it, the case with others of the Lord's beloved ? They cannot be more near and dear to Christ, nor can they be more and better beloved by him than *Peter* was. And as his fall was brought about by Satan, so the same adversary is always on the watch to swallow up, in the hour of temptation. Our apostle therefore writes to these *little children* to keep them from sin : to prevent from falling into sin : to put them on their guard against it : that they might be delivered from it. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not*. I love you as mine own. I love you in the bowels of my Lord. I write

on purpose on the subjects set before you, out of real love to you. No other apostle hath any hand in my present writing. I write of, and from myself to you: yet not without the influence and direction of the Holy Ghost. I write these things which I have set before you, in the former part of this Epistle, *that ye sin not*. I proceed to consider,

2. What the apostle wrote to them. It is of that which very greatly concerned them, to know, and believe. It also concerned the Lord Jesus Christ. *These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* There is no heart can ever fully conceive the evil of sin: the bitterness saints have the experience of, when they sin against the Lord: nor can any one so feel for them, and sympathize with them, as to suit their inward frames and feelings, when they are actually overcome with sin, and are fallen by it, but our Lord Jesus Christ. He can. He doth. Even though he is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Our text gives us full proof of it. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The apostle puts in himself, in the word *we*, as being as liable to sin, as the *little children* he wrote unto: and as having interest in the same Father, and also in the same advocate. *Mr. Romaine* was for reading the words thus. *If any one of us, who have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, we have an advocate with the Father.* Most certain it is, this is the apostle's meaning. Every man that sinneth doth not belong to our Lord Jesus Christ: such as do not, will everlastingly perish in their sins. It is only those for whom Christ became their sacrifice, who have him for their advocate. And he is their advocate against their adversary, who is the devil. It is the devil who pleads against them. Christ pleads for them. He does this with the Father. It is in consequence of sin committed, Christ pleads on the behalf of his clients. We are they. He does not plead on the behalf of sin. No. Nor does he plead for it. Yet he pleads on the behalf of his sinning people: not to extenuate their crimes, be they what they may. He pleads on the behalf of his people, when they are fallen by their iniquity: so that neither the words, nor doctrine of our text, contain the least encouragement for sin. I thought good to express this, for the following reason—that so it is, we are prone to suspect the free grace of God: to think we may make too free with such a scripture as this: that to allow it possible for a real believer to commit sin, will have a dangerous tendency. Hence we are for avoiding such a passage as this. Or if it be taken as the foundation for a discourse, to say as little about sin, and sinning as possible. Beloved, we should aim to unfold our text; or why do we take one. This, here before us, does not concern sinners, it belongs to saints: nor does it even suit *them* when they are in the mount of high and exalted fellowship with God. It suits them when the devil has broken in upon them: when sin has prevailed over them: when they have been actually overcome by their inherent corruptions, and cannot but cry out, we have sinned. I am not going to say, as the renowned *Dr. Goodwin* does, that the apostle by the term *sin* here, means some gross act of sinning: but whilst I am not going to particularize what is to be understood, and comprehended here by *sin*, yet I must so understand it, treat, and explain it, as comprehending every sinful case of the called people of the most high God. Let their sins be what they may, after they are called with an holy calling, we must understand the pas-

sage before us, as designed by the apostle, to be a grand catholicon for them all. Let their personal sins be what they may, none of them must be left out, unless we are unwilling to have a complete cure for all our spiritual maladies. It belongs to all the saints. It is thus directed unto them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:* "And he is the propitiation for our sins." This is the first place in the New Testament we have our Lord Jesus Christ presented unto us under this title: yet we have all included in it, and in his execution of this office, set forth in a vision *Zechariah* the Prophet saw, and records in the 3rd. chapter of his Prophecy. He says he saw in vision, "Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD; and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" v. 1, 2. Here is the substance of what is contained in our text. If the saints did not sin, they would not need Christ to be their advocate. When they have sinned, Satan their adversary immediately turns their accuser. He brings in his accusations, and pleads against them in the court of their own consciences. They fall under the same. They cannot but acknowledge themselves guilty. He pursues them, even when, and whilst they are at the throne of grace. They are self condemned, and confounded. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ who is interested in them, pleads against Satan's charges, on their behalf: He pleads for them, as his clients, his own blood and righteousness, the everlasting and present efficacy of the same. The Person with whom he pleads is the Father. Even He who is, and stands in this relation to all his family in heaven and in earth, who are named in Christ, and are one with Him. Our Advocate pleads before him, in the high court above. *If any man sin, we have an advocate*, who is deeply concerned for us: who stands up on our behalf: who lives in the presence of God for us. It is our misery to sin. We feel the guilt of it in our minds, and experience unspeakable sorrow for it in our hearts. Yet this neither undoes what we have done: nor can it remove the guilt of the same from us. Our Lord is in our nature in the highest heavens. He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is not such as not to be touched with a feeling of our *infirmities*, but he is so affected with the same, as to be a merciful and faithful high priest. It is sin, yea, actual sin designed by the word *infirmities*: nor must we leave this out: if we do, we shall omit bringing in Christ, when, and where we most need him. Let us not go beyond the apostles: we shall do wrong so to do. If any man who belongs to the election of grace *sin, we have an advocate with the Father*. This is our consolation: and by it we have most blessed relief from the accusations of Satan, and our own consciences, when we are most sorely oppressed with actual falls into sin. I proceed to my next particular,

3. To shew that Christ is a righteous advocate. Therefore his plea on behalf of his sinning people, cannot but be successful. They therefore need not despair. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, hath a righteous plea to make, on the behalf of his sinning people, and that with his righteous Father, whilst he does not by any means excuse any part of their sin, or sinfulness. He is in-

terested in the persons of his people, and in each and every one of their concerns. He has them in perpetual remembrance, and liveth after the power of an endless life, in his Father's presence on their behalf. His appearance in the presence of God for them, is their eternal perfection. As he bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and put them away by the sacrifice of himself, and washed them clean from all sin, in his most precious blood, so he presents them in his own Person, blood and righteousness, before the divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, without all sin. They are without all blame before the throne of God. In him they are complete : as such he beholds them : yet they having sin in them, and they sometimes falling by the same, hence to relieve their minds from the guilt thereof, Christ is set before them in the gospel as an Intercessor and Advocate, which I conceive to be one, and the same : only so expressed in a two-fold point of view to give the mind of real saints the more complete relief : especially in cases of sin : it is then we need the same views of Christ, and apprehensions of his blood and sacrifice as we were favoured with when we first believed. Yet the atonement of Christ being a past one, although it be everlastingly perfect and efficacious, yet we seem to want some renewal of the knowledge of the same to our minds, as may suit and be agreeable with our present cases and circumstances. Hence the advocacy of our Lord, is spoken of here, as our present and immediate remedy : it containing the same present health and cure, which was in the wounds and blood of Christ. As he died for us, when we were sinners, and ungodly, so He is an Advocate for us when we have sinned. And the true knowledge of this, is proposed by the apostle, to be our consolation and cure when we have sinned actually. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The expression, *the Father*, is a general and vastly expressive one. All the elect make but one family : a part of them are in the house eternal in the heavens ; and a part of them are here in this our world. Those in glory cannot sin : such as are here upon earth may : yet they are all equally interested in the Father's love : they are equally and alike before Him, in his love and favour. Christ is their advocate with him, He is the friend of his people, in the execution of this his office. He is a righteous advocate. He is the Lord our righteousness. He is in heaven as such. He thus appears before the throne. And the Father beholds all the members of Christ, as made the righteousness of God in Him. It was his own act to make them so, by imputing the righteousness of Christ unto them. As they are thus in Christ, so he also pleads his own righteousness with the Father on his, as also on their behalf : whereby he has more to plead for them, than sin, or Satan can possibly have to plead against them. The Person of Christ, God-Man, exceeds in worth and excellency all his people, even though they are, and have been the objects of the Father's everlasting love and delight from before all time. His undertakings on their behalf, were before they had sin in them : thereby they were secured from the imputation of it. His being made in the fulness of time, sin and a curse for them, which was the act of the Father, must have a worth in the same, which transcends all sin, as inherent in the elect. The obedience, sufferings, blood and sacrifice, death, and soul-travail of Jesus Christ cannot but everlastingly exceed all the guilt, evil, and demerit of sin : all which, this great Advocate hath to plead, on

the behalf of his sinning people: which cannot but invalidate all charges of sin, and sinfulness, which may be brought against them, by Satan their adversary and accuser. The saints therefore of the Most High, should consider this, so as to take the benefit of the same, and plead it on their own behalf. It is the will of the Holy Ghost they should do so: or it had never been written thus. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Whilst I am on this subject, I would say, I do not conceive the Intercession and Advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holiest even in heaven itself, to be a vocal one. It is enough, and allsufficient that he lives and appears in the presence of God for us. This is of itself, in its own nature and efficacy, equal to whatsoever may be included in such expressions as these. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?" Rom. viii. 33, 34. Christ became incarnate, and lived, and spent his whole life for us in this our world. He put away, and purged our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. He lay in his body in the grave for us. He rose from thence for our justification. He entered Heaven as our forerunner. He sat down on the right hand of God: which was an everlasting proof of his acceptance of the Father. He there lives to represent us. And his appearance there is a solemn memorial of what he completed on earth: the blessings and benefits of which, he wills the Father should bestow on his church militant in this our world. His office of Priesthood in heaven, is represented unto us, as consisting of two parts: Intercession and Advocacy: the whole of which is set before us, by Christ himself, in the 17th chapter of *John*. And most wonderful it is to consider, we have the whole life of Christ in glory, as we had his whole life in our nature and world, to carry us above and beyond, all our sins, and miseries. We sin against Christ, now He is in Heaven, yet he is our Advocate there. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.* Our Lord himself says, "The Father himself loveth you." And, "as the Father have loved me, so have I loved you." And he says to the divine Father, "Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." See *John* xvi. 27. chap. xv. 9. chap. xvii. 23. God loved us in Christ. He sees us as so many jewels, presented before Him in the Person, and shining forth in the heart of Christ. God's love and Christ's intercession are commensurate. In the death of Christ we are acquitted: In the resurrection of Christ we have an irrevocable act of justification in the high court of Heaven, that Christ was then justified, and we were then justified in Him. Christ at his ascension took possession of Heaven for us. He is seated at God's right hand with all power in heaven, and earth, to bestow and continue eternal life, with all the blessings of the same to his beloved ones. And in his Intercession and Advocacy we are completely and everlastingly secure. Believers in Jesus, look over the words of our text, over and over. It contains an infinite fountain of grace: such as we all need: especially when we have sinned. Consider the Advocate, who he is, and what he is. It is the Son of God. Even he *whose blood cleanseth us from all sin*. Remember with whom he intercedes! He is *an advocate with the Father*.

If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. The interest of the Father in Christ, and Christ's relation to the Father must have a mighty influence here. The expression *with the Father*, is indefinite, to express as fully and comprehensively as possible the prevailing efficacy of Christ's advocacy. Then the justice of Christ's plea on the behalf of his clients is noticed. He is *Jesus Christ the righteous*. His titles afford inexpressible sweetness. *Jesus* is a name of the utmost importance to us. He is the Self-Existent, the Allsufficient, the Almighty Saviour: who by virtue of his office, He being, and living a Priest for ever and having an unchangeable Priesthood, "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He is also a righteous intercessor and advocate.—He is *Jesus Christ the righteous*. His pleas are all righteous ones. He lays in no claims, but he has a most just right unto. He pleads on our behalf, with his Father, and our Father; with his God, and our God. He is well acquainted with whom he pleads, and with those for whom he pleads; and for what he pleads, and against whom he pleads. He never lost one single cause yet: so that we may with safety put our every case into his hand, and trust it wholly to him and with him. I come now to consider,

4. How we receive the benefit of what hath been treated of, concerning our Lord's advocacy, into our minds. This is by the Holy Ghost, who is styled *Advocate* by our Lord himself, in these words, "But the Comforter," (the learned say, the word is *Advocate*), "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

It is in our own minds we are oppressed. That which most sorely afflicts us is our personal sin, and guilt. We have fallen so and so, through the deceit of our hearts, and the malice of the devil. He follows us with accusations. He suggests them, and he brings them against us, and charges them on us, in the court of our own consciences. So he also does before God, when we fly to his throne of grace, to supplicate for mercy. He will suggest the remembrance of our sins to us. He will convey such thoughts of our own sinfulness unto us, as shall serve to swallow up. If he possibly can, he will swallow us up in despair. The Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in the saints, is pleased to put forth, beyond the perception and apprehension of them, his indwelling power and grace. And when their cases are vastly extreme, and their souls bowed down within them, He is pleased to act for them, and within them, and on their behalf, the part of an Advocate and Intercessor. He pleads Christ's cause in the court of their afflicted minds. He takes of the things of Christ, and shews the same unto them. He brings to their remembrance what Christ is to them: what he had done for them; how he stands in union unto them: the offices he sustains on their behalf. He creates fresh conceptions of the same in their renewed minds. He pleads the cause of Christ there. He brings the blood and righteousness of Christ to their remembrance. He shews them afresh the eternal worth, and everlasting virtue of it. He creates in their mind some most blessed apprehensions of Christ being in heaven, with all the worth of his one offering, appearing in the presence of God for them—that he is their Intercessor and Advocate—that he is most deeply interested in the cases of

his people, especially every thing concerning sin. He then opens this Scripture, as it belongs to them, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Thus it is, we are led to receive the knowledge, and benefit of Christ's intercession and advocacy into our minds; so as to enjoy the same, and be relieved thereby, and gain a triumph over sin, condemnation, and the oppression of the enemy. As the Holy Ghost dwells in us, so he works every good motion in us. When we are most deeply surrounded within and without, by views of our exceeding sinfulness, and we cannot open our mouths in prayer, He is pleased "to make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." See Rom. viii. 26, 27 : all which is the fruit of everlasting love : a glorious part of the everlasting covenant : an echo to the Intercession and Advocacy of Christ in heaven. And it is hereby we partake and enjoy in our own souls, the blessings flowing from the same, and have fellowship with Christ in his intercession and advocacy, and with the Father, before whom he appears, and with whom he pleads. Christ is our advocate in heaven to maintain and plead our cause there ; so as no one charge can ever there be admitted of against us. It is only in the court of our own consciences, we can have any charge and condemnation. The Holy Ghost is our Advocate on earth. He performs this office within us. He effects it by pleading the Person, righteousness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. And he so prevails as to stop the clamours of conscience, and produces the peace of God there : and he casts out the accusations of the devil. He maketh intercession in the saints, according to the will of God, which they express in prayer, with groanings which cannot be uttered. May we have a more increasing spiritual and scriptural light and knowledge of these truths in our own souls than we have yet attained. Amen.

SERMON XII.

And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for our's only ; but also for the sins of the whole world.—1 JOHN ii. 2.

THE apostle is pursuing the glorious and everlastingly precious subject. It respects the advocacy and atonement, the righteousness and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a subject which at all times, in all cases, and circumstances, must be very acceptable to the called people of the most high God. To know the heart of Christ, what it is, since he left our world, and is entered into his glory, is most truly desirable. We were given to know in the words which preceded our present text, what the office of Christ is, since he is entered within the vail ; which is most truly blessed and comfortable. His glory is Essential. It is Mediatorial. It is Personal. It is altogether Divine. His Person is

immortal and immutable. His Priesthood is eternal. He is a Priest upon his throne. He liveth for ever after the order of *Melchisedek*. His office is unchangeable. The perpetual efficacy of the same, is thereby continued. He is "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This he is with regard to every thing which concerns his people on earth, in their every sinning case, and with regard to every thing which regards any, all, and every one of their sins, and sinful cases. The apostle introduced this subject in the former verse thus, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* To which he adds. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Both verses united, contain one and the same subject; the separation of them is only for a more full and comprehensive explanation of this most divine and important subject—which concerns the Priesthood of Christ in heaven: founded on his righteousness and sacrifice which he completed here below. On the footing of his Priesthood and office in Heaven, the veil is opened, and we are admitted to enter into the Holiest of All, in the believing views of his most precious blood, and are admitted also to converse with Him. He is consecrated, as the Son of God, to be a Priest for evermore. "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Heb. viii. 1, 2. In the former chapter, our apostle had said, to such of the Lord's people as had sinned, "If we confess our sins, he (i. e. God in the Person of the Father,) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the first verse of this chapter he says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" to which the words of our text are annexed. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* With a design to open and explain these words, I will cast them into the following method and order.

1. I will aim to shew the connexion of them with the former, which I conceive will be the proper method for preserving the strength and efficacy of them: and thereby conveying the same, throughout every part; it is pity any particle of the same should be lost: they being so most truly precious, excellent, and sacred.

2. To open what is said of our Lord in these words before us. *He is the propitiation for our sins.*

3. That the propitiatory offering of Christ, extends to us, and not only to us, but to others also. *And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only.*

4. The uttermost extent of the virtue of Christ's propitiation. *Not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.* These words, *the sins of*, are supplementary: leave them out, then the text reads thus. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the whole world.* The text without the addition, or with it, is to me one and the same. If any difference, the additional words clear up in one point the meaning of the text. I shall therefore retain them, without running it into universal redemption. Thus I have given you the outline of my text. And to begin with my first particular.

1. In the which, I will aim to shew the connexion of the words of my

it with the former; this I conceive will be the proper method for proving the strength and efficacy of them: and thereby conveying the same throughout the whole. Our text belongs to the former. I will therefore recite the whole. *My little children, these things write I to you, that ye sin not: And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* He had been in the former verse, speaking of Christ, as an advocate with the Father, on the behalf of his sinning people. He had presented Him as a righteous one: He pleading his own righteousness for their behalf. He here speaks of Him as the propitiation for sin: intimating that his plea on the behalf of his people in heaven, was founded on his oblation of Himself in the days of his flesh—that it extended influence to the whole election of grace. Therefore his plea founded on merit, must be commensurate to their every personal and particular sin. The mere recital of the words afresh will be sufficient to confirm us; so that no universal salvation, redemption, or call it by what term I may, as including every single individual can follow on it. The word *we* is a bar to this. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* To remove sin from the persons of the Elect, and out of the sight of law and justice, this was the very end and design of Christ's Death: this is the aim, and that for ever. He offered up Himself: He made complete satisfaction, so as he never needed to repeat it. In the strength and in all the perfection of it, He entered heaven, where he intercedes for the whole church. Christ's life in heaven is to save each, and every individual for whom he died, by virtue of his Intercession and Advocacy. When the subject is thus expressed, it does not suggest that there is any other salvation than what is contained in our Lord's Death: it is only intended to enlarge our views of the vast importance to us, which is contained in our Lord's life in glory: which is as truly for the benefit of his church here below, as his life and sacrifice were. "Such an high priest came us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Our Lord being all this, "He offered Himself." He is Jesus the Son of God, an High Priest who liveth ever by the power of an endless life, in the presence of God for us. He is Intercessor and Advocate for his people. He pleads justice and righteousness. He is, therefore, able to carry every cause in which he is interested. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." An advocate hath place, only in a court of justice. Christ's Advocacy is executed by pleading his own Death, as the only sacrifice for sin. He is "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And he is the propitiation for our sins. He pleads his own righteousness and blood, on the footing of which, the worst of sinners, belonging to the election of grace, are saved. He so conducts the matter, that justice is as truly on the side of the clients, as mercy. Hence it is the apostle says; *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of heaven—the Lord of Glory—the Father and glorious Proprietor of it—even He who has taken up Heaven, and entered it in his own name, and as the Head and Representative of all

his church and people, He it is who is their great High Priest, their Intercessor and Advocate. He, their Saviour and Anointed one, is entered into Heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. He is, what He is here most justly entitled, *the faithful friend at the bar of justice. Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* By his powerful mediation at the right hand of the Father, the rights of divine justice and of holiness, are most gloriously displayed and maintained. In Him the riches of grace are most gloriously displayed: so that the Father is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. And the Advocate Christ Jesus is just also. *He is a just God, and a Saviour*, in all his pleadings at his Father's bar. It is the everlasting worth of his obedience, and soul travail, he presents on the behalf of all those for whom he intercedes. It is because he bore their sins in his own body on the tree, he appears on their behalf before the Throne. The Person of Christ is the foundation on which all the worth of his intercession and advocacy rests. It should never be forgotten by us, "we have an high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." And his appearance there is our eternal security. He is there our propitiation, as he also is "the LORD our righteousness." We can never think or say too much of the Dignity, Majesty, Worth, and transcendent Glory of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet I shall add no more, so much having been before expressed on this most important part of our present subject. I therefore proceed,

2. To open what is said of our Lord, in these words before us. *And he is the propitiation for our sins.* He is this, now this moment in the high court of heaven, just as he is the LORD our Righteousness: that is, He is there in the full worth and perfection of his most precious sacrifice.

This was not expressed in the former verse; yet it stands most closely connected with it, as hath been before shewed. Our Lord in the former verse bore the title of *Jesus Christ the righteous*. In this He bears the title of *propitiation*. *He is the propitiation*: or, *He is the atonement*. We have this word but seldom in the New Testament; the first place it occurs is in these words, "Whom God hath set forth, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. iii. 25. And this word occurs twice in the epistle before us: once in the text, and again in the 4th chap. v. 11. We have the word atonement, once for all, in the New Testament, introduced thus. "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 11. The word propitiation, and atonement, are both derived from the Old Testament, and are one and the same in their meaning. They are most frequently used, in the books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. The apostle when he uses the word *propitiation* in the epistle to the *Romans*, refers to the mercy-seat, which was called the Propitiatory, or covering, because it hid what was in the ark, out of sight; and also before it, on the day of atonement, the propitiatory offerings were completed, by bringing the blood of them within the vail, and sprinkling it before the Figures of the Great Ones, the representatives of the Holy Trinity in their covenant engagements. The incense, fumed between the cherubim of glory, or rather before the same, so as the cloud of smoke arising therefrom might cover the mercy-seat, was expressive of the savour and fragrancy of our Lord's intercession, as

fully appears from what our apostle relates in the *Revelation*. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." viii. 3, 4. It is in allusion to the golden altar of incense, which was so placed in the Holy place, as to be immediately before the ark, the mercy-seat of which was called the throne of God: as he was represented as enthroned between the Cherubim. The Incense altar was called the Golden altar, to distinguish it from the Brazen altar. The throne alluded to by *John*, was the mercy-seat: of which long before his time, the prophet *Jeremiah* said, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." xvii. 12. The ark was a solemn memorial of the Person of Christ, God-Man, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" or personally. It bears titles suitable to this. It is entitled, *the King of Glory*. *The Lord of Glory*. *The ark of the Lord: of the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims*. It was framed of shittim-wood, inclosed with plates of solid gold. It served to be expressive of the divine and human nature, united in the one Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The two tables of the covenant, written with the finger of God, were put into it; which was expressive of the law, written in the heart of Christ, and fulfilled by Him. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." On it was placed the mercy-seat, which was a solid plate of gold. At the two ends of it were Cherubims of Glory. Their wings were stretched out, and formed an arch; in the midst of which was a cloud of glory, in which the Lord dwelt. On the day of atonement the High Priest appeared here, and presented the typical blood before the Cherubim, or the Faces of the great Ones. The apostle tells us, "in the Holiest of all, was the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Heb. ix. 4, 5. All which was a figure for the time then present: and hath all, since, been realized in the Person, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; who "being come, an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." v. 11, 12. As the mercy-seat was a figure of Christ, and hid the law, so as it could not be seen; so the blood and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, is such a complete *propitiation*, or atonement, or covering, that it hides all our sins out of the sight of law and justice. The etymology of the word atonement, is by a learned man, said to be derived from a folding door, which folds forwards and backwards; which he applies thus; "our sins were folded back from us, on Christ. His righteousness is folded from Him, on us." This I conceive, to be a very comprehensive idea, to convey the true meaning of this most important doctrine of the atonement which Christ hath made for us by the blood of his cross. He is the propitiatory offering. He is the propitiation for our sins. He is entered into Heaven himself, as our propitiation. I conceive it is not sufficiently considered by

us, that the entrance of the Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven, and his acceptance there by the divine Father, is the one grand testimonial, that salvation is so fully completed, as to afford us the firmest foundation for confidence, and joy. The sacrifices were performed by the High Priest in the outer court, in the sight of the whole congregation, yet it was the bringing in the blood within the vail, and sprinkling it before the mercy-seat, which completed the atonement. Thus Christ entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb. ix. 24. There he is as our propitiation. He has washed us from all our sins in his own blood. He therefore is in the Holiest of all, as our true propitiatory. I come,

3. To observe, that the propitiatory offering of Christ, extends to us, and not to us only, but to others also. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only.*

The Person of Christ, his holiness, righteousness, sacrifice, and intercession are the security of the whole church of God, and their everlasting perfection. It is their sanctuary to repair unto. They may have recourse to Him, in every time of need. Our apostle says, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* The apostle is suiting his discourse to our cases, who though redeemed by Christ, and made pure in his blood, yet are frequently backsliding from him, and falling into sin. He says every thing he can to take off our thoughts from poring on ourselves, sins, and miseries. He would have us to know, Christ is with the Father, and that as our Advocate. He is a righteous one. He is the Lord our Righteousness. He is our Propitiation. His blood speaks on our behalf: it is as full of virtue as when he shed it, and poured it out as the atonement for us. He is now this very moment, our sacrifice before the Throne, as to all the worth and perfection, virtue and efficacy contained in his one offering which perfecteth for ever. The apostle is of the same spirit, with our *John*, who says, "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." Heb. iv. 15. Both these apostles were full of the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and felt for the people of God, under their falls, and that which could not but sorely grieve and distress them, in consequence thereof. Our Lord himself, feels for his saints, and beloved ones, on these accounts. He is touched to the very quick on their account. He is therefore most compassionately disposed to relieve them. All the people of the Lord, share in this grace of our Jesus—the virtue of his blood and righteousness—of his advocacy and intercession—of his life in heaven—of his propitiatory blood which hides the transgressions from view; it extends itself, in the blessings and benefits of the same, to all the household and family of faith: yea, to the whole election of grace, be they called, or, be they uncalled. Those uncalled, are in consequence of our Lord's intercession on their behalf, called in the appointed time: those who are called, have a blessed discovery made to them, of Christ's compassions which fail not, but are perpetually exercised towards, and upon them. Of the which there are seasons, when they have most sensible and very particular, personal, and precious evidence thereof. One point which the apostle drives at, in saying the propitiatory offering of Christ extends beyond those whom he wrote this

epistle unto, was to convey this idea unto them—that many saints who were unknown to them, were equally, and alike interested in the same grace of our most gracious Lord Jesus Christ : so as from the proper consideration of the same, a fresh tribute of praise might arise unto Him, whose Name, will for ever and ever be glorious, and exalted above all blessing and praise. The apostle would have it understood, that the office of our Lord Jesus Christ, the virtue of his blood and righteousness, the efficacy of his mediation, had its universal influence, and extended its efficacy to all the saints—“unto all, who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs, and ours.” This is a most comfortable consideration—our Lord hath a most perfect knowledge of all his beloved ones. He fully comprehends them, personally, and individually ; with all their sins, cases, wounds, wants, and miseries. He also knows the whole of his own heart towards them. He views, and reviews their particular circumstances. And there is but one way in which He can make known to them his love, now that He is with the divine Father ; and that is by having them in everlasting remembrance, and giving them in their own souls, real evidence of the truth of this. Here comes in his glorious office in Heaven, as Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate. All which being founded on what He did for his people, in putting away their sins, and bringing in to the high court above, everlasting righteousness ; so he proves his heart is full of love to them, now he is in his kingdom of glory ; as their present sins, and sinfulness, do not take off his eye and heart from them. But if any of them sin, he is their advocate with the Father : and he is the propitiation for their sins, and which is the case regarding all his church. They all sin : it cannot be otherwise with them ; “in many things” says the apostle *James*, “we offend (or sin) all.” This is the antidote—Christ’s blood is our purity. “He hath loved us, and washed us, from our sins in his own blood.” He thus presents us in heaven, before the throne of God. He is our Propitiation there. Whatsoever befalls us, he is our powerful advocate : what he is in his Person and office as Mediator of reconciliation, he is to all his people ; not simply to us, who know him, and by our converse with each other, may be able to prove to each other the reality of our knowing him, and of our communion with him, but he is the same to all others, who are called and brought to the knowledge of Him. *He is the propitiation for our sins : and not for our’s only.* All his members share in the same grace. They are all one in Him : so as to be equally interested in Him—in his Person—in his love—in his suretyship engagements—in his incarnation—in his life—in his propitiatory offering—in his death—in his burial—in his resurrection—in his ascension—in his priesthood in heaven—in the representation which he makes of his whole church in his own Person, before the Father : and in all the blessings and benefits thereof : not one of the Elect is more interested in the whole of Christ, than another. They are all one and the same in Christ their Head : the scriptures of the New Testament lay all the stress, on what Christ is to the church, on what He hath done for his church, and on his priesthood on the behalf of his church, which he exercises in heaven : and also on what the church is in Christ. We neglect this too much : we lay too much stress on our experience of these truths, and conceive of our interest in Christ, and state before the Lord, accordingly : all which is wrong ; it is in a certain sense to neglect Christ : yea, it is no little sin : for which

we need continually the efficacy and virtue of Christ's advocacy. Now to enlarge the spiritual conceptions of the mind, the apostle in carrying on the subject of Christ's being the *propitiation*, says, *and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*: this brings me to my last particular; which is,

4. To shew the uttermost extent of the virtue of Christ's propitiation; which is thus expressed, *And not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*. The whole of our text is this, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*. These words *the sins of*, are added to the text; yet I conceive they are better retained, than parted with; as they contain an account of what Christ's atonement was for. It was for sins. Sin can have no existence but in a subject. If Christ died for sins, then Christ must have been the subject on whom sin was laid—to whom sin was transferred. He must have been made sin by imputation, or He could not have been the sacrifice for them. If all the sins of the elect were laid by the Father on Christ, as the Surety and representative of the elect, and he bore them in his own body; then his blood must have washed out the whole of them. And the extent of Christ's most perfect and allsufficient oblation, must comprehend the whole election of grace. They must in each, and every one of them, individually, be cleansed from all sin, in the sight of God, by the one propitiatory offering of Christ. So that these words, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, whilst they most fully and freely set forth, the uttermost extent of Christ's death, and the infinite virtue of his blood, and propitiation, yet they do by no means extend this beyond the pale of election. Suppose we leave out the additional words, and read the text thus, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the whole world*, what do we gain thereby? I think, nothing. We only omit these three words, *the sins of*. Now these words are really and truly explanatory: they only follow what was in the text before. *He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but for the sins of the whole world*. Now it was for sins, Christ died. He also died for particular persons. He substituted himself in the room and stead of these, and their sins were laid on him. He sustained the whole curse due unto them. He was made sin and a curse. He hath by his one offering finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and his blood, now and evermore, cleanseth from all sin. The virtue and efficacy of which, belong to the whole election of grace. It cannot to any beside: because it goes not beyond the persons, whose sins Christ bore. Therefore the expressions before us, whilst they have an universality in them, yet not such as reaches and extends any part of its virtue and efficacy beyond the church of the living God: which, as it consisted of Jews and Gentiles, might be styled the whole world. Or, it might be in agreement with our Lord's words, who expressed himself thus to *Nicodemus*, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. The word *world* here, is conceived to refer to the Gentile world: to whom the gospel was then to be sent, and by the means of which the elect would be gathered, and drawn to Christ. Some not content with

this, say, the *world* here, means the world of believers. This I cannot subscribe unto: because Christ did not die for believers. He died for sinners. When we were yet sinners Christ died for us: neither does the efficacy of Christ's propitiatory offering, depend on our believing. It is an immutable truth, such as Christ died for, will, in the Lord's time and way, be all brought to hear their Shepherd's voice, and be enabled to believe on him for life everlasting; yet this doth not interest them in Christ and his death; it is only the manifestation thereof. I therefore conclude, the *world* here is best understood of all the persons included in the whole election of grace. Christ is the propitiation for each and every one of these, called or uncalled, he hath put away all their sin. They are sanctified by his one offering, so that all their sins are removed from their persons, as far as the east is from the west. This was the incommunicable work of Christ himself: hence the Psalmist saith, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Ps. ciii. 12. As some express it, there is a world in a world. The apostle speaking concerning some who had profaned the Lord's supper, and of the judgments with which the Lord visited such, and some of the saints also, for the same, says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. xi. 30, 32. Now here is a world condemned, as in our text we have a world saved. This distinction kept up in the mind, will, I conceive, give us the true sense of these words, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Take the whole body of the elect, and all sin and sinfulness have been, and will be found in them: some in one, some in others. No sort of sin which can be committed out of hell, (except the sin unto death, which none of the elect can commit), but will be found amongst them, either before or after their conversion to the Lord. What then must be the virtue and efficacy of Christ's propitiatory offering, to remove for ever the whole imputation of it from them, and purify and cleanse them from all sin, in the sight of God? Surely, I cannot but conclude the apostle here intended to honour the sacrifice of Christ to the utmost extent of its virtue and efficacy, when he said, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* The great and most truly renowned Dr. Owen, in his book entitled, *The Death of Death in the death of Christ*, proposes this to those who are for universal redemption; "Either," says he, "Christ died for all the sins of all men, or, he died for some sins of all men, or, he died for all the sins of some men. If he died for all the sins of all men, why are not all men saved? You will say, because of their unbelief; but unbelief is either a sin, or it is not: if it be, and Christ died for all their sins, why should unbelief damn them, seeing he died for it, as well as all their other sins? If Christ died for some sins of all men, then there are some sins of these, which Christ died not for: consequently they must perish for them. If Christ died for all the sins of some men, then these must be everlastingly saved: and this," says he, "is our own doctrine." I hope the Lord will be pleased to reflect the glory and grace of his truth on our minds. It is only in his light we

see light. His glory is reflected on the mind, in and by the scriptures of truth. They are all clear in themselves : we need never to start any puzzling questions on them. We should receive them, in all matters of faith, just as they are in themselves. The Holy Ghost is allsufficient to lead and guide us into all truth. It is our blessedness to be kept continually dependant on him, for his unction which teacheth all things. May we be living over the truths which have been set before us, concerning our Lord's advocacy and propitiation. And, seeing the finished work of Christ is the very basis of his mediatorial Throne in Heaven; let us rest wholly, and for all our salvation, on the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ : looking to receive the blessings and benefits of the same from Christ, as the Intercessor and Advocate in heaven; and learn to converse with Christ on his Throne. This will lead us to give him glorious praise ; which we never perform more acceptably than by trusting wholly in Him for our everlasting blessedness. The Lord himself bless you with the life-giving knowledge of these life-giving truths, and life-giving communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, through the Spirit. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.—I JOHN II. 3.

THE truths delivered in the former verses are most truly noble and divine. They are suited to relieve the minds of the Lord's people, in the worst cases which can possibly befall them through the journey of life. These words now before us, stand, as I conceive, in close connection with the former : it is quite pleasing to my own mind to view them thus ; it being full proof that the true knowledge of the doctrine of God the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ, and real fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ as our atonement, and the belief that *his blood cleanseth us from all sin*, are not unfriendly to the real practice of holiness, but are the very means of increasing the same. Free accesses to the Father, in spiritual apprehensions of his being our Father in Christ Jesus, and in gospel views of his being our advocate and propitiation in heaven, are the right means of keeping us from sin ; and also the only way for us to enjoy the peace of God in our consciences, and the love of God in our hearts. So far as these most inestimably precious truths enter into our minds, and in proportion to our minds receiving them, and being brought under the mighty power and authority of the same, we are most blessedly disposed to every good word and work. We must know the truth before we can receive it. We must receive it before we can be influenced by it. We must have the experience of it before we can live in the practice of it. This may well be looked upon as a proper preface to all which remains to be opened and explained, throughout the remainder of this

most excellent epistle; in which we have various subjects: and some very singular expressions; such as are best opened in an expository way: an attempt at which will be aimed at. I shall therefore mention them here, only by way of hint. They are such as these, *He that is born of God sinneth not. He that committeth sin is of the devil. He that is born of God doth not commit sin. There is a sin unto death. It is the last time.* These will be unfolded in their true meaning, as we shall come to them. I only suggest the same to shew the necessity of expounding this epistle: as thereby the true connection of one sentence in it with another agrees, and that the true and right knowledge of the same, is thereby made the more clear and evident. I will here recite the two former verses which preceded our present text, to shew the unity and connection of them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* The words of my text, as may be most easily perceived, are a closure of the former: in which the apostle is speaking of himself and others, of the knowledge he and they had, in themselves, of their own knowledge of Christ. They had an inward evidence of this: which they gave also an outward evidence of. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* With a view of opening these words, to the real profit and benefit of the spiritual mind, I will aim to set before you the following particulars.

1. What it is to know Christ: from whence it springs, and how this is evidenced to believers.

2. How believers can say from their own inward knowledge of Christ, in their own souls, *and hereby we do know that we know him.*

3. The reason why the apostle puts in the word *if*, and speaks of an outward evidence of our knowing Christ, as he had before of an internal one. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

4. What is comprehended in this, *if we keep his commandments.* These are the subjects which are now before us, to be opened and explained. May the Lord the Spirit be pleased to shine on his truth, and on the renewed minds of his people, that we may see in his own light the true meaning of the scripture before us, and receive the explanation to our profit and advantage: so be it, O Lord. I am

1. To express and set before you, what it is to know Christ: from whence this knowledge comes; and also how this is evidenced to believers: *we do know* (says our apostle,) *that we know him.*

The knowledge of Christ is wholly and altogether spiritual and supernatural. It is beyond all that nature can possibly attain unto. No unregenerate mind can have the least conception of it. All the knowledge of all contained in the whole and utmost circle of science, cannot convey to the most profoundly learned, the least spiritual conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, the Bible itself, which is full of Christ, the gospel itself which is the revelation of Christ, the ordinances of it, in the which Christ is evidently set forth as crucified, cannot give us the knowledge of Him. It is the Holy Ghost by his own illumination and revelation, who only can convey to our minds that knowledge of Christ

which is life eternal. To know Christ, must include and contain in the same, the knowledge of who he is—of what he is—of his Person—of his love—of his salvation—of his righteousness, and sacrifice—of his fulness—of his offices—of his interest in us, and of his relation to us. Now whilst the gospel of Christ, and the ordinances of Christ, are blessed means for our increasing in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, yet we must know Him, before we can derive the least real benefit from these; for our whole spiritual life is contained in the knowledge of Him, and our everlasting life in heaven, will be perfected in our beholding Him. It is the vision of Him in Glory, will be our eternal perfection. Our Lord said to his divine Father, concerning his church, *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3. Paul prays thus. *That I may know him.* Phil. iii. 10. He says to *Timothy*—*I know whom I have believed.* 2 Epis. i. 12. The knowledge of Christ consists in a spiritual apprehension of Him, formed in the mind, and produced in the understanding—of his Person, from the word, and by the Holy Ghost. Whatsoever conceptions any of us may entertain in our minds, which are not wholly and altogether suitable, and in perfect agreement with the holy scriptures, they are not from the Lord the Holy Spirit; they are, therefore, to be wholly rejected. We receive the knowledge of Christ into our renewed minds, not by having any form wrought up in our imaginations of who He is, or what He is, but by an inexpressible act of the eternal Spirit within us. Who, as he formed the human nature of Christ in the womb of the Virgin; so he forms the true and supernatural knowledge of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in our intellectual faculties: and we know Him in his Person to be the true God and eternal life. We know Him to be coequal, coessential, and coeternal in the self-existing Essence with the Father and the Spirit. We know Him to be God—Man—the Head—Mediator—the medium of union and communion between God and us. We know Him in his love, which is the miracle of heaven. We know Him in his incarnation, obedience, and death. We know Him in the glories of his Mediatorial Person, work, offices; and in his union, and relation to his people. It is in the knowledge of Him, we love Him—we worship Him—we trust in Him for our whole salvation. We cleave to Him with full purpose of heart. We renounce all but Him. We triumph in Him alone. Now this is what I profess concerning the knowledge of Christ, that it is a knowledge of his Person—of his love—of his righteousness—of his blood—of his priesthood in heaven—of his fulness, such as leads to an entire confidence in Him, and centering in Him.

From whence all this springs, is the next consideration. It is wholly from the Holy Ghost. He is the revealer of Jesus. It is his office to give the true knowledge of Him: this he does by taking of the things of Christ, and shewing the same to the renewed mind; as also by bearing his testimony to the same. It is hereby he forms Christ in the understanding, opens the heart to receive Him, lifts up the affections to a fixation on Him, and makes Him supremely All in All. It is thus we receive the knowledge of Christ; and in this our whole spiritual life consists. Our faith in Jesus is the fruit hereof. As all comes from the Spirit, who is the revealer and glorifier of Jesus, so it also springs from, and is agreeable with the revelation made of Christ in

the everlasting gospel: which, as it is the outward and declared testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Father's everlasting love to us in Him, so it is by it the Holy Spirit is most graciously pleased, to lead us more and more into a spiritual and supernatural acquaintance with the Person, work, and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. If I could express my mind fully on this subject, I should say, to know Christ as he is revealed in the scriptures, to receive into our minds, what is set forth in them concerning him, this is to know Christ. We do not want to know any thing of Christ, but what he is pleased to set before us in them. We apprehend Him in them. We see Him in them. We receive Him into our hearts through them. We have communion with Him, as he is testified of by them. If we are favoured with transporting views of Him, it is as the Holy Ghost is pleased to elevate our minds, by giving us, under his life-giving influences, fresh apprehensions of Christ's glory, worth, excellency, and perfections.

I come to shew you how this, concerning the knowledge of Christ, is evidenced to believers. *We do know* (says John) *that we know him. And hereby we do know that we know him.* He is hereby speaking of an inward evidence of the same, which they had in themselves. In the course of this epistle, he hath a great deal to do with evidences: some concern our interest in Christ: some have personal respect to ourselves: some to others: they are all very good and useful in their place; none of them are designed to take off our eye of faith from Christ: nor to put us on resting our salvation on any grace wrought in us, or produced by the Holy Ghost in our lives and conversations. You need not, therefore, fear, lest I should bring you into bondage; whilst I am, according to the words before me, to open to you the inward evidence here given in my text, how we may know that we are in Christ, and that, also, by what we know inwardly in our own souls, of and concerning Him: *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* It is not the whole of these words, but only this part of them which comes before me under this first head of this discourse, which has been thus expressed.—To set forth and express, what it is to know Christ: from whence this knowledge comes: and also how this knowledge is evidenced to believers. *And hereby we do know that we know him.* I have set before you what it is to know Christ: also from whence this knowledge comes. I have now to speak concerning this part of the same subject, how this is evidenced to believers, so as that they may say, *and hereby we do know that we know him.* Most assuredly the true knowledge of the Person, love, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ contains the greatest reality. Nothing in heaven can be more certain to saints within the veil, than the knowledge of Christ is to the spiritual mind, by faith. Christ is as really present to faith, as he is to sense in glory. Such as know Christ here in our world, know Him as truly, as he is known in Heaven. They enjoy Him, and have as real fellowship with Him, as any saints in heaven. The reality of this is one and the same: the difference here is none. It is in the degree and fulness of this, lies all the difference; I know Christ as truly, as I ever shall in heaven; yet not so fully. I have as real communion with Christ now, as I ever shall; yet not to that fulness and perfection it will be advanced unto in glory. Let this be attended unto: it is of vast importance to the spiritual mind. It opens all contained in our text at once; and that with the utmost satis-

faction. Christ being made known unto us, we having received Him into our hearts, He is in us : He lives in us : He dwells in us : He enlivens us : He shines within us : He shines upon us : He puts forth his heavenly influences. He gives us a real acquaintance with the virtue and efficacy of his life and death, his blood and righteousness. He holds free and blessed fellowship with us in our own hearts. He admits us to have and hold, free, and most blessed fellowship with Him. It is hereby we have a real, inward, spiritual knowledge of Him : what we thus know of Him, leads us to value Him. We most highly prize Him. In the knowledge which he is pleased to impart to our minds, in inward fellowship with him, in the true apprehensions of his wounds and blood, sacrifice, righteousness and death, we have real fellowship with Him, in the benefits and blessings thereof. In the communications he is pleased to make to us, and in his really imparting the secrets of his mind and will to us, he gives us such undeniable evidences of his love to us, of his delight in us, of the riches of his grace towards us, as constrains us to say, individually for ourselves, and of Him, *my beloved is mine, and I am his*. And *Paul's* high prizings of Christ become our's, in our measure and degree. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith : That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Phil. iii. 8—11. In such spiritual exercises of the mind as these, there is a real outgoing of the heart after Christ, and some real fellowship with Him. Christ and the believer become very familiar. There is mutual communion with each other. The believer can from his own personal knowledge of Christ, and from his real fellowship with Him, say for himself, I know him ! He is my food : my drink : I feed with him : I feed on him. I really experience the truth of what he spake in the days of his flesh : He then said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.—Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven :—he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." John vi. 51. 54—58. All this the Lord Jesus Christ realizes in the believer, and unto him, as he dwells in his heart by faith : and from hence the believer can speak of Him with certainty and confidence, and say, *hereby I do know that I know him*. Next to the knowledge of Christ, is the knowledge of our personal interest in Him. The one follows on the other, as the fruit and consequent of the same. It is the grand prerogative royal of the Holy Ghost, to reveal Christ—to enthrone Him in the conscience—to crown Him in the heart—to prove to a vessel of mercy that Christ is his. On this follows personal communion

between Christ and the believing mind. This in the substance of it, I have been describing: this produces what our text is here speaking of—*We do know that we know him*: which leads me

2. To shew how believers in Christ may say, from their inward knowledge of Him in their own souls, *And hereby we do know that we know him*.

This knowledge must arise from their real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can want real and undeniable proof and evidence in his own soul, of his knowing Christ, of his interest in Him, that Christ is in him the hope of glory, who is living on Him, and making continual use of Him. To live in Christ, is to have the mind continually exercised on Him: and those supernatural faculties, wrought in our souls in regeneration to be so engaged on the Lord Jesus, as that thereby we have a real enjoyment of Him, and communion with Him. In this consists the greatest secret of christianity. The mind being inwardly and spiritually exercised on the Lord Jesus Christ, carries its own evidence with it, and enables all true believers to say, *And hereby we do know that we know him*. Living in believing views and apprehensions of the love of the Holy Trinity to us in Christ Jesus, influences the spiritual mind with the love of the Three in Jehovah to us. What we have the inward conceptions of, draws out our love, and fixes our affections on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father in him: all which is from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us; wherefrom, speaking in an open, experimental confession of the same, we may truly say, *And hereby we do know that we know him*. We who have an inward, intuitive knowledge of Him, have also an inward communion with him: an inward and spiritual relish of his goodness. We know what it is to have our hearts and affections sweetly refreshed and perfumed with the savour and fragrantcy of his Name, Person, sacrifice and salvation. We therefore speak of and from our hearts concerning Him, when we say, *And hereby we do know that we know him*. The whole substance of which amounts to this: we are favoured with a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of the Person and salvation of Christ: we know Him to be our advocate and propitiation; we have communion with Him. The truth of all which is so realized in our own minds, by the indwelling and testimony of the Holy Ghost, that we have the fullest assurance of all this in our own minds. We cannot be more fully assured of the same than we are: it is certified beyond all contradiction unto us. We know that we are Christ's—that we are his—that we are partakers of Christ—that He is in us—that we are in Him—that we really know him; because he dwells in our hearts. He is high in our esteem; we cannot live without Him; we cannot be happy; No; not for one single moment, but as we are engaged in the contemplations of Him: When we speak of Him it is from our hearts; yea, it is with the whole of our hearts; it is also from what we know of Him there. We received the true knowledge of Him, and his great salvation into our minds, that He might dwell in our hearts by faith. The whole is from a spiritual perception of Him, formed in our renewed understanding of Him from the word of the Gospel, which hath so captivated our minds, and ravished our spirits, that he, in the whole of what He is, and in every part and particular of what we know of Him, is our object, our subject, our centre, and our circumference, our one supreme and everlasting All. John therefore says, in his own person and that of others, *And hereby*

we do know that we know him. It is herefrom we do profess the same; the ground work of this is in our own souls: it is from thence we thus speak: it is to confirm you in the reality of this, we thus confidently address you: the truth of which you may rely upon. And the inward views, conceptions, and apprehensions formed in our minds of Christ, we find to be altogether agreeable with the revelation made of Him in the sacred scriptures, and which have been wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, agreeably with the same; and hereby we know and are fully persuaded that we do know Him. We are fully persuaded all the powers of nature could never have produced that knowledge of Christ which we are possessed of; nor that enjoyment of Him, which we have in our hearts; nor that communion of his grace to us, which we have received, and do enjoy in Him; and which we find ourselves the subjects of: nor that communion with Christ which we enjoy: nor that conformity to his holy image and example, in our lives, and conversations: therefore, as we do not question the truth of our knowledge of Him, so we would attribute all we are, as it respects grace and holiness unto Him. Saying, *And hereby we do know him, if we keep his commandments.* And it is what we know of Him, enhances our value and esteem of Him. It causes us to trample on all beside. We have Him dwelling in our hearts: what He gives us to know of Him in personal communion with Him, into the which He is pleased to admit us, this gives us great boldness in our speaking for Him: we say no more of Him, nor concerning Him, beyond what He hath really taught us: we do know Him: we are fully assured of this: we know Him in the secrets of our own souls. There is no outward object, nor subject more really known, and enjoyed, than this, in ourselves who have the knowledge and enjoyment of the Person, and salvation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. We also know the blessed fruits and effects which this knowledge of Jesus produceth in us. It seems necessary here to say, that it is the true knowledge of Christ, produces faith in him, love to him, and hope in him. The true knowledge of Him, leads into communion with Him: on this follows walking in Him, with Him, and before Him unto all well pleasing. These are all connected with each other, and follow one the other. Our knowledge of Christ is the sole foundation of our faith in Him, which is always commensurate with our knowledge of Him. Our communion with Christ altogether depends on the influx of the Holy Ghost. It is in proportion to his taking of the things of Christ and shewing the same unto us. It is He who opens the renewed minds of the beloved of God in Christ Jesus, to such apprehensions of Him, and the Father's love in Him, as swallow up, at seasons, the whole of our spiritual faculties in fellowship with the Lord. I will afresh remind you of the words of my text, that it may be seen how far on I have proceeded in them. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* It was at the first proposed, to set forth in the two former particulars, *what it is to know Christ: from whence this knowledge springs: and how this is evidenced.* This was our first particular. Then secondly, *how believers can say from their own knowledge of Christ, and hereby we do know that we know him.* These distinct particulars have been treated of, and that to the best of my poor ability. I never aimed yet to be a great preacher. It never became me. All I ever aimed at was, simple truth, so far as the glory of Christ, and the good of his people may be promoted. And now I am going on fast in

the journey of life, being in the seventy-second year of it, what I only aim at, is truth as truth; or, in other words, *the truth as it is in Jesus*. To give the true statement of my text, this now, and at all times, is my one aim: as thereby, the Holy Ghost working with the same, it may clearly appear what is contained therein. I am for truth without mixture. I do not conceive any thing we can, or may be bold to add to the word of inspiration but must spoil it. Having therefore been carried through the two former particulars, as hath been mentioned, I come to my next which is,

3. To shew and set forth the reason why the apostle puts in the word *if*; and speaks of the outward evidence, which follows on the former internal evidence of our knowing Christ. *And hereby we do know him, if we keep his commandments.*

The reason of the *If*, as I conceive, is this—it is used by way of distinguishing, and discriminating of one person from another—one professor of Christ from another. The churches of the saints were in the apostle's time, thus far what they are in our time—they were made up both of such as were the subjects of a new and supernatural birth in their minds, so as that they were new creatures in Christ Jesus; and also of those, who were led to confess the truths of the everlasting gospel, and profess and submit to the ordinances thereof, yet they were not born again of the Spirit: the latter were, therefore, but merely nominal professors. This is most awfully the case, with respect to the visible churches of Christ, of every denomination throughout our land: more professors than possessors. The persons in the churches of Christ in the apostle's days, were all received by one and the same mean into the fellowship of the church. They professed faith in Christ: they were then baptized: then they became members: then they were admitted to the table of the Lord; and had a right to all the immunities and privileges of a church-state. When so received and acknowledged, they could not be easily dismissed: therefore, when the apostles wrote to the churches, as they included the whole bulk of them, as those they wrote unto, hence, as I apprehend, at times they use certain words such as the *If* before us, to give an item that they were in doubt of some of them. This is the reason of the *If* here: you have it in the first chapter of this epistle five times: we have the *If* again in the first verse of this very chapter, *If any man*, or any one of us, who have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, who are cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ in the sight of God, *sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: so in this text now before us, And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* It seems our apostle took up these words of Christ himself; who said to him and the other ten apostles who were with their Lord, when he gave out that most excellent sermon contained in the 15th and 16th chapters of John's gospel, (in the which the Lord says,) "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:—If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." xv. 3. 9, 10. Judas the traitor was not present when all this was pronounced. Such as then did know Christ, and such also as did in the apostle's time, did not know Him by keeping his commandments. Those who said, *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, did by no

means intend to convey the least idea, that their keeping his commandments was that which brought them to the knowledge of Him, or into communion with Him. If not, it may be asked, what is the design, or what is designed by the *If* here? I answer, to prove the reality of their knowledge. The inward evidence which they had in their own souls of Christ, his love, and salvation, of his love for them, of his interest in them, of his dwelling in them, of his delight and rejoicing in and over them to do them good, made an essential difference between them, and others. So that such as were altogether indifferent respecting their walk and conversation, by the same to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and thereby to give an outward evidence to others of the reality of their having an inward knowledge of Jesus, of their knowing and possessing Him as their chief and most supreme portion and inheritance, could not be looked on by real saints, in a comfortable point of view. This epistle abounds with many inward and outward evidences of grace: by the which it may be known, whether we belong to Christ, or not. Our text is the very first, with which our apostle begins this subject. Hence we have the *If* here: to distinguish between one professor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and another. The one knows Christ inwardly, and spiritually: the other does not. The one hath communion with the Lord Jesus Christ in what he knows of, and concerning Him: the other knows nothing of Christ but externally, and therefore cannot have the least fellowship with Him. I hope all this is clear and plain unto you. The word *If* is not always used in a way of doubting. The apostle says, *If there be any consolation in Christ*: there can be no *If* here: He is everlasting consolation. It reminds me of *Mr. Romaine's* opening this word *If* in the 9th verse of the 8th of the *Romans*. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.* He said, there was no *If* in the business: we either had the Spirit of Christ, or we had not. He therefore said it should be read thus. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, insomuch, or inasmuch as the Spirit of Christ dwells in you.* I think this to be a very complete explication of the word *If*, in the text before us, and in divers passages of the scriptures in the which it is used, as it is here. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if, or insomuch, or inasmuch as we keep his commandments.* I am come to my last particular, which is to set forth,

4. What is comprehended in this part of our text, *If we keep his commandments.*

There can be no communion where there is no union. There can be no fruit where there is no root. Where there is no true knowledge of Christ, there can be no real faith in Christ: so that no one but a real believer in Jesus, can bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. The apostle throughout the whole of this epistle, does not call for fruit from any one of us. But he insists on this: that those whom Christ died for, are in the Lord's time renewed in the spirit of their minds by the Holy Ghost; who produces in them, such real graces, fruits, and effects, of their new, spiritual, and supernatural birth, as fully prove to themselves, and also outwardly and visibly to others, that they have been with Jesus—that Christ is in them—that they live in Him—that they live on Him—that they live for Him—that they live unto Him. As saith the apostle, *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not*

I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. This is a most blessed life. It contains the whole sum total of a real christian. The words of my text are but an appendix to it. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if,* or insomuch as *we keep his commandments.* The words most certainly imply this—that such as do know Christ, truly, inwardly, and spiritually, are concerned to give outward evidence of this to others: especially to those they are connected with in a church state: yea, to give in their whole conduct and conversation with others, realizing evidence hereof. This in the words before us, is expressed, by keeping the commandments of Christ: I thus word it, Christ being He who is immediately and positively referred to and expressed; the apostle having in the former verses spoken of Him, as the advocate and propitiation of his Church: and he speaks of Him here, as inwardly and personally known by his saints: with whom they were personally and particularly acquainted; the knowledge of whom so dwelt in their minds, and engaged their spiritual faculties, as filled them with divine content. Hence they could say, *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* We have, say they, an inward evidence in our own minds, that we know, and have the true gospel apprehensions of Christ in our souls: it most blessedly operates within us; we bless the Lord for it; we would and desire to give an outward evidence of this, by keeping his commandments, to prove hereby, to all with whom we are concerned, that we have been with Jesus. By Christ's commandments here, I should not confine it to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but to all included in the terms, as extending itself to all the precepts which our Lord hath expressed his holy will by in his word. I should be for taking in all which concerns the whole life of faith, and practical christianity, and this as branched out into its various particulars. I shall not attempt this, here: it will in the substance of it, be more or less expressed in pursuing the explanation of this Epistle. I would therefore conclude this present sermon thus—that the true knowledge of Christ is altogether practical; such as know, and have communion with Him, will keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. May the Lord grant we may be found of the same blessed and happy number, walking in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord blameless. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered unto you at this time, so far as agreeable with his most holy word. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.—1 JOHN ii. 4, 5.

THE apostle in pursuing his end and design in this Epistle, goes on in the next and seven following verses, to speak of some clear scriptural evidences of the truth and reality of spiritual faith and love, wrought in the minds of such as were regenerated by the Spirit of the living God, which made an essential difference between them and all other professors of the gospel whatsoever. As all this was written under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit; so no part of it is to be overlooked, or contemned. It is all pure truth: it is for use: it stands as it ought, and where it should: it is to answer a vast design—to separate the precious from the vile—to have, under the hand and seal of the infallible Spirit, what the fruits and effects are, which the new birth produceth. And, on the contrary, what will ever be found in unregenerate professors, let their profession be ever so high and glittering. There are in the outward visible church of Christ; two sorts of persons: one, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and who walk before the Lord unto all well pleasing; the other, who have no root in them; consequently they can produce no fruit: they never did; but inasmuch as at their first appearance of being greatly concerned in their minds about eternal things, and having obtained so much knowledge of the truth, externally, as to be able therefrom to collect materials to compose a confession of their faith, they were looked on by some true saints, as being wrought upon by sovereign grace: hence they were admitted to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They being thus in union to the churches of Christ in the apostle's days, and never producing any spiritual fruit, our apostle is led, by the unmerring Spirit, to point these out, by way of distinguishing them from the real children of the most high God. He doth so in the words before us: he speaks here of two sorts of persons: of one who professed the knowledge of Christ, yet kept not his commandments; of another, who not only professed Christ but kept his commandments also; thereby giving outward and clear open proof, by keeping Christ's word, that the love of God dwelt in his heart—that he was under the power and omnipotent sweetness and influence of the same. This is the outline of these words, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.* I would here observe, it would most certainly cast light on what is thus, and further expressed throughout this epistle, on the subject of what is styled, marks, signs, proofs, and evidences of a true work of God upon the soul; if what our Lord was pleased to deliver in his own ministry was more closely attended unto: especially in his account of the sower and the seed: of the different hearers, of the different effects

the preaching the word produced in them. See Matt. xiii. 3—8; also our Lord's explanation thereof, in the same chapter, verses 18—23. We must not style our Lord's explanation of his own parable a legal one; as if we wanted to get rid of it: neither must we style the Epistle before us so either: nor does the Epistle of *James* deserve that title. We should take care, not to weaken the authority of any part of the Scriptures of truth. It should ever be kept in remembrance, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2. Tim. iii. 16, 17. As I am to explain my text, and shew and express what is to be considered as expressed and contained in it, I will aim at the same in the following order, to the intent the whole of what is in it may be apprehended: yet I will recite my text before I give you my plan. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.* In the which sentence the following particulars are to be set before us.

1. Here is first described a mere professor; who saith of and for himself, *I know Christ*; yet he keepeth not the Lord's commandments; which proves him to be only a mere professor. The apostle calls him liar to his face; and roundly and positively asserts the truth is not in him: read his own words for this, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

2. The essential difference of one who knows Christ. He is described as one who keepeth the word of Christ. How this operates within and upon him, and what it produces within him. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*

3. This produces infallible evidence of such an one's being in Christ: outwardly and manifestatively. *Hereby know we that we are in Him.* In going through these heads, I hope, through the good hand of my God upon me, to do justice to the words now before me. I am

1. To describe a mere professor of Christ; who saith for himself, *I know Christ*. Yet notwithstanding this, keepeth not the Lord's commandments; which proves him to be only a mere professor. This man the apostle calls liar to his face: and roundly and positively asserts the truth is not in him: the words for my guide are, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

The subject is expressed in the singular number: it may be because a profession of Christ, is a personal act. The confession is made by the person individually: it is made in the case of a mere professor, from theoretical hearsay knowledge, and from reading and hearing the scriptures of truth. The knowledge received is altogether ideal: it is but a notion of the truth: there is no reality of it in the mind. The mere professor is but a mere imitator of those who know Christ: so as to lay hold of their words: to value himself on saying the same things: in using the same expressions: of holding the same doctrines: of being a partaker of the same ordinances: of having, it may be, no outward blemish: or if he has, either moral blemish, or is evidently wholly and altogether without the practice of holiness, he has enough to say in his own excuse, and on his own behalf. *I know Christ*, says he, and that is enough for me:

I will have nothing to do, to tack this, that, and the other, to the work of Christ: it is completely finished: I am saved: I will give myself no farther concern about it: our apostle had heard of such an one: he deciphers him: he says he may be known by this—he does not keep our Lord's commandments. By which, in the generality of the expression, I conceive the person pays no regard to any thought, word, or act of his own; but is just as ever he was before his boast of knowing Christ, under the influence of his own will; so that with regard to walking as one with Christ; as beloved by Christ; as saved in Christ; as having communion with Christ; he knows nothing of it: he gives himself no concern about it. What he professes of Christ, and to know of Him, and why he so boldly affirms he knows Him; all arises from some floating ideas and imaginations in his own weak and unrenewed apprehensions of some truths and doctrines contained in the everlasting gospel, of the which he never had the slightest true apprehension. Yet he is very confident, like Solomon's fool, more wise in his own sight than seven men who can render a reason: yet he will talk boldly: yea, freely and fully: and in the conceptions of some, very gloriously. Such there were in the apostle's time; such there most certainly are in our time; they may however be known; they may be easily discovered. For what is there in any of us professing Christ, or saying, individually, *I know Christ*, if our lives and conversations give the lie to this? Nothing. It is worth nothing, all outward profession, if we do not give full and clear outward evidence to others, that we have been with Jesus. The apostle does not rank a mere professor, amongst the saints: he will not admit he shall be so much as mentioned with them: nor at the same time, except it be to shew and prove the essential difference there is between them. What then must be a mere, Christless professor? one says, such is the blackest sight next to hell: no doubt it must be so: it cannot be otherwise: yet such are always disposed to hold fast this lie in their right hand. It may be, some individuals hold it fast in their dying moments, *I know him: I know Christ*. But how is this to be proved by you: since, O mere professor of Christ, it was never thy study or any part of thy employment, to testify any cleaving or attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ, in any one of his commandments. It is on this account the apostle brings his charge against thee, and fastens the same on thee. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* Reader—Hearer—It is not keeping all the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, will give us the true knowledge of Christ: this must wholly proceed from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is He is the revealer and testifier of the Lord Jesus Christ to the regenerated and enlightened mind. But none can prove they are the partakers of Christ, but as they walk in union and communion with Christ Jesus: and there can be no walking in fellowship with our Lord, but there will be a most blessed profession of Christ maintained in an outward life and conversation; which cannot be, but by an obedience rendered to his most holy commandments. By the which I should conceive might be understood the various precepts and commands, given forth by our Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, and in his resurrection state, as they are from Him, and in their own nature and design, immutable, and obligatory on his saints, so long as they shall remain this side heaven. To disregard all these, therefore; to pay

no attention unto them ; to profess to know Christ, and at the same time to pay no attention to what the Lord hath called for, and commanded his people to attend unto, as set before them in his written word, for them to practice, and thereby give outward evidence, that they are called to the practice of holiness ; this is so contrary to the will of Christ, that *John* with all his meekness cannot forbear saying, with some good degree of warmth, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* These words are not dropped from *John*, to be recited to a child of God : they do not belong to him. They are for a mere professor ; yet inasmuch as they could not be conveyed to the one, but the other must hear of the same, hence in the next verse he speaks wholly to the latter. A man who saith, I know Him, (i. e. Christ,) and keepeth not his commandments, the apostle calls liar to his face. He cannot but be so : for his not keeping His commandments is a plain proof he does not love him : and it is impossible to know Christ, and not love him ; yea, must know Him, and have some glimpses of his glory, before we can love Him. He must also open his heart to us, and reveal some communications of his love to our minds, before our hearts are drawn out in love to Him : which, when this hath taken place, we cannot but delight in Him, and in his blessed ordinances and commandments also. As a mere professor of Christ and his gospel, is wholly and only what he is by declaring for himself, *I know Christ*, and hath nothing as an outward evidence and proof thereof to give to justify his profession, so he hereby gives himself the lie. The apostle brands him in the hand, and marks him a liar : not content with this, he adds thereto, *and the truth is not in him.* He is not the subject of the grace of God ; neither is he wrought upon by the Spirit of God ; he does not know the Truth as it is in Jesus ; neither has he received the grace of God in truth. It is all profession without any foundation to bear it up : it cannot, therefore, be but what it is—a mere profession without the least inward spiritual knowledge of Christ. There is nothing in the mere professor, for fruit to grow or be produced from : therefore to expect it, is without any reason. It is only from the holy, spiritual, and divine nature, conveyed by the Spirit of God to the regenerate, any spiritual fruit can possibly be brought forth to the praise and glory of his most holy Name. I will close this head with the words with which I began it. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* I will also immediately proceed to my

2nd particular, in which the essential difference of one who knows Christ is described, and how he differs from the former. Our text describes him, as one who keepeth the word of Christ. How this operates on him, and within him ; and what it also produces. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*

It may not be amiss to put both these verses in their full and proper contrast. Thereby, it may be, they will the more clearly be seen and understood. Here is one says, *I know him* : the other without so saying, proves it. To the one, the keeping the Lord's commandments is of no importance : to the other, it is. The not keeping Christ's commandments by the one, proves the person a liar : by keeping the word of Christ in heart, and remembrance, the love of God is perfectly proved in the other. By keeping the commandments of God, is proved to a

certainty and demonstration, such and such are in Christ, and have hereby the knowledge of it. By the neglect of the sum total of them, and in not paying the least regard to them, it is proved in the opposite case, there is no truth in that person. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.* These words, and this declaration of the apostle's are most true, and as clear as a sun-beam: there is nothing dark in it. He is not speaking of Christ as a Saviour; nor of him as the immediate object of faith: he is speaking of those who professed they had fled to Him for refuge—To those who declared freely and publicly before the church, their confession of Him. He is distinguishing the truth and reality of the profession, between the one and the other. He deals in the gracious effects produced in the minds of some of these who professed Christ, having an internal work of grace wrought in their souls, from the word and Spirit; and those who had not, although they made the same confession, and profession. He shews how the one is deceived: the other is approved. The one and the other, fully evidence, what they are not, and what they are. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.* It is all holy apostolical: it therefore demands great reverence: no part of it should be overlooked. It is absolutely necessary it should have its full and proper place: its full weight and meaning should be ascertained; otherwise it is not giving every part and passage of scripture, its proper place, weight, and due. I have gone over the former words, and have only the latter to encounter. The essential difference of both these verses, most certainly is this—the one is expressive of a mere professor, the other gives an account of a possessor; of one in whom Christ dwelleth: whose description is introduced with a *But*; to signify he is most directly different from the former: who, though he said, *I know Christ*, yet he could give no real proof and evidence of this: whereas, such an one spoken of in the words which are now to be spoken of, could: so here lay a vast contrast between them: the one and the other made the same profession: there was no difference in this respect. The one said, *I know Christ*: the other declared for himself the same. The one neglected all internal evidences of this, and outward evidences of the inward reality thereof, in outward life and conversation: the other did not. Hence it is the *But* comes in, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.* Now as there is this most essential difference between the mere professor and the real saint, that the one knows Christ truly and spiritually, and the other does not, so the one neglected the commandments of Christ; but the true believer is here spoken of, and described as one who keeps the word of Christ. By the word of Christ, most undoubtedly the word of the gospel is to be understood: this is the very medium by which Christ is received into the mind: it cannot therefore be, but it must lie near the true believer's heart: it must most assuredly be very near unto him: it must be very precious unto him: it cannot but be his daily food—his daily feast—his daily portion; to make use of it; to meditate on

it; to take into his mind fresh sights of the Lord Jesus Christ therefrom; and to be furnishing his spiritual faculties from the same. He keepeth Christ's word in remembrance: he attends to the voice of his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word. All in it, which concerns Him; such as looking to Him, hearing his blessed voice, casting every care and burthen on Him, rolling ourselves wholly off ourselves, and out of ourselves on the Lord Jesus Christ; this is attended unto by a real believer; that is in a measure, not to any degree of perfection in any one instance. The words of Christ, the commandments of Christ, the precepts of Christ, the promises of Christ, dwell in the mind of a real believer; through the grace of the eternal Spirit. This operates in the mind, within the mind, and on the mind, so as for him who is one with Christ, and Christ one with him, to feel and have in himself, the realizing virtue and efficacy of the same within him. It produces in him some blessed and increasing thoughts, views, and apprehensions of the Lord Jesus Christ—in the dignity of his Person—the greatness of his love—the glory of his salvation—the nature of his gospel—the excellencies of his offices—the inexhaustible fulness of his grace—the relation he stands in to each of his believing people. It is hereby the believer is increased, within him and without him, with the increase of God. Thus he grows strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The same word of Christ operates within him, so as to deaden and subdue carnal desires and affections; to quicken and excite inward graces, so as to draw them forth into real act and exercise: as also to raise up the heart and affections into spiritual breathings and aspirations towards the Lord. Thus the love of God which hath been made known unto him, and which hath been shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him, is more confirmed in him. He has inwardly and experimentally the love of God, so evangelized in his mind, and realized in his heart, that he cannot but be giving outwardly, in his talk and walk, real evidence to others that he loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Thus the love of God is completed in him; or perfected in him: or, it so operates within him and upon him, as that he is always disposed to think, speak, act, and walk before saints, professors, and sinners, as one in whom the word of God dwelleth: so as that hereby he may properly distinguish himself to whom he belongs; and walk and act in the name and fear of the Lord, as ever in his immediate eye and presence. All which is the fruit of love and gratitude to Him, for the benefits which he hath received from Him. Thus he that keepeth his commandments, gives full, clear, and outward evidence, that the word of God is in him: that the love of God is in his heart: that he hath an inward sense of the love of Christ remaining on his mind: that he is alive to Christ: that he lives in Christ: that he is kept looking unto, and trusting all in Christ, for the whole of his salvation, and for every grace and blessing of the same: that he is also come to some good decree and stedfastness in the knowledge and belief of the Truth. The whole whereof is most exactly agreeable with the words which contrast this verse with the former, *But who-so keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.* This is the apostle's account of it. We may well acknowledge him to be a proper judge; and it well becomes us to submit to his judgment. We shall most assuredly advantage thereby. He is not here informing us, what we ought to be: nor what we must be: nor what he would have us to be.

He goes beyond all this : telling and expressly declaring what the Spirit of God actually produces in the souls of the regenerated elect. The words are neither delivered as a precept, nor command, nor an exhortation, nor an excitement to the exercise of any grace, or to any duty. No : it is wholly and only a solemn declaration concerning such as knew that Christ was theirs, and that they were his : that such would keep the word of Christ : it would dwell in them : it would abide in them : it would influence them : it would perfect the love of God in them ; that is, it would, by their being under the power, influence, and energy of Christ's most precious gospel, appear truly and with the utmost confidence, such as would be fully confirmed by most unquestionable evidence, that the love of God was perfected in these persons. That there was nothing to prove, that such and such were the real partakers of the love of God, *But who so keepeth his word*, that is, such an one as keepeth the word of Christ, (for it is He to whom belongs the relative) *in him verily is the love of God perfected*. In such an one the love of Christ hath its proper place, and produceth its proper effect. As the words have been thus opened, there does not appear anything which, by any means, can take off our minds one single moment from our Lord Jesus Christ ; whilst there is a sufficiency in them, and the subject of which they treat, to take off our minds from our setting our hearts upon, and being taken with, any who are but mere professors : although it does not become us to speak, or pretend to say what their eternal state before the Lord is, yet it becomes us to deal with them concerning the state we view them to be in as mere professors : but even there, where there are no external evils connived at, we shall find need to act with care and caution ; the Lord will have some such in his visible church ; they have their use and end : they are a means of preserving the corn ; they are as good hedges about standing wheat : or leaves on the trees, which screen the fruit from storms, and too much sun. The words of our Lord should, therefore, be here called to mind. He said respecting the tares and the wheat, " Let both grow together until the harvest : and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them : but gather the wheat into my barn." Matt. xiii. 30. Errors, and immoral persons, most undoubtedly, should be removed out of the churches. Such as the five foolish virgins ; and doubtless professors answerable unto them, may be found in the congregated churches of Christ amongst us, are, I should conceive, by no means obnoxious to real saints : therefore they may as well remain where they are, as be removed ; seeing they are by no means troublesome, and real saints can receive no essential evil from them. To sum up the present head—a real professor of Christ's gospel is one, who keepeth the word of God : in whose heart the love of God is perfected : who hereby gives outward evidence of the truth and reality of all this ; and hereby is quite opposite unto, and most clearly and evidently distinguished from, the mere nominal professor. This brings me

3. To shew that this essential difference between a mere, and real professor, produces infallible evidence that the real believer is one who is interested in Christ ; or, in other words, that where the commandments of Christ are kept, where the word of Christ dwells, in whose heart the love of God is perfected, or so established as for the true and proper fruits of the same to be produced, this evidenceth and manifestatively

proves to immutable certainty, that such an one is in Christ. *Hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.* It is never to be omitted, and it is, therefore, here again repeated, the apostle is not speaking of the witness of the Holy Ghost to our spirits that we are the sons of God: he is speaking of the internal and external evidence which may be produced of our being born of God: it being quite like unto this, that we keep in remembrance the word of God: walk as becometh the gospel. All which proceeds from inward and spiritual principles. They, therefore, carry their own evidences with them, proving such and such to be the Lord's; the outward difference of one professor's walk and conversation, differing so much one from the other, as to prove where and in whom Christ was, and in whom he was not: so that *John* says, *hereby know we that we are in Him.* The knowledge of which must have been most divinely satisfactory; more especially as this was an outward standing evidence, such as could not but be taken notice of by some, it might by all who knew them, seeing it was made manifest in their lives, walk, and conversation. This being the case, it was, therefore, so absolutely necessary, for the apostle to mention these fruits and effects of the real knowledge of Christ, as thus expressed. I should not call any of these things the apostle mentions, in and throughout the whole of this subject, the fruits of faith; I should rather term the same, the natural effects of the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, in producing a new creation in the called people of God: it carries its own testimony with it, of what the Lord had wrought; it is always inherent in the mind: it is so residentiary there, that it becomes to the real children of the most high God, habitual: it is spiritually so. Hereby the renewed mind, being never more at rest and peace, and moving in its own spiritual sphere and activity, when acting in the name of the Lord Jesus and to the praise and glory of his Name, with a view to exalt him and advance his praise and glory; it became self-evident, it would not admit to be called in question by such as knew Christ, that these very outward and inward evidences were proofs that they knew Him: they were so to themselves: they were so to other believers. Hence the apostle speaks for himself and all the holy brethren, *hereby, know we that we are in him.* The word *hereby*, refers to what the apostle expressed in these words. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily, or truly, is the love of God perfected.* It is, hereby, fully proved to be genuine, and altogether divine. *Hereby know we that we are in him.* We cannot but be fully persuaded of this: we would by no means call it into question: we have increasing evidence hereof: we give full and convincing evidence of this by our profession. *Hereby know we*; we have the evidence of it in ourselves: we do not want others to prove to us, we are the Lord's disciples: we have the full proof of it in our lives and conversations, *Hereby know we that we are in him.* It appears to me, I have been led very clearly and plainly, and, I conceive also, with much ease, to give you a spiritual exposition of this scripture before us. Holiness of life and conversation is the very walk and ornament of the believer; it may well be considered, as it should be, his outward garment and ornament: so as that he cannot wear it, and go out and in with it, before men, but the

glory of Jesus is advanced : the good of fellow saints promoted : fresh evidences of being one in Christ and with Him, given : and also renewed proof of our being in Christ, afresh gained : so that the whole cannot fail of being very beneficial to the souls and bodies of real saints. Still all this is but an outward evidence of our knowing Christ ; it is, however, a very substantial one ; it is so good in its place, we cannot willingly part with it ; yet we do not lock within ourselves for it. No, we give it, and we also take it ; but we never substitute it in the place of Christ. Yet without it we should be ashamed to say, we did belong to Him ; because we cannot, by any means, conceive, the Lord hath stamped His divine image on us but it becomes us to reflect the glory thereof on others. The apostle's saying, *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in him*, implies a knowledge which saints, as saints, have of each other ; so as to conclude concerning each other, that they are in Christ : and without this they can have no real satisfaction in and with each other. There can be no union without communion, neither can there be any communion without an union. This is discovered by a close and most hearty attachment to Christ the Head—to his gospel, truths, and ordinances—to a walk agreeable with the same. Where this is manifested, real saints love each other : they cannot but love each other : they cannot fail of knowing each other that they are in Christ. *Hereby know we that we are in him*. This knowledge must have its increasing influence on the minds of such as are saints indeed : we know this so blessedly and effectually, as to be of one heart and of one soul, striving together for the faith of the gospel. I might here observe, how one real evidence of our being partakers of the grace of God, so as to be not only the objects of it, but the subjects of it also, springs from one gracious act, and is followed by more. The true knowledge of Christ goes first : this is the gift of God. In the true knowledge and with the right spiritual apprehension of Christ, we receive him and his great salvation into our minds. This makes way for our acknowledgment of Him, and to confess Him. Then it becomes us to give outward proof and evidence of our faith, openly, before others ; which is agreeable with our Lord's command, "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. So doth a real christian. He being in Christ, by grace and by profession, he believes on Christ : he keeps the commandments of Christ : he holds fast and maintains the truth of Christ : he keepeth his word : the love of God produceth this most blessed effect in him : he knows himself, and he knows others hereby. It is certain to himself that all this is the very fruit and effect of the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. This is his outward criterion to look at and judge others by : so it was the apostle's. Such as were so and so influenced by Almighty grace, to cleave with full purpose of heart to the Lord, who had the love of God dwelling in their minds, who were thereby sweetly constrained to attend unto, and keep Christ's word, were the very identical persons of whom *John* was persuaded, they were in Jesus. If these things are so, then we do not want to reject the use of all evidences concerning a man's state before God. They are for an outward evidence, and serve chiefly by way of discrimination between one and another who profess the Lord Jesus Christ and his truth. Perhaps that is the

one sole and grand design of them : not for us to judge our eternal state by, as to judge of ourselves and others also, how far we give proof to others, of our walking in the Spirit ; and as becomes the commands and precepts of the gospel : and in an especial manner to keep up and maintain a proper and regular distinction, between real possessors of Christ, and such as are only professors. Let this be considered. For we may be fully persuaded, whether we have the true meaning of the apostle or not, that it could not be the design of the Holy Ghost to lead us off Christ, to look for any thing in ourselves to recommend us to Him ; nor to build our confidence of faith in Him, on account of any of these evidences, which, in and of themselves, were so many substantial fruits and effects of our being born of God. They are spoken of as outward evidences of grace, proceeding from an inward faculty, which fully proved what they were produced for ; which was to shew the vast difference between one born of God, and another under the same profession of Truth, who was not renewed by the Holy Ghost. I leave what is thus set before you. May the Lord give his own light in the same to your minds ; that you may receive it by his own Holy Spirit's teaching. Amen.

SERMON XV.

He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.—I JOHN II. 6.

OUR apostle in this chapter hath a variety of subjects. Some we have taken notice of : others we are not as yet come to. We have been in the three former verses on some certain outward evidences of grace, which distinguish one professor from another, and discover a vast outward difference between them. The apostle hath set forth the same in the person of an individual : why so I cannot say, unless it might be to make it the more awful and striking. You shall have the two former verses recited. They are these. “ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in Him.” He then proceeds to the words of my present text, in which he says, *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* He had, in the first chapter, spoken of walking with God in a way of holy spiritual communion. He is, in this, speaking of walking before God, and outwardly before men. He therefore says, “ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” Now keeping the commandments, by which I would conceive to be comprehended, all, whatsoever the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed, and commanded throughout the whole revelation of his will ; this will never give us the true and saving knowledge of Christ. Nor can we serve him, or obey him, until we have the true knowledge of Him : therefore the apostle cannot be speaking here, but of what is outward and self-evident to others. Our walk with God is unseen by men : our

walk before God, some part of it is external; it is under the influence of it we walk before men; we do this by making his word our rule—His Spirit our guide—His glory our end. When, “whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we do all to the glory of God.” As in the visible church of Christ, there are such as are the Lord’s, and such as are not, some being sons, others servants, some heirs, others children of the bond-woman, some born from above, others but temporary ones, who never bring forth fruit unto everlasting life; so *John* seems to aim at distinguishing these one from the other; especially such of them as lived in sin. Some of these were mere formal professors: others of them were swallowed up in errors: and some were preachers of the same. Some were one thing, and some another. It will be quite convenient to speak of these when we come to verse the 18th of this chapter. Our apostle set in contrast one with the other, a mere professor, and a real possessor. The one said *I know Christ*, so did the other. The one paid no attention to the precepts and commands of Christ: the other kept the word of Christ, and meditated on the same. The one was so empty as to improve no ordinance: the other was so spiritually improved, that the love of God produced its true and proper effect within him: this the apostle holds up to view; with this commendation. “Hereby know we that we are in Him:” this is a good clear outward evidence of the same; for he is speaking of that which gives this outward testimony thereof. He then sets forth one who saith he abideth in Christ, how it became him to act. Before, he had said, “He that saith, I know him:” this was a mere verbal assertion in the mouth of him who spake it: yet as proceeding from the heart of another, it produced its proper fruits and effects. Which as it did, the apostle says, *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* There is a difference between professing Christ, and an abiding in Christ. The one is a simple profession of his Name, Person, love, righteousness, sacrifice, and salvation: the other is a continuation in the same. So that as perseverance crowns the action, so abiding in the true confession of Christ, crowns our faith. Or in other words, it confirms and proves the reality of it; in the same sense in which our Lord says, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” In order to open and explain my present text, I will attempt the following particulars.

1. The confession made by the person in the words before us: it is this, He saith he abideth in Christ.

2. I will endeavour to set forth, what abiding in Christ is.

3. The obligation on such an one for holy walking: and how, and after whom he ought to walk, even after Christ, and as he did.

4. That all this is enforced by apostolical authority. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* It is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is expressed under the term *Him*. As he also is in the three former verses. He had before been entitled an Advocate. A righteous one. An advocate with the Father. The propitiation. After which it is *He*, and *Him*. So it is in our text: so it is in many of the succeeding verses. Nor is there any great addition to this until we come into the third chapter: this may be conceived as the reason for it—the sacred writer is not just here speaking concerning matters of faith; but of practice. I am

1. To take up, and take notice of the confession made by the per-

son in the words before us. It is this, "He saith he abideth in Christ." The fact is, the apostle speaks the word for the person : which suited the subject he would enter on well ; as it would draw forth the attention, and give full and proper opportunity for him to set forth what the walk and conduct of such an one ought to be : for we must have *ought* here. It being an inestimable blessing bestowed, for a man to know Christ—to profess Christ—to abide in Christ—to be bold in declaring this ; surely it must lay such an one under the highest obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ, which the apostle was so fully persuaded of, that at the very first view of the same, he pronounces, *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he*, (i. e. Christ) *walked*. But to the confession. The person in the words of my text is considered as saying, *he abideth in Christ*. We cannot abide in Christ except we are in Him : we must be first in him, before we can believe on him. If we are not in him, we cannot be quickened by Him. There is an eternal union : there is a manifestation union : and there is a communication union : by the which the soul is quickened with spiritual and immortal life—is made partaker of the faith of the operation of God—is enlightened with the light of everlasting life : it sees Jesus : it professes him : it enjoys everlasting life : it hath it now, as truly as it will have it in glory everlasting. Which is agreeable with our Lord's words, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." From this follows the true profession of Christ, and faith in Him. The person in the words before us, a primitive believer in *John's* time declared this : he improved on it : he increased on the foundation : he was confirmed and strengthened in the faith, and was established in it : he owned and declared the same. It was all of grace : the free gift of God to him : he, therefore, openly and boldly told it out, it might have been in like manner with the Psalmist, when he said, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." To say, I know Christ, by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, in the word, this is the effect of great grace : to say, I am in Him, this is an advance in the school of Christ : to say, I abide in Christ, I am rooted, grounded, and settled in Him, this is beyond all the former. It is so by way of spiritual gradation ; very few saints attain to this : it belongs to all, yet is enjoyed by few. The person spoken of by *John*, professed Christ, and he also said, he abode in Him, in the true faith and acknowledgment of his most holy name. He saith, saith the apostle, *He abideth in him*. Surely it could not but rejoice his heart, and be very refreshing to his mind, such a declaration from the lips of one, in whom we may conclude he had confidence in the Lord touching him. We find it so ourselves : we do, we cannot but esteem such as are established in the faith of Christ ; because we expect more from them than from others : we also conceive they are the persons who bring more glory and honour to our most precious Lord than others. At the same time, more is required from them than all others. Our apostle throughout the whole of this Epistle, is for perpetual proof of every thing he treats of : he would have all he said concerning the great things of the gospel, received : as professed to be received into the mind, he would have them proved, by their corresponding effects. Nor could he think they were properly received, if the true genuine effects did not follow. Take this hint as the key to unlock this whole Epistle, then we shall find no perplexity in the same. The sun shining upon me, I can-

not but feel the effects of it; the air breathing within, and upon me, I must be revived, refreshed, and strengthened therewith; I cannot be inwardly satisfied with meat and drink, but I must be inwardly nourished thereby: so Christ cannot at any time shine within us and upon us, but we must be enlivened and refreshed: the Holy Ghost cannot breathe within us and upon us, but we must be spiritually invigorated. We cannot enjoy real views and blessed communion with the Father in his everlasting love, but it must produce the effects of the same, within our hearts, on our affections, in our lives and walk and conversations: this I conceive to be the whole sum total of this Epistle. Every cause will produce its own proper effect: it will never produce that which is contrary to it. If you are really in Christ, you will truly believe in Him: if so, you cannot but abide in Him: as surely as this is the case you will walk in Him: this will be an holy, regular walk: you will not walk without rule, nor without example; no: far from it: Christ himself will be your example. If a man was to say, I know Christ and live in sin; this, says the apostle, is such a contradiction in terms, I should, and I would spit in his very face. If a man was to say to me, that he abideth in Christ, why, says *John*, I should say to him, walk, or so oughtest thou to walk even as Christ walked. As the words of the text concern such as profess and declare they abide in Christ, *He abideth in Christ*, I shall therefore get into my next particular, hoping to improve our present subject.

2. By endeavouring to set forth what abiding in Christ is, or, what it is to abide in Christ. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

I need not observe, these words as well as the former are all used by way of discrimination: also they point out the individuation and personal distinction there is between one professor, and another: yet so much has been before said on this, there cannot be any further necessity of treading over the same ground. If it be here settled, it may serve for all that follows throughout this sacred Epistle. It contains all through, two sorts of persons whom the apostle writes of: one, the saints: the others, who though they had a name with and amongst them, were not of them, so as to be of one heart and spirit with them. Well, this I will now leave out: should it come up hereafter, what hath been before said, in what is passed over, and in what is now said, will be sufficient, to keep in mind and maintain the real difference there is, and will ever be found to subsist, between a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a mere nominal professor. So long as this true and proper barrier is kept up, and maintained in this sacred writing, there will never be any thing found in or throughout it to stumble and distress a real saint. But to my present work; for that is what I am only called now to attend to: it is to set forth what abiding in Christ is. *He that saith, he abideth in Christ.* It is in consequence of one's saying, he abideth in Christ, the words are brought forward. Now the question is, what is it to abide in Him? To which the reply most undoubtedly must be as follows—To abide in Christ most certainly is, to rest on Christ alone, for the whole of our salvation—to abide and continue in the true belief, confession, and acknowledgment of all the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel of his grace—to abide by, and also in, the ordinances thereof—to cleave to Christ in them—to abide by Him in the true confession of them—to worship and acknowledge Him in these;

this is to abide in Christ: all which may be considered as included in the words of my text. *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* Also by the apostle *Paul* saints are exhorted to this in such words as these, "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." Heb. iv. 14. These words are an exhortation to an abiding in the truths, doctrines, and ordinances of the everlasting gospel: surely we cannot but from them, receive a true and right apprehension of what it must be to abide in them, and Christ, who is the substance of them. So from our Lord himself, we may receive further light into what it is to abide in Him. He said to his disciples the very night on which his Passion commenced, in delivering to them that most important discourse, begun in the 15th chap. and which ends at the 16th verse of the 16th chap. of *John's* gospel: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Christ is the true vine, into which his people are implanted: they receive their all from Him, by virtue of his union unto them, and their union with Him. Their abiding in Him, in the sense here spoken of, is the effect of their believing in Him, living wholly dependant on Him by faith, and cleaving wholly unto Him, the truths, worship, and ordinances of his Gospel. So to do is all of grace: it is not so much any act of ours, as it is the act and operation of the Holy Ghost within us and upon us. By thus cleaving to Christ, we abide in Christ: we find Him to be a strong tower of defence—a place of refuge and defence—a strong tower against the enemy—a place of broad rivers and streams. He is to us the glorious Lord—our bread to feed us—our wine to cheer us—our shield to defend us—our fountain to supply us—our All in All. In every sense and way, allsufficient for us: we therefore abide in Him. We find ourselves filled with all good in Him, by Him, and from Him: so as to be able to say, as one of old did, *I have all things.* A man that abides in Christ, is one who knows Christ—who is fixed on Christ—who hath a blessed comprehensive apprehension of Christ: and who is also established in the faith, rooted and built up in Him. We have a most blessed encouragement to look for this blessing, if we need it. It is thus written, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. To profess to abide in Christ, most assuredly includes that such an one, is most blessedly acquainted with the truths and doctrines of God's most holy word: that he knows the glory of them; sees and perceives the worth and excellency of them: knows how to value them, more and beyond all which may be conceived, or expressed in and by all contained in created good. It must be conceived of a man established in Christ, that he is in the full possession of Christ in a way of believing; so as that his heart is established trusting in the Lord. I have been endeavouring to set such an one before you; to express him to you. This is more than the apostle doth in the passage before us: he hath more to do with his walk, and on insisting how he ought to walk, saying, *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* So that according to our

apostle, it is not saying I am in Christ : nor saying, I abide in Christ, will satisfy him, without a life and walk correspondent to the same. Which brings me to my next particular.

3. The obligation on such an one who confesseth and declareth that he abideth in Christ, to walk holily : and also how, and after whom he ought to walk ; even after Christ, and as he did. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

How inconceivable it is, that any should entertain the least apprehension of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God, as not replete with holiness, and allsufficient to maintain, and establish the full and complete system of holiness, and fully and effectually operate on the renewed mind, so as most fully and effectually to produce therein its most blessed and glorious effects ; whereby such who believe in the Father's everlasting love, the Person, and complete salvation of the Son of God, and in the distinctive Personality of the Eternal Spirit, who is the Sanctifier of the whole election of grace, and will perfect them for ever in eternal glory, may have most clear and blessed communion with them, as suited to the revelation they have made of themselves in their mutual and glorious acts of grace. Yet many are the prejudices entertained in the mind of some, concerning many of the glorious mysteries of grace ; that some conceive clear light and knowledge into the same, would be injurious to the interest of holiness : others think, if people were established in Christ, and the truths of the everlasting gospel, they would want a motive for practical holiness. True light and clear knowledge into the words of our text, are sufficient to set aside such gross and false conceptions. *He that abideth, and saith, that he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* This is the language of it ; the person is considered as one who abideth in Christ : it is necessary therefore he should walk even as Christ walked. This is full proof, that to abide in Christ, firm and fast to all the doctrines of truth, does not, by any means, take off the mind from holy walking : it is the most powerful excitement thereunto : it lays an obligation on the person so to do : it is included in the very expressions. The word *ought*, is here the same which our Lord made use of to his disciples, after his resurrection ; when he said unto them, " O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken : Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? " Luke xxiv. 25, 26. There is a necessity for him who abideth in Christ, to walk holily. It cannot be otherwise : it must be so : he cannot be prevented. His confession of Christ constraineth him : his abiding in Christ lays him under an immutable obligation so to do. He must walk after Christ : he must walk as he did : he must walk as having him for an ensample. This most assuredly is implied and contained in the words of my text. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* The *ought* is a binding influential word. A man in Christ is holy in Christ : he is one of Christ's holy brethren : the Holy Ghost dwelleth in him : he is possessed of, and inhabited by the Spirit of Christ : he is made a partaker of an holy nature : he cannot be unholy if he would : he is called to holiness : he is bought with a price, and is the Lord's free man. He is most graciously and freely constrained, to glorify the Lord with his body and soul which are his : he is under a present and everlasting obligation to give up his whole person to the

Lord, and to be the Lord's for ever. This is the substance of what is here before us. The apostle indirectly makes an argument of it, to shew it is impossible to know Christ and live in sin. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* This very profession calls for and requires it: an *ought* of necessity is put upon it. No outward evidence can be given of abiding in Christ, but by this: there is therefore no avoiding it. The whole contents of the expressions are vastly strong: the walk expressed is the real christian's; the example and pattern of it is Christ himself: He it is who is to be followed. Not as though we could imitate Him: no. This is by no means conceived of or designed: it is but to follow at an humble distance after Him; declaring ourselves to be his meek and lowly followers. It is this, he who saith he abideth in Christ, is to be—a real follower of Christ—he is to set the Lord before him—he is to study conformity to Him—he is to consider the obligations he is under to his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—he is to walk in Christ—to walk with Christ—to walk up and down in the name of the Lord, in his fear, as seeing him who is invisible. The term *walking*, is expressive of outward bodily action: what the apostle is here treating of, is outward and visible: it is performed in the body, and by it. He is not here speaking of internal spiritual mental exercise; but of what is altogether outward and to be seen. It is because it is visible an *ought* is put upon it. When I say, what is here spoken of is outward, I do not mean to say, it can be performed without an inward and spiritual faculty. No. It cannot. Yet it is an outward walk; it is the life, and conversation, which are most certainly designed here; and all this, it must be confessed, is outward and visible. It is open to the eyes, ears, and perception of others: hence it is, and it becomes visible. That an outward walk is designed here, the words of the text are sufficient to prove: as also the terms in which the subject is expressed. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as Christ walked.* The words *walk* and *walked*, the one spoken of the man who abideth in Christ, the other of Christ himself, fully evince it. Our Lord's walk in holiness and righteousness, was outward and visible before men: so is what is called for in our text to be. The end to be answered, by the walk proposed in my text, is a further proof of its being an outward visible walk. A man who walks in the view of others is seen: those who look at and behold him, see who, and what he is: if he walks in an upright and becoming manner, they cannot but allow and confess it: it should be so: yet as it respects a child of God, it is not always so with him. Even so it is, in what is here before us. A believer is in this world; he lives in it; he professeth Christ; he abideth in Christ; he is on his journey through this vale of tears; at the end of it is death: yet he walks on until he comes to his journey's end. He is, for the glory of his Lord, to give an outward evidence in his walking, that he is the Lord's: and that so as he may thereby be distinguished, as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what these words are here brought in for, to distinguish one professor from another. As several inward effects of grace had been spoken of, so now he speaks of one outward evidence of the same; and this is such an one, as cannot escape notice and observation: it is to walk so as to give continual proof, in and by the same, that we look to Christ. He lives in us: reigns in us: we walk in our measure and degree, to reflect

the image and example of Christ on others. It is very beautifully expressed by the apostle *Paul* in his Epistle to the church of Christ at Philippi, in such words as these. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of-life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." ii. 14—16. The words, he ought to walk even as Christ walked, or if you will have the whole text, *He that saith he abideth in Christ, or, in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as Christ walked*, are vastly expressive of the holiness, purity, and godliness, which are the outward ornament that adorns the conversation of a child of God. This being an evidence of real christianity, it should be closely attended unto: not to make us christians, but to prove us to be so: not for our own glory, but for the glory of our Lord. Such as say they know Christ, and abide in Him, let such remember, they *ought* to walk even as Christ did. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*. Having expressed the obligation, on such an one who abideth in Christ, for an holy walking, and how, and after whom he is to walk, even after Christ, and as he did; I proceed to my last particular.

4. To shew that all this is enforced by apostolical authority. It is from the beloved apostle of Jesus Christ, all this is pronounced. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*.

Whilst this Epistle is so full of distinctions between one and another under the same external profession of Christ, yet the discrimination is so solemn and awful, as sometimes to have too much influence on the minds of real saints. We should never look for any thing of grace and holiness in ourselves: we should look to the Holy Ghost, to draw out from within us, what he hath most graciously wrought there. It is because we sometimes look to our new nature for grace, instead of looking to the Lord the Spirit, that we go without that continual supply of grace we constantly need. With respect to and concerning personal holiness of life, walk, and conversation, whilst it becomes us to be found in the continual exercise thereof, yet we must be looking to the Lord alone for the same. It should also be remembered, outward holiness is the fruit of inward holiness: the one cannot be without the other; the one being the cause, the other the effect. The gospel calls for the effects: these are what outwardly are to be seen: these clearly appear: they speak on our behalf, and shew to whom we belong. It is in this way and manner they are here by our apostle treated of. I remember *Mr. Romaine* once said, "But you are afraid of the interest of holiness. Indeed Sirs, I know of no holiness but what is contained in the fulness of Christ; and is received out of it in a way of believing on Christ, and living on him." Whilst any of us are living on Christ we are holy. Communion between him and us, is the only way for increasing and promoting it: we are full of the practice of holiness, when we are living on Him and to Him. The gospel is holy in every part of it, and all throughout it: equally so with the law, which is holy, just, and good. The great *Dr. Goodwin* somewhere says, *the law is holy, but the gospel is far beyond it for holiness*. I understand his meaning, therefore I make no objection against it.

Otherwise they being both holy, they may be considered as equally so. He means to distinguish the difference thus: the law is a transcript of Jehovah's will, concerning the moral holiness of his rational creatures: whilst the gospel is a display of his grace and holiness, made known in the salvation of his elect, fallen by transgression, through the fall of Adam. There is most assuredly, a greater manifestation and display of the Holiness of the Divine Nature, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man in one Person, than could ever have been reflected by the Law, on the mind of pure man, in his creation state, had he continued in it for ever. The Person, Holiness, Righteousness, and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Mediator of reconciliation, and as expressed therein and thereby, reflect the very essence of all which is true holiness and grace. It is that which contains the very uttermost demonstration of it, and lays the foundation for the influence, and everlasting efficacy of the same on the minds of the called elect, and for their real personal and practical holiness. Yet this is always suspected. How is it so? Because of the full blaze of free grace which is hereby displayed: and because of the godlike way and manner in which the saints are made holy. We conceive it must be by some creature efforts: whereas we can no more make ourselves righteous before men, by any acts of our own, than we can make ourselves righteous before the Lord. We must be made righteous, before we can produce, and be filled with the fruits of righteousness: we must first be made holy, or we cannot walk holily. It is by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we are made inwardly holy. It is by the fruits of this, we appear to be holy, in our affections, thoughts, words, and actions. Not that our unholy nature is made holy: but we have a new nature put within us: and a new spirit also. This is wholly of grace: the fruit and effect of the accomplishment of that most gracious promise which runs thus, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. It is in the fulfilment of all this, by the Lord himself, in the souls of his elect and called people, all their sanctification and holiness consists; so that this whole Epistle of *John* is nothing more than insisting on it, that God cannot deny himself. There are some in whom, and to whom these promises are fulfilled and made good: consequently these cannot but be distinguished from all others, by a work within them, which is altogether godlike and divine: such as produces supernatural effects: some without; some within: some are less evident, others more so. The truth and reality of the same is such, that the apostle, with all the weight of his apostolical office and authority, enforces and enjoins on all who professed Christ, to attend closely to what he wrote in this Epistle: he would by infallible and apostolical authority, and with all the weight thereof, sound this forth; so as that a man who was in a profession arrived to any good degree, and steadfastness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus, should attend unto this. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* Thus he shews his great attachment to holiness—

to personal holiness—to practical holiness—to holiness of walk, and conversation : all which is open and external ; as is that which another apostle calls for and exhorts unto, when he saith, “ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Heb. xii. 14. We cannot make ourselves inwardly holy : it is wholly out of our power : we are called upon to prove ourselves to be holy ; this is to be by an holy conversation : so says the apostle *Peter*, “ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance : But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; Because it is, written, Be ye holy ; for I am holy.” 1 Epis. i. 14—16. Holiness is our ornament : it does not bring us into acceptation with God : it does so with the saints. It is most truly necessary for us : it is recommended in, and throughout all the scriptures : it is most solemnly impressed on the minds of all who professed Christ, by each of the apostles. If it be asked, what is the reason ? Is it that we may be beloved of God ? Is it that we may be accepted of Him ? Is it that our salvation may be secured ? Is it that we may have any ground of confidence in ourselves ? The answer to all this must be, No. We are beloved of God, out of the sovereignty of his own will : we are accepted in the Person of the Beloved : we are saved in the Person, and by the one complete atonement and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with an everlasting salvation : we can have no other confidence, and foundation for our salvation, than the Lord hath given us, in the word of his gospel : so that our having received Christ, and walking holily, are the fruits and effects of the same. It is in this direction our apostle places it ; so that we distort it, when we advert to this at any time, and set aside Christ. We are not saved because we are holy, but we are holy because we are saved. Holiness in conversation is a good proof and evidence before others, to prove we are the Lord’s ; but all of it put together cannot make us holy in his sight. Whilst no part of scripture should be concealed ; yet every part of scripture should not be alike dwelt upon : we should here be guided according to the necessity of the subject. May the Lord give to us all, who know Him, a true and right apprehension of the past, and present subject, that we may rightly apprehend the same. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you : because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.
 1 JOHN ii. 7, 8.

THOSE subjects which have been before us, and those now under our present consideration, respecting the internal and external evidences of

the saints' personal interest in Christ, as described by the apostle, throughout this Epistle, enabling them to speak with real and most certain confidence concerning the same, we are now going on with. I began at the third verse of this chapter: it was continued in verses, 4, 5, and 6, and we are now entering on a fresh part of the same subject, and that under a different form. The verses which are my present text, are an introduction to a fresh view of the past subject: the next three following verses, viz. 9, 10, and 11, close this part, which began with the third and finally closes at the eleventh verse. In the following parts of the chapter, we have a variety of subjects: some which concern all saints universally; the whole universal church of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth: some which regard the Lord's called people, respecting their age, case, and standing in the school of Christ. An account is given of some apostates from the faith, both preachers, and others, who had most awfully erred from the Truth as it was in Jesus, having corrupted the same, and were the Antichrists of the apostolic age. It is noticed by the apostle, that the real saints were preserved from these: this was owing to their having received an unction from the Holy One, whereby they knew all things. To these the apostle particularly addresseth himself: he encourages them to abide in the truths of the everlasting gospel. In the words of my text, which are as follow, *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*, he addresseth them by the term *Brethren*: this is different from the former, which was, *My little children*. v. 1. He says he writes no new commandment unto them, but an old; which was from the very commencement of the gospel delivered unto them. They had heard it from the beginning: it was a divine precept concerning loving one another, as Christ had loved them: it was for substance the very same word which Christ had delivered unto them from the beginning. Again, under another view of it, without the least alteration in the same truth, it might, without any misrepresentation of the same, be styled a new commandment: it having been afresh repeated, and enforced by a new and most effectual motive by our Lord, for the observance of, which could not but have its influence on such as were saints; for now the darkness was past, and the true light shone. By which I conceive, the Jewish state, and the present state of the church are to be understood. The former dispensation is finally closed: it is past never to return. The present gospel state of the church is such, that the true, or clear light of the gospel, and its ordinances now shineth: and will remain unshaken, until our Lord's second coming in his kingdom and glory. It was under the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, in his incarnate state, and towards the close of it, this new commandment was given, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12. Thus I have given you an outline of the text, and of the whole chapter.

I conceive it will be best to cast my subject into the following scheme and order, and by means of the same to open the contents of it.

1. I will take notice of the address, and what he writes to them.

His words are these : *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.*

2. What this was. It was the *old commandment, which, says he, ye have heard from the beginning.*

3. He says he writes a new commandment unto them, which is true both in Christ, and these he writes unto. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you.* In what sense these things are so, I will endeavour to explain.

4. The reason assigned for this is, *because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.* May the Lord most graciously lead me through these particulars, so as the true and proper knowledge of what is contained in them, may be reflected on and thereby be received into the mind. I am now to keep close unto these particulars : and

1. To take notice of the address, and what the apostle is here writing about. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.*

The address, this is *Brethren* : which is very loving and affectionate. In the after parts of this chapter the address is various : sometimes it is little children : then fathers : afterwards young men : then little children : which is several times repeated. The term *Brethren* is very expressive of his love for them, and regard of them in the Lord. He, and they were born again by the same Spirit. They were one and the same, with regard to union with the Lord Jesus Christ. They had one and the same Father, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was their God and Father also. They were all saved by the same one Lord Jesus Christ. They were all interested in his one complete and everlasting salvation. They were all alike washed, justified, and sanctified in the same righteousness, and by the same most precious blood-shedding. They were all of them complete in the one most precious God-Man. They were alike bound up in the bundle of life with him. So that they were *Brethren*, in the best and highest, and truest sense, being the brethren of Christ, and children of the most high God. It might be the apostle might like to use this term, *Brethren*, as he was going to speak on the subject of loving one another for Christ's sake, and in Christ, and together with Him. It might therefore well suit to use the term *Brethren* : to them he says, *I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.* By what follows in the succeeding verses, it is very evident, the commandment here spoken of, respects brotherly love. Read the next three succeeding verses, and you will be satisfied that it is even so : yet he says, *I write no new precept, nor doctrine to you.* No ; there could be no need of it ; because the Lord Jesus Christ himself had delivered out all which was ever to be given as from Him. All, I am fixed on as essential to faith, and practice, and all which concerns you, as essentially considered, this is all I am writing on. I am very especially disposed under the influx of the Holy Ghost, to write on what concerns our loving one another with a pure heart fervently. This is the doctrine we were brought up in. It is no novel doctrine : it is the very same we had from the beginning, the knowledge of Christ, and our profession of his most blessed and glorious gospel. It is an old commandment which we had, and received from the first knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. It was by him delivered unto us from our first admittance

into his school. As this was an old commandment, there could be no objection to it: nor to assenting to its truth, nor conforming to its practice. The oldness of it, was a real evidence in favour of it: so that these words may be received in favour of the same, *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning*: ye need not therefore object in the least against what I deliver unto you, it is nothing new, either in faith or practice. The one is the foundation of the other. The one is the cause, the other the effect. The one cannot exist in your minds but the other also must. You cannot love Christ, but you must love the brethren of Christ. You cannot love, and continue in your loving Christ, but you must love, and continue in your loving the brethren of Christ also. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you*, on this subject. No; indeed I do not. Our Lord has issued out nothing new concerning it. From the first day *we* his apostles were brought under his ministry, I myself cannot, neither can you; but well recollect this was spoken out by him, "Love one another, as I have loved you." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." I therefore want you to be fully persuaded of this, that what is herein contained, is just the same old commandment which ye had from the beginning. This is what I am now writing to you of.

2. What this old commandment was, is to be more fully expressed. It is *the old commandment, which*, says he, *ye have heard from the beginning*.

The commandment concerning love to the brethren, for Christ's sake, was an old commandment. It was coeval with the gospel, and essential unto it. It is founded on it: issues out of it. The love of Christ, and of God in Christ, to the elect in Christ, is the ground and motive, the argument and excitement thereunto. It was an old commandment which was delivered, and hath been enforced over and over again by our Lord Jesus Christ, on all those who declare they know him, and belong to him. He has from the beginning, given it as the true badge of discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This hath been declared from the first revelation of Him, down to the present moment. It will evermore continue in force. It is an immutable evidence of real, spiritual, supernatural, internal love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his most glorious gospel, precious ordinances, and holy worship. I conceive, in reading through the whole of this Epistle, it should be received into the spiritual mind, and retained there, that the water of Life which flows from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, runs in, and throughout every vein and nerve of this apostolical letter. Every one part, and single particle of it, is of vast importance; and serves in the hand of the Eternal Spirit, as an occasion to direct our hearts into such real perceptions of the love of God, as that we may know ourselves to be the real objects and subjects of the same. Carrying about in us, and with us the real memorials and testimonials thereof. It cannot be the design of the Holy Spirit to lead us to look off Christ, to look within ourselves: yet he could not indite this Epistle, but the end must be worthy of Himself, and for the consolation of saints. And were we to digest this properly in our own spiritual understandings, that the doctrine of faith received, will in the hand of the Holy Spirit produce a work of grace within us, answerable

to the doctrine which we profess, I think we should both read and preach from this sacred Epistle to our great edification : and be no more led into ourselves thereby, than we are by reading the 17th chapter of *John's* gospel. All set forth in it, and expressed concerning internal and external evidences of grace within us, would no more take off our eye from Christ without us, than our immediate exercise of faith on Him doth. I would aim to relieve the mind from one expression which is not so correct, neither does it convey that true view that I could wish to preserve and maintain concerning this point of inward, or internal grace, as I would desire for myself to maintain and enjoy on this very interesting subject. Whilst I would by no means weaken any thing in this Epistle, nor wholly reject the evidences given by the apostle, of a work of regeneration wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost : which work is outwardly manifested, exactly and expressly in the way the apostle sets forth ; yet I would wish to speak of the Holy Ghost's producing such and such effects, fruits, graces, and most blessed apprehensions of God, and Christ—as he most graciously takes of the things of Christ, and shews the same unto us. Then it will clearly follow, it is all the fruit of communion with Christ, and all effected and produced by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This will most certainly preserve the honour of free grace and give the entire glory of the whole to the Three in Jehovah. It would also serve to prove to a demonstration, where the Holy Ghost hath wrought a supernatural birth, he will draw forth the same, and in the exercise thereof, he will produce in the tempers, lives, and conversations of the saints, supernatural graces ; and loving one another for Christ's sake, is one of these. The apostle having said, *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning* : he says, *Again, a new commandment I write unto you*. He affirms he writes *an old commandment unto them* : he then says, *Again, a new commandment I write unto you*. This must be explained. I would first mention the whole of the words, hoping we shall receive the more clear and convincing light thereby. I confess at times I find it necessary, to go over things again and again, to make the subject the more clear and plain to the thinking mind : you will therefore excuse me here. The words to be repeated are the whole of my text : a part of which hath been explained, in two particulars already. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Even from Christ himself. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you : because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.* This old and new commandment, must stand in some connexion one with the other ; and also there must be some difference between them : if not, why call the one by the term—an old commandment, the other—a new ; why is it said, which thing, concerning the one being an old commandment, the other a new, is true both in Christ, and in his church : which confirms the distinction of, *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you : because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.* I am now brought to the next head of my discourse, which is this,

3. To notice what the apostle says—that he writes a new commandment unto them, which is true both in Christ, and them. *Again, a new*

commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you. In what sense these things are so, I will endeavour to explain.

The apostle had, in the former verse, explained what he meant by the old commandment; it being the very same which they had received from the beginning. It was all this as to what it was essentially. It was the old commandment, in the very same sense as we read of the old covenant, and the new. There ever was but one and the same everlasting covenant: yet the different administrations have been such, of the same, as to give the denominations of the old and new covenant thereto. So our Lord's command to his beloved disciples, that they should love one another, receives the appellation of the *old commandment which was from the beginning*, and afterwards, *a new commandment*, from the distinct periods of its delivery. The one being at the first beginning of his ministry: the other being renewed just as he was about to finish it, when it was enforced with an additional argument.—“Love one another as I have loved you.” It was no new doctrine: it was not antiquated and worn out. It was one way in which they might express and exercise their love towards him: it being impossible they could testify their love to Him, if they did not love those who were his. Now I am to shew, how this old commandment is here said to be a new one. It was deservedly entitled *a new commandment*, because it had been repeated and delivered out afresh, by our most precious Lord Jesus Christ, just before he laid down his life for his whole church. He gave it forth with fresh authority, and an entire new motive, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” This I conceive is what the apostle refers unto here. He might well therefore say, this commandment was both *old* and *new*. It was all this in Christ; it was so also in the church: it had been given by Christ: it had never been revoked by Him: it was renewed afresh by our Lord Jesus Christ: it had been received by the Church: they afresh were under the powerful influence and authority of it on the day of Pentecost: it was then their case to be of one heart, and of one soul. John might therefore well say, *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*. Thus this gospel-commandment concerning loving the household and family of faith, is both an old, and a new commandment. It is of perpetual force and obligation. It is true in Him. He hath realized it. He hath established it. He hath most fully confirmed it. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” All which is set before us in the scriptures, that taking in the true, proper, spiritual apprehensions of the same into our minds, we might “love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” There is no contradiction, in calling this both an old commandment and a new: it being so in the sense in which it hath been explained. All which the Lord Jesus Christ hath spoken in his most holy word, will be for evermore, in all ages, and throughout all generations. What he spoke from the beginning of time, will bear up, and carry on his people all through time. His word will ever be as immutable as Himself: there will never be any change in it. The Truth of it will ever remain in Him: it will also remain everlastingly true in his Church. Every part of the revelation of his will, with every act of his will, with every purpose of his

grace, with every promise of his mercy, with every ordinance of his appointment, with every relation which he stands in to his saints, his church and beloved ones, will remain the same for ever. It is very good rightly to apprehend this, and to live in the full and free, and firm belief of the same. One great and grand end of the apostle, in and throughout every part and branch of this Epistle is, so to express the doctrine of the Person, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also together with the same, so to intersperse those most blessed fruits and effects, produced by the Holy Ghost in the hearts, lives, and conversations of the real children of God, as fully prove them to be born from above : and which is always in a like proportion to their faith. These fruits, graces, evidences, call them by what terms you please, do not produce faith : neither do they support it : nor do they increase or confirm it. No ; nor does faith look at any of them : so far from it, that the most of these are produced when faith is least apprehensive of the same. It is when faith is most swallowed up in Christ, we love Him most, and his beloved also for his sake. All we call graces and evidences, of which the apostle treats so fully here, are so many effects of the new-birth wrought within us ; which as the Holy Ghost is pleased to work and operate on, by revealing Christ in us, and taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to us, excites and draws forth, such and such blessed fruits and effects. And this is the reason the apostle dwells so much on these subjects here. It should be remembered, the Holy Ghost, when he fell on any of the apostles so as that they should write to any of the churches of the saints, he fixed the minds of these writers on those particular subjects he would they should personally and particularly be engaged on. Hence it is, there is such a vast, and holy variety in what is delivered by them. It is said of Old Testament prophets, " holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It was so as it respected the holy evangelists. It is not to be understood, that any of these saints, could produce, or act by any power of their own, by any natural acts and efforts. No ; yet such whose minds were renewed by the Holy Spirit, He by his indwelling in them, would in a greater, or less degree, produce such and such gracious fruits and effects in them : and where there was a profession of Christ, and none of these graces and fruits did appear, it most certainly proved there was no real work, and operation of the Holy Ghost in such. This new commandment, which *John* says is true in Christ, and in his church, is very expressive of the importance of it ; as also of the certainty of it. It was both of the reality of it ; and also of the immutability of it. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you.* Its command is immutable. Heaven and earth may pass away, yet all contained in this will abide for ever. Not that this can be exercised in the unseen state, as it is now : yet if Heaven is found to be a church state, love to the saints, and from and towards each other, will be found existing in their minds, and will be drawn out and exercised towards each other in glory, and that into personal act suited to the state of glory. So it will be with the Lord Jesus Christ : He will Personally and particularly express his love in acts of everlasting kindness to his people even in Heaven. So that this will even there be true of Christ, and of them—that there will be a continuation of reciprocal love exercised and maintained between them. If this was properly conceived of, it would serve to be a great motive for

our abounding in every real act of love to saints, whilst we remained here below. I hope the opening these subjects has been so far satisfactory, as to give light on the words of the text; as it respects the old commandment, and the new; as also how this is true, both in Christ and his Church also. It is both old and new in Christ, as he first gave it: and then again renewed it. So to the Church of Christ, it is both the old, and new commandment unto them. It so is, and the thing is true; as they received the same at two distinct periods. It shews how much the heart of Christ was in this commandment. The apostle's mentioning it, shews his apprehension of the vast importance of the same. He wants to have the same set on upon the minds of saints with divine emphasis: that it might be an outward distinguishing proof that they had been with Jesus. By the which an outward external evidence would be given, that they knew, and believed on him; and were of the same spirit, and walked according to the same grace with the saints at *Thessalonica*, of whom *Paul* writing to them says, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." 1 Thess. iv. 9. Thus I am come to my last particular of the text. Which is,

4. The reason assigned by our apostle for this; viz. that this commandment is new, as it had been an old—*because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*. I will here recite again the whole words of my text, that thereby our whole subject in the substance thereof may be retained. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

The reason why the new commandment is true in Christ, and in his church also, is this—*because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*. By the darkness and light here, I should conceive the legal dispensation, and the evangelical dispensation are to be understood. The one styled *darkness*, because it was only introductory to the manifestation of Christ in the flesh: the other compared to *light*, because of the clear open revelation of Christ thereby. The one is generally styled the legal dispensation, because that under it, the people were under the economy of ceremonies and sacrifices of worship, as kept them under a subjection which entangled their spirits, and kept them from perfect freedom. The other we style the New Testament, because Christ is fully revealed therein, as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The substance of these, is thus expressed by our apostle, in the 1st chapter of his gospel, in these words—"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." v. 17. Now our Lord Jesus Christ having visited his church, and been in our world by his Incarnation, before the apostle wrote this Epistle, he writing of Him, and concerning Him, and of what he had commanded, might therefore well and most truly and properly say, *the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*: as in the Person, work, salvation, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in his open, manifestative glory in the glass of the everlasting gospel, there is a dispelling all the mists of darkness, and every seeming obscurity which might appear to hover about the things contained in the past revelation of the very same grace. The revelation

of Christ in the Old Testament having been fully confirmed by the New, and thereby an effusion of light being shed forth, it is a reason why the old commandment of Christ might well be styled a new commandment: and that because the darkness of what we frequently call the Jewish state, or dispensation, was past. Light being shed on all, and every part of it, there was great cause for saying, *the true light now shineth*. There is a passage in the Epistle to the *Romans*, which seems to confirm this. The apostle says to the saints whom he addresseth, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." ch. xiii. 11—14. Here light and darkness, night and day, are used to point out the state of unregeneracy, and the legal dispensation, and the state of grace, and of the New Testament dispensation. So also the following words of the same apostle, who says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. v. 17. I confess I should look on this also, as expressive of the change not only wrought in the soul by regeneration and conversion to the Lord, but also of the change of state, believers in the apostles' times were brought into: as they were delivered from all Old Testament ordinances, and brought into the open visible church of Christ. In the which old things were passed away, and all things were become new; all the ordinances of the Old Testament superceded, and those only which belonged to this new dispensation were introduced and established, such as Baptism and the Supper. As we conceive thus of this subject, we can clearly apprehend how old things are passed away, and how all things are become new. We have the ordinance of preaching the everlasting gospel, instead of that of sacrifice: which being abolished and put down for ever, our Jesus having perfected for ever the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself; the preaching the everlasting worth, virtue, and efficacy thereof, is in the room and stead of it: and to us of everlasting importance. Thus I have been endeavouring to shew you, that the apostle's saying, that the old commandment is become a new one, and this is the reason for it, *because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*, is for the substance of it this.—The darkness of the past dispensation is over: it is at an end. The true light of Christ, and gospel-truth now shineth; never to be put a stop unto. All is clearly revealed and recorded therein. His word reflects itself on the minds of saints, as a lamp that burneth. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*. The darkness is past; never more to return: the which be it taken of the Jewish state, or of the darkness of a state of nature, and unregeneracy, is equally true. The sinner translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son, can never be transferred back again into it. The darkness is past: the Jewish ordinances can never more be established; nor can saints evermore be under the full power, and absolute dominion of sin. The *true light of Christ*, his grace and truth, now shineth in the everlasting

gospel of his grace : it will evermore shine : sometimes with more clear and full meridian splendour : sometimes with less : but shine it must. " For the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It *now shineth*, says our text : *the true light now shineth*. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the true light that now shineth. If it be asked where doth the true light shine ? the answer is, in the true and proper element thereof. If it be asked, where is that ? the reply is, in the scriptures of Truth : through them Christ shines upon his church : it is by this means he illumines her. He is as the sun, and she is as the moon, on whom he shines : so that it is from Him she receives all her light, knowledge, and glory of divine truth. Whatsoever she receives to any good purpose into her mind, of grace and truth, it is all and alone from him. *Paul* most beautifully expresses all contained in this in the following words : " For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Cor. iv. 5—7. The glory of God is reflected on the saints in the face of Jesus Christ. It is such a shine as amounts to a clear and supernatural apprehension of the same. There may be real saintship without it : yet where it is not, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, hath not been revealed. And where the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is manifested, and it shines forth on the mind and into the heart, in the Person of God-Man, Christ Jesus, there is real and most blessed communion enjoyed with the Lord. There the commandment which Christ hath given, will be engraven on the heart : it will be remembered and practised ; which may also be considered as a part of the beloved *John's* meaning : *which thing*, namely loving one another for his sake, *is true in him*, in us, and in you. His light on this precept shines within us : we are under the sweet influence of the same : we most cheerfully practice it, because the darkness of sin and error is past from us. We are in a spiritual state. We are in a new church-state of things. We are not embarrassed with our old Jewish notions. This is the very reason why we are not—*because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth*. May the Lord bless, if he please, what hath been delivered, so as to give us some enlarged views of the various subjects contained in this Epistle, as we pass through the same, and that we may not involve and entangle one subject with the other. I am for aiming at a proper connection, and for preserving this : and also for every distinct subject to be properly kept where it should ; being a very great friend to the harmony of scripture. May the Lord command his blessing on what is set before you. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.—I JOHN II. 9.

THERE is a very close harmony and connection, in and throughout every part of this discourse of the apostle here before us. He had been speaking of the old, and new commandment of our Lord: he had shewn how it was both old and new. It was in this very sense so, in Christ our Saviour; it was so in his church also. The darkness of the former Jewish state was past: the true light now shone forth. The apostle therefore proceeds to improve the subject. Our Lord never gave forth a command of universal obligation, but his true disciples were most heartily disposed to submit to it. Christ's command, and their new nature, and his divine authority are so congenial to each other, that the disciples and their Master are in perfect harmony. Therefore *John* makes this a matter of essential difference and distinction, between a real believer, and one who is only nominally so. A mere professor, and a real christian, are very distinct one from the other: they are, therefore, here diversified. It is common with them to speak the same things; to say the same of their case, state, and what they are by profession. So the empty professor is here spoken of, as speaking of himself, in words altogether agreeable: as if in the light of grace: as being a child of light: yet giving the lie to all this, by walking in darkness at the same time. It had been declared, that the new commandment, concerning loving one another in Christ, for his sake, and agreeably with his command was realized in the saints. Our Lord had not only commanded it, but set the example for it. He had himself realized the same: it had been so in a measure in the saints also. It was a truth in Him. It was so in them. He being gone before them to Heaven, and he having left them upon earth, they could not but exercise themselves much this way, one towards another. The darkness being now past, and the true light now shining, they loved each other in a very spiritual manner, and to a very great degree: so they did their dear Lord also. For his sake, they loved not their lives unto the death. They were also willing to lay them down for each other. The apostle, therefore, here by way of discrimination, says in the words now before us, *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* To hate a brother in Christ must be altogether unnatural: it is altogether inconsistent with our most holy profession: such an one cannot be in a state of grace, most assuredly: it cannot be manifested that he is so. The terms *light* and *darkness* must refer to a state of grace, and a state of nature: they are brought in here from the former verses; in which the states of those who were under the former and present dispensations, were expressed: and they are used to describe the same for the substance of them, as may be most readily perceived by putting them together. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write*

unto you, which thing is true in him and in you : because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. The words, *light* and *darkness* are most evidently fetched out of the former verses : they are here inserted, to shew it was a vain pretence to say, such were in the light, let the profession be what it would, who hated his brother, who professeth the same faith and practice with himself. Such an one was so far from being in the state of light, and truth, and grace, that the darkness was not past, but he remained in it and under it to the very present moment. To open and explain the words before us, I will aim at the same in the following manner, and under the following particulars.

1. I will endeavour to consider the apostle's design in these words, and his reason for expressing himself as he here does.

2. That to say, or any of us to say, we are in the state of grace, and free, open, manifestative favour with God, and to hate a brother in Christ, is full proof, and gives clear evidence that we are in a state of darkness.

3. What we are to understand by hatred, or hating, or one's hating another as expressed here.

4. That such an one is in *darkness*, he is in a state of nature and unregeneracy. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now* : to this very present moment. I will

1. Endeavour to consider the apostle's design in these words, and also what may be considered to be the apostle's reason for expressing himself as he here doth. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

Most assuredly, the one grand design of *John's* expressing himself as he here doth is, to keep up the proper discrimination between one professor and another. He began this, almost as soon as he entered on this chapter. It seems to be one great end and design of the apostle, throughout the whole of this Epistle, in his differences and discriminations, to separate and distinguish between the real christian, and one who was only so by profession and not in reality. As to the truths and ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was no difference here ; nor was there any about the effects these should have, and produce in mind and walk : yet there was a vast difference in the internal and external evidences in these different persons, so that let these think and speak ever so favourably of each other, yea, were it so, that the real saint thought very highly of some, because they were under the profession of the true gospel, yet our apostle saw such a real and manifest difference, as he could not but notify the same. It might also be one reason why this Epistle is written as it is, to be a witness for the scriptures themselves : that as they contain the truths of the Living God, so these truths produce all their fruits and effects, in proportion to the genuine reception of them into the mind : that the best channel of their conveyance, is regeneration : that by this faculty they are not only received, but they also operate ; so that they cannot but produce their real evidences of the nature of them and of their use, end, and design : that they are efficacious on the mind ; effectual in the heart ; operative on the will ; and bring the person into a most blessed state of conformity unto the image and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. I conceive this

may cast a light on many of the subjects before : for we must not set up one part of the written word above and beyond the other : neither must we set up any as in direct contradiction to the other. Salvation is alone in the Person and work, the incarnation, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ. This is wholly and will be for ever without us. The revelation of this is in the scriptures of truth. This is the sole foundation for our faith, hope, and reception of it : which we receiving into our minds, the Holy Ghost bears his testimony unto in our hearts. We hereby seal the same with our most hearty assent and consent. As the subject is vastly comprehensive, it containing the whole of God, so far as he hath been pleased to make known of himself in Christ Jesus, so the enlightened mind, as this most glorious revelation is more and more reflected on it, is more and more impressed with it : affected by it : and by this means it is more and more brought under the mighty energy and influence of the same. Hereby it is, the truths of God, and doctrines of the everlasting gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, produce their most blessed fruits, influences, and real effects on such as receive them. As there is both an internal and an external receiving the truths and doctrines of salvation, and the one may be where the other is not, and there may be a possibility, through the self-flattery of the heart, to deceive ourselves and others, concerning these important things, and this being very much the case with outward professors towards the close of the apostolic day ; hence I apprehend it is, we have so many internal and external evidences of real grace mentioned here, and throughout this sacred transcript of the divine will. It cannot be the design of the Holy Ghost to divert our minds from Christ : to take off the eye of our minds from looking at, and stedfastly beholding Jesus. It cannot be his design that we should look at any thing wrought within us, or felt by us, or produced in life and conversation, as any part of our salvation : that would be to break in upon the honour of free, sovereign, unconditional grace : it is rather to set forth the things which accompany salvation : and to shew that all real, spiritual christianity, springs from, and is the fruit and effect of inherent grace, and implanted principles wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God : which the Holy Spirit's shining on, and drawing forth into act and exercise, were so visible, and evident, that such as had them not, it was outwardly evidenced they were not the true followers of Christ. This I do most sincerely in the sight of the Lord, apprehend to be the true statement of the subject of this Epistle before us. Here we are on what is outward and visible. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* As the design of the apostle here, must be to express the difference of a formal professor, and a real practical possessor of Christ, so his reason for thus expressing himself, must be to convey conviction to the person thus described. To what purpose would it have been to write thus, if this was not his end in it ? If this were his end, then there is an excellency in it. Open rebuke is better than secret love. It is so, as it may prevent many errors and mistakes : it would do so in the present instance. For a professing brother being informed by apostolical authority, that he was quite mistaken in his present profession of christianity, must be very awful, and such as, one would conceive, must most solemnly affect him—that though he professed himself to be in the light of truth and grace, and to be walking in the same, yet with all this his declaration of it, he was

wholly and altogether far from this. And here lay the evidence against him—his not loving a brother, who made the same outward confession of Christ and truth, with himself. It was hereby very evident against him, that he was still, with all his external appearance and profession, in a state of darkness and unregeneracy even until now. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* He saith of himself, what he never was. He is only an external professor: he is not a real christian: he knows nothing of practical christianity. Let him therefore no longer deceive himself. This is of like meaning with the words of the fourth verse, which we have before passed through. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* Both these verses compared together, speak one and the same thing: to which may be added verse the sixth. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* Which, with our text, expresseth the emptiness and vanity of a bare and mere profession. So that there is nothing in them, which need by any means to distress a real believer in the Lord Jesus, or of disturbing his thoughts for a single moment, so as for him to look off Christ, for any evidence in himself, to prove thereby that he is interested in life and salvation, or that it is on the footing of his being this, or not being that, that he is in Christ. Assurance of this comes in to the mind quite another way. Assurance that such and such walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called is one thing, assurance of personal interest in Christ is another. To profess Christ, and not love for his sake, is an outward and external matter, which cannot but be open and visible. It is this is, as I conceive, the subject here. I should suppose there might be almost, if not altogether, the same external appearances in one professor, as another; only that in the mere professor, it only arises from various motives, it does not spring from internal grace wrought in the renewed mind: whereas in the real believer, it springs up from within; agreeable to what our Lord says, “The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” John iv. 14. But to proceed with my subject.

2. I would observe, that to say, for you and us, or any of us to say, we are in the state of grace, in the free, open, manifestative favour of God, and to hate a brother in Christ, is full proof, and gives clear evidence that we are in a state of darkness. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

It appears very evident, professors of all sorts seem to aim to make the very same confession of faith, and what they are. It also seems from the words to be very natural, that such as have the least internal evidence of their being the subjects of grace, and partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are as forward and bold to speak on such subjects as are connected with a very solemn professor of the gospel, as any whatsoever: even such as are partakers of the grace part of it. Hence, here before us, a mere outward profession is represented to us, as speaking out with as great a degree of confidence as any one possibly could. He is not backward to say he is in the light: that Christ is his light: that the darkness is past with him: that he is acquainted with the system of grace—with the truths of the everlasting gospel: that he knows he is in a state of open communion with God: yet with all, he does not love his

brother in Christ : he does not esteem him in his heart : he is not disposed to esteem him as his brother : he is quite cold and indifferent unto him : he has no real affection for him : all which is an awful proof and evidence, a professor acting thus, cannot be what he professeth, and declares himself to be. He cannot be in the light of grace and truth : he cannot be walking in Christ the light of everlasting life : he cannot be walking in communion with the Father, and the Son : it is wholly and altogether impossible. Therefore as the apostle had before said, *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* And again, *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* So he here saith, *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* So that these all concern one and the same person, and subject—a professor of Christ, who with all his profession, pays no respect at all to any of the Lord's commandments. Neither does he look on, and meditate on the holiness, purity, and walk of Christ, as it is recorded in the scriptures, as if he considered that to be a living edition of the same, and was what he should be aiming after ; or that it was closely connected with real love to Christ, to love a brother of Christ. Yet these were, each of these, so many standing evidences, that such had no true knowledge of Christ, formed in their minds by the Holy Ghost. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* If it was so then, it must be so now. Therefore these things must concern us now, as truly as they did the professors of the age in which *John* lived, and wrote. How it may strike others I cannot say : I must say for myself, I think it an admirable distinction, to conceive a real and vast distinction between being one with Christ, and of being a real christian. The one must be before the other ; the latter follows on the other : yet the one may be real, where there is no opportunity of realizing it outwardly and visibly. But there may seem a necessity of explaining this, which I will most willingly do, according to my spiritual knowledge and the wisdom given me of God. I apprehend an elect person may be effectually wrought upon, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and be made the subject of the whole work of grace, yet the same person may never be so disposed of by the Lord's most holy providence, as to exercise, and fill up a life and conversation which contains, and realizes what practical christianity consists in : which as I conceive of it, takes in, comprehends, and includes the whole contained in the various circumstances and conditions of life which the Lord may call the person into. And the practical part of christianity must consist, in the exercise of every social, religious, and relative duty consistent with, and connected therewith. And this altogether in agreement with the will of God, revealed in the word, as commanding, exhorting, and suited hereunto. Now it is this I style christianity. The whole of which, in a sense, is outward and visible : whilst it all flows from the grace of God implanted as the sole principle of it in the mind, by the Spirit of God in regeneration. The Lord will, if I may so say, have two sorts of real spiritual persons in his church, to glorify his glorious grace on. Such as are effectually called by grace, and make their acknowledgment of the same to his praise and glory, by walking humbly with him the Lord their God : and others of his beloved ones, he will set and place them in such circumstances, that they shall be called forth by him, to manifest his

work on their souls, by their graces, and gracious dispositions, in the exercise and performance of every good word and work. Now I should apprehend I can offend no one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, in my making this distinction, between one who is manifestatively united with Christ, and of being a real, practical christian: as both the one and the other are equally and alike born again of the Spirit. The one proves it by cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart: the other most chiefly by outward good works, according to the will of God, talking hereby before him unto all well pleasing. I might say, as both these are in the church of Christ, and in them his grace is variously reflected and shines forth, so there is another sort of persons, who are only outward external professors; on whom the Lord works, so as they are reformed, and are brought to an external acknowledgment of the gospel, are received into the visible churches of Christ, and thus they have names and places in the courts, and house of God. This was the case in the days of the apostles; the Epistle before us gives full proof of

I might say the same of all the rest of the Epistles. It is the case our day. The right apprehension of it, will be a clue to guide us to a right knowledge of several parts of the subject before us. It is not possible for you or me to say, and prove we are in the state of grace, and love either to ourselves or others, we are in the free, open, manifestative favour of God, and to hate a brother in Christ.—this cannot be. There must be, if this is our case, in a state of darkness; we can be no other than unregenerate persons to the present moment. Let us say whatsoever we may of the love of God, of the Person of Christ, of our access to Him, of our open communion with Him, of our enjoyments with Him, and hate one, any one who professeth the same, we thereby prove that we are in the darkness of a sinful state—that we are in it to the present moment. Truth is Truth. The same in one age as another. What is infallible truth in *John's* time is the same in ours. Here let me be permitted to speak out freely. Many are disposed to make a very bad use of all this, saying, seeing these things are so, why my profession of Christ may also be in vain; I may be deceived in, and by what I profess; may be self-deceived; seeing there is no security in my making ever so high a declaration of my knowledge and attainments in the knowledge of the doctrines of free grace. Here you are speaking, as you also say the apostle is, of a mere professor, who declaring himself to be in the light of truth, yet proves to a real certainty he is wholly and altogether mistaken in this, and gives outward and visible evidence hereof, by not loving a brother in the same profession, but he hateth him. I would say, there is no need for us to err and stumble here. We do well to have right apprehensions of the scriptures of truth, and of the power of God which accompanies them to the minds of the Lord's called people. A true believer hath an inward knowledge of Christ: he is possessed and inhabited by Christ: he has real communion with Him: he is not so much depending on his professing any, or all the truths of the everlasting gospel, nor any one act or part of the declaration he makes of and concerning himself, as he is on the truth of that revelation the Lord God hath made of himself, in the Person, and salvation of his Son. It is here his object is: this is the subject which supremely attracts his mind, and engages his faith. He loves next to Christ himself, those who are his brethren in Christ: he may not always love them with the same degree

of affection; yet he does not hate his brother. But the person spoken of in my text doth. It is *he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*. It is he is the person here spoken unto.

3. This leads me to shew what we are to understand by hatred, or hating, or ones hating another, as expressed here. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*.

To hate is to bear an ill will to any one: hatred is a deep rooted ill will to a person. Hatred is sometimes used as an expression of loving far less ardently, than might naturally be expected: thus our Lord is pleased to express it. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. The word *hate* here does not imply positive hatred, but a less degree of love, it being called for to be engaged in a greater degree, and expressed in a more exalted manner towards our Lord Jesus Christ himself. I should think, we may conceive, hatred which is a deep rooted ill will, is expressed in vexing one another, and murder which is the highest instance of it, is in this Epistle chiefly mentioned, to shew the venom of these evils in the lowest exercise of them, and what as causes, their natural effects are. That from such views, we might avoid them in their lowest stages, as the best and surest means of being preserved from them in their highest ebullitions. I will here begin with *hatred*. This is to bear a deep rooted ill will to another: which is a most sinful act of the mind: inherent in all: yet not so drawn out, as to make it self-evident to be in all. I have charged it on all, for this reason; because the apostle speaking of what the elect were before they were regenerated, and brought into a state of grace, says, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Titus iii. 3. The case and character of what we were in our unregeneracy, will not suit us in our regenerated state. To bear a deep rooted ill will, against a brother in Christ, must be wholly contrary to being in a state of grace. One would almost suppose it could not be with any one, who had but the profession and outward form of godliness. To hate is to bear ill will to another. This I consider in a lower degree than the former: it consists in envy.—I am not pleased another should exceed me; or, be more esteemed for gifts and graces, for the knowledge of Christ, and communion with him than myself: yet I will conceal all this as much as possible lest I should be taxed for it, and thereby be put to the blush, and confounded in myself before others. It may be there is one in particular I secretly set myself against: I seek to destroy and undermine him. He has done me no evil: I have no reason to doubt he is the Lord's: I confess him openly to be such: yet I want to set up myself by degrading him. I am by all means seeking to establish my own reputation on the ruining of his: I am quite pleased to go from one brother in Christ to another, to those to whom I am sure of ready and free access, to report and give an account of every infirmity which such an one is the subject of: and all with an hope, and expectation, I shall so far, by little and little, and one season after another, obtain my end. Beloved, what is this but to hate one's brother? Does not this look very like what the apostle is here speaking of, and against? Who would not conclude this is

the very person the apostle is speaking against, when he says, *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*. Beloved, I do fear I have drawn the picture, and given the true description of the professor, and the sin of him, of many, of several in various churches of Christ; who, with all their profession of Christ, of his truth and worship, of spiritual attachment unto Him, and love for Him and his truths, act so base a part: indeed, my beloved, it is too awfully realized in our day: self, not Christ and grace, and the meekness and humility of the lowly Jesus, is too predominant: it is almost universal. The charge of the apostle is a most awful one: he says such an one hateth his brother. I dare not alter his words: neither can I explain them, according to my present light, otherwise than I have done: nor can I remove them from any on whom they may fall, or to whom they may belong. I would ask, Lord is it I? It will not be amiss for you individually to ask of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, at his throne, saying, Lord is it I? Sirs, I have expressed this sin of hating a brother in Christ, in the lowest stage thereof. It acts so subtilly and secretly within us and upon us, as to overcome us when we least perceive it: yet inasmuch as it amounts to an hating a brother in Christ, that is, it is so in the sight of God, may the good Lord for evermore keep us from it. May these words, with all their authority and importance fall upon us. *He that hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*. Sirs, these words are not mine. No: they are the apostle's, and are recorded in the Bible with apostolic authority. May this, therefore, be attended unto.

4. I am to shew, such an one as hateth his brother, is in darkness: that he is in a state of nature. For that is what I apprehend by what the apostle says. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*: That is, he is in a state of ungeneracy: this I conceive to be his meaning.

But it may be, you will be ready to ask, how is this possible? Do you apprehend a man can be a friend to truth? Can it be cried up, and abided by? Can it be in a good degree countenanced, and many real fruits and effects be produced which bear witness of a love to the truth, and yet because such an one doth not like every thing in a brother, must it be put down to his account, and charged on him, that he hateth his brother? This seems to me to be far from being the spirit of the gospel. Brethren and beloved, I think so also. You know my well beloved, I did not write this scripture: neither have I taken it up, to criminate any. No: it falls in my way. This may be what makes the general exposition, or going through a course of sermons on any Epistle, so very useful and pleasing to some minds, because it cannot be performed, but every verse, or verses being taken up, there must of course, be some terms and expressions, as well as some things expressive of the true, native, genuine sense of the same touched on and explained. I do like with my slender ability, to do justice to what of the Lord's word is at any time before me. I think in our going through this Epistle, this will be advantageous. Here are such terms in it, as, *It is the last time* (or hour). *He that committeth sin is of the devil*. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. *There is a sin unto death*. &c.; which when we come to them, it will be quite right and also necessary to explain, and give you an account of: which could not be done with so much advantage as in an expository way: and will be the very means of casting light, and re-

flecting the same, throughout the whole body of this sacred witness for God, and his church, in this very important church letter; for such it is: it does not belong to such as are without; yet it sets forth, and gives an account of many of those who are without, both preachers and hearers: but it is for the sake of those who are within, these are mentioned. So these words, *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*, are not written to describe one without, but one within. I should conceive them written not simply to express such an one might be deceiving himself, but if possible to prevent his going on in this very act of sinning. Just as these words of another apostle are, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema-Maran-atha." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. They are not only pronounced to shew what the state of such was, but also to prevent real saints from all lukewarmness, and every thing which would carry any outward marks and evidence in their appearances thereof. So here, I would look on it as expressed by way of prevention. A man may be well instructed in the doctrines of grace, he may be a gifted person in prayer: he may be full of activity, and useful in very many particulars in, and unto the community to which he belongs: he may be zealous, he may be devout, he may profess he is in the light: yet he may hate his brother in his heart; and hereby prove in the day of trial the whole of his religion vain. Sirs, I do not conceive a man's comprehending any one single scripture, or all scripture universally, is any part of true, and real godliness. Whilst we cannot know Christ but as he is revealed and set forth in the scriptures, yet we may know all the scriptures without knowing Him: yea, we may have the doctrines of the gospel, and not know Christ, who is the object, subject, glory, and perfection of them. We may even have the theory of Him in our minds, and yet have never seen Him in the light of faith, nor have been supernaturally enlightened into a supernatural light and knowledge of Him. The apostle says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." He then asks this question, to make the subject he was speaking of self-evident. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." He then speaking of himself and others, declares thus. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Then comes the line of distinction, which is drawn between these and all others, let their religion be what it may. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 9—14. Natural and supernatural religion are quite distinct, different, and opposite to each other: yet very many attempt either to build up their natural notions on the system of gospel doctrines; or, gospel truth on the foundation of nature and natural notions. It is this is the awful state of this case in our present day. Hence I conclude there could never be a time,

when the case stated in our apostle's words, were more necessary to be attended unto. For we swarm with preachers and professors: yet all of these look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Yet these very persons may steal the word every one from his neighbour; and all to set up and aggrandize self. This is the very chief principal in all unregenerate men, be they professors, or profane: and when it operates in such as profess the Lord Jesus Christ, it acts and goes to much greater extremes, than in such as are merely natural men. It is from hence all the strifes and backbitings which are so rife in the churches, arise and originate. Sirs, from my text, and this Epistle it is very evident, our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to set forth in his most holy word, the various spirits and characters of those persons, who fill up their places therein. He is also pleased by what he declares concerning them in the same, to leave them without excuse. He sets before them, how they may judge of their own state before Him: and also, what his thoughts of their thoughts, words, and conduct, in his sight and before Him, are. It is not what their profession is, but what he thinks of them, and sees them to be, is the matter of importance. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother*, even in so low a degree as I have explained the same, *is in darkness even until now*: he is so to the present moment. We may see from hence, the vast difference the Lord himself makes, between real grace, and a mere profession, founded and maintained and carried on, by a theoretical knowledge of the doctrines of grace. I fear there is a very great mistake made by us in this present day. We are all for knowledge: yet what is this knowledge? Wherein does it consist? Shall I reply? If I must, then I must say, it consists in saying one after the other, some great gospel truth; we are pleased with ourselves, we are also pleased with others in so doing: yet some of us live long enough to find all this may be, and no real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ exist in the mind, with all these expressions: whilst it must be acknowledged they are vastly important. And were the Person, love, salvation, and Saviourship of Jesus Christ, really and spiritually known, agreeably with these expressions, and the same received into the mind by the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, it would be that very knowledge of our most precious Lord Jesus, which is life eternal; whereas it only amounts to a notional knowledge: and all it does for such as are the subjects of it is only to lead them to speculate and reason and argue, carnally and in a natural religious way, on the most sublime mysteries of our most holy faith. I hope I have cleared up, in what hath been delivered, the truth of this. If so, then all is thus far well; it being my place in these lectures, to stand fast in the faith, and to quit myself like a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. I aim at nothing beyond this: this being all I am called unto; it being the Lord's own immediate work to make his word an immediate personal blessing. I therefore now leave what is set before you, for your consideration, and unto the Lord for him to make use of, as seemeth good in his sight. May he command his blessing. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.—1 JOHN II. 10, 11.

THE apostle in the continuation of his subject, concerning being distinguished as being in the light of grace, or that new state of grace, into which the real children of God are brought by the true knowledge of Christ, and the dark state in the which such remain, as are but mere professors of Christ, gives us, in the verses which are now our present text, a farther account of these. He here speaks of a brother, who gives evidence of his abiding in the light; and of one so called, yet he abideth in darkness. We see here it is perseverance crowns the action. It is not beginning well, but it is ending well. It is not a bare profession that the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth, but so walking as to prove the truth of this—to express and evidence the same, by our love to such as we call brethren in Christ. The former words were these—“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.” Our present words are these—*He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* Here is a line of difference and distinction drawn between two professors. One of them is said to abide in the light: the other is declared to be in darkness. The one is said to love his brother: the other is said to hate his brother. In the one there is no cause of stumbling: in the other there is; for he walketh in darkness, he is in darkness, he knoweth not whither he goeth, which is not to be wondered at. The reason of it is given: it is, *because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* It seems to me it will be best, in the explaining the scripture before us, to take up each of the verses, and handle them separately and distinctly: by which means we are most likely to have the whole out of them that they contain. Under these views, I will make the attempt. And of these words, *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him,* I will observe the following particulars.

1. That by exercising love to a brother in Christ, proof is given of an abidance in the light of that new state a believer is really brought into, by the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. That such an one gives no cause of stumbling.

Then I will open these words—*But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* I will also cast this into the following division.

1. That to hate a brother, is of itself a full, clear, and convincing evidence that such an one is in a state of darkness and error.

2. That it is self-evident, he walketh in darkness, and that he knoweth not whither he goeth. And this is the very reason of the whole of it—*because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

I hope by opening each of these particulars, we shall have a right and clear view of the subjects which are contained in the words before us. *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* I am

1. To observe, that by exercising love to a brother in Christ, proof is given, of an abidance in that new state a believer is really brought into, by the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words are a perfect contrast with the former—*He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* In going over the past verse, I expressed what it was to hate a brother in Christ, and that in the lowest degree it appeared to me the expressions could be conceived. I have now to express as well as I may, what this love of a brother in Christ must consist in: and that, not in its highest degree; so as to bear proportion with the other. It must then be viewed thus. That the love of a brother in Christ here spoken of, as exercised towards another brother, or brothers in Christ, must be considered in all sorts and kinds of out-goings of affections and of good will towards such as are heirs of God, and co-heirs of Christ, for his sake. Such an one as loveth his brother, and is always, and by all means, testifying the same, in all sorts, so far as it lieth in his power, gives proof of his being in a state of light—that he is born again—that he is not in the darkness of nature—that he abideth in a state of light—that he is a new creature—that he is in a new state—that he is a believer in Christ Jesus. He gives evidence that this is his state and case hereby. This is an outward and open demonstration of it: which cannot but be very satisfactory to others. It is not from hence the person spoken of is comforted; nor from which he draws his inference that he is the Lord's: nor does the apostle speak of it for that purpose. No; this would be legality indeed: whereas there is no legality here. It is only an external evidence to such as are in Christ, and in some measure also to those who are without, that the work of regeneration within us is realized, by some of the fruits and effects which it produceth, which cannot but fall under the notice and observation of other fellow-christians and professors, and carry incontestable evidence, that such are in the sight of God inwardly, what they outwardly profess themselves to be. The exercising love to a brother in Christ, consists in various acts: some respect the person; some the body; some the mind; some are spiritual acts. To reverence the person of a brother in Christ, must of necessity contain a part of this love. It is very far from being a right and becoming speech, in the mouth of such as profess themselves to be brothers in Christ, to say, there are such and such, they are the Lord's, yet I would not have any thing to do, or say to them, were it not I am obliged, because they make a profession. They are very disagreeable in their persons: I cannot say I love them: they are so and so: I only love them because I believe well of them. Whilst such a speech may at times drop from the lips of us

all, yet it carries marks and evidences of very great indifferency and disrespect to the persons spoken of. And if it be so we do not love the person of a brother in Christ, we can have no real and spiritual esteem for him: this is wholly impossible. Where the person is loved for Christ's sake, and esteemed on his account, there a fellow-believer will exercise true love towards such, in every right act of respect.—Ministers to their flocks: the people to their shepherds: one church officer to another: one church member to another. Hereby giving proof of their esteem for each other, as standing in such and so near relations to one the other. All which is most exactly suited to the true spirit and order of the gospel. The apostle *Peter* writes to saints, and churches thus. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." 1 Epis. v. 1—3. The same apostle, in the same chapter, calls for subjection from one church member to another, in the fear of God. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." v. 5. So the apostle *Paul* exhorts the whole church of God at *Ephesus*, which he had purchased with his own blood, to be filled with the Spirit, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Eph. v. 20, 21. In all these ways the love of the mind to Christ, and the brethren is expressed. In the text before me, it is spoken individually. It is here, *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* He hereby gives proof of his being the Lord's; he having the same mind which was in Christ Jesus: which by the exercise of the same graces, tempers, meekness, gentleness, and compassion, is thereby manifested. This in the lowest acts as well as in the greatest, is alike from one and the same cause: and they are all, and equally alike acceptable. It is outward and sufficient proof, that this brother is one who abideth in the light; which brings me to observe

2. That such an one gives no cause of stumbling. *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

To profess Christ and to walk contrary to the revealed will, word, and command of Christ, cannot be reconciled. To profess to be in the light of grace, and in a new state of things, requires brotherly love. Such an one therefore, as is in this light and new state, and loveth a brother, who professeth the same faith in Christ with himself, he proves himself hereby to be what he is. He is no dissembler; he does not profess one thing and act another. He is in heart and life, in act, and walk, what he professeth. He is therefore one who may be looked at: there is no occasion of stumbling in him. His profession of love, and his practice are in union, and perfect harmony. Look at him, you will find no cause to suspect him; to doubt his character; to call it into question; to fear it will not stand the test of free, clear, and critical investigation. There will be none occasion of stumbling in him: so as to doubt the truth of

his profession; to suspect him not to be sincere; to fear he will undermine you, or prejudice others, against the truth as it is in Jesus; or against the person of a brother. None of these things will be in the life, character, conduct, and conversation of him, who abideth in Christ: who abideth in the true doctrine of Christ—in the true faith of Christ—in the true light of the Lord Jesus Christ—in the true submission of heart and will, to the commandments of our Lord; who said, *Love one another, as I have loved you*. Such an one is no kind of stumbling block to others: seeing his heart is seen in his life. His constant course of love, expressed sometimes in very small instances of kindness, and at other times in more enlarged ones, yet coming from the very same root and fountain,—inherent love and affection for Jesus' sake, they all speak and testify, this man abideth in Christ: this person is one with Jesus: he is a christian: he is one who cannot be doubted: he gives no cause for any one to suspect: he is open: he speaks uprightly: he does not at any time prevaricate. There is no occasion of stumbling in him. This is a most beautiful description of a brother in Christ—of a real christian—of one in whom there is no occasion, neither does he give any cause, of stumbling. And this is the profile of a true christian, given us by the apostle *John*. *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him*. Yet all who profess Christ are not all this. No, they are not. If they were there would be no need of making comparisons between them, and distinguishing them by the word *But*, which is the case here. *But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes*. Thus the one is set in compare with the other: the real believer, with him who is but a mere nominal professor.

I am now according to the division I gave you of my present discourse to enter on my 2nd. part of it, which is contained in these words; *But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness has blinded his eyes*—to open these words unto you, which I shall also cast into two general parts. 1. That to hate a brother, is of itself a full, clear and convincing evidence, that such an one is in a state of darkness and error. 2. That it is self evident, that he *walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth*. And this is the very reason of it: *Because that darkness hath blinded his eyes*. I am,

1. To shew and set before you, that to hate a brother, is of itself, a clear, full, and convincing proof and evidence, that such an one is in a state of darkness and error.

What it is to hate a brother, I shewed in the former discourse. That so to do, is of itself, a clear, full, and convincing proof and evidence, that such an one, is in a state of darkness and error, is that which now lieth before me. This must be very evident to any who attend to what is in the very text expressed. For if, he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him; then most assuredly it must follow, by way of necessity and natural consequence, that he who hateth his brother is in darkness. He cannot be openly and evidentially in the state of grace: he cannot enjoy and be in the true light of everlasting life, otherwise, he would love his brother in Christ, and very highly esteem him for His sake; whereas, his secret contempt of him, his secret underminings of him, his constant seeking by sly,

secret converses with others, to suggest, to utter, and with design to set every one so truly against a brother in Christ, as lieth in his power; this most assuredly amounts to a kind of secret hatred, and which is so, in the eyes of the Lord. It may not appear so in the eye of the person who acts thus. It is declared of Jehovah, "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." 1 Sam. ii. 3. And, again, "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Again, it is said in an address to the Lord, "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness." 1 Chron. xxix. 17. Therefore according to this, in God's sight, who knoweth what our hearts are, and what our secret imaginations, thoughts, words, and actions are, it amounts before him to hating a brother, to act and deal in the way I have been expressing. It is full evidence that a brother in Christ is so far from being esteemed, that he must be actually despised, in the eyes of that brother, who can so treat him, backbite, and secretly slander him. Therefore it proves the person who act thus: especially when it is with design, yet carried on so secretly, and covered over with so much artifice; such an one, let him say to the contrary as he thinks fit, and may see necessary to cover the deception, he cannot, he does not love, for the Lord's sake. So that I conceive we may clearly apprehend the case of the person here set before us, and described unto us. *But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness.* He was never in a renewed state: he was never in Christ's kingdom. It may be, as our Lord said of one, and unto one, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." But he was never yet in it: therefore he has no spiritual knowledge of Christ; nor of the things of Christ; nor of the real friends of Christ. Such an one cannot love beyond the element of nature: yet it may seem to him, and others, he is a most spiritual man: that he loves Christ, and such and such for his sake: yet there is no one single atom of spiritual love in all this. No. With, and throughout the whole of his profession, his whole love to Christ, his ordinances, people, and worship, is only so far as self may be exalted. It may seem strange I should so assert of him, whom the apostle is here speaking of; but if you please, it is not my comment on the text, it is really the apostle's meaning in it. He says, *he that hateth his brother, is in darkness*: which most certainly must have respect to the state and case such an one may, and must be in: he is in error. This cannot but be the case. Error and truth, and truth and error are perfect contraries, and opposites to each other. They may be set forth very expressively by light and darkness, as these are not more distinct and distinguishable than truth and error are. They can never be one and the same. He who embraceth the one, cannot but reject the other. Even in the instance before us; whoever he be, let his profession be what it may, concerning Christ, his gospel, truth, and ordinances, or be ever so splendid and great, yet if he loveth not a brother in Christ, and one whom he acknowledgeth as such, but hateth him in his heart, the man is in darkness of error and living in the same. He may preach like an angel, preach like an apostle, be as zealous as a saint, yet he is not in that new state the knowledge of Christ admits into. He has no new and supernatural birth in his soul: he is at best but a natural religious man. He is not born of the spirit: he never has yet most cordially received all the truths of the gospel into his mind. There are some of them, let him conceal the same in his own

mind as he may, he does not love and relish : and some of Christ's most holy precepts also. Our Lord says, " And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Many who are under some particular profession of Christ, are not entitled to this blessedness. Some do not most heartily like, neither do they embrace the doctrine of Christ's Person, that He is both God and man, in one Person. Others do not like the scriptural doctrine of the love of Christ, that it is immutably fixed on the persons of the elect—on the many sons whom he was appointed to bring to glory, and that it cannot be removed from them, and fixed and exercised on any but these. Others are not pleased with the doctrine of salvation, that it is so entire and complete, that the creature on whom it is bestowed, hath nothing to do in it, Christ having saved all the given ones, in himself, with an everlasting salvation ; which he bestows upon them, as the free gift of royal sovereign grace. " So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Others are not satisfied with, nor will they yield up their minds unto, nor receive, the doctrine of everlasting love, that the Father from himself, and out of his own will, and according to the good pleasure of his will, chose his beloved ones in Christ before the foundation of the world, to grace and glory ; irrespective of any good or evil in them. Even the doctrine of the Omniscience and Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, in his act of regeneration, illumination, revelation of Christ, in his shedding abroad a sense and enjoyment of it in the heart, in his taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them, and what is contained in them, unto the regenerate mind, his sealing the same thereon, and also sealing up the same person unto the day of eternal redemption : these truths are not cordially received, embraced, nor delighted in by all who make, what they call, a gospel profession of Christ. Sirs, it is not the gospel is offensive to the generality of professors ; it is the specialities of it. And when these are brought forward, it is these distinguish between one and the other. So again, nature will not object against Christ, and salvation by him, so it may have him and it, in its own way. Let such a nominal believer, as the one in our text, be deciphered, and he will no farther object against the truths of the everlasting gospel but as follows. He will tell you, few understand them : it is by no means necessary to preach them : that it would be better to omit them : that to speak to the cases of the people ; who, says such an one, are certainly the Lord's because they see this, that, and the other ; would be of real service to them : he does not see for his part what comes out of setting forth the deep things of God : he would have experiences laid as the ground work ; such and such are to be looked on as the children of God, because they feel so and so. The man would build them up in this. He declares all this to be the work of the Spirit of God in them. Then he comes with Christ, whom he builds upon this rotten foundation. And it may be is bold enough to say that this is the right method of preaching Christ, and the infallible way of being evidentially possessed with a good hope through grace. Beloved, Christ is altogether left out as salvation, in all this. So is the Spirit in his operation and work also. Yet being both mentioned, and that by a professing brother, and he a preacher also, the people are deceived with his plausibility. So let them and him also. For what saith God himself ! To the law, and to the testimony. " And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord hath de-

ceived that prophet." Ezek. xiv. 9. ♡ The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. So likewise, some are offended with the ordinances of Christ: some with the words and commandments of Christ: the person spoken of in our text was; his hating his brother professor was a proof of the same.

2. It is self-evident, that such an one is in a state of darkness and error, but he also walketh in darkness, and that he knoweth not whither he goeth. And this the very reason of the same; it is, *because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

One who professeth himself to be of the household and family of faith, and yet notwithstanding all this his declaration concerning himself, hateth his brother in Christ, abideth not in the light of truth, because this is to sin against it. He gives occasion of stumbling to real saints. That he is not concerned about this, is altogether against him: it proves he is in a state of darkness: that he is not in a state of regeneracy: that he can be nothing more than a natural religious natural man. If he walketh in this way, and gives constant proof of its being the predominant temper of the mind, why it is from hence self-evident that such an one is in the state of darkness and error: yea, that he also walketh in darkness. He is perverse and obstinate: he is perseveringly so: he is living in the continuation of not loving his brother; yea, he is proving hereby that he hateth him: so here are many evils contained in one; and the apostle's words are most awfully verified and realized. *But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth.* How is this? why he, though the book of God may be in his hand every day, and he may read it very devoutly; yet he does not make any application of it. He is content to read it; which satisfies the mind, as well as if so doing were the very practice of the same. But how can this be? What does it prove? I answer, most certainly it shews the weakness, littleness, and enptiness of the mind. It would be well if this belonged but to one individual. Yet, alas! our times swarm with such. This is the very reason, the churches of Christ, in the United Kingdom, are so low, and have so little truth, spirituality, and presence of Christ amongst them. They have numbers, and additions on additions continually to them, of such as are merely and only, nominal professors: merely natural men; only they have their minds engaged on religious subjects. And all this merely in a natural religious way. Hence we have a number of preachers who will suit them most exactly: yea, they will new-model the very ordinances of Christ, and his truths, to suit them. All which is of itself sufficient to shew how much self must prevail. Any thing, every thing which will serve to increase and promote natural religion, and decry supernatural religion, is coming in upon us, in this present day; so that we have scarcely any under a profession but natural men, who are reformed by the gospel; yet the mysteries, and specialities of it, they are altogether ignorant of, and real enemies unto. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if one amongst them, should be in his carriage and behaviour towards a brother in Christ, as the apostle here sets forth. *He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth,*

because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. It must be the fruit of very great self-conceitedness: to go on in it, is to give continual proof hereof. As such an one is under the guidance and influence of his own mind, he must be more and more blinded: so as that he knoweth not whither he goeth. He acts and walks just as a blind man doth: he is always pursuing the same track: and this is the reason of it, *because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* This must be an awful state, and case. To be a professor of Christ, and his gospel, and at the same time, to be one that hateth his brother, even in the way which hath been expressed, is very, very sad. I shall at present have nothing more to say on it: there is no occasion. It came in my way to open these passages, and I have done it to the best of my ability. More on the same subject will follow, as we advance into the third and fourth chapters; but I conceive there, some very odious expressions of outward hatred to a brother in Christ, and for Christ's sake, and hatred to the truths of our Lord's gospel, are designed. We shall say nothing of this here. Let every subject come forth in its proper order, as it is ranked by the apostle: that is most suitable to an Exposition. The apostle here ends his internal and external evidences of christianity, which he began at the third verse of this chapter. The true knowledge of Christ, is outwardly evidenced, by keeping the commandments of Christ; which is a testification to others, that we belong to Him: that his word dwelling in our hearts, and operating upon our minds, increaseth our love to God, and produceth the fruits and effects thereof; so that we know that we ourselves, and those we converse with, are in Him: that our acting according to Christ's will, in the old and new commandment given by Him, concerning loving each other in Him, and for his sake, is a most glorious part and branch of christianity; that to love a brother in Christ, is an evidence for us, that we abide in the light and truth of our Lord's holy commandment. The contrary is an evidence against such, that they are in darkness. To continue in a course which is expressive of hating a brother in Christ, is full evidence that such abide in a state of darkness; by which the perverseness of the mind is so fully expressed; such go on still in darkness, and fully prove that darkness hath blinded their eyes. May the Lord the Spirit reflect his own light on what hath been delivered, and give us so to receive the same, as that we may see the scriptures describe the whole will of God, and deliver it, as it concerns our tempers, affections, walk, and conduct, as fully, as they do what concerns our complete and eternal salvation. And whilst no part of our salvation, nor our eternal state in the least depends on the same, yet they manifest to ourselves, how far the true knowledge of God's everlasting love, and Christ's salvation influences our minds. Let this be remembered by us. Then we shall receive profit from this Epistle: nor shall we want to part with any one sentence in it, or any part of it. Let it be considered, the Holy Ghost is setting forth the subject of communion between God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and saints, which will produce such and such blessed fruits and effects in them, both inwardly and outwardly; it will then be clear that this Epistle contains a true portrait of christianity; such as is not elsewhere given us in all the Bible. Not in exhortations, precepts and commands, as by the other apostles, but more in a way of positive assertions. The sum total of which amounts to this—so far as you know Christ, and have

real communion with Him, this will be manifested by you, in exact proportion to the influence it hath, upon your outward and inward man. Where the profession of all this produceth nothing, there Christ is not. This I conceive to be the substance of the whole. I recommend this to your most serious consideration. May the Lord give you a right and spiritual understanding in all things. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.—1 JOHN II. 12.

WE are now entering on some very particular and distinct subjects from those we have hitherto been upon. This verse is introductory to them: in the which he addresses the whole universal church of Christ throughout the world, under the title of *little children*. In the next verses, he distinguishes the saints of God, according to their age and standing in christianity: dividing them into three classes—fathers, young men, children. And having spoken to each of these, he closes with an exhortation suited to the case and age of the young men in Christ. This will extend to the 17th verse. This our present subject, the apostle begins thus. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*. As this is a preface to what is to follow, so in opening the words before us, we may consider the following particulars in them.

1. The address, and title given to these to whom the apostle addresseth himself: *I write unto you, little children*.

2. The reason why he wrote unto them. It was because their sins were forgiven. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you*.

3. The authority on which he pronounceth this comfortable truth unto them, viz. the forgiveness of their sins. It was for Christ's name sake. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the immediate Person included in the context. He is spoken of in the first and second verses of this chapter, as an Advocate with the Father, as Jesus Christ the righteous, as the Propitiation for our sins, as He who was known to the *little children*, and whom they knowing and having communion with, proved thereby, outwardly and openly, by their lives and conversations, that they belonged unto him. So that He must be the Person whom *John* here designs, when he says, *Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*. And by his expressing himself as he does, he gives evidence, that it is the Father who forgiveth his people all trespasses on account of his Son's mediation. It is for Christ's name sake, on the footing of his personal obedience and sufferings, all trespasses are forgiven. All which is sealed and testified by the Holy Ghost, in these

words, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. x. 17. In my entrance on my present sermon, I shall endeavour, with the Lord's blessing and presence, to pursue it according to the plan given; and hope to fill it up accordingly. And

1. To open the address, and title given to these to whom the apostle addresseth himself: *I write unto you, little children.*

It is for the substance of them, the same with which he began, when he was about to introduce and set before them, the office and advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. He then said, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins." So now, when he is writing to these very same persons, because their sins were forgiven them for the Name's sake of their glorious and allsufficient Advocate and Propitiation, the apostle addresseth them with the same title, and much in the same way; only he here speaks of himself first, and they next; which it may be was to stamp the address with dignity and authority: whereby may be designed, he was most particularly and personally attached unto them; either by his personal knowledge of them; or by his being their father, who had begotten them unto Christ, by the gospel. It seems on such accounts as these it is, he uses the pronoun *I*. Not that this is to be depended on: but it is probable. They most certainly knew him, and he most certainly knew them: or he had not expressed himself thus. And as he did not affix his name, there is the greater strength in the conclusion. They might know the writer by his subject, and by his peculiar mode of writing. He says, *I write unto you*. It was conferring an honour on them so to do. They were very particularly, and personally interested in what he wrote unto them. His address is very affectionate; *I write unto you, little children*. This being the same title with which he addressed them before, shews that he meant to comprehend the whole church of Christ, saints of all ages, and degrees, of every size and stature, and growth in grace. They were all one in Christ. They were all one to this holy apostle. They were all alike interested in the Person, and advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were all alike interested in the Father's everlasting love. So they were in the free forgiveness of all trespasses. Hence it is, that as he comprehends them, in one and the same address, so he includes them as partakers of one and the same blessing. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*. Thus he expresses himself most affectionately unto them: and proves hereby his universal love to all the saints of the Most High. Whether known or unknown to him, they were very dear unto him: which he shews by his address unto them. The title he gives to them, is that of *little children*. He was an aged man: therefore it came with grace and majesty from him. It could not but be very sweet, and received very kindly from him. It was also very evidential of his considering them very high in God's favour: and he wanted to be more familiarly and simply realizing the love of God and Christ unto them. *I write unto you, little children*. This his address and title with which he addresseth them, comprehends, and most affectionately embraceth, the whole visible church of God. What he refers to, is contained in the former verses. It concerned holiness of life, and brotherly love. An attention unto which, would by no means take them

off from their attachment unto the Lord Jesus Christ. It would rather increase and promote the same. It was out of love to Christ, and them, he wrote on these subjects; not by any means to wound them, but to promote their spiritual happiness, and mutual confidence in each other, which could not but be the case. Seeing their inward affections, and outward expressions of what they were aiming at were so similar to each other and the same, they might clearly see they were of one heart and of one soul. The whole church of Christ is one and the same: yet it is diversified into a variety of distinct members. Unity in truth, worship, and discipline, is very advantageous to the whole church of Christ. Hence the apostle of the Gentiles saith, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 4—6. Therefore the same truths, and exhortations must be suitable to all the holy brethren; and the same address, which if it be not made in the same words, yet it must be in the same spirit. We have indeed the apostle *Paul*, using the same words with these before us, in an address he makes to the saints in the Galatian churches. He says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." ch. iv. 19. The same address before us, breathes the spirit of true christianity. It might be borrowed from Christ. Whom *John* aims most blessedly to imitate. Our Lord used the phrase, and addressed his disciples in this manner, in one of the last discourses he had with them immediately before his Passion, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." John xiii. 33. Whoever will read from thence, through the three succeeding chapters, the 14th, 15th, and 16th, will have reason to conclude our apostle formed, and founded all he wrote in his first general Epistle on the same. And what could he do better? How could he direct the church of God better, than by making our Lord's sermon his text, and in giving the church of Christ a comment on the same? If you can conceive how he could have acted better, I cannot. We may learn from hence, all, and whatsoever is written in the Scriptures of Truth, concerns the true church of Christ down to the end of time: and each and every professor of the Lord Jesus Christ also. They may all read the Lord's mind and will concerning them. They may all see their own faces in this true glass. They may by it understand what God's views are of them. Whether they are on the Lord's side, or not. But as I conceive enough has been said concerning the title and address, *I write unto you, little children*, and these being the children of God, I will proceed to my next particular.

2. To shew why he wrote thus unto them. It was because their sins were forgiven. These are his own words—*I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

As this Epistle is what we style a catholic Epistle, so the address is suited to this, and an universal blessing which belongs unto, and is actually bestowed on all the members of the true church of Christ is expressed, which is that of the forgiveness of sins. This is the reason he assigns for writing to them, and also why he so lovingly and affectionately addresseth them. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you.* He had before declared that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth them, now, in the present tense, from all sin. He then proceeded to declare if any of these should sin, they

had in Christ, an all prevailing Advocate. He was with the Father. He was their Righteousness and their Atonement. Then he shewed what the true and spiritual knowledge of this, and communion with Christ in the blessings and benefits of all this, would consequently and evidentially produce. And he now addresseth them, because they were the pardoned ones of God. Thus here is consolation, abounding consolation, increasing consolation for them. They were brought to the knowledge of the Father and the Son; they were admitted into fellowship with the Father and the Son; they were in Christ, pure and righteous. He was their High Priest before the Majesty in the heavens. Their sins were completely taken away, and they were in their own individual persons, pardoned: so that they could not be in a better state out of heaven. Therefore the apostle writes unto them: it draws out his whole heart towards them. He expresses himself most affectionately unto them: *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.* It most clearly appears from hence, one grand part of the gospel ministry is to comfort saints—to lift them up above themselves—to take them out of themselves—to lift them off themselves—to set before them all revealed of Christ: that by their truly apprehending, and receiving the same into their minds, they might be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man. There is not one sentence which comes from our apostle's pen to weaken faith: every one is divinely intended and calculated to strengthen, encourage, and increase it. He gives this as his reason for his writing to the whole church of Christ, whom he addresseth under the title of *little children, because* (says he) *your sins are forgiven you.* This is one of the first blessings of the gospel: it is proclaimed with this. There cannot be any real publication of it, but this must be made known. When our Lord gave his apostles to know what they were to preach, and where they should begin their ministry, “He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it beloved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke xxiv. 45—47. The apostles obeyed our Lord's command. They said unto the people, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Acts iii. 25, 26. At the first and second verses of the next chapter, it is said, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees were grieved that the apostles taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead; which, in fact, was to preach the remission of sins, it being the glorious fruit and blessed consequence thereof. This is one of the blessings of grace, brought to the ears, when the everlasting gospel is preached. It is also brought home to the heart, when the gospel is received. Peter preaching Christ, to *Cornelius* and his friends at *Cesarea*, said of Christ, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts x. 43. So *Paul* preaching at *Antioch* in *Pisidia*, said at the conclusion of his sermon, “Be it known unto you therefore, men

and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 38, 39. Now as these to whom *John* writes, had received the gospel, so they had received with it the forgiveness of all their sins: and it was hereby they, and the apostle, knew their sins were forgiven. They could not receive the gospel, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed and set forth therein, but they must receive therewith the forgiveness of their sins, and the knowledge and enjoyment of this most inestimable blessing: which *Mr. Romaine* used to call *the key of all spiritual life*. And, it must be acknowledged, no spiritual act of the mind can be any ways discovered till a sinner is brought to understand, that he is fully and freely pardoned through the most precious blood-shedding of our Lord Jesus Christ. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you.* It may here be asked, how the apostle, and themselves knew this? I will endeavour to give as clear, and scriptural reply as is in my power to give. This shall be from the scriptures, and also from my own experience. And before the subject is closed, I will endeavour to make it clear to you likewise, how you may know for yourselves also, that your sins are forgiven. It will no doubt be a season of grace, and refreshing from the presence of the Lord, if he should be pleased to deal with any of us, as he did with the woman, who came to him in the house of *Simon* the Pharisee: to whom our Lord said, "Thy sins are forgiven—Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Luke vii. 48, 50. Not, my friends, that I am going to have to do with feelings, impressions, or any thing without the scriptures. The Lord forbid it. So great and momentous a doctrine as the pardon of sin, should never be, at any time or in any case, built on any other foundation, than that which is immutable. For if it be founded on the sand, it will sink of itself, and all connected therewith must fall with it. I shall aim at a gradual, clear opening and explaining the subject, and must request your close attention to the same. First then, to reply to the question, how the apostle, and these *little children* to whom he here addresseth himself, knew their sins were forgiven. I reply as follows. The apostle's knowledge and their knowledge of this, must have been from the gospel: which contains such a clear and full revelation of Christ, as exceeds and transcends all which can possibly be in sin. Christ in the gospel, is set forth in it, as the only remedy for it: the everlasting antidote against the whole venom in it: a remedy of God's own providing. It gives an account how the Lord hath laid sin on Christ. It hath been imputed unto Him. He bore it in his own body on the tree. He purged out the whole stain, guilt, and filthiness of it, by his bloody sweat, and soul travail. What he hath done is everlastingly acceptable to the Divine Father. He beholds it removed out of the eye of law, and justice, by the one offering of Jesus: on the footing of which, he delighteth in mercy. He proclaims himself, in the everlasting gospel, the God of Peace. Pardon and Justification are the blessings thereof. The apostle having a clear view hereof, he knew as assuredly as they had received Christ, they had together with their receiving Him, received the pardon of their sins. This was agreeable to what our Lord Jesus Christ said to his beloved *Paul* when he commissioned him to preach his gospel. I send thee, said our Lord, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts xxvi. 18. When the gospel revelation of Christ is made clear to the renewed mind, and by it the Holy Ghost is pleased to take of the things of Christ, and shew the same unto any of us, it is hereby the pardon of sin is made known to us. It is by this means manifested unto the mind. We receive and enjoy a real knowledge and sense of the same in our own souls; and from hence we speak out, and profess ourselves to be the pardoned ones of God. As I have set before you, how the apostle *John* knew these persons' sins were pardoned, it was because they had received the gospel, and Christ the subject of the gospel into their minds, by the power of the Holy Ghost; so I have aimed, and shall aim to confirm the same, that it was in the very same way, these saints knew it for themselves. Their minds had been illuminated with the bright shining of the Sun of everlasting righteousness. He had shone in the ministration of the everlasting gospel into their hearts. They had been led to clear and supernatural apprehensions of his love, mercy, blood and righteousness—that he was a complete Saviour—that he was the Rock of salvation—that his work was perfect—that the Father was everlastingly well pleased with his Person, and finished salvation—that he pronounced all such blessed as trusted in Him. They having a true perception and comprehension of this, rested hereon, and found everlasting life in believing in the Name of the only begotten Son of God: and hereby they had in their own souls the true knowledge of the pardon of their sins. It was in this very same way I received my knowledge of pardon under the ministry of *Mr. Romaine*. Hearing him state the engagements of the Eternal Three, and the transactions between the Father and the Son, concerning the laying all the sins of the people on Christ: how they had all been borne by Christ: how he had put them all away out of the sight of law and justice by the sacrifice of Himself—that the Father was infinitely and everlastingly well pleased with the obedience and soul-travail of his coequal Son, and with any, and every poor sinner who was brought to believe in the righteousness and bloodshedding of Christ Jesus: it was this, in the hand of the Spirit which led me to believe on Christ for everlasting life. And it was in believing on Him, I received the pardon of my sins; had a real sense and enjoyment of the same; was brought to know I was interested in Christ, and that my name was written in heaven; and this without any act of my own. I was wholly passive in the whole of this. The Lord opened my ear. I was all attention. I received the word of the gospel. I believed it. The Holy Ghost sealed it on my mind; and I enjoyed and rejoiced in the same. Now, my beloved, I conceive there can be no knowledge of the pardon of sin, brought into the mind any other way, than by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ: and this I profess was the way by which I received the same. And I do conceive it an invaluable blessing to know the way by which it is received and apprehended. The apostle says to the saints at *Ephesus*, having before spoken of Christ, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." He writing to the saints at *Colosse*, says, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,

in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." ii. 10—13. Our Lord, when he gave the cup of wine, in the institution of his holy Supper, said, "Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood, of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. xxvi. 27, 28. I have quoted all these scriptures to shew, that the pardon of sin is the fruit and benefit of our Lord's most precious sacrifice and bloodshedding: as also to give you to see, the one cannot rightly be apprehended, but the other must be known and enjoyed. I might also quote the words of the apostle *Peter*: who said to those persons who were cut to the heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Acts ii. 37, 38. As in that ordinance, faith is immediately directed to the Lord Jesus Christ in his overwhelming sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection, so from the true knowledge of the subject, remission of sins is realized in the mind. This may be evidenced from the words which that servant of the Lord *Ananias* said to *Saul* of Tarsus, before he baptized him, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord:" Acts xxii. 16. Baptism is but an ordinance. There is no salvation in it: yet salvation is the subject of it. As faith is in the observance of this institution, directed to the blood of Christ, and the name of the Lord Jesus is called on, and here a finished salvation is recognized, hence it well became the good man to say, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins:" or, in other words, see by this outward memorial of Christ, which, as well as his holy Supper, is to continue in his church until his second coming, how completely thy sins are washed away, and how thy pardon, and every benefit of redemption flow into thy soul, through the propitiatory oblation of the worthy Lamb. I hope I have clearly and scripturally established this doctrine, that pardon of sin is received into the mind and enjoyed, as we have right apprehensions of the life, and death, and burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Father's acceptance of the same, and through the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning it in the scriptures. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you.* That you may be strengthened and confirmed in the truth of it, by my setting my apostolic seal unto it. As this is a blessing in which all the people of God share, I therefore here mention it, as my general address unto you. It is one of those grand cordials which is of itself, allsufficient to bear you up, both in life and death. To it there can be no addition, nor alteration in it. You may have increasing spiritual apprehensions and enjoyments of it: you may be further and more enlargedly settled and strengthened in it: yet the Lord himself can never more fully reveal it: He can never more fully seal it, with the oath of the covenant, and the blood of Christ, which is the blood of the everlasting covenant, than he has done. I will therefore, says *John*, lead you to the reason why your sins are forgiven. It is for his name's sake. And this brings me to my

3rd. Particular.—The authority on which the apostle pronounceth

this comfortable truth. It was for Christ's name sake. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.* By which we are to understand Christ. He is the immediate Person spoken of, and pronounced in all the foregoing verses, and all the following to the end of this chapter: yet not to the exclusion of the Father. This cannot be. For though, it may be, Christ is sometimes mentioned without the Father, yet it is never but as conjoined with Him, even when he is omitted to be expressed. Our salvation is a covenant salvation, in the which all the Three in Jehovah are equally engaged and concerned. This is the foundation on which the whole of our faith and hope ultimately rests. Our Lord Jesus Christ hath a great and glorious Name, in and throughout the everlasting gospel: which is the mean of his communicating his love, his mercy, his health, his cure, his pardons and compassions, to the elect sons of men. It is a marvellous thing, and a glorious proof of Christ's eternal power and Godhead, that thus it should be. The gospel, as we have it, is made up all of letters, syllables, and words: yet by these, as put in order by the Holy Ghost, and uttered by the holy apostles and prophets, become the gospel of our salvation. The Holy Ghost hereby, creating and forming such conceptions and ideas of our Lord Jesus Christ, as will exist in our minds to all eternity. We begin our spiritual acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ here. We are taken to heaven, that there it may be completed. The words, says our Lord, that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. He is not now on earth, yet as he speaks to us, through the medium of his word, we experience the power, virtue, and efficacy of the same, as truly as those did, to whom Christ spake in the days of his flesh. The name of Christ is to be considered by us here, as a term used for the Person of Christ. It seems to be here adopted by the apostle, to keep this clear in the mind, that pardon comes from the Divine Father: and flows down on us, through Christ the glorious Mediator, as the most blessed effects and fruits of his mediation. I will give you my reason for this, as it arises out of the context. The apostle had said, verse 9th of the former chapter, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I shewed you, when I expounded those words, that God the Father, is the Person comprehended in the term *He*: that his forgiveness of sins, is both an act of justice and mercy: that it is founded on the covenant stipulations between him, and his Son: of whom it had been declared that his blood cleanseth us from all sin. In the 1st. and 2nd. verses of this chapter, we had Christ enthroned in heaven, as Priest, Advocate, and Intercessor with the Father: and this as suited to what we are whilst here below, where we are liable to sin. Hence says the apostle, *If any man sin, we have an advocate.* Now as every blessing contained in all this, was expressed as coming from the Father's bounty, and flowing down upon the church, and every member of Christ, from Him, and through the channel of his glorious and prevalent mediation, so here also, the apostle pursues the same most gracious and sublime subject: saying, as he had done when he began this chapter, the same words by way of address, *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.* Whilst the forgiveness of your sins is the fruit of his blood and death, so it is also the very proof and evidence of the high estimation the Father hath of Him, and his everlastingly efficacious death: by the

which the manifestative glories of God have been evidenced : the honours of the law fully maintained : the rights of justice preserved : the love of God expressed to the uttermost. The salvation of God shines forth in all its glory and brightness on you, in the Person of Christ. I want, says our apostle, you should understand, that all you are, all you enjoy, all you will be now and evermore, is all in Christ—by Christ—through Christ—and from Christ. Your persons are accepted of God : but that acceptance of them is in the Person of Christ, God-Man. You are the saved of the Lord, and saved with an everlasting salvation : but you are saved in the Lord : and all the blessings of it are in Him. It is out of his fulness you receive them. I would, therefore, be your remembrancer, and remind you of it. All the Father's love to you, is in Christ. All you are saved for, from every present evil, it is on account of what Christ Jesus did and suffered on your behalf : the blessings of which flow out of his inexhaustible fulness into your minds. You receive and enjoy the same through your knowledge of Him. Your persons are justified, your sins are now and evermore forgiven you. It is all by Christ. His life went for yours. His blood for yours. His soul for yours. He gave himself a ransom for you. Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. Surely the apostle thus addressing them, and in his bringing home the subject thus unto them, must have been, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, a means of endearing the most precious Lord Jesus Christ, in his most glorious Mediatorial Person, love, work, and office unto them in their view and remembrance of him. And it is herein, and hereby, all the love of the Holy Trinity is reflected on the saints. *Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.* He is your representative within the veil. In him you are beheld. In him the Father rests in his love, and rejoiceth in you with joy, and that to an everlasting content, and with ineffable satisfaction. It is for Christ's sake your sins are forgiven you : by an act in the mind of God which is irrevocable : God will never repent of it : He has reason sufficient in himself, and in consideration of the dignity and coequality of Christ, the Son of his love, for so doing. Yea, He sees that infinite worth in what he did in human nature, in his state of humiliation, to continue all the grace contained in his pardoning mercy to his people, throughout the ages of eternity. So as that you will never be able to comprehend the fulness of grace, contained in the mere expressions of it to you, the objects and subjects of it, for ever. This is soul-animating. The apostle is directed by the Spirit of God to write thus to all saints : they being all alike instated in the blessedness contained in it. There was a vast difference in their gifts, graces, and attainments. Some were fathers : others were young men : others were babes in Christ : yet with respect to the forgiveness of sins, they were all alike interested in this grace. And they all had received the knowledge of this into their mind ; yet they had not all alike the same enlarged conceptions thereof : and here I would observe this is not necessary. It pleases the Lord to shine in his word as clear as the sun doth in the firmament. Thereby he shines into the minds of all his people : so as that they are all, more or less blessed with his shine. It is said the natural sun so shines, that as the course of the earth in its rotation goes on in regular succession, pursues its course, all the inhabitants, and habitable earth are equally enlightened : so the Divine Father shines in Christ upon his whole church here below, and sheds the blessings and

benefits of Christ's mediation on all their minds; yet this is not to the same degree: on some more, on others less, as seemeth good in his sight. In these respects, it is all in a sovereign way and manner. Let this, therefore, be retained in our minds. What we know of Christ, let us most carefully retain in our minds. If so be we have tasted the Lord is gracious, let us with gratitude remember it, and praise Him for it. If we have received into our minds the pardon of our sins, let us not forget it. Let us act towards Him, in the belief of it; we cannot more effectually shew forth his praise. It will be the best motive for us to walk humbly with our God. It will be the best shelter against the fear of death. The best preparation for a dying moment. The best frame for us to enter into heaven in the knowledge of. The Lord add his blessing to his Truth. Amen.

SERMON XX.

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.—1 JOHN II. 13.

THE apostle is now on a subject, which he had not touched on before. It concerns real saints, according to their various and several standings in the school of Christ. We see here the truth of what *Solomon* declares. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." Our apostle gives proof of it. He lived the longest of all the apostles. He seems to have been brought into an acquaintance with Christ from his youth: hereby he had an opportunity of treasuring up in his mind, a large stock of experiences and observations, and also of bringing the same forward in a way and manner, as could not fail of being both useful and profitable to the church of the living God; and certain it is, he writes on such subjects as none of the rest of his fellow-apostles touch on: He had known in his own case, and by his own experience, what it was to have been once *a babe in Christ*; and through the grace and teaching of the Holy Spirit, he had also known what it was to be advanced to the state and degree, of being *a young man in Christ*: and he by gradual steps arrived, through the good hand of God upon him, to be *a father in Christ*. He was, therefore, having passed through each of these states and ages in christianity, very sufficiently qualified, as he knew the true experience, and uttermost attainment of the knowledge of Christ, and communion with Him, in each of these states and ages in christianity, to write the Lord's people according to the same, so as to be of real use and benefit to each of them, according to their distinct progress, from one of these steps to the other. He begins first with the fathers: he goes next to the young men: then to the little children. *Dr. Goodwin* says, the words, or title, *little children*

in this place, differs from that in the former verse. Here, according to him, it signifies *infants*, or *babes*. It must be known, that these terms, *fathers*, *young men*, and *babes*, do not here refer to natural ages, and matters. They are here made use of, to express things of great importance in christianity. Only as one of deep acquaintance, and understanding in the truths of the everlasting gospel, may be considered as a father in Christ, and another, who is full of spiritual life and vivacity, and who is victorious in his conquests over the flesh, the world, and the devil, may well be termed a young man in Christ, so also one who is breathing vehemently after Christ, and expresses the same, by calling God Father, may be said, agreeable to this, to be a babe in Christ—so these expressions are accommodated hereunto. I would say further, take true christians, and they have all that is said of these three classes, in them, in and throughout their whole course and progress, in the school of Christ. There are indeed seasons, in the which they shine more eminently in one of these here spoken of, than another. True breathing after Christ is real spiritual life. As the babe is distinguished by it, the young men, and fathers in Christ are not without it. If the fathers know Christ, so do the young men in Christ, and babes also. If the young man in Christ, overcomes the wicked one, so doth the babe in Christ, in his measure and degree, and the father also. The one of these is more eminent, according to his degree of standing in Christ, for the exercise and discovery of one grace, and the other for another. This for the substance of it, is the truth of the matter. The apostle sets the Lord's called people, in their proper order and division, and thus addresses them; *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.* Having thus placed them, he speaks to each of these, agreeable to their experiences, and attainments. The fathers first, then the young men, then the babes: this is his order. Old men are most for knowledge. Young men are most for strength and full of vigour. It is their delight to put it forth, and display the same. As for babes, their greatest delight consists in knowing their parents, and in calling on their fathers, thereby signifying their distinct knowledge of them. In conformity to all this, our apostle frames his discourse here. I would most willingly give you the essence of my text, so far as lieth in my power. I know not how to set about, and aim at this better, than by casting it into the following threefold division.

1. I will go over, and give the outline and statement of what the apostle says to, and of the *fathers*, as expressed in these words: *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

2. I will go over, in the same way, and with the same design, what he says of, and concerning the *young men in Christ*, with the account he gives of them. *I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.*

3. I will give an account of the *babes in Christ*, and what he says of them, and unto them. *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*

I conceive in going over these particulars, the substance of the text will be set before you, and explained: and thus the present text will be

finished. May the Lord help me in all this, to impart light to your minds, so as that you may be profited thereby. For this is the very design of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be accomplished by his people's attendance on every ordinance. The Lord grant this may be attained, by the present very feeble attempt. I am according to the plan given you, to handle these words before us, as already expressed.

1. By going over, and giving the outline and statement of what the apostle here says to the fathers in Christ. *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

In our present times, we have not many fathers, either in the way *Paul* speaks of them, or in the way our apostle doth. The former means it, as it respects the ministers of Christ; the latter as it respects believers in Christ. The former writing to the church of God at Corinth says, "For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." 1 Epis. iv. 15. Some think all preachers are alike, they being sent of Christ; so did not *Paul*. None ever respected such as the Lord sent forth more than he did; yet he did not think alike of all of them, as it respected their place, station, qualifications, and usefulness in the church, and to the souls of men. Some of them were instructors in Christ, and they could go no further. The Lord himself had neither fitted them, nor designed them for any thing beyond this. It was a great honour conferred on them to be this: yet they should be content, and not lift themselves above their brethren, in thinking they are the only ministers who are useful in the church of Christ, for they are not: nor are they of the most use to the flock of God. Were they contented with their station, and allotment in the church of Christ, in the which the Lord hath placed them, it would be well. But most assuredly, fathers in Christ, are superior to them; and their usefulness in the church of Christ, and to the church of Christ, must be of more service and importance. As in the real church of God, and amongst such as are real saints, the Lord will have the threefold division kept up, of fathers, young men, and babes in Christ; so He will have ministers suited to each of these. And whilst they shall all be useful in their respective situations, yet they cannot be useful in the same way. The fathers will be ever distinguished from others. Their use will be of another sort and kind from that of the brother, who is to encourage the young men in Christ, and quite distinct and different from such, as are to feed the babes in Christ: nor will the gifts of the one, last as long as the other; because, though there is at all times a greater number of young men, and babes in the churches of the saints, than there are of grown ones, yet as they are, and must be conceived to be growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, so they will need the assistance of the fathers in Christ to perfect the same, and to confirm and establish their faith. As *Paul* speaks of ministers, when he says, *ye have not many fathers*, so our apostle *John* speaks of saints who were so grown into the knowledge of Christ, as to have attained to this degree. He says to these, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.* This is his address unto them; and his reason for writing unto them, is thus expressed; *because ye have known him that is from the beginning.* I am to go over, and give you the outline of this. It seems necessary first,

to give you an account of one, who is, and may be looked on as, and be well entitled a *father* in Christ: and as such may be considered as here addressed. I should conceive him to be one, who not only knows Christ, so as to believe on Him for life everlasting, but as one also, who is deeply and spiritually acquainted with the Person of Christ: His Glory, Allsufficiency, and the perfection of his salvation, so as to be borne up, and fixed and established on the Lord Jesus Christ, by this very means, and to possess an unshaken confidence in Him. *Paul* says, *I know whom I have believed.* 2 Tim. i. 12. The generality of persons, who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, in our present day, know nothing of Him, but from certain effects, and causes, which they have the evidences of in themselves. They do not know Christ, and his salvation, from the word, and as revealed therein. Some there are who do: it is those, I should look on as worthy to bear, and sustain the title of fathers in Christ. If it were asked, how they attain this dignity and excellency? whilst the answer must be, it is all of and from sovereign grace; I should also say, it is from the revelation the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, hath made of Christ in the sacred word. In which the Person of Christ, his glory, excellency, perfection, and salvation are so fully and clearly revealed, that as the Eternal Spirit is pleased to open the enlightened mind to receive the same, and retain it, the saint cannot but know the Lord Jesus Christ so comprehensively and intuitively, as to be swallowed up in Him, as being all, and as having all the mind can ever desire, even in glory. This is the medium of letting in such views of Christ on the renewed mind, as lift it up to Christ, to an immutable and eternal fixation on Him, so as to lay a foundation for personal communion with Him: which far exceeds all that communion saints have with Him, through the medium of graces, and duties, which other saints have with Christ, in the use of holy ordinances. I once heard *Mr. Romaine*, say, "There is a state which you call your first love: but give me leave to tell you, there is a state the Lord brings his people into, which as much exceeds that of their first love, as the heaven exceeds the earth." I suppose he must have intended the same, I am now aiming to express. Most assuredly, the knowledge of Christ's Person, in the eternity, glory, and majesty thereof, is the greatest attainment we can arrive unto, this side heaven: and communion with Him, in proportion, and agreement with the same, must be our uttermost advancement, this side a sight of Christ in glory. That such knowledge of Christ is attainable, by saints, in this our world, I would bring the following scripture, as giving countenance to it. The apostle says to the saints at *Colosse*, *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* chap. ii. 1—3.

Now most undoubtedly such an one, and all as are thus possessed and enriched with such a knowledge as is contained in what is here expressed, may well be entitled fathers in Christ. If all this, great and inestimable as it is, had not been attainable, the apostle had not laboured, that these persons should be the partakers of the same. If

so, then such who were favoured with such comprehensive knowledge of the doctrine of the Godhead, and the Divine Persons in it, and as they were pleased to shine forth in the Person of Christ, and reflect the knowledge of everlasting love and grace on the saints, might well deserve the title of father, as given them by *John*. A profundity of spiritual knowledge and judgment in divine truth, most certainly is what distinguishes this class of saints, from all others: they being those, who hereby, are most eminently exalted into distinct and clear views and perceptions of the blessedness of communion with the Three in Jehovah, agreeable with their union, and relation unto them. To these the first part of our text is addressed, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning*. This is Christ, God-Man, of whom our apostle had said, and introduced in his first entrance on this Epistle thus; *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life*. He spoke there of the eternity of his Person, and of his existence before the world began. And he here speaks to the fathers, as having this for their supreme excellency in the school of Christ—that they had known Him, and that from the beginning; which may imply, they knew him from the beginning of their hearing the gospel preached: or, it may imply, they had seen and heard and also known Christ in his incarnate state: or, which suits us best, that this was their glory, they so knew Christ, as revealed in the gospel, as to distinguish him from all other objects and subjects set before them in the everlasting gospel; and to understand how they all hung on, and received all their glory from Him. This seems to be the outline and statement of these words, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning*. It is to you, I would, in a very particular manner, desire to address myself: to point out to you the blessedness to which you are brought: the degree in the school of Christ to which you are raised: and to remind and congratulate you, on the dignity, honour, and privilege to which you are raised in Christ Jesus. Your knowledge of the Person of Christ as God-Man, as the Image of the Invisible God, as He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God: In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; is that which creates in your minds, through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you, such conceptions and apprehensions of this *great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh*, as fix your minds on Christ, as the Christ of God, as fill you with holy admiration and astonishment. As you are led into the knowledge of Him, as your Head, and representative before the Divine Majesty, you cannot but find matter for holy delight. As you are led to know Him to be from the beginning, before the foundation of the world was laid, to be the Mediator of union and communion, of headship and fellowship with God, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness of grace and glory should dwell, this serves to increase your valuation of Him. You know Him to be from the beginning your Lord, your Saviour, your Father, your Brother, your Rock, your Shepherd, your All; and, therefore, you having your all in Him, you rest well pleased with Him, and he is your centre and circumference. I therefore write to you, of and concerning Him: well knowing you have some daily converse and communion with Him. This I consider to be the subject and substance of what the

apostle's words here, express and contain. Nor will I go beyond this in the present verse, for the following reason; because in the next verse, we have the following words, to these very same saints, *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.* Now whilst I do suppose there is some distinction in what is designed in this verse, and what may be conceived to be the apostle's design in that, and the different tenses in which the words are expressed, is with me an argument sufficient; yet to the ear, the sound is such, that many real saints may possibly overlook it. It seems therefore proper for me to reserve something to say, concerning the knowledge of Christ's Person in the succeeding discourse, and not crowd too much of this vast subject here. I will therefore close this first head of my subject on these words, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.* It is what is common, and it becomes old men in Christ, to speak out concerning their knowledge and experience of Christ, his truth, ways, and ordinances, and to express the way in which they have walked with Him, and before Him, unto all well pleasing; all which may be considered as implied, and contained in the address of our apostle to such, and also in what he says of them: which most certainly contains his reasons for his writing unto them. They having been brought on to a greater degree of knowledge of the Person of Christ, and into more distinct communion with Him, than those who were not so highly advanced in real and divine acquaintance with the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, he therefore in a universal sense first says to the whole community of saints, *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake.* Then he says, as in the words before us, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.* The words are in the present tense. They contain the reason of the apostle's address, and why he wrote unto them. He gave his reason in the former verse for his writing. There it was because their sins were forgiven. He gives his reason also here, for his writing to those, he entitles fathers; it was because, says he, ye have known him that is from the beginning. So that their knowing the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, was a principal motive for his writing to them.

2. I will go over, much in the same way, and with the same design, what he says of, and concerning young men in Christ, with the account he gives of them. *I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.*

I would first aim to give you an account of one, who is a young man in Christ. He is one who hath acquired some doctrinal knowledge of truth, and of Christ from the same. He is one, in whose mind the whole plan of doctrine, and ordinances is well settled and established: what he knows of Christ is chiefly herefrom. He has not as yet, received the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, by an inward revelation of the Holy Ghost. If he is a Preacher, he will be very zealous. He will be all for doctrines and ordinances of the gospel. He will insist much on experiences, graces, and duties. He will not be so much for Christ, as for the things which are sure to accompany the knowledge of Him, and which cannot but most assuredly follow the same. As the generality of the Lord's people never get beyond this, he will be generally esteemed beyond a father. And it may be, he will never attain to

be one himself. Let it be observed, I am only giving the outline and statement of this. I am neither censuring, nor aiming to set this aside. No. I am only declaring the thing as it is. In such a ministry, there is clear truth: yet it is not at all times kept where it should be, in its proper place. There is more zeal than solid judgment. More of what the man apprehends of truth, than a "Thus saith the Lord" for his warrant, and a clearing up the truth immediately from the scriptures themselves. As I look on this as very expressive of a young man in Christ, who may be a minister of the word, so as to a young man in Christ, I should describe him thus. He is alive to the Lord agreeable to his age and stage in christianity. He is in the prime and flower of spiritual age, as considered in the mid-season of it. He is strong in inherent grace, not in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. He is full of desire to exercise his spiritual courage and strength, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. He is more looking to himself, talking of himself, leaning on himself, than he is apprehensive of. He is more taken with his own comforts than with divine truth, neither does he know how, clearly, to distinguish between things which differ. It will be found, and sooner or later he will find for himself, it is peculiar to that age and station in the school of Christ, to be more taken with creature affection, and terms, and high sounding expressions, than in any other stage of christianity whatsoever. Thus I have given you the true portrait, and outline of a young man in Christ. I am next to observe and set forth how our apostle addresseth such, and what he says to them, and of them. This is before us in the following words: *I write unto you, young men.* It is not meant of such as are young in years; but of such as are in such a stage of christianity, as may be said to have passed from being babes in Christ, to that of well deserving the title of being *young men*; so as to be between those styled babes, and fathers. Thus they are advancing. It is a matter of fact, which demands our praise, there are numbers of the elect of God, whom the Lord is pleased to distinguish and call by grace, out of darkness into his marvellous light, when they are young and in their youth; which is an inexpressible favour. Such can never be too thankful for it. Who can entitle God, and praise Him that he has been their God, and the guide of their youth. They are thereby saved from ten thousand sins, and from ten thousand miseries. It may be said indeed, that youth which is the spring season of life, is the best season for any to exercise themselves towards the Lord, and in the ways of godliness. The Lord says, *My son, give me thine heart.* He says, *I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.* To encourage to this, the Lord Christ was pleased to add, "Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches, and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." Prov. viii. 17—21. The young men, who are addressed in my text, had been won and overcome with the love of Christ, which had warmed their hearts, attracted their minds, and fixed their affections on Him. He was high in their estimation. Their portion, treasure, and inheritance. They had tasted that he was gracious. They were in a measure, and to some good degree, established in the faith of Him. To these the apostle writes thus. *I*

write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one : by whom is meant the devil. He says they had overcome him, he therefore says he wrote to them : which cause must have been matter of great joy and satisfaction to the apostle ; and which he is disposed to certify unto them : which he could not have done any other way, or by another way so effectually for their comfort, and encouragement, as by inserting this in an Epistle. As he had before made it the principal excellency of the fathers in Christ, that they had known Christ, that is from the beginning : so he here makes it to be the one distinguishing excellency of these young men in Christ, that they had overcome the devil. *I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.* It was done. It is in the age in which these are placed, the Lord is pleased to exercise them, with some very severe conflicts with their own corruptions : and some particular and sore temptations : and Satan having an implacable hatred and malice against them, seeks to oppose, and to cast fiery darts at them : to inflame their lusts : to wound their consciences : to draw off their hearts from Christ, and thus to cause them to fall, by some secret, or open evil ; so as that he may rejoice and triumph over them. Yet these young men, had stood their ground. They had proved they were strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. And they had overcome and withstood the wiles of the devil. And this is what the young men in Christ, are most especially called unto. The babes in Christ, are in general fed and dandled on the knees. The Lord takes them by the arms, and instructs and teaches them how to go. The fathers in Christ are in general engaged in such deep and solemn contemplations on the Person, and unsearchable riches of Christ, that this swallows up their souls : and old age being on them, they are not so suited to the devil's various temptations, as the young men in Christ are. Not that I by any means aim to signify they are not the subjects of temptations, and of the devil's hatred and malice ; but are so, as are the young men. Only that as youth is the season for activity, for courage and valour, for war and conquest, so it is, according to the words before us, for the young men in Christ to express their strength and courage in fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold of eternal life. It is the Lord who only can make them victorious. It is his battles they fight. He has ordered them to stand strong in Christ Jesus, and in the power of his might. There is a complete suit of armour provided for them. The Lord puts it on them. He covers their heads in the day of battle. Some of the enemies they have to withstand, are false teachers and false doctrines. I conceive the apostle had his eye on these when he thus wrote ; because we shall in a few verses from hence, hear him speak of such : and that these saints were preserved from them, in consequence of that Unction which they had received from the Holy One, by the which they knew all things, concerning truth and error, so as to be kept stedfast in the one, and preserved from the other. I cannot think this to be any false gloss on the words, but that they are so congenial with the subject as to cast light upon the same : for the apostle seems to speak of them, and unto them, as victorious overcomers : *I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.* This title *the wicked one*, is very expressive, of the old serpent called the devil, who is the wicked one ; the first who sinned : in whose mind sin was first conceived ; who never from that

moment ceased sinning. Yet the eminency and excellency of the attainment of these young men in Christ, was, they had been engaged in certain particular battles with him, and overcome him. For this reason the apostle wrote particularly to them. These had a particular interest, and were deeply rooted in his heart. He loved them for their zeal for Christ: for their spirituality and spiritual attainments. He could not but admire the grace of God in them, who had so remarkably fitted them for running the christian race, and how they encountered Satan: withstood him: how they overcame their own inward lusts: obtained glorious victories over the evil one. This gave the apostle to delight in them; he being hereby so fully confirmed of the grace of God in them. Therefore to them he says, *I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.* This was the highest step they had attained unto in the school of Christ: and a reason why the apostle wrote thus particularly unto them. And thus ends our second particular head of this discourse. I proceed,

3. To give an account of the babes in Christ, and what is said of them, and unto them, in the words before us. *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*

I will first give the account and description of a babe in Christ. He is one, who being quickened by the Holy Ghost, and made partaker of spiritual life, hath for a season but one way of expressing the same. This is by being led and drawn forth in love to the Lord Jesus Christ. And he very frequently is led to call God his heavenly Father. In nature, and natural life, the very first thing which babes and young children discover is an acknowledgment in their way of their parents. In an aim to call them by their names; in distinguishing them from others. The apostle in a kind of conformity with this, mentions the distinguishing act of the babes in Christ, that they acknowledge God to be their Father, by expressing in their way their attachment to Him, and their dependance on Him. This is agreeable with such scriptures as these. "Thou shalt call me Father." Jer. iii. 19. It is, "Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me." "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?—I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Jer. xxxi. 9. 20. A babe in Christ is drawn to Christ, and his experience of Him, and of the Father's love, consists chiefly in some sweet manifestations of the same to the mind: in the sensible enjoyments thereof: in some very earnest breathings after the presence and enjoyment of Christ. In some blessed ravishments of spirit. In real delight in the Lord's ordinances, and in the use of them. Such an one is not in general the subject of doubts or fears. He knows very little of sin, or temptations. He is not for a season called forth to fight the battles of the Lord; nor does he for a season experience what he is in himself, in consequence of the fall. Every thing is sweet to him, which hath any thing of Christ in it. He is his one beloved object, and so are the saints. He delights greatly to recite his own experience, and to hear the recital of the experiences of others. Now this is an outline of a babe in Christ, especially at his first entrance into the school of Christ. There is during his continuance

in this state, a further increase and drawing forth of the mind, so as to attain some clear spiritual perceptions that he is the child of God, and that God is his Father, and for him to confess this: which is the utmost of this state, as to the attainment of it, according to our apostle; who says, *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.* This was his reason for his writing unto them. These being young in years, and very little in the knowledge of Christ, yet were not on these accounts to be neglected. No, says the apostle, I give an example of this in my own person. *I write to you, ye babes in Christ*—because you are so, yet ye have attained some true and saving knowledge of God; this I gather from your calling God your Father; which you could not do, if ye had not his Spirit. And as you have given proof, and still do of your being the children of your heavenly Father, by your faith in Him, and love to Him, which you evidence by your keeping his commandments, hence my heart is towards you. And as I write to the fathers, and young men, so I write to you. My address, and what I have to say of you, and unto you, is contained in these words, *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.* And this must have been from the inward and divine teachings of the Holy Spirit. You have received the knowledge of Him into your renewed minds, and you love Him in proportion thereunto. I will now give some further account of a babe in Christ, by quoting what the apostle *Paul* says on this subject, and which you have set before you, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. v. 12—14, which includes preachers, and people. He says to the saints at *Jerusalem*, for it is to them he addresseth himself, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” This apostle describes a babe in Christ, either preacher or hearer, to be one who is unskilful in the word of righteousness; very little acquainted with the everlasting gospel in which the everlasting righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth, and the worth and excellency, the use and benefit of it, recorded and declared. Yet the babe is so disposed to live, and be contented with his own experience, frames, and feelings, that he neglects the glorious provision made for him in Christ’s work and fulness altogether: so do such ministers also, their grand aim being to prove such and such are the Lord’s, merely because they have been so and so wrought upon, and because they have such and such experiences. This is here censured by the apostle. And such, both preachers and hearers are here reproved. We have another account of such as the apostle calls babes in Christ, in 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2. “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet now are ye able.” This is also spoken by way of reprehension. The apostle had preached the everlasting gospel unto this church, but they were so carnal, they could not receive those sublime truths, which were most especially calculated to lead up their minds to higher and more exalted communion with the Lord. Yet the spirit flagged at this.

Neither did many of the Corinthian saints like it. He therefore censures them for this, saying, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it." By milk, he means those truths of Christ, which are suited to our first infant state: such as were quite agreeable to our first profession of Christ, and entrance into his church. He styles these babes, carnal: and their carnality was expressed by their not being disposed to receive and live on the more sublime points and truths of the gospel, which were most especially calculated to nourish up their minds unto everlasting life. Whilst what this apostle, in both these places speaks, is so clear and plain, yet such is the ignorance and prejudice of the mind, to receive the unmixed pure gospel, that many cry out, *milk for babes*. Why the apostle complains of these babes: yea, this he does, whilst he calls them "babes in Christ:" the very cry proves how little the gospel of the blessed God is known, and received by the generality of those who profess it. Then it is frequently brought forward what *Peter* says, "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Epis. ii. 2: whereas this hath nothing to do with the subject. The word of God, as unmixed and unadulterated, and not mixed up, and blended with our experiences, is like milk; which is nutritive, and very salutary to the constitution. He would have these saints desire and seek after it, that they might grow thereby. So that it follows, even babes in Christ, cannot be fed and nourished but by it. They cannot grow into the knowledge of Christ, but by it; nothing but this will strengthen them. This is found to be the case sooner, or later: which generally produces a change in their hearing: so that such ministers who were useful to them at one time are not at another. And if this were properly understood, there would not be such objections amongst ministers and churches, when any of their friends leave them, to join and sit under a more advanced ministry. Our *John* says, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.* May the Lord command his blessing on what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.—1 JOHN ii. 14.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ in the course of his public ministry, repeated over several times the same things. This is very evident by what is recorded in all the four Evangelists concerning the same. No doubt but our apostle copied after him: so did *Paul* the apostle, when the case

called for, and required it: to the intent Truth might be the more completely fixed and confirmed, and the saints have it the more deeply impressed on their memories. So here, our apostle, goes over almost the same subject as in the former verse; only that there it was in the present tense, here it is in the past, and there he had his address to babes, or the little children in Christ, and here he omits them. His words, in the former verse, were, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." Thus he gives his reason for his particular address to each of them: and expresses the attainments of each of them in the school of Christ; and also what was their highest attainment therein. It was the excellency of the degree and stage the *fathers* were arrived at—they knew him that is from the beginning. It was the highest degree the *young men* were arrived at—they overcame, and had overcome the wicked one. The highest step the *little children* were come up unto, was this—they had known the Father. The title, *little children*, is universal: our apostle gives it to the whole body of christians, as an universal term suited to them all, again and again throughout this Epistle. But I told you, *Dr. Goodwin* says, that as used in the 13th verse, it is a different word than in the former verse; in the 13th it signifies *infants* or *babes*. This our present verse, may be supposed to retain and comprehend them, as included in the fathers, and young men. If so, it must convey this with it—he did not conceive they would always continue in their infant state; but would most certainly grow out of it, into a more advanced one. If that can be supposed to be his reason for omitting them in the verse now before us, it should serve to be a lesson to all the saints; and remind them of that most blessed word, which declares, "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The Lord's promise to his church is this, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Hos. xiv. 5, 6. In my text, the apostle realizes this, as evidenced in those several degrees, and advancements in the school of Christ: and here, changing the tense in which he had spoken unto these saints before, he says, *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him from the beginning*: omitting the supplement, and so the words read. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* Here he says of the young men, what he had not before. In the former verse he said, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one:" here he says, *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* So that he gives here the reason how it was these young men were strong. It was in the Lord and in the power of his might they were so: it was because the word of God dwelt and abode in them. This made a lively and deep impression on them: it was this produced in their tempers, lives, and conversations, a conformity to the revealed will of God, that which was answerable, and agreeable unto all this; by the which they could not but be in reality, the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. This appears to me

to be the outline of the subject and text before us; which I shall aim to open, and express what is contained in the same, by casting it into the following division.

1. By considering what he had written to the *fathers*, and his reasons for the same, and why he recites it. *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

2. What he had written to the *young men*, and why he also recites it.

3. His reason for his again addressing these *young men*. He gives it in these words. *Because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* Some of these blessings were present with them, and in them. One great and unspeakable one was past. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

4. How it was they were so strong? It was, by the word of God abiding in them. *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

1. I am to consider what he had written to the *fathers*, and his reasons for the same, and why he recites it; for the words before us, contain all this. *I write unto you, fathers*, was in the former verse. Here it is, *I have written unto you, fathers*. His reason for the same, as he himself gives it, was, *because ye have known him that is from the beginning*. The words *that is* we will leave out: we took them in, as we went over the 'past verse. To know the beginning of the gospel, as preached by the Lord himself, must be a blessing which could not but be most highly valued and esteemed by saints in the age in which *John* lived. He, and others in that age, had been thus favoured: there can be no great doubt of this. And he might intend them in this address, and style them *fathers*, as well as others, who might in a spiritual sense, and on spiritual accounts most justly deserve the title. It is by no means foreign from the subject, to conceive, *from the beginning*, may be designed in the first place, to express the beginning of our Lord's ministry: and such as had retained the everlasting truth which Christ himself had delivered, concerning his co-essentiality with the Father, his living with, and his being pre-ordained by Him, for all the purposes of life and salvation to the elect and beloved ones; such as had so retained in their minds, and had the savour and fragrantcy of these important verities resting on their spirits, these could not but be very precious unto our apostle. As also others were, who had the true knowledge of Christ in their minds: but whilst such as were brought by the ministry of the apostles, to know Christ, must have been peculiarly and particularly dear and precious in their esteem; yet when they met with those who had received the knowledge of Christ, under his own teaching, I conceive it must have been great joy to the holy apostles of the Lord and Saviour. Well, we will pass this, and go, as we before did, to the *fathers*, as being so called because they had been a long time in his school, and had been greatly favoured with light from the Divine Spirit, so as to conceive and apprehend, to enjoy and to know Christ in his Person: as one in the Self-existing Essence, who was equal with the Father and the Spirit: who was

set up as God-Man, and shone forth in majesty and glory which none but Himself could be invested with—In the form of God—The Image of the Invisible God—In the glory which was given him by the Father before the world was. And this as God-Man. In whom the Son of the living God dwelt, as the incomprehensible and only-begotten Son of God, in the humanity: by means of which all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him, because of the Personal union which subsists between the Second Person in the Essence, and the Individual humanity assumed by Him into Union, so as to receive all its Personality hereby. Now the eternity of Christ's Person, the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, His existence before God, His Personal Glory, how he was the first and the last in all the ways and works of God, constitute a subject which is of vast importance to the mind: in the which saints of the highest attainments in the school of Christ, take great delight: so far as they have been favoured by the Holy Spirit, with an intuitive knowledge of the same. The means of their receiving this, is from the revelation made thereof in the sacred word. And old saints, who deserve the title of *fathers*, find everlasting life, and enjoy the same, in their knowledge of the Person of Christ, and in their having personal and particular communion with Him. He therefore becomes their daily study and delight: their joy and their treasure. They know He will be their perpetual Heaven in Glory. They therefore are aiming with *Paul* to know Him more apprehensively: more as their Head, their Lord, their Righteousness, their everlasting Purifier, their Hope, their All: being fully persuaded, if they could but apprehend what his glory is, as set before them in the gospel, they should have most blessed conception of what their glory will consist in; which will be to see his glory, and to see Him in his glory, by means of which they will be swallowed up, so as to be perpetually fixed on Him, and be filled by Him with all the fulness of God. Now beyond this subject, and the enjoyment of it, none can attain this side the vision of Christ in glory. Some of the saints have clearer and brighter views and apprehensions than others. It is not a matter of speculation, but an infinite subject. Faith can never fully comprehend it; No; nor can saints ever fully enter into it in Glory. It is glory itself. Here below some saints, as they advance heaven-ward, have more of the knowledge of glory let down upon them, which as it enters into their minds, yields them prospects and foretastes of future glory, and prepares them for the same. I would by no means admit of mine own thoughts on this subject. I would be passive; giving up my mind to the Holy Ghost, for him to enlighten it, into the knowledge of Christ's Person, from the revelation of the same, and from the same so to form Christ in me, and thereby make Him my supreme and everlasting All, as might lead me to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." There are some things said concerning the Pre-existence of Christ's soul which are no parts of my creed: nor do I love the statement given of this subject, when it is said Jehovah covenanted with the human soul of Christ; of this I can by no means approve; because the human soul of Christ is a creature; and I would not for ten thousand thousand worlds that my salvation and eternal glory should rest on a creature. My views, apprehensions, and conceptions from the scriptures concerning the Person of Christ are these. I believe the Son of God, who was, and ever will, and

cannot but be equal in the Godhead with the Father and the Holy Ghost, as possessing the whole of the divine Nature, Essence, and Godhead with them, was by the will of the Holy Trinity predestinated into creature existence. And was as the Second Person in the Incomprehensible Essence, to be God-Man, from everlasting. This is his commencement of being what He is as God-Man. By this the glory of his Godhead is secured : which I am always afraid is not in the other way of stating this most deep and mysterious subject. Let me, Beloved, be understood by you on this great and grand point, so that you may not say of me when I shall be out of the body, and it lies rotting in the grave, that I held the doctrine of the Pre-existence of Christ's human soul, and the Indwelling scheme : that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in it. Say, if you like to mention it, that I believed from the scriptures, that Christ was set up, and existed from everlasting : that the foundation of this was laid in the Second Person in the Essence, who was decreed to be God-Man : that this decree falling on Him, he existing as a Person in the Godhead, he was capable of sustaining the glory, and wearing the garb and appearance of God-Man : that he actually was God-Man, from everlasting. He had an ærial body, before he had a corporeal one : which, it may be, was somewhat like what the bodies of the saints will be after their resurrection. In the which he appeared before his open Incarnation to many of the saints, under the Old Testament dispensation. I believe the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelleth Personally in Christ : He being God and man in one Person ; and united by Personal union to the Son of the living God. The eternal Father not only chose Christ to be God-Man, but the Essential Son, and Word of God, was pleased to engage to be all this. And so far as I know and apprehend of this matter, I have here briefly declared. I would have the following scriptures considered, as belonging to this most deep, sublime, and wonderful subject. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Jno. v. 26. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Jno. iii. 13. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Jno. vi. 38. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Jno. viii. 58. "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Jno. x. 36. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jno. xvii. 5. Whilst I understand all these most sacred and important passages, to be spoken by Christ, as God-Man; yet I understand from them, that his Being in the Essence, as distinct in Personality from the Father and the Spirit, the Son of the living God, is the very foundation of his being God and Man in one Christ. To this I would add, He whom we style God-Man, was not taken up into union with the Essence, He was taken up into union with a Person in the Essence. Now as old persons love to hear and contemplate on, ancient things, so our apostle gives us to understand, that the fathers in Christ, have their spiritual minds taken up, and exercised on Him who was from everlasting, their eternal Head, and their eternal life: in whom they were chosen: by whom they were represented: in whom they were loved by the Father with an everlasting love: in whom they were blessed with all spiritual

blessings: in whose Person they were accepted: with whom the covenant of grace began. He was the Surety of the elect in it. He hath, agreeable to the will of the Father, carried the whole of it into execution. He is the Righteousness, Salvation, and Perfection of his whole church. It may well become them, therefore, to have their minds engaged on Him; and it need not be wondered at, that *John* should make it the prime excellency of these fathers in Christ, to whom he here writes, that they *knew Him that is from the beginning*. *I have written unto you, fathers*, according to your age, growth, and state in christianity. It is your delight, and quite to the degree you have attained in the school of Christ, to be much engaged in deep meditation on the original glories of the Person of Christ: on the nature and inherent Perfections which reside in Him. I have in my *Gospel* set forth, and recorded many of those most important sayings which he uttered from himself, the which contain such depths, as the Holy Ghost only can unfold unto you. I would recommend them to your most diligent perusal; as they contain in them, life everlasting. My end in writing to you, is to encourage you, to abide in what you know—not to be moved therefrom—I know what is going forward in the churches: I therefore *have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning*—that ye may receive no other doctrine concerning Him, than that which ye received from the beginning; when it was delivered most purely by us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

I would here add, all such as take on them to feed the church of God, and give accounts unto the same, concerning the Person of Christ, God-Man, and his Glories, Perfections, Royalties, and Blessedness, his Life, Self-existence, and Immortality as such, should take care they say all they say, on this great mystery, God manifested in the flesh, agreeable with the revelation made of the same in the holy Scriptures. Lest they should be found substituting a false Christ, a Christ of their own forming, and not the Christ of God. The apostle recites what he had written to those persons, he here addresseth, to preserve them from going off from what they knew of Him, and had believed, and confessed concerning Him. Thus having so far as I could, given you the outline on this first head of my discourse, and leaving it for you at your leisure to improve and meditate on, I proceed

2. To notice what he had written to the *young men*, which he here refers unto, and why he also recites it. *I have written unto you, young men*.

He wrote to them in the former verse. He there gave this as the reason for it. *Because ye have overcome the wicked one*. It was, most certainly, to encourage them; to strengthen them; to shew them a token of his personal love and affection to them: that they might clearly perceive that he did not love them less than he did the fathers, though he could not but place the fathers first, and write to them in a different way, and on a different subject. He could not write to these as he had to them: as they were more highly advanced in the school of Christ, and were learning a more distinct lesson, which according to their seniority was more suited to them. These young men were dexterous in fighting the battles of the Lord. They were full of godly zeal and courage. They frequently displayed it: by withstanding the devil: by resisting him in the faith of Jesus. Hereby they made him flee again and again.

They were men of renown for this. The apostle bears his testimony of this, in saying in the former verse, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." And here he says to them, *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.* Solomon says, "The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the gray head." So it was the glory of these young men in Christ, their spiritual strength: which they, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, exerted in resisting the devil, and their own fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: as also, in withstanding the heresies and false doctrines of the day in which they lived. I put in this for the following reason—because the apostle as soon as he ends this part of his discourse, and has given them an exhortation, informs them of the Antichrists of that day. So that this must be included in what is written to the fathers: he must mean they should abide in the profession of the true faith of Christ's Person, and salvation, and not deviate therefrom. The absolute necessity of this, could not but be evident unto them. These young men, were strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Their courage was not abated, though they had been again and again in the closest engagements with the evil one. They were in the Lord as strong as ever. They were noble and valiant soldiers. They were expert in the use of their spiritual arms. They had again and again come up from the battle, more than conquerors through him that loved them: and were to the present moment, noble champions for Christ Jesus. Hence the apostle says, *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.* This he gives as his reason for writing to them; he said not this before. It may be he recites his writing to them in the former verse, that he might bring in this here, as an encouragement—that they might not only be encouraged from his observation of them, but also be excited to shew their hatred against the one grand, common, and universal enemy of the whole church, the evil one, the devil, more and more. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* Having given you the outline of this, I am brought to my next particular, which is,

3. To shew you his reason for his addressing these *young men* this second time. He gives it in these words, *because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

He had in the former verse said they had overcome the wicked one: he here adds to this, by saying they were strong. *Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* It most certainly was to be an encouragement unto them, and as an excitement to encourage them to go on in the good ways of the Lord, and to wax stronger and stronger: and also to give them right apprehensions in whom their great strength lay: likewise by what means it was continued and renewed. He would fain have them most clearly understand, their righteousness and strength were in Christ Jesus; who as the Essential and Living Word, was in them. He lived in them. He abode in them. It was in Him, and from Him, and by his indwelling in them, they were all they were: strong and vigorous in the good ways of God—in running the race set before them—in marching with an high hand heaven-ward—in glorifying the Lord with their spirits, souls, and bodies, which were

His—in renouncing every error—in boldly resisting such as were corrupt in the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity; who had not the true Christ in their ministry; who were reprobate concerning the faith. The *young men* were of a sound judgment. They had a clear spiritual discernment. They had the knowledge of essential and fundamental Truth in their heads, and the real and most blessed experience of the same in their hearts; by means of which they were preserved from those errors, and pernicious preachers which were in the day in which these lived: and having the spirit of love, and of a sound mind, they boldly withstood them, and overcame them. For I cannot but include this, as what is intended by their having overcome the wicked one; as every corruption of the word and doctrine, and ordinances, and worship of Christ, is from him. All mental errors are as truly and positively sinful and abominable in the sight of God, as any corruptions of the flesh are. It is of vast importance to know the truth as it is in Jesus—to receive it—to believe it—to abide in it—to walk in it—to persevere in it—to die in it: because the glory of God, and Christ is concerned in it. We should therefore value it beyond our own salvation. Our Lord says, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John viii. 31, 32. Young men in Christ, are generally found to be very particular about the doctrines of grace, and the preachers they hear. Those in *John’s* time, and to whom he writes, were strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. The living Word was in them. They were quickened by Him. He was their strength. It was through Him, they overcame the wicked one. Let his attacks upon them be what they might, these were in Christ, more than a match for him; for they had overcome him. Their grace had been exercised. Their faith had been opposed. He had cast his fiery darts at them; which they had quenched, by looking to Christ, and making use of Him as their shield. He had corrupted the whole system of grace, as revealed in the gospel, so far as it lay in his power so to do; yet these young men had seen into all this deception; and though he had raised up men to preach just what he had invented, and which was altogether a lie, whilst it was coloured over with the name and sound of Jesus Christ; and he appeared in them, and their doctrine, and ministry as an angel of light; yet these young men in Christ, were made wise unto salvation, and confounded and confuted the whole, because they were born of God, and taught of God, and kept by the power of God. And this the apostle assigns as his reason for having written unto them in the words before us. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* His writing to them, shews his very great love for them, his attachment unto them, and how much his heart was set upon them. He viewed them to be a seed, a generation, who should praise the Lord, and keep up his Name and Truth in the world, so as from them, in succession, it would be maintained in all ages, and throughout all generations. The fathers in Christ are going off the stage: their eyes will soon be closed in death. The young men are to have a continuance on this stage, when, and after the other are called off. It is therefore a part of the concern and duty of such as are fathers in Christ, to communicate as much as they possibly can, of what they know of Christ unto them: that they receiving more light and knowledge into the mysteries of Christ, and his kingdom, may

thereby be of the more service and use to the saints, and that the loss of the *fathers* may not be so much felt. We have a most noble instance of this, in *Peter* the apostle of Jesus Christ; who says to the saints to whom he wrote, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance: Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." 2 Epis. i. 12—14. A most noble example, worthy of imitation by all the servants of Christ, who may be styled fathers in Christ, for their spiritual knowledge, and attainments. It would be well they should communicate their knowledge, as fully as they possibly can, to their senior and junior brethren, that the saints at large might sustain no loss by their being taken to heaven. Yea, and such of them as have gifts for it, they should use them, so as to leave some writings behind them, which might be of increasing profit to the church of Christ. Having set before you, what the apostle *John* had written to the young men, and why he had written unto them, with his reason for his again addressing them, as he doth in this verse, I come to my last particular.

4. How it was they were so strong? It was, by the word of God abiding in them. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

By the *Word of God* here, may be understood, either the Essential, living Word, who sustains the title in our apostle's writings, both in his gospel, and also in this Epistle; or the written word. It may be best, as it will be the more comprehensive, to take in both here. It must have been that Christ the living Word was in them, as their life and their light, agreeable with his own declaration in the days of his flesh; who then said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. The Lord Jesus Christ abiding in these young men in him, he quickening and putting forth his life and light in their souls, hereby they were strengthened with strength, and hereby Christ was their strength, and they were strong in the grace which was in Him. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.* Ye are a noble company of spiritual warriors. Ye have the hearts of lions, in fighting the great and roaring lion, who is going up and down continually, seeking whom he may devour. You are strong, for the Lord hath strengthened you. You are strong, because the word of God abideth in you—the word of Christ, which is able to make you wise unto salvation, even the Scriptures of truth, by the knowledge and faith of which, ye grow into Christ, so as to be rooted, grounded, and settled in Him. The written word of God may also be included in what the apostle here says in his address to these young men in Christ, when he says, *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* Because it is by the written word, as the same has place in our renewed minds, that Christ lives and dwells in our hearts. Hence the apostle *Paul* writing to the saints at *Colosse*, says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." chap. iii. 16. Here, it

seems to me, is a very clear distinction made between Christ, and the word of Christ. It is by the word of Christ he dwells in us; just as it is by Him, the Word of life, dwelling in us, his word doth. And it is by both, and from both, the young men in Christ were strong. It was hereby they overcame the wicked one. The written word provided them with armour of proof. They were hereby armed against every assault of the enemy. It was Christ the Essential Word taught them the use of the spiritual arms. He went before them, as the Captain of the Lord's host. He strengthened them in the day of battle; so that they were enabled to shout and say, "The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." Hence our apostle addresseth them as conquerors, saying, *Ye have overcome the wicked one.* He places to their account former victories. He therefore uses the past tense. *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* This then is their excellency: the crown and summit to which they arrive. They are valiant for the Truth. They are zealous in the good ways of God. They are fit for war and battle. They are strong and full of exploits: that which makes them so, is the word of God abiding in them, and his word dwelling in them. Ye young men are strong. Ye are fit and well fitted for martial exercises, and enterprises. Ye can cut the sinews of error. Ye are well skilled in the use of the spiritual bow. Ye can shoot arrows at an hair's breadth, and wound the old serpent called the devil, ere he is aware. I do not ascribe this to you, as though it proceeded in any measure from yourselves. No. It is all the fruits and effects of supernatural grace. It is wholly from the Lord, and from the power of his might. It is because the word of God abideth in you, that ye have overcome the wicked one, in all his past assaults on you. The love of the Father is in you: the love of the Father preserves you: the love of the Father abideth in you: this is the cause of your continuation in his good ways: to this is to be attributed all your spiritual successes. I love you in Christ. I value you for your spiritual successes and victories in his great name. My heart is drawn out towards you. I have written particularly unto you. I love you next to the fathers, whom I love in the Truth, and you also, and all them which have known the truth, for the truth's sake which shall be in you, and abide with you, and them for ever: neither can I express my spiritual affection for you beyond, or better than in the following words, "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." 2 Epis. v. 3. I have therefore one piece of advice to give you; which I will administer unto you, by way of exhortation in the three next following verses. May the Lord, if it please him, reflect his own light on what hath been set forth, and delivered; so that this passage of the word may shine forth so clearly, as that your minds having a right and proper understanding of the same, you may receive real profit and good therefrom: and "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This is the desire and prayer of my heart. The Lord grant it me on your behalf, and to the praise and glory of his Name. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—I JOHN II. 15, 16, 17.

OUR apostle having expressed himself by way of address to the fathers, young men, and babes in Christ, in the two former verses, and given his reasons for so doing, pointed out wherein the chiefest excellency of each of these states consists, and the highest attainment of christian knowledge in them, he here comes to give a word of exhortation. This is contained in the words now before us; which may be considered as belonging to the whole church of Christ: but to one denomination of christians more than to others. As for instance, old saints, such as are justly termed fathers in Christ, seem by their advancement in the knowledge of Christ, and communion with Him, not to need it. Babes in Christ, seem not to be brought forward enough in the school of Christ, to be fit subjects of such an exhortation. The *young men* therefore seem to be most immediately intended: and as the former words to them were these, *I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.* And these words immediately follow; *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* It seems, therefore, that it is an address, or an admonition and caution to the young men in Christ: to which this may be added; it is more suited to such as may be styled young men in Christ, considered as in the prime of nature, as well as of grace. Therefore I shall consider them as those here particularly intended, and treat the words as an exhortation unto them. I will accordingly cast my whole subject into the following order and division, by considering the words thus.

1. The caution here given not to love the world, and the things which are in it: with the reason given against it. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

2. A summary account given of all that is in the world; with a denial of its being of the Father. It is wholly of the world: *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

3. The vanity and emptiness, of the whole world: with the stability of him who doeth the will of God. *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* If I am carried clearly through this, I conceive you will have the full

outline. May the Lord be with me. Amen. And render the same a blessing. So be it, O Lord, for thy own great Name's sake. I am

1. To enter on the caution here given, for it is such, as it may be considered as an exhortation also. Love not the world, and the things which are in it : with the reason given against it. The subject is set forth in these words before us. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Here is a caution given. It is to the young men in Christ Jesus : who have been admitted into fellowship with him : who are on his side : who are fighting under him as the Captain of salvation. They are here cautioned against this present evil world, not to love it : by which we are to understand the spirit, the customs, maxims, the ends and designs of the men of the world : who turn their back on Christ : renounce and will have nothing to do with Him : who in all their aims, designs, and ends, are guided and influenced to pursue that which will tend to self-gratification. Let this be as various as it may, yet this is all a worldly man can be at : self being alone his end and aim ; how to advance it, so as to receive comfort and content therefrom. Now young christians are in the world : they cannot go out of it : they must live their appointed time in it : they cannot be without having their concerns in it. The Lord's beloved ones are variously disposed of by his own will and appointments in it ; they are not forbidden to attend to worldly business ; nor to get what is lawful in an industrious way. They are cautioned only not to love the world : by which must be intended not to love it with an inordinate love and affection, so as to set the heart upon it, and esteem it as our treasure and portion. Love not the world for itself : as though it could make you happy : as if some real good was to be found in it : neither the things which are in it. There is no real good to be found in the same. This is very evident ; because one who had vast possessions, a flourishing trade, plenty of riches, a noble retinue, and enjoyed every thing which he possibly could, found no real good in the whole : so that he wrote a book and published it at a very great expence. I have seen, and read it : yet, I profess, if I did not know Christ, I never would look into it again. It is to me so very doleful. It seems enough to crack the heart-strings of every worldly man in the whole world. The title of it is *Ecclesiastes ; or, The Preacher* : near its close is, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher ; all is vanity." chap. xii. 8. If *Solomon* could find no real substantial good in all his worldly pursuits, where, or who is the man that cometh after the king, that doth, or shall ? No wonder then, an apostle of the Lord and Saviour, who had seen him, and found all good in him, should give this caution to young men who were in love with this Jesus, not to love the world, and the things which are in it, lest it should ensnare and captivate their minds and affections, and thereby take them off in any manner and measure, from the all-glorious, most truly precious Lord Jesus Christ. You who are young in the good ways of God, to you is this word of caution addressed. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* Not, my beloved, that you are to omit worldly business, and employments. Some of you must in due season, be settled in the world : you are to be married : to bring up children : to enter on trades : to carry on business : to be diligent in the same. It will be no sin to be industrious ; to get wealth ; to have

large concerns : all this may be done and performed in the Name, and faith of the Son of God. It hath been : it was in the apostle's time : it hath been since : it is in the present day : it will be so long as the world : nor is any part of this an enemy to our faith : many a time it is a furtherance to it. My young friends in Christ, the caution is, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* You may feel the force of this, and act under its influence, and be properly exercised in worldly things. We have an account of one *Mr. Dorney* of Gloucestershire, an eminent merchant, who was very greatly engaged in his own temporal concerns, yet a more spiritual person could not be found. He was so far from being unfitted by his vocation from prayer and conversing with God, none was more constant in his addresses to the throne of the heavenly grace ; or in reading the holy scriptures : and this in, and with his family and friends, as in secret also. It is a good Dutch proverb, *Prayer hindereth no work.* I say, beloved in Christ, if you are called to enter on life, to pursue trade, and business, or fill up any station, be it inferior, or superior, this is the advice which suits you, nor can you act right without it. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Prov. iii. 5, 6. Set not your hearts on the world, or worldly good. *Love not the things which are in it.* Use it, and them, as not abusing the same, but in their place, for which the Lord hath appointed them. The less you have of them so much the better. If the Lord gives you riches, use the same to his honour, to his glory, and on his cause and interest, so far, and not beyond what will serve to increase his praise. By which I mean, this is not to be done to the neglect of your families : nor to laying up in store, agreeably with the bounty of the Lord towards you. O young men in Christ, this commandment, this caution, this exhortation is for you. *Love not the world.* Set not your heart on it, nor any of the things in it : they all perish in the using : they will not long be continued to you. What is your life ? Of no long season : it is even as a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Set therefore your affections on things above, and not on things beneath. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. The reason the apostle gives, why we should not love the world, is this—*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* This reflects light on the subject. We are not to love the world, neither the things which are in the world, with the whole of our hearts : not to an infinite degree ; as if we esteemed it to be our chief good : nor as if we were unwilling to be parted from it, and for ever separated from all in it, by death, at any moment the Lord shall be removing us herefrom. This would prove the love of the Father is not in us. He loved us before the foundation of the world. If we have right thoughts and views of this, we shall love Him, for his loving us from everlasting. The Father thought on us, before he formed this world on which we dwell. If we are right with Him, we shall think of Him, and his thoughts and purposes in Christ Jesus concerning us, more than we shall of the world, and all the things in it. The Father fixed our allotments in the world, during our continuance in a time state, before he gave being and existence to it, by his almighty word of power. Surely then, if the love of the Father is in us, we shall rest well pleased with the good pleasure of his will concerning us, concerning our particular situa-

tions in life. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* This is very expressive. It is also very comprehensive: it takes in all who are or may be under a profession of the Father's love. He loved you before the world was. He loved you when the world was not. He loved you from everlasting. You profess this: you confess this: yet your hearts and affections, your minds and thoughts are more set upon, and engaged in the things of time, and sense, in worldly things, in earthly, sensual things, than on the Father's everlasting love. What can I, says the apostle, conclude from this? Is it not a most just, whilst it is also an awful evidence against you? *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* I am, says John, for divine realities. What is a profession without a possession? It is to me nothing worth. I therefore declare it to, and before you all, If any man, let his profession be what it may, love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Where the knowledge and real enjoyment of the Father's love is, it lifts up above and beyond all the world, and the whole contained in it. The maxims of the world, the beauties, charms, and pleasures of it, are annihilated in the mind, in the which God hath shed abroad his love. The carnal and corrupt doctrines, and the very natural religion of the world, and which the men of it, are so partial to, and fond of, to such as have the love of the Father in their hearts, appears full of sin and corruption. It is as bad, if not worse than any other thing, or any other subject in it. So that this, says the apostle, is what I have to say, by way of caution, advice, and exhortation, and my conclusion is expressly this. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* The expression, *the love of the Father is not in him,* implies, the love of the Father is in the heart of that person, who loves not the world, but prefers God to it. To have the love of the Father in the mind, in the true knowledge and enjoyment of it, must be a real soul-enriching portion. Nothing can exceed it. No: not in heaven. It will be more fully enjoyed: but not more really and truly. I hope I have cleared this first head of my discourse, and will therefore proceed to the next, in the which is proposed

2. To give a summary account of all that is in the world. With a denial of its being of the Father. It is wholly of the world. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Here is the world's trinity in its unity: which draws all mankind out of Christ after them. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are the three great and powerful enemies of all who are in their sins, and in their natural state. They are their complete and powerful conquerors. They are the whole, and this contains, and it may well be said, it is the all in the world: and a most wretched all it is. By the world must be meant those who are in it. By all that is in the world, must be meant, what is the substance of the whole contained in it. The enumeration of this forms the summary of the whole. It is *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* And a mighty all this is. It has, in its causes and effects, been found to be too strong and powerful for thousands and tens of thousands. The word *lust* signifies *desires.* We generally make use of it to express sensual desires. As so considered, it is one of those grand engines of the devil, by which he has

destroyed and drowned many of the sons of men, in destruction and perdition. By *the lust of the eyes*, may be understood how these are made use of, as so many inlets to the mind, to convey to it what will be an occasion to sin, and sinning: with the various acts which are the effects thereof, and proceed therefrom. By *the pride of life*, may be designed to express, those various desires which proceed out of the mind, by aiming at, and after a variety of situations and circumstances, which have in them the appearances of affording honours, pleasures, riches, fame, beauty, and glory, which promise such enjoyment, as would constitute perfect and lasting happiness, to the proprietors of the same: yet the whole is delusive. It is wholly imaginary. It is altogether sinful. It is increasingly so. It is not of the Father. It is wholly of the world. This is the outline of it. To open and more fully explain the same; the account here given of the world, of a truth must most assuredly refer, to the course and customs of this present evil world; so called on account of its present existence, and because it is wholly and altogether sinful, and full of evil: all which is the fruit and effect of the fall: in consequence of which it is wholly and finally condemned: and is one day to be consumed by fire: at which season, the heavens being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat: the earth also and all that is therein shall be burnt up. In its present state, every object in it is made use of by Satan who is the god of it, to draw them who are his, more and more into actual sin and increasing misery; so that such as are the Lord's, there is no one thing therein, but they are in danger from. Its objects, sounds, pleasures, profits: these are deceitful things; so are its honours, customs, maxims, and its pursuits and practices. These are all full of snares: they have all that in them, which will suit every lust, vile affection, desire and appetite which is to be found in fallen man. Hence it is, saints are in such danger from the men of the world, and their conversation: because their eyes, their ears, their every sense and passion, are liable to be tempted, and to be impressed, and overcome. There is that deceitfulness in the things of time and sense, and they work so impressively on the sensory, that even the people of God at times are overcome, when, and where they least expected. Hence they need caution, and exhortation: and this shews the propriety of the former words to the young men in Christ. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* The reason for which is here most fully stated, and the whole which is in the world is reckoned up, clearly expressed, and nothing left out. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

All these, not being of the Father, but of the world, is the very reason why they are not to be loved by us. And if the love of the Father be in us, they will be renounced by us. The enumeration of the things which are in the world, I will endeavour to call over, and place them in their proper order. Let us consider them in their expressions. Here is *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*. This is all, and the whole that is in the world. It is from these alone, all our danger arises; yet there is nothing in these worth one single thought: it is wholly impossible to reap one moment's real satisfaction from them. They are of the world. See them therefore, ye

children of the Most High God, in their true and native light, the vileness and sinfulness of them will appear. Then reflect on the love of your heavenly Father, and you will be preserved and saved from the influences of them, so as not to be carried away by them. To speak distinctly of each of these. As it respects *lust*; the word signifies *desire*. So that it may include the desires of the mind, as well as it may of the body: and may here refer to a worldly disposition, and a thirst for outward worldly company, and earthly things. It may also be expressive of bodily corruption: which young men in Christ are most apt to be afflicted, affected, and assaulted with, because of their youth, strength, and natural constitution. They are all of them, doubtless, at one season or another, tempted by the evil one, who would if possible overcome them. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." It is good not to look at temptation, nor to stand in fear of the devil, lest thereby we fall. I would give this general advice to you that are young men in Christ. Never speak out your corruptions one to another: carry them to the Lord: speak out all to Him. This will be to your advantage; leave them all with Him, that he may dethrone and subdue them by the mighty power of his grace. Take heed, and avoid being in a hurry and perturbation of spirit, in consequence of any inward experience of sin arising in your mind; as Satan will most assuredly seek to gain advantage thereby. Hear what the apostle *Peter* says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." 1 Epis. ii. 11, 12. Hear ye also, you young men in Christ, what the apostle *Paul* says to *Timothy*. "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Epis. ii. 22.

I am now to speak of *the lust of the eyes*: which is enumerated in our text, as one of the principal things which are in the world. This consists in looking on what is without us, and that surrounds us—on beauty, dignity, honour, and fame. And seeing others in the possession of these, we lust, or desire to be partakers of the same. It was by this very means, the first woman, who was the mother of us all, was overcome. You have the account hereof in the following words. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Gen. iii. 6. Here was the lust of the eyes. And an abundance of sin is drawn forth from the mind, by means of the eyes. *Job* speaks of his having made a covenant with his eyes. So it is, we all take in more sin with our eyes, than any of us are aware of: and having once received it, there is a taint and impression on the mind, we cannot so easily get rid of, as we may imagine: it will sometimes retain its impression for years. I must conceive, *the lust of the eyes*, in this place, is, as I apprehend, engaging them in surveying the pomps and glories of the world; from whence all worldly men derive their joy. It was by aerial representations of these, the devil made his attempt on Christ the Son of God. So says *Matthew*. "Again the devil taketh

him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." *Luke* says, this was in a moment of time. "And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The Lord of glory could not be overcome: yet we see it is one of the most powerful temptations whereby the wicked one doth overcome the sons of men. The pomps and glories, and vanities of the world, are looked at: the eyes see them: the mind is engaged with them: the heart is set upon them. This is the lust of the eyes here spoken of; and this is in the world, and it is altogether earthly, sensual, and devilish. Here, ye young men in Christ, come in most suitably the words of the apostle *James*; who says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." chap. i. 9—12.

We come to the third thing mentioned as being in the world, which is *the pride of life*: which must consist in vieing with, and out-vieing one another: in dress; in amusements; in company, retinue, and every possible excess. This is all that is in the world. And a very poor all it is. To carry pride to its utmost excess: to exceed in dignity, honour, majesty, and behaviour all others: to look with contempt on all, and treat them with indignity, this is the very essence of the pride of life. This is in the world. It is the spirit of the world. It is *not of the Father, but is of the world*. Therefore, ye young men in Christ, take heed to yourselves. Hear ye what *Paul* says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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. 1, 2. It is to me wonderful, the apostle, so heavenly minded as he was, and so swallowed up in communion with the Father and the Son, should be so very capable of giving us such a correct map of the whole world and all in it, as he here does. It shews the true knowledge of Christ makes way for a vast expansion of the mind in some particular instances. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*. Then let us have nothing to do with it. Let us turn our backs on it. Let us everlastingly renounce it. Let us take care we are not found in the spirit of it. This brings me to my last particular head of this discourse.

3. To shew the vanity and emptiness of the whole world: as it stands in connection with the before given account of it. *And the*

world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. This is a contrast. There is no continuation in the one: the world, and its people are always changing. Such as do the will of God, are permanent, and will be everlasting.

The minds of carnal and earthly-minded persons, are always changing: so are their customs, their pleasures, their amusements, their joys, their pursuits. It is by this means they are more and more deceived. So that in the object they sought happiness yesterday, and were greatly mortified in not enjoying it, they will be as earnest in seeking it in, to-day, as if they had always found it in the same object and subject. They can only seek it in themselves, and in the gratification of their senses. Their objects from whence they expect this, are all before them. They are all contained in *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* These all grow stale, and at one season or other grow tiresome, and insipid: they can none of them be enjoyed alike: they all perish in the very using. It might well therefore be said of the whole of them, as the apostle doth, *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.* This is the case continually. One new way of sinning succeeds another. One new mode of address, is substituted instead of another. One new fashion of dress, of entertainment, of building, succeeds one the other: all of which hath its day; it then grows old, and dies. So that the vanity of the human mind, in its fallen state cannot be expressed. It is a vacuum of mere emptiness: and that which it aims to feed on, and to be supported by, is altogether emptiness. It is lighter than vanity: yet this is not all; for every thing which the men of the world lust after, and are so desirous of, is passing away: and with them, the desire of their votaries also. *The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.* He is speaking of the same world, which he had reckoned up, as containing nothing more, or less in it, *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* The which so far as I understanding my own meaning, in the description which I have been giving you of the same, contains in its sum-total, the essence of sin, and the essence of misery. No marvel, therefore, the apostle should exhort the young men in Christ, to have nothing to do with it: saying to them, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* By which I should understand an abidance in Christ: in the knowledge and belief of the Father's revelation and record of Him in the scriptures. Such will most assuredly abide for ever; whilst the world, and all its deceitful lusts are passing away: have very short duration: yea, perish in the very use and enjoyment of them. The fashion of this world passeth away: there is a continual flux, and reflux in it, and in all which concerns it. Such as are in Christ, and live Christ, have an eternal inheritance. They have solid joys: substantial pleasures: riches which are durable and will outlast the world. They have a portion which can sustain no change. *The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* All which, as delivered to the young men in Christ, is to keep them from the world: to guard them from setting their hearts

and affections on the world : to give them clearly to see what it consists of : to shew them the exceeding sinfulness of the various pursuits of earthly minded men : and to express the emptiness, and end thereof. *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Thus our apostle ends this part of his subject to the young men in Christ : and here comes in, what the apostle *James* says, very pertinently, as a closure of our sermon, “ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin : and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” chap. i. 13—15. If we would not be overcome with *the lust of the flesh*, with *the lust of the eyes*, and with *the pride of life*, let us not stand looking at the same. The eyes and ears are very dangerous avenues ; they must be guarded : or they will be the inlets of much evil, and sorrow to the mind. It will not do for any of the Lord’s people, to go in any course, or pursue any path, so far as they may think themselves safe, presuming the Lord will keep them. Many who have so done, indulging their eyes and ears, and letting out their affections and hearts towards and upon forbidden objects and subjects, have most justly smarted for the same. Let the *fathers, young men*, and *little children* mark this. Let them be mindful they are only safe, when, and whilst they are kept looking unto Jesus. Let them therefore remember the following words of the before cited apostle. “ Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” v. 16—18. May the Lord the Spirit bring the hearts of all his people, be they of what degree of standing they may in his school, under the mighty weight, authority, and influence of his most holy word, continually, and effectually. May every precept, every caution, advice, direction, exhortation in the scriptures, be received by us as coming from the Lord. Then we shall most carefully attend thereto. This is of itself, and in its place, a very powerful inducement unto it—*He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Let us therefore live on Jesus. Let us go on our way rejoicing. Let his word be our rule. Let us take his Spirit for our guide. Let us not sow to the flesh, lest of the flesh we reap corruption : but let us sow to the Spirit, that of the Spirit we may reap life everlasting. May the Lord bless, if it please Him, what hath been set before you, and make it useful and effectual unto you. May he give these subjects an entrance into your minds, and explain and enforce them with divine emphasis on your hearts. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.—1 JOHN ii. 18.

IN the former verses, namely, the three past, the apostle was preparing to enter on the subject before us: which concerns erroneous teachers, and pernicious doctrines which were then in propagation; this was to the very great distress of real saints, in the then present day: from the which, the *little children*, the *fathers* in Christ, the *young men*, and the *babes* in Christ, had been preserved: which was matter of unspeakable grace. It was to be looked on as an evidence of their eternal election; for the which the Lord should be most highly praised and magnified; as it distinguished them from others, who were professors. It served to be a mark of real and essential difference, between such as were christians, and such as were only so by name. In the words before us, he addresseth the true church of God, under the title of *little children*. This he had done before, in verse 1; saying, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He again thus addressed them, verse 12; where he says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." After this he uses the same term, when he is speaking to the babes in Christ: and he makes use of it again in the words which are now before us. He here gives his reason for his present addressing them. It was because it was the last time. They had in the ministry of the apostles, been informed, that one styled antichrist should come. He was now in his harbingers, and forerunners actually come. Yea, even now there were many antichrists. This was an evident proof to the apostles, as that hereby they knew it was the last time, or hour, or close of the apostolic age: for that is it which we are here to understand by the phrase, *It is the last time*.

To give a little entrance into it, let us consider the following subjects. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having in his incarnate state, finished the work of salvation, ascended up into glory: and being seated on his Mediatorial throne, sent down the Holy Ghost on his church on the day of Pentecost; who fitted and qualified his apostles and others, to preach the unsearchable riches of free grace. On these were bestowed miraculous gifts. They could heal all sorts of sicknesses. They could expel devils. They could raise the dead. And many other acts they were capable to perform, which were peculiar unto them. Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them. and confirming the word with signs following. The gifts bestowed on the apostles and first ministers of Christ are thus expressed: "The gospel was first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Heb. ii. 3, 4. The

apostles were the first and immediate ministers of Christ. They were qualified with gifts and graces, so as fully to confirm their being sent by Him, and which served to confirm the truth of the everlasting gospel; and many were led to receive Christ, and his gospel by them. During the period of their being engaged in this great work, many were turned to the Lord: churches were planted, settled, and built up on Christ the rock: supernatural light and knowledge into the mysteries of grace and salvation, was communicated and diffused throughout the churches of the saints, by the apostolical Epistles sent unto them. During the lives of the apostles, and whilst their ministration was continued, well deserves to be considered, as the glorious summer of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. After which came the autumn of this: when many professors fell off; some into one evil, some into another. Many of these followed one the other, and falling into damnable courses of sinning, fell into damnable errors. Out of these, more and more originated: so that our apostle who lived to see this, informs the saints of it, in order that they might be guarded against the same. The churches in his time had been warned by the apostle of the Gentiles, of the coming of anti-christ. Our apostle perceived he was all but come: what would completely constitute him, had its present existence. He therefore declares, that now, at the time of his writing this Epistle, there were many anti-christs, whereby he, and others in the churches, knew that it was the close of the apostolic age, and the last time, and the last hour of it. As every thing has its beginning, so also it has its decline. Our apostle in his *Revelation* under the visions of seals opened, trumpets sounded, and vials poured out, exhibits the whole state of the church to the end of the world. I apprehend *John* wrote his gospel first. This Epistle, and the others, one to a *noted lady*, and the other to *Gaius*, in his old age: so that his writing *The Revelation*, which was in the *Isle of Patmos*, was between the time of his writing his gospel, and these Epistles. Some conceive the seven Epistles, sent to the seven churches in *Asia*, are descriptive of the state of the visible church of Christ, from his ascension down to the end of time. To view the church of *Ephesus*; which is looked on as expressive of the church of Christ in the apostolic day; she is commended, she is reprov'd, she is censured, she is charged with having left her first love; yet is she also praised for not embracing such doctrine as was contrary to our Lord Jesus Christ. See Rev. ii. 1—7. Compare this with what I have been hinting at; you will find a similarity in it. The apostles, *James*, *Peter*, *Jude*, and our *John*, all speak of great sins, errors, and heresies, abounding in the times in which they lived. And these were chiefly such, as corrupted the doctrine, worship, and commandments of the Lord and Saviour. I am to open to you these words before me: *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* I will cast my sermon, and deliver it out unto you under the following heads.

1. I will notice the address, with the apostle's reason for writing to them; and aim to express all implied in the first part of the words, in this first head of the sermon, included in these words, *Little children, it is the last time*, or the last hour, or the last close, or the full and final end of the apostolic age. The last hour in my text, is used much in the same sense here, with the expression, *Time shall be no longer.*

In the 10th chapter of *the Revelation* we have the angel "clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein; that there should be time no longer." v. 6. Now it does not mean time should then cease. It hath respect to prophetic time. So here, the last time, or more properly the last hour, is the very last close, or period of the apostolic church state.

2. The apostle here reminds the saints, of what they had heard of antichrist: of his coming: and that he was almost come. His fore-runners having fully signified this. *And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.* Under this head will be expressed what is to be understood of *antichrist*. He is but one fundamentally: yet in and with him, all heretics, and false teachers, are to be included as antichrists.

3. Who are designed by these many antichrists is to be declared. We may most undoubtedly understand, the heretics and heresies of the then present day. Therefore we must include *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*, with whom it is conceived our apostle had to contend. These denied the divinity of our Lord. It is said our apostle being in a bath, leaped out of it, when he knew *Cerinthus* who denied the Godhead of Christ was in it.

4. The apostles, and others, knew by the abounding of errors, and heresies in the churches, that it was the last hour, or time, in the sense which hath already been expressed. *Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* I conceive in filling up these particulars, I shall give you a most satisfactory outline of the text. May the Lord most graciously conduct me through the same. I am

1. To notice the address, with the apostle's reason for writing to them. I am also to aim at expressing, all implied in the first part of these words, and that in the first head of this sermon, included in these words. *Little children, it is the last time.*

The address, *Little children*, hath nothing to do with their natural, or spiritual age: nor, with their long, or short standing in christianity. No; it is here used only, as a loving and very affectionate way of speaking. It is here designed to express his love and affection in Christ, to all the saints: as it could not but be very pleasing to them, to be thus most affectionately addressed by one, who had been so particularly distinguished by our Lord Jesus Christ, in his state of humiliation, and also in his exalted state. Some say, he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, in *Domitian's* persecution, about A. D. 95, and came out unhurt: after which he was banished to *Patmos* to be starved to death. Under the Emperor *Nerva* he was recalled from exile, and preached the gospel there till he died, about 90 or 100 years old: so that he must have been far advanced in years when he wrote this Epistle. His therefore addressing them so lovingly and affectionately, must have made way for them to attend and receive the more attentively, what he had to say unto them. It most certainly concerned them all. What he is about to deliver unto them, was concerning the great evils which had broken out in various parts and congregations of saints, from some who

had been numbered amongst them. To prevent, therefore, the Lord's people from being carried away with the error of the wicked, and thereby fall from their own stedfastness, it was absolutely necessary for the apostle to speak to them on this most dangerous and alarming subject. The tokens and harbingers of antichrist were to be seen: which were indicative to the apostles, and others, that it was the last hour of the present church state: that it would most certainly undergo a change. It therefore became saints to be on their guard: to take the alarm: not to embrace any new sort of divinity which might be proposed unto them. *Little children*, says he, *it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* These *little children* were particularly interested in this: therefore he informs them of it: not that it was the end of the world, or that the day of Christ was at hand. No: this was not intended, nor included in it, nor designed by it. In the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, we read of the last days, of the latter day, of the day of the Lord, of the day of Christ, of a day of trouble, of a day of power, of a day of espousals, of a day of slaughter, of the day of vengeance, of the year of the redeemed, of a day of salvation, of a day of redemption, of day breaking or breathing, but none of these are intended here. Neither is the expression to be found as here used, in any place beside. *Peter* speaks of the last times, but this is the last time; or the last *hour*; which as it signifies a fixed season, or opportunity, so also it denotes that which is short. Hence we read "of the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. iii. 10. His intent in writing this Epistle, and addressing these persons thus very affectionately, was to exhort them to exercise love to each other, and to be constant in their abidance in the Truth—a lesson most needful for them to receive and practise in those divided and apostatizing times. He tells them there are many antichrists now abroad. These he tells them were such as had once professed the gospel, but were now fallen from it: and this is full evidence the apostolic church state was closing, and would soon be ended. I hope I have done justice to the words of my text, and given you a clear outline of the same, and in so doing have administered satisfaction to your minds. I will therefore proceed to my next particular.

2. Observe how the apostle here reminds the saints, of what they had heard of antichrist, and of his coming: that he was almost now come: his forerunners having fully signified this. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

It is the beginning of the last part of that time of the gospel, which is foretold by the scriptures, and the apostles and prophets of the Lord and Saviour, which will be full of errors, heresies, apostacies, confusions: and the kingdom of antichrist is begun to be framed. It is out of those evils which are now abounding amongst us, he is to originate and spring. *Antichrist* is said to signify *a lawless one*. He is a principal adversary to Christ, and head of the rebellion and apostacy against his doctrine and spiritual kingdom, with usurpation of an absolute command, wherein consists the formal property of antichrist, above all other false teachers

and heretics. And the name of antichrist is not to be taken to point out one man only, but is to be applied also to a kingdom and state, set up against Christ, above all other false teachers and heretics: in which divers shall reign successively, one after another. Those called by the apostle antichrists, and said to be many, were forerunners of the chief one, who found out, and went in the path for him, so as out of their spawn of errors and heresies he might be conceived and hatched. These were in their original, authors of heresies, and heads of factions and various sects in the church. All, each, and every one of them, were real and inveterate enemies to the true church of Christ, the Bride the Lamb's Wife. The saints had heard such enemies would arise: they had been warned of them. The rise of these, as of the great antichrist, the Pope of Rome, had been freely set before them. *Paul* in his farewell sermon to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, had expressly said to them, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts xx. 29, 30. *Peter* had said, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." 2 Epis. ii. 1, 2. *Jude* had said, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle *Paul* had expressly declared, there would be a departure from the faith, and the man of sin, the son of perdition should be revealed. He was to be exalted above all that is called God: he was to sit in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God: by a strong delusion, he was to overspread the whole Roman empire, as a terrible judgment introduced by ignorance and hatred of the Truth, and apostacy from it. This great and tremendous antichrist, was to be found sitting in the temple of God, as exalting himself above magistrates, angels, and every thing called God, as a contemner of the gods of the heathen, and the God of his professed fathers in the primitive church, and setting up a new class of deities to protect his various classes, and new denominations. He was to be possessed with the vilest blasphemy, cruelty, and persecution. I refer you to the 2nd chapter of the 2nd Epistle to the *Thessalonians*. The same apostle writing to *Timothy* says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." 1 Epis. iv. 1, 2. And as *Paul* says to the saints at *Thessalonica*, "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" so it was doubtless the case with the rest of the apostles, so as that *John* might well say, *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists*. He reminds them of what they had heard. No truth had been kept back from them. All the apostles had received from Christ, and been by Him intrusted with, they had faithfully communicated unto them. It therefore became them to make a proper use of it: especially at the present time when every thing contrary to sound

doctrine was prevailing. Towards the close of the apostolical era it was, that every opposition to the "Truth as it is in Jesus," was expressed : every thing contrary to the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity in one incomprehensible Unity, was blasphemously spoken : the true Christ, and the doctrine of his being God and Man was corrupted : the Personality of the Holy Ghost, was impiously trampled on : in fact, all the heresies which were in succeeding ages, and which are even in our age, or ever will be, were then ; so that the saints of God were in need the apostle should write most tenderly and affectionately unto them, and remind them of what they had heard, and of what the apostles had foretold. As after a very glorious summer, storms, thunders, and lightnings, and equinoctial winds may be looked for ; so likewise it was here. The gospel having been so gloriously preached, and such abundance of people turned to the Lord, so there were to be found also many false professors. As the world had been mad, and full of hatred against the apostles, so the devil entered into abundance of persons who had received the knowledge of Christ only in notion, and theory, and set them upon framing out of what they had professed, schemes of their own. This was in direct opposition to the Truth : and they became as great enemies to Christ, his apostles, and church as ever were, or ever can be. This, therefore, being most awfully realized at the time this Epistle was written, our apostle might well say to the saints, *and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.* All who denied the doctrine of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity ; the Person, Godhead, Incarnation and Salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ—such as rejected the co-equality and Personality of the Holy Ghost in the incomprehensible Godhead, as one with the Father and the Son, were called antichrist by *John*. There were many of these antichrists in his time. So all these made way for the coming of the great antichrist at Rome. Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, and so true is this which has been foretold concerning it, that we have his forerunners and harbingers. They have made their appearance. They are now on the spot. They are acting their various parts. They lie in wait to deceive. The poison of asps is under their lips. They are many. Their name is legion. They are so many antichrists. But I will go on to my next particular, and set before you more particularly,

3. Who are designed by these many antichrists. We may, and we must most undoubtedly, understand the heresies and the heretics of the then present day : for most assuredly, what most chiefly was then in vogue, must be conceived to be the subject the apostle kept in his eye. And as *Ebion* and *Cerinthus* were two arch heretics, they denying the humanity and divinity of the Son of God, these must undoubtedly be included.

Little children, it is the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last time. A most solemn and awful declaration. It is also very greatly to be feared as it was then, even so it is now : for if this was antichristian doctrine—to reject the doctrine of the Trinity, to renounce the Person and Godhead of Christ, and His salvation, to reject the Person of the Holy Ghost, to deny that He is a Person in God, and his office, work, and operations in regeneration, grace, and perseverance in the same ; if this was to oppose the true christian doc-

trine in the apostle's times, surely it must be the same now: and the very same blasphemy and error must be still contained in it. The heresies of the *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Sabellians*, *Pelagians*, *Arminians*, *Antinomians*, which abound in our day in this kingdom, are as truly, in their own nature, operation and design, full of the spirit of antichrist, as any of these were in the apostle's day. From the very beginning of the apostolic church there were these heresies. Some denied the Person, Divinity and Messiahship of Christ: this is very evident from the gospel of *John*, and from this his Epistle. Some contended for good works as the sole matter of our justification before God: against which, and whom, the apostle *Paul* writes his Epistles to the *Galatians*, *Romans*, and *Corinthians*. Some were *Antinomians*, against these the apostle *James* writes his Epistle. Some had corrupted the doctrine of grace: the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, is calculated to set right, and preserve the purity of the same. *Hymeneus* and *Philetus* corrupted the doctrine of the resurrection: they gave it out that it was already past. 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. There was the heresy of the *Nicolaitans*, and *Jezebel*, which tended to the encouragement of fleshly lusts. See Rev. ii. Heretics are false prophets and teachers, which Christ and his apostles foretold should come: they would and did forsake the truth themselves, and seduce others also into error. Among these in the apostolic church, were *Simon Magus*, *Ebion*, and *Cerinthus*, *Hymeneus*, and *Philetus*. It is said, *Simon Magus* corrupted the doctrine of the Trinity: who had, before his being baptized, given out that he was some great one; that is, that he was the Messiah: so he afterwards gave out that he was the Father in Judea, the Son in Samaria, and the Holy Ghost in the rest of the nations. The *Sabellian* heresy is said to have arisen from him. *Ebion* denied the humanity of Christ, and *Cerinthus* the divinity of Christ; these laid the foundation of these errors in succeeding ages. In about 235 years after Christ, the heresies of the *Gnostics*, *Ebionites*, and of *Basírides*, *Valentinus*, *Hermone*, and divers others prevailed. Towards 300 years after Christ, the *Sabellian*, *Samosatenian*, and other heresies prevailed. The *Donatists*, raised by *Novatus*, and *Novatian*, under pretence, that some compliers with idolatry, in time of persecution, were too easily admitted to the church. Under *Constantine*, the *Arian* heresy broke out: after which were the *Arians*, and the *half-Arians*, the *Macedonians*, who denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost, the heresies of the *Photinians*, who thought Christ a mere man, and the Holy Ghost no divine Person, with the *Apollinarists* who believed Christ's flesh consubstantial to Deity, and not formed of the substance of the Virgin, and that his Divine nature supplied the place of a soul; and the *Anthromorphites*, who imagined God to have a material body like their own, exceedingly troubled the church: after which *Pelagian*, *Nestorian*, and *Eutychian* heresies troubled the church. Out of all these the man of sin was formed. The Pope arose about 600 years after Christ. He is the great antichrist: the rest may be styled the many antichrists the apostle speaks of in our text: for though they all were not then in being, yet the essence of these heresies out of which they sprung in succeeding times then existed. The reformation from Popery was an unspeakable blessing: yet the church hath not been without her enemies. *Servetus*, *Socinus*, and others, make human reason their standard of trying revelation: they reject the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost: they deny

Christ's satisfaction for our sins : our justification in Him ; the covenant of works and grace : original sin : they maintain that perfection of holiness is attainable in this life. And they very greatly prevail at present : as do the *Arians*, the *Arminians*, and *Antinomians*. O how great must the devil's hatred of Christ and his gospel be ! He has done, and still does all he possibly can to corrupt it in every instance, and by every means. But to return to our text ; the apostle says to his beloved ones in Christ, *Little children, it is the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists*. And they are some of them in the churches, as well as some of them out of the churches : yet their distressing the churches is heart-aching. It is on that account I write concerning them : to warn you of them : to warn you against them. Have nothing to do with them : their words eat as doth a canker. They will propose to you a philosophical Christ, framed up and formed in their own imagination, instead of the Christ of God. They want to, and do with some, pass for the apostles of Christ. Some are so deceived by them, as to conceive of them that they are the angels of light. Their gifts deceive both themselves and others. The devil deludes them. They speak great swelling words : they have men's persons in admiration because of advantage. My beloved, you have heard of all this before it so visibly appeared as it now doth. It hath been declared to you from the best authority that antichrist shall come, and now we have awful and convincing evidence of the same : for look to the swarms of heresies and heretics amongst us ; what are they but so many antichrists ? They all set up for themselves ; yea, they do it that they may dethrone our Lord Jesus Christ. Look into the churches, and see how they have divided and scattered them. Behold what confusions they have been the causes of : you may well compare them, with what the Holy Ghost saith of them. It is from thence I myself know them ; and from the same, I warn you against them, and do declare them to you to be antichrist : and as sure as they appear, the great antichrist also will. Also what is now before us, is a most sure and a certain evidence of the time we are in—that the summer of the gospel is past—the autumn is come. Professors are dropping off, and leaving the true doctrine and worship of Christ, and will walk no more with us.

Something like this is the case with all the churches of Christ : they have their spring season : they have their summer season : they have their autumn season ; when like leaves in that season, so many professors will drop off, and walk no more with them : some on one account, some on another : some on account of the true genuine doctrine of Christ, which after a while they having no relish for it, determine they will hear it no longer : others because they cannot bear the communion of saints, and communion with them as saints ; it lays them under too much restraint ; therefore they give it up. Sometimes it is because they have embraced error, and esteem it above the Truth : sometimes it is out of carnal affection to such, as are enemies to the church to which they belong : and sometimes it is to shew their self-sufficiency. It proves more than any of these persons are aware of, that they are self-conceited ; high in their own esteem. They are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; having the form of godliness, but denying the power of God. It is no loss to any church, if such turn their backs on them : it is best it should be so, as it saves the church the trouble of removing from them.

When such things take place; it becomes saints to act according to the words of the apostle, "from such turn away." It is in my view, scarce worth while to ask them any questions, but leave them to the providence of God, and the free and open censure of all the churches of the saints. I come

4. To notice that the apostles, and others, knew by the abounding of errors, and heresies in the churches, that the last hour, or time, in the sense which hath been already expressed was up. *Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

The very great number of antichrists, with their various and several doctrines which they embraced, together with their end and design in them, were sufficient to prove to the apostles, that the period of the apostolic age was very near its close. *Little children, it is the last time.* The evidence of this is now before you. Old prophecies begin to have their fulfilment. In this age we have had heaven opened; our Lord Jesus Christ hath been received up into it. The Holy Ghost is descended from it. He hath wrought by us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. We have resounded within the space of 40 years, the sound of Jesus. We have proclaimed his Person, declared his salvation, and shewed forth his incomparable excellency. Millions have been brought to the knowledge of Him, who is life eternal to their souls. The work is now stopped. The gospel we perceive hath not that success which it has had. We perceive many high professors are fallen into some of the most abominable crimes. We know how, and what judgment we are to form and make of this. We perceive the doctrine of grace is corrupted—that many have turned and are daily turning the grace of God into lasciviousness; we are by all this fully convinced there will soon be a change. All is making way for the further accomplishment of our Lord's purposes and promises. We have been informed by Him, before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, false christs and false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. We know that event is near. That is it which the apostle *Paul* refers to, when he says, *The Lord is at hand.* Phil. iv. 5: and which the apostle *James* hath in his eye, when he saith, *The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* chap. v. 8: and the apostle *Peter* intends, when he says, *The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.* 1 Epis. iv. 7. We, says *John*, are all united in this apprehension of the subject, therefore my little children, I write to you on it, saying, we are in the last time, even in the last hour of it. As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, and if so there must be a way made for his coming, so even now, as an evident proof of his appearing, are there many antichrists, and by this we know that it is the last time. If the Lord was not disposed to separate between the precious and the vile, he would not permit those erroneous persons to break forth, and scatter their vile and pernicious doctrine as they do. They are laying the foundation for all, and every damnable heresy which shall ever distress, and trouble the true church of Christ down to the end of time. *Little children, it is the last time.* Times will be worse and worse. All sorts of sin, evils, and heresies will more and more prevail. You are not to be surprised at this, you have been informed of it, you have all the ministers of Christ, from time to time declaring this to you: so that you cannot be at a loss to know what all these present things will end in. You have heard that antichrist will

come : it is very evident it will be so. The present times are portentous. The harbingers of his coming are making their appearances. The antichrists of the day are his forerunners. We know, and you may also, by all these, that it is the last time. We may learn from what hath been delivered, to know, how it is only the old errors and heresies, let them be presented in what form they may, which the devil is so very fond of reviving. They are not new errors but old ones ; yet he reading his own new lectures on them, causes them to pass over and over, for new. Thus he beguiles the minds of sinners, who think they have received some new light which was never in the world before. This is all of it mistake : but the devil is well pleased that all erroneous persons should thus conceive of those schemes and doctrines which he encourages them to embrace. It is most truly awful to be left of the Lord, to fall into any error of judgment and doctrine : or into any way of will-worship. It is the very aim and greatest master-piece of hell, to corrupt the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Person of Christ ; because all the essentials of the everlasting gospel are founded thereon : and all the true worship of the Lord is wholly and entirely connected with the same. Beloved, let us attend unto this. For the great things of God, and the true knowledge of them are necessary, yea, they are absolutely necessary to the being and well-being of our souls. They do indeed contain our spiritual, and eternal life. If we are quickened by the Holy Ghost with spiritual life in our souls, then it is in the knowledge of these truths we live, and in the exercise of our spiritual minds on them is the life of our souls. We have the same truths set before us in the scriptures, concerning every article of our most holy faith, which the apostles set before the churches in their public ministry. If we have therefore the same antichrists to withstand, we have the same weapons of defence. May we be guarded on all sides by the Truth. May we be valiant for it, and in the defence of the same. May we contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. In so doing let us never neglect the Bible ; nor go to human authors. There is a sufficiency for us in that grand treasury. We can have no true ground for what we believe, but as it is founded there, and to be found therein. Let us also remember that such as are in the Truth, can never be more in it than they are. They may have more clear views and apprehensions of it. They may have more and increasing fellowship with the Persons in God, in further and deeper conceptions of the same. They may be more and more rooted, grounded, and settled therein. And all this, is in its place absolutely necessary. It is by error and heresies the devil creeps into churches. It is by the Truth, and abiding by it, and standing firm and fast in it, he is driven out of them. *Consider what I say ; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.* It is not long before it will be the last hour, or time with the great antichrist. Let us therefore be on our guard, and fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, and witness a good confession. May the Lord, if he please, bless and render profitable what hath been set before you. May it be to the praise of his glorious Name. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.
—1 JOHN ii. 19.

THE former verse contained a declaration, that there were at that period many antichrists; which was an evident sign the last state of the apostolic church was just closing. It was necessary this should be known and taken notice of; because whilst the fathers in Christ might be wholly out of danger from these heretics, and from heresies and errors, yet such as were not established in Christ might not be so: as the apostle therefore wrote to these, and had informed them what the times were, so he also informs them from whence these persons came. They originated in the church: they went out of it: they were therefore the more dangerous; seeing they knew the better how to sow their pernicious errors. They were the more to be avoided, in their persons, as well as their doctrines also. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* Their renouncing the faith and fellowship of the gospel, after they have made plausible professions and appearances of being believers in Christ, their separating themselves from our church communion, that they might broach their infamous errors, and spread the same, with their infamous practices far and wide, fully manifest they were never true believers, but downright hypocrites and false-hearted professors. These persons I would guard you against. Your being preserved from them, and their pernicious ways, and errors, will be good evidence for you, that ye are on the Lord's side, and belong to Him. As this distinguishes you from them, so it makes you very precious unto us. It is therefore that I address you on this subject. To make the present text as clear as I can, I will cast the division of it into the following particulars.

1. These antichrists mentioned in the former verse, went out from the true church of Christ. And the reason they went out of it, was because they were not of it. *They went out from us, but they were not of us.*

2. This is confirmed by the apostle, who says; *For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.*

3. The reason why these antichrists went out of the church. It was that they might be made manifest, that they did not belong to the church of Christ, let them make their boast of the same as they might. *But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* I am

1. To shew, these antichrists mentioned in the former verse, went out from the true church of Christ: and the reason they went out of it

because they were not of it. *They went out from us, but they are not of us.*

Where could these apostates go out from but the church? If they had not been in it they could not have gone out from it. The church which went out of was the true church of Christ, founded by the apostles themselves on Christ, the foundation and chief corner-stone; in which the true and everlasting gospel was preached; the ordinances of Christ, baptism and the Lord's Supper kept as purely as Christ himself had commanded them; the whole church plan, form, order, laws and government properly enforced and attended unto also. And these persons had confessed their faith in all the essential truths of the gospel. They had been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. They had been regular members of churches. They had been admitted to the Table of the Lord. It may be, they had been admitted to fill up some office in the service of God: such as that of Deaconship, or of being Preachers of the Gospel. Yet their ambitious spirits were such, they could not be content to let them must bring in another gospel, contrary to what the apostles had preached: and in the virulency of their spirits were set most desperately to spreading the same. They therefore break through all the sacred ties and obligations of church fellowship, and went off from the various churches to which they belonged; pretending to have greater light into the truth, and what they called the Person of Christ, and grace, than the apostles themselves. *They went out from us.* The word *us* is a distinguishing one in the New Testament. It was made use of on the first formation of an instituted church, which took place immediately after the ascension of Christ into heaven. See Acts i. 17. 21, 22. *Peter* speaking of *Judas Iscariot* to the church then present, says, "he was numbered with us." And of the whole church as included in the word *us* he says, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us from the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." We have this word *us* made use of by the apostles, in their writings, to express the church of Christ by. As for instance: "Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Our apostle uses the word *us* in the same sense here. These persons whom he here styles schismatics, had been in the church. They went out of it, without leave; they took themselves off abruptly; neither gave they their reasons for so doing; they would not acknowledge themselves under any sort of obligation to the churches to whom they belonged. Thus they openly and publicly renounced all submission to Christ's Lordship and Kingly authority over his house, the church. Thus they went out as traitors: first with a treacherous design against Christ, and the church which he had purchased with his own blood; to corrupt his worship; to renounce the truth; to blaspheme the same; to draw away from the true churches of Christ, followers after them. *They went out from us.* It was most shameful in them so to do. It must have been in some of them, the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is styled in this Epistle, *the sin unto death*. They turned their back on Christ, his gospel, his ordinances, his apostles, his churches, and every thing belonging unto him, and were led out of their own errors, heresies, whims, and fancies, a Christ,

and gospel for themselves. The apostle assigns the reason why they went out from the churches in the way and manner they did—it was because they were not of one heart and soul with the churches in the truth. *They went out from us, because they were not of us.* The true church of Christ is holiness to the Lord. Her real members are born of God. They have the Spirit of God. They know Christ. They live Christ. They are baptized into one and the same Spirit. They love the Truth. They abhor all and every thing which detracts from it. No marvel that these antichrists should go out, and depart from the true churches of Christ, and set up for themselves. They were not one with them, whilst they remained amongst them; therefore they only waited for an opportunity, and then they left them entirely. Thus it was in the apostle *John's* time, a little before the close of the apostolic age. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* *They went out from us, but they were not of us.* This is the account the apostle gives of them. As it was then, so it has been ever since. All the heresies which have tormented the churches of Christ ever since, and down even to our present times, have originated from persons who have been in the churches; who have departed from the churches. From such as have made schisms and divisions in the churches; and when any old error is newly revived, it in general springs from such persons as are disaffected to the true churches of Jesus Christ. It may be you will expect me to give you to understand what I mean by a church of Christ. Most certainly I understand a company of saints giving themselves up to the Lord, and to each other by the will of God, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, agreeable to the rules laid down in the written word. I do not look on all the congregations of saints, to be worthy of the title of the churches of Christ. The church of *England* is not the church of Christ, yet many who belong to the church of Christ are in it. Many denominations amongst us, who are sound in the articles of Truth, so far as they respect salvation, yet I should not look on them as justly claiming the titles of the churches of Christ; and that for this reason, because they are not framed according to the plan and model of the New Testament account of the same. The greatest reformation of churches, which ever took place, since the reformation from popery, was in *Oliver Cromwell's* days. *Dr. Owen, Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Chauncey,* and others give the best account of the formation, plan, order, members, and officers, laws, rules, government, and discipline of the churches of Christ, which I can refer you to: except it be in the writings of *Dr. Gill*, who has made some improvement in the same. The churches styled independent churches, and those styled the baptized churches of Jesus Christ, are properly churches. There is no difference between these, but in the ordinance of Baptism. These have a defence in themselves, of themselves, and from themselves, to defend their members from error and heresy. Not but that many in these are weary of Christ's yoke, and often find ways and means to cast it off: and at times, error and heresies spring up amongst them: and it must be so, according to the purpose and sovereign will of God. So says the apostle to the *Corinthian* church. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." 1 *Epis. xi. 19.* There were in that church, many who profaned the Lord's Supper, and polluted

it; some who denied the resurrection of the dead; yet the church at *Corinth* being properly organized according to our Lord's institution, remained a true church, though all the members of it, were not one with the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the gospel remains immutable in its truths, doctrines, and grace, notwithstanding *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, have put the same away from them, and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. It is an honour to belong to a true church of Christ. It is to be lamented any should be admitted into it, without having a clear and scriptural knowledge of it: for when they profess, and give themselves up to walk with a church, it is very dangerous to depart from that church, unless any immorality, or heresy spring up, and is connived at by the majority of members. Or, unless a member has good reason to believe he should increase with the increase of God, more, by removing his communion to another church. In the present day, there is very little conscience made of these things. But whoever observe it, will see, it is no honour to remove from one church to another: nor is it a blessing to any church to receive any disaffected member into their communion. It is always best when the church in its members, is gathered into its own holy fellowship, by the ministration of the same minister of the gospel. Then they uniting in the same faith, the obligations they subject themselves unto, as the yoke, and by the divine authority of Christ, will have a very blessed effect, and lasting effect on them. It is very grievous to the churches of the saints, when they have to say of such and such, as are immoral and erroneous, *They went out from us, but they were not of us*. In the general, the Lord sets his mark upon them, as those he is grievously displeased with. But I drop this, and proceed to my next particular: which is,

2. To shew how the apostle confirms his assertion. He had said, *They went out from us, but they were not of us*. He gives this reason of their going out from them—They did not belong to them. Though they were for a season numbered with them, yet they were never of them, or of their number; if they had, they would have most certainly remained with them: this is his argument. *For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*.

How solemn! how awful! These antichrists came out of the apostolical church of Jesus. They had been in it. Their names had been registered in their church book. They had been church members with the best of saints: yet all this did not preserve them from the foulest apostacy. They had heard, and professed to have received, and believed the very same doctrine the apostles preached: yet this did not keep them stedfast in the faith. They were carried away with lust and lasciviousness. This led them to corrupt the doctrine of God's free grace: to suit it to encourage their own corrupt affections: and from hence to proceed to set forth such a different Christ, and such a different gospel, and such a different spirit, as eclipsed the whole glory of that Christ, and gospel which was preached and declared by the apostles themselves. If these wretches had not for a season been under the profession of Christ, and in the church, amongst his people, they could not have acted as they did. They could not so completely have corrupted the gospel, if they had not had the notional scheme of the same in their minds. It answered their end for a season to remain in the churches to whom they had given in their names. It suited them to leave these

churches at such seasons; when they could, to distil their pernicious influences, as they thought and hoped, it would gain converts to them. Then they went out from the apostles and churches of the saints, because *they were not of us*, says John; *for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*. For Christ is yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever: so are the truths and doctrines which have respect unto Him, and in and by which He is revealed unto, and set before his church: and which his saints have such evidence of in themselves, that one for them all, says, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. These heretics left the churches, because they were not of them; only nominally. They were not the elect of God. They were reprobates. Their going out of the churches, and perverting the truth as it is in Jesus, was a most convincing evidence of this. They might, and undoubtedly did, boast of superior light to all others in the doctrines of grace. They were slaves to their own lusts. They were covetous. They were greedy of reward. They were full of gainsaying. *Jude* describes them as *clouds without water, carried about of winds. As trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots*. He likens them to *raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. To wandering stars. To whom*, says he, *is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*. The account is enough to make us tremble. It is evident these could never belong to Christ. And yet if they had not been professors of Christ, and for a season in the visible churches of Christ, they could never have come out of them. And had they been one in mind and spirit with the real churches of Christ, they would not have left them: but they were not. *For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*. They would have accounted it their glory and honour so to have done. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*. The pernicious heresies of the present times, are Socinianism, Arianism, Arminianism, and Antinomianism: of the latter the most corrupt reviver of it, was one *James Relly*, who had been a preacher in *Mr. George Whitfield's* connexion. His doctrine from his writings is stated to be this—that Christ took the whole humanity into union; so that He is all mankind, and all mankind is Jesus Christ—that all are saved by virtue of union with Him—that they are all so saved in Him, and has so put away all their sin, that there is no sin in them, nor in any thing they do—that Christ's birth is our new birth, and all were born again in Christ, when he was born for us. According to him, some are elected to know the Truth; others are not: such are delivered thereby from all fears of sin and hell: others are not: they die fearing they shall be cast into hell; but there is no hell for them, for Christ is the head of every man, and every man is saved in Jesus Christ. This man lived according to his wretched notions, and died in the same. He never had any great number of followers; for as one once said to me, it is too gross for any to receive, except such pro-

fessors, as never found any thing in all their profession, having never attained unto the true knowledge of Christ; for the saints of God cannot meddle with it: and it is too profane for those we call the outward people: yet the works of this man are by some very highly admired. I confess I look on them very dangerous; nor would I, for ten thousand worlds venture to look into, or meddle with them. I should be for crying out, shame on such as do. All heretics come out of the church: most of them have been preachers and teachers in it: they are raised up by Satan, first to disturb the peace of the church, and next to pollute and defile it with their abominable falsehood. The words of the apostle are very suitable here. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. But I will go on, and proceed to my last particular, which is

3. To shew the reason, why these antichrists went out of the church. It was that they might be made manifest, that they did not belong to the church of Christ, let them make their boast of the same as they might. *But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* So says the apostle. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

This was their end for their going out, but it was the Lord's end in thrusting them out, and it might be, some of these might have been thrust out by apostolic, and also by church authority. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: Knowing, that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself;" so speaks the apostle to *Titus*, ch. iii. 10, 11. The same apostle speaking of *Hymeneus and Alexander*, whose horrible errors and sins laid him under the necessity of exercising his apostolical authority to cast them out of the visible church, he says, "Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." 1 Tim. i. 20: so it might have been the case with some of these. However this might, or might not be, yet so it was they went out from the true churches. They quitted the fellowship of the saints. They could not bear their testimony for Christ; nor like any longer to be with, or amongst them. In the holy and secret mystery of the Lord's providence, it was evidenced they were not the Lord's beloved ones. It was hereby made manifest they were not of the church. They were at best but external members. They had no being, nor root in Christ. They were but external branches, even when they made the most flourishing appearance. The Lord Jesus Christ therefore, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, willed to make this full evidence, and give this convincing evidence of it to themselves and others, that they were never in any true sense one with his church and people: and the apostle says what he here does on this subject, that the churches of the saints, and the saints in those churches, might not be too much distressed, at what they saw, and heard, concerning the apostacy, horrible doctrines, blasphemies, and immoralities of these persons. Nothing but the worst of crimes were to be looked for from them. It is, it hath been, and God will have it, so—all that is in the heart of fallen man shall be discovered: not all in one individual;

that cannot be, nor can all sort of sinfulness existing in the mind be drawn forth, but as various seasons, cases, circumstances, temptations, make way for the same. No one can say what sin is; we can say what the act of sin is: it is the transgression of the law. But this is only expressive of the act; not of the exceeding sinfulness and demerit of it. Some sin against conscience. Others immediately against God's holiness and purity expressed in the law. Those persons before us, sinned most immediately against the light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God; so that their sin was immediately against the Holy Ghost: of which I intend to speak, when I get to verse 8th of the next chapter, as it will there come in very suitably. Here I conceive it would be altogether immature; I only mention this here, to the intent you may be looking for, and expecting it, in its proper place. At present I would observe, some of the greatest sins are committed under the most pure preaching of the gospel, and the most spiritual administration of the ordinances. It was so in the cases before us. These very persons were evidences of the truth of this. None can be supposed to have had clearer light externally into doctrine and worship, into order and discipline than these had; yet none ever sinned more willingly, perversely, and obstinately; and this, by turning the whole into an occasion of licentiousness. This they are charged with by *Jude*, who would not, we may be sure overcharge them: so they are by the apostle *Peter*, who says, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them, than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Read the whole chapter, and the Epistle of *Jude*, and you will find them to be the very same persons of whom our apostle says, *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* And if they were the same, we may then most assuredly say, from the apostles, *Peter* and *Jude*, that they were the greatest sinners which ever existed out of Hell. It was by their departure from the true churches, and by their errors, heresies, and sins into which they fell, they were manifested to be what they were. In the day in which we live, we have had many preachers, who have shone forth in public view, as blazing stars and comets, who have professed superior light, zeal, and usefulness to all others; who have been puffed off; had their own cant phrases. Such as saying of some of their great admirers, They see the Spirit in such and such sentences, in which they have chosen to express themselves. They have very many of them, fallen foully; scandalously. Yea, most shamefully, and abominably: and all by lust; yet all this would not prevent such wretches from preaching, were it not that the law prevents them. Sirs, this is notorious matter of fact: it cannot be denied. What shall we say, or think of such? I know I think, and cannot but pronounce, they are of their father the devil: yet we have persons professing godliness who will stand up for them—that they are powerful preachers—that

they are preachers of the gospel—that they are clearer and deeper in the truth than others are—that it is on account of their excellency of knowledge in the mysteries of Christ, they are persecuted. Sirs, such excuses for such notorious sinners, are an awful sign of what our times are. Let us by no means have any thing to do with licentious preachers, and teachers. It is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. I count it to be a defilement to mention the names of such. I fear there is more licentiousness stalking up and down the professing religious world than any of us are aware of. May the Lord preserve us from it. It is by these most holy and righteous dispensations of the Lord, that he is pleased to separate between the precious and the vile. As it was in *John's* time, even so it is now. They never belonged to the true church of Christ; so it need not stumble or distress us, as if such were instances of falling from grace. No; such were never partakers of the grace of God. They professed something which they called grace; but they never knew any more of it, than the sound. Let us therefore rejoice when such are most justly exposed. Let us comfort ourselves with these words before us. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* There is a greater discrimination made by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, than we can, or ever shall be able to conceive and apprehend. It is to some the savour of life, it is to others the savour of death; and all by divine and immutable appointment: by the which man and man is so discovered as it concerns the Lord's purposes towards them, as is most truly solemn and awful. One is called under the preaching of the gospel, and another left. Not only so; but at times, under one and the same word, one is won to the obedience of Christ, another is led to blaspheme: so different are the effects which the revelation of God's will produceth in the minds of such as are hearers of it. Hereby that solemn word of truth is realized in us poor worms of the earth, which is quoted by the apostle, as delivered by the Lord, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory? Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Rom. ix. 18—24. These are most important and very solemn questions, in which great truths are implied and contained: and when they enter into our minds, and their weight, importance, and authority rest upon our hearts, they empty us of all dependence on ourselves; and we clearly see, that he that glorieth must glory in the Lord. If these things are so, let us know and remember, the church of Christ will be preserved and continued to the end of time, and the gates, that is, the powers of hell, shall never finally prevail against it. Let who, or whatsoever may arise, and even though it may

overthrow the faith of some, yet we may say, and it becomes us to say with the apostle (when all they who were in Asia were turned away from him), "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. ii. 19. It well becomes us so to do—to depart from all doctrinal and practical iniquity. I can never believe men to be sound in the faith and truths of the gospel who live in any known sin. I therefore suspect the judgment of many, who insist on it, that men may be sound in the faith, who do not adorn it in their lives and conversations. I am for my own self fully persuaded, we can live no one single truth of the gospel over in our minds any farther than we know it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. And so far as we live any one single truth of Christ's gospel, so far we shall live down sin, and live above, by living Christ, and living on Him. I now leave what hath been delivered to your consideration, and for the Lord's blessing, so far as seemeth good unto Him. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.—
I JOHN II. 20.

THESE words come in as a divine cordial, to relieve and refresh the mind of those saints to whom the apostle wrote. They wanted the same. He told them seducers from the faith were many—That their grand design was if possible to overthrow the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel—That it was a prelude to a general and almost an universal departure from the faith—That it would most assuredly issue in the appearance of the man of sin, the son of perdition, the great antichrist, who should be revealed; whom the Lord would consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming. The coming of the great antichrist, in distinction from these antichrists he is now speaking of, would be "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. ii. 8—10. I might here request you to observe how the Lord God visits and punishes for one sin by giving up to another. Because his Truth was rejected, he gave such up to be deceived by Popery. The doctrine of it abounds at this time in the United Kingdom. The worship of it is awfully increasing throughout it. Professors of Christ, be on your guard. Beware of it. The apostle says, concerning such as "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." v. 11, 12.

You may be sure these words do not stand here for nothing. There is no blank in the Book of God: they are for use. Little as we may at this time think of the spread of Popery, there are some who will feel it. Many will be carried by it off the true doctrine of Christ, and his most holy and sacred institutions; and none but the elect, whose names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, will escape, more or less, the contagion. These will; as those to whom our apostle wrote. They remained in the churches where they were. They abode and stood fast in every article of their most holy faith. They held Christ their Head. They kept his ordinances pure and undefiled. Their church fellowship was the communion of saints. They cleaved to the Lord Jesus Christ with full purpose of heart; and so they would hereby be kept from the deceits of those seducers, of whom the apostle had been speaking, whom he had styled antichrists; and would be preserved and continued in faith and holiness to the very last moment of their lives. The reason for which, he gives them in these words. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* As the word *But* knits the text with the former verses, I will therefore cite them, that you may see their genuine connection, the force of them more strongly operate, and the glory of them the more fully appear. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* It is therefore ye were preserved: it is therefore ye are preserved: it is therefore ye will be preserved unto the end. Thus you have the true and full reason why the one went out, and the other remained. Those who went out, never knew the Truth as it was in Jesus. They were not taught by the Spirit. They had not the Unction from the Holy One. Those who remained in and with the churches of the saints at this time when errors, heresies, and such multitudes of antichrists abounded, had received that Unction, or Anointing which teacheth all things. They were in the possession of the same. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* It is therefore ye are what ye are. It is by this ye are distinguished, and I myself know you to be what you are—the *Beloved of God*. Your having the true knowledge of Christ is to me clear, full, and satisfactory testimony of the same. The Holy Ghost hath revealed Christ in you, and unto you. He hath furnished you with spiritual and supernatural graces and gifts from Himself. He has communicated to your spiritual and renewed minds, the knowledge of all spiritual truths necessary to salvation: and this is your guard and protection from these seducers which are gone out of the churches, and lie in wait to deceive: but you cannot be deceived by them for the reason which I have given you. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* I will cast my text into the following division.

1. I will speak of the *Holy One* here mentioned.
2. Of the *Unction* which these saints had received from the *Holy One*. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One.* They had received the Unction, and it still abode with, and rested on them.

3. The blessing and benefit of this. *And ye know all things.* *The Holy One* is Christ. The *Unction* is the Holy Ghost. The blessing and benefit of this is, the knowledge of all things. In what sense we are to conceive and apprehend this, will be declared, as the whole subject will be pursued in the order here laid down, so far as the Lord shall be most graciously pleased to influence, teach, and direct my mind in the same. I am

1. To speak of the *Holy One* here mentioned. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One.*

Christ is the Person here designed. And He is Holy. He is essentially so. He is the Holy One of Israel. He only is Holy. His Nature is Holy. He is independently so. He is the fountain of holiness. It is from Him, elect saints, angels and men, both in heaven, and earth, receive all their holiness. Christ is God's Holy One. He is the most Holy. See Dan. ix. 24. He is worshipped by the seraphims in *Isaiah's* vision, with a thrice holy: he says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." chap. vi. 1—3. The apostle *John* says in his gospel, referring to this vision, and quoting the 9th and 10th verses of this very chapter, he applying the same to Christ, says, "These things said *Esaias*, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. See chap. xii. 41. This most Holy One saith of Himself, and for Himself alone, "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." *Isai.* xlv. 6. Christ as one in the Godhead with the Father and the Spirit, is essentially, necessarily, and underivatively Holy. As God-Man, his holiness exceeds our uttermost conception, He being the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts. In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead personally. He is God manifested in the flesh. The Son of the living God, he in whom as such, by essential union with the Godhead dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, was pleased to take our nature into Personal union, so that He is God-Man in one Person. His glory, his holiness, his purity, his perfection as such, is incomprehensible. He is the Holy One of God. He was prefigured by *Aaron* the first high priest of the Jewish nation: who was a figure of Him, in his office, and work of putting away sin. The high priest was anointed with holy oil. He was the anointed one. He was the holy one of *Jehovah*. He had by the Lord's command and appointment, a golden plate with this inscription graven on it, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, or, the holy one of *Jehovah*, which was put on his forehead, which was always to be on him, when he appeared in the discharge of his office before the Lord. The command for it, reads thus. "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon *Aaron's* forehead, that *Aaron* may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." *Exod.* xxviii. 36—38. It is in the Person of

Christ, God-Man, the Father from everlasting loved the persons of all his elect. It was in Him they were chosen and accepted. It was in Him they were blessed. It is in Him they are saved. It is in Him they shine, and will for ever shine, holy, righteous, and without spot. It is the shine of the Father on them in the Person of Christ, God-Man, which will be their uttermost blessedness in heaven. *Aaron* is styled *God's holy one*; and *saint of the LORD*; Deut. xxxiii. 8, Psa. cvi. 16; and most assuredly it could not be but in reference to his being a type, a figure, a representative of our most precious Lord Jesus, who is the great High Priest of our profession; who has been girded and adorned in the robes of his own mediatorial holiness, righteousness, and sacrifice; who has offered Himself in the flames of his own love, a whole burnt sacrifice to the Father's law and justice; who hath put away sin. He hath brought in to the high court above, an everlasting righteousness. He is as our High Priest entered there. He hath been afresh anointed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. And he hath sent, and still continues to send down the Holy Ghost, the heavenly Unction, the holy oil and anointing, on his saints, church, people and ministers here below. This Jesus is our Holy One. All our holiness as truly as our righteousness, is in Him alone. What we style the new birth, is neither more nor less than a spiritual faculty, wrought in our minds by the Holy Ghost, whereby we are capacitated to receive and apprehend the Lord Jesus Christ, and our heavenly Father's love to us in Him. It is no part of our holiness in the sight of God. It is impossible God should behold us holy out of Christ: or, abstractedly from Christ. It is alone in Him we can be holy before the Lord. Yet almost all of those whom we look on as the Lord's, are disposed to overlook this. It is really strange it should be so with saints: yet so it is. They will give Christ the glory of his righteousness: yet to have no holiness but in Christ; to rest before the Lord, and to believe they are as truly holy in Him, as they are righteous, this is not pleasing unto them. Yet if they have not a perfect holiness in Him, and if he is not a perfection of holiness unto them, then they cannot be complete in Him. Beloved, our heavenly Father beholds his whole church in Christ. It is what he views them to be in Him, is matter for soul satisfaction. It is what he sees and beholds our persons to be in the Person of Christ, which feeds his vast mind with everlasting complacency: such as comes up to that exuberancy of joy, which the prophet expresseth, when he says, "The LORD delighteth in thee:" and again, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. iii. 17. It is as the Lord beholds our persons in the Person of Christ, God-Man, and views us in his holiness, purity, and righteousness, and as thus presented by our Representative and great High Priest, that he rejoices in us. And as we must look out of ourselves, for purity and righteousness, so we must for holiness also. Nor shall we ever know, or have the least true idea, of what holiness is, until we are favoured with a spiritual apprehension of our Lord's holiness. He is the Holy One to whom we must continually resort. If we are holy in God's sight, it must be founded alone on our interest and relation to Him: it must be wholly matter of grace: we cannot obtain it; neither can we add any thing to it. If it be ours, it must be on the footing of imputation. Christ's holiness will never be in us, any more

than his righteousness is : but we shall have an inward apprehension of it, to our everlasting benefit. Why should not this be sufficient ? Especially as God himself will never behold us, but in the Person of Christ, and in the representation he will make of us, no not in heaven, to the ages of eternity. Doubtless it was enough to satisfy the mind of those saints to whom the apostle is here writing : and to whom he says, *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* A most costly fragrant oil was commanded by the Lord, to be prepared and made, to anoint Aaron the high priest. It was to be poured on his head, and it ran down to the collar of his coat. Christ is called *Anointed*, or *Messiah* herefrom. He was anointed not with material oil, as Aaron was who prefigured him, but with the Holy Ghost who was typed forth by the oil with which he was anointed. The *Psalmist* speaking on the subject, and applying the same to our most precious Lord Jesus Christ, says, " All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." *Psa.* xlv. 8. As the high priest was anointed, so were his garments, the Tabernacle, Ark, Shew-Bread Table, the Altar, &c. So all the elect are anointed in Christ, by Christ, and from Christ. The holy Unction descends from him, down on all, on each, and every one of his members. " Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." So the apostle said in his gospel, and he says the same here. *Ye have an unction from the Holy One.* It was already bestowed upon them ; and that by the Holy One. They had received it from Him, who was their Holy One. This leads me to my next particular, which is this.

2. To speak of the *unction*, which these saints had received from the *Holy One*. They had received the Unction, and it still abode with, and rested upon them.

The word *Unction* is the same with *Anointing*. The Holy Ghost is called here *Unction*, or *Anointing*. He it is, who agreeable to his office in the everlasting covenant, anointed Christ to his office. And he also anoints all the elect, and bestows on them his graces, comforts, and gifts ; fitting and qualifying them for whatsoever work he calls them unto. *Peter* the apostle of Jesus Christ, speaking to *Cornelius* and his friends, says, " The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ : (he is Lord of all :) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached ; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power : who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with him." *Acts* x. 36—38.

Our Lord received his Name Anointed, or, *the Anointed One*, or *Christ*, from the Holy Ghost who was his Anointer, and who anointed Him. And we receive our title christians, which signifies anointed ones, from Him also. The word *Unction* must also signify *Teaching*, or there would not have been a proper suitability for the use of it here. This I conceive must most clearly appear by reading the whole of it. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* This was the fruit of divine teaching. This was agreeable to our Lord's promise. " Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth : for he shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak : and he will shew you things to come. He shall

glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 13, 14. This promise had been fully realized unto *John* and the rest of the apostles. The Holy Ghost had been sent down from heaven. The whole church had been partakers of the benefit: so that the apostle might well say, *Ye have an unction from the Holy One.*

According to the economy of the covenant established by the Three in Jehovah, agreeable to the good pleasure of their will, it is the office of the Holy Spirit, to quicken the souls of all the redeemed with spiritual life. He is their holy Teacher; who inspires their minds, and leads and guides them into all necessary and saving truth. He makes them wise unto salvation, by faith in Christ Jesus. These persons who are here addressed had been thus instructed and taught. The Holy Unction from Christ had been bestowed on them. They were possessed of it: whereby they knew the Truth which concerned the Person, love, work, salvation, and perfection of Christ, so as not to depart from the same. They had the true Unction. The true Anointer was in them. He was with them. He had taught them. He still continued with them. They were under his continual guidance, and teaching, that he might lead them into all Truth: into the whole Truth: and into nothing but the Truth. He being himself infallible, he was all-sufficient for this. The Lord Jesus Christ shed this Unction richly on his Church on the day of Pentecost, and it was still continued. It extended its most blessed and beneficial effects to all the saints; so that the apostle here speaks of it as an universal benefit. *Ye have received an Unction, and an Anointer from the Holy One.* The Holy Ghost was not again to be sent. He was sent once for all. He was not again to be given unto them; He was given, to live and abide in them, and with them for ever. He liveth and dwelleth in the saints, in that new and spiritual birth, or faculty which He produced in them in regeneration, and all their spiritual life of graces is from Him alone. He is the object of their faith, love, hope, as truly as the Father and the Son are. We are said to be "an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. ii. 22. The Holy One, as the High Priest in heaven, had poured out of his Spirit on his Church on earth; who is styled here *Unction*: to express his work within them, and upon them. He was the *Anointer*; who having anointed Christ the head of the whole election of grace, is the Anointer of them also: and as he anointed Christ afresh when he had finished his work, and was entered into glory, so the Holy One, Christ Jesus shed Him richly and abundantly on his Church, in the days of the apostles: so that the saints then had larger measures of gifts and graces bestowed on them than ever have been bestowed since. This Holy Unction is still bestowed, and will be to the very end of time: for thus it is written, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." Isai. lix. 19—21. The words are pronounced by Jehovah the Father. He is addressing the glorious Mediator. The promise is to Him, and to his seed. The word and Spirit are here joined together. The promise is, these shall never depart from Christ, and his Church, but

shall both remain with Him, and his Church for ever. And is not all this for the substance of it, just what Christ says himself in these words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." It is from the Divine Father, through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost is sent into the hearts of saints, to reveal Christ unto them—to take of the things of Christ, and to shew the same unto them—to shed abroad the love of the Father in their hearts. The apostle therefore speaks in strict connection with all this, when he says, *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* It was bestowed on them. It was enjoyed by them. The Holy Ghost maintained his dwelling in their minds. They enjoyed the blessings and benefits of the same. They had received Him. He still abode with them. He rested upon them. This was their blessedness. He was their Teacher, and they were most truly blessed to have, and enjoy him as such. Hence they were kept from errors and heresies. And this was but the fulfilment of Christ's own most true and faithful promise: who had said in the chapter quoted before, viz. John xiv. 15—17 what has been already cited, and also this now to be, from the 25th and 26th verses. "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Nothing could more effectually keep the saints from errors and heresies, than bringing to their remembrance the words of Christ: and none could do this effectually but the Spirit of Christ. It seems to me, as our apostle had a most blessed knowledge and enjoyment of Christ's love, and that too in a way of personal communion with Him, so none of all the apostles appear to have the word of Christ more richly dwelling in them, than he had. I conceive it might almost be affirmed, his whole Epistle is but an exposition of his most precious and invaluable gospel. It most assuredly is founded on it. And seems to be an exemplification of the life of Christ, in his people. I should like to view it in this light, as containing a full and correct portrait of real genuine christianity. The which can never be produced, but by the indwelling; teaching, light, inspiration, and grace of the Holy Ghost. And these saints having Him dwelling in them, it was not to be wondered at if they were christians in reality. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* Therefore it is ye are preserved from errors and heresies, from the many antichrists and false teachers which are now, at this time, so rife and present among you. And this brings me to my last particular, which is

3. The blessing and benefit of this divine Unction, which they had received from the Holy One. It was this—*And ye know all things.* How and in what sense we are to conceive this, I am now to declare. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* The Holy One is Christ. The Unction is the Holy Ghost. The blessing and benefit of this Unction bestowed by the Holy One on us, is this, *and ye know all things.*

I would have this title here given Christ, to be remembered by us : to the intent it might everlastingly endear Him to our souls ; and exalt Him most highly in our hearts. So I would also have the title here given the Holy Ghost remembered by us, that from it we might the more and more glorify Him. He it is, who consecrates our souls and bodies, as his temples to dwell in. He it is, who anoints our minds and affections, and enables us to worship the Father in the Son. He it is, who teaches us the true knowledge of the Father and Christ. It is by Him we have communion with them : yea, it is by Him alone. He is our Teacher. He is our Unction, or anointing oil. And he hath taught, and led his church into all Truth : so says our apostle in the text before us. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

I must first observe before I go on further, this was to an apostolic Church, and to such as should be entitled primitive christians. Therefore it ought to be remembered by us, there are some things in it, which were applicable to them, which are not to us. The church as framed by the apostles was pure and perfect : it being exactly according to the will of Christ which he made known unto them. The Holy Ghost had led the apostles into all truth. Their light and knowledge of it were perfect. There was no defect, nor deficiency in what they knew. They were infallible in the doctrine they delivered. What they had received they made known. It is all contained in the Epistles sent by some of them to the churches of the saints : so that with these views the apostle might well say to these to whom he wrote, *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* They did so in this sense. Every truth, doctrine, the ordinances and all Christ had appointed and commanded, had been fully, freely, correctly, and most blessedly stated by the apostles unto them. Yet even this they could know but in part : and this but in a gradual manner : yet inasmuch as the whole and every truth of the everlasting gospel had been set before them, and delivered unto them, and they had actually received by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, the true spiritual apprehensions of the same, they knew all things which concerned the salvation of their souls. They knew every truth, and article of their most holy faith. This was for the substance of it to know all. Therefore the apostle says, *But ye*, (hereby distinguishing them from others) *have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* I doubt not but some present, have the same divine Unction from the Holy One, which they had : but not in the same measure, nor degree ; and none of us can say, we know all things ; yet we know some things as truly and spiritually as they did ; but not so immediately as they, nor from the same means as they. I would not say, I know all things. I would not say of every thing I deliver, this is as true as God is true. The apostles could. I am not an ambassador for Christ. I have no immediate message or commission from Him ; nor do I believe any one man in the whole church of Christ, throughout the whole world hath. The ministers of our Lord Jesus Christ now, receive what they receive concerning the truths of the everlasting gospel, not immediately from Christ ; they receive it mediately : some from the preaching of men : some from the word of God : some from conversing with saints : some from the writings of such, who may be justly esteemed as fathers in Christ : some by meditation and prayer : and some by the Holy Spirit's divine light and instruction : so that we all receive light and knowledge

one from another. We may be unwilling to acknowledge it : yet this is the truth of it : therefore none of the ministers of Christ, see so clearly into all truth, as to be uniformly of one and the same judgment : for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to salvation ; without it we cannot speak of the Father's everlasting love to the persons of his Elect, whom he chose in Christ before the foundation of the world : nor of the Person of Christ, set up from everlasting, to be God-Man, the Head, Mediator, and Saviour of his church and people : nor of the Personality of the Holy Ghost, and his interest and concern with the Father and the Son in the everlasting covenant. Yet this great and fundamental truth, into the belief of which real believers in Christ, are baptized ; saints of the greatest degree, although they most cordially believe the truth of the doctrine, do not state it alike. *Mr. Romaine* and *Dr. Gill* whilst they most heartily believed in the Three in Jehovah, yet in their statement of the same they were quite different : why, beloved, had they been both infallibly taught by the Holy Ghost, they would not have differed one hair in expressing themselves on this most sublime subject ; yet they were both great men of God, and the Spirit of the living God dwelt in them. It might have been said of them, *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* What I have said, is with a design to shew that there is no man on the earth, in any of the churches of the saints, perfect in knowledge. The great apostle of the Gentiles, says of himself, and others, " For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." 1 Cor. xiii. 9. Surely we are not going to set up ourselves above him ; and yet it may be safely expressed, that we, who have received the *Unction from the Holy One, know all things.* But it may be asked, how, in what sense do we know all things ? All who are under the teachings of God's Holy Spirit, are by him, from the word of grace, taught all things necessary for their own personal, complete and everlasting salvation : and all things necessary for life and godliness. And this is all our Lord sees necessary for us to know ; and it contains in it a sufficiency for the maintenance of our spiritual life, faith, love, and hope in God. There is an infallibility in the word, and in the Holy Spirit's teaching ; yet He is not pleased to teach us so infallibly, as that we cannot make any mistake in what he hath taught us. Some things he is pleased to teach us, we can never forget, nor alter in our judgment of the same. The true knowledge concerning Christ, and the Father's love to us in Him, which we received into our mind from the word, by the unction of the Holy Ghost, this we can never forget. It is by and from the word, the Holy Ghost is pleased to create and form, true, real, spiritual, and supernatural ideas and conceptions, of the Person, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, in our renewed understandings. And it is from the Holy Ghost, who will dwell in us in heaven for ever, that we shall have such inward intuitive conceptions of our Lord, as will everlastingly, intensely, and immutably fix and centre us so in Him, and upon Him, as that we shall never have one thought to take us off from Him for evermore. If we know Christ, we know all things. There is an increase in the knowledge of Christ : and the word expresseth Him fully. It is well therefore for us to read and search it to this very end ; that we may know Him more fully, and to follow the apostle, who expresseth himself thus. " That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ;

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Phil. iii. 10, 11. The Lord follow with his own blessing, what hath been set before you, if it seem good in his sight: and to his name shall be the praise. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.—1 JOHN ii. 21.

THERE is in and throughout the whole of the sacred writings, as much modesty and decorum as can possibly be kept up, and expressed between the writers and those written unto. This is very observable in what is now before us. All which could be said of the antichrists in the apostle's day, had been spoken out: and all which could possibly be said to encourage and comfort saints, had also been expressed in these words. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Why then say any more? Why write to such? Could you, *John*, have the least suspicion of these? Why come you now forward with your present apology? Truly, says the apostle, I am ready with this; and I present it you. I have not written unto you, of whom I am fully persuaded, ye have an Unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things, every truth in the gospel, in all its weight and bearings, as if ye knew not the truth: this is not my reason for my writing to you. No; it is quite the reverse: I love you; it is therefore I addressed you with the title of *little children*: and I write unto you as persons, who know, believe, and are well acquainted in your own souls, with Christ, and every doctrine of his, which is calculated to preserve you from being injured by false teachers, or seduced by them. I write to you as unto those that know Christ, and esteem Him. And I write to you as persons of spiritual judgment in divine Truth, who are well informed in the Truths of God, and are well assured, that no error, heresy, fraud or deceit, such as these deceivers promote, can proceed from the gospel, or be consistent with it. I will here recite the past verses, from verse 18 to this, that you may see for yourselves the connection, and also the truth, as it regards the substance of what hath been expressed: next I will give you the general outline of all contained in this chapter; and then return to my text, and open and explain the same. The beginning of our present subject is expressed thus. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* I conceive you may by a very

general knowledge of scripture, and reading it with the greatest ease and simplicity take the whole contained in these verses into your mind. He has been warning them of antichristian preachers, errors, and heresies. He tells them the reason they were preserved from them—It was owing to the Unction they had received from the Holy One. He then gives them his reasons for writing unto them: it was not because they knew not the Truth; it was because they knew it: therefore they must know that no lie was of the Truth: it could not be of, or come from Christ, who is the Truth itself. He then goes on to the end of the chapter; seeing they acknowledged the doctrine of the divine Personality of the Father and the Son, he exhorts them to continue and abide in the same: this being the only, and best preservative, against all the antichrists then existing. To which he adds some blessed encouragements: as that they would in the true knowledge of and in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy all the blessings of eternal life. He gives them to understand, he had set before them all which was sufficient to establish them in the Truth, to comfort and fortify them against the antichrists of the then present day: he then leaves them in the hands, and unto the care of the Holy Ghost; and closes with exhorting them to abide in the true doctrine of Christ. Thus I have given you the substance of what remains in the chapter; which is to be unfolded, as we go on to sermonize the remaining verses. Our present one reads thus, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* As you approve of, and most cordially embrace Truth, so I would revive the same in your memories, and establish you more and more in the same. You must of and from yourselves, as such as know and believe the Truth, be fully persuaded in your minds, that no false doctrine can proceed from, or agree with the gospel of Truth, which you have embraced. The words contain a declaration, and affirmation, and the conclusion of it. Keeping this in my eye, I will cast my text into the following division.

1. I will consider the declaration. *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth.*

2. The reason, or affirmation why he wrote unto them: it was because they knew the Truth. *I write unto you because ye know it.*

3. The conclusion of which is this: ye must confess it is impossible that Truth and falsehood should agree: therefore no lie is of the Truth. Whatsoever is contradictory to the gospel of God our Saviour, cannot be true. *Ye know that no lie is of the truth. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* I am

1. To consider the apostle's declaration in the words before us. He says, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth.*

This is secretly intimating they knew the Truth; which he afterwards declares they had done, and so he did before, when he said, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." If they did, why write to them? Why not to others who knew it not? The reply is, none but those who know the Truth will ever think themselves concerned in what is written concerning it; therefore it can answer no good end: it is only to waste time so to do. Those who know the Truth are the persons who alone can value it: to them it is well, therefore, to write of the Truth, to the intent they may receive further light into it:

and hereby have further and more enlarged apprehensions of the same ; so as that thereby they may be furnished with true, clear, and proper arguments to defend themselves against the assaults of such as lie in wait to deceive. The apostle, when he here says, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth*, seems to make his apology unto them for his writing as he had done. It is not pleasing to saints to be suspected ; it is what they cannot bear. The apostle well knew this ; therefore he here aims to relieve their minds. He would by no means have them conceive they were not most blessedly acquainted with the gospel of the Lord and Saviour, in all its parts, and branches. He had said this before. They could not have received an Unction from the Holy One, and have known all things, and be ignorant of any one thing necessary to the being and well-being of their faith. They were not suspected by him, as if they would be led away by the errors and heresies of false teachers : yet as he could not but mention them, so he could not avoid warning against them. And these saints were the very persons to whom he could not but communicate his mind ; yet it was not because they knew not the Truth. By *Truth* here, I should understand Christ : who says of Himself, " I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John xiv. 6. He is emphatically *the Truth*. The whole truth of God is summed up in Him. These persons knew Him : and this from the teaching and revelation of the Holy Ghost : so that his Person was glorious in their view. His love was their heaven. His Name as ointment poured forth. His Salvation their one constant subject. He was their All, and the Holy Ghost had most highly exalted Him in their view and estimation. So that to write to them, as if they had not known Christ was by no means to be admitted of—not to write to them, this would have been to have neglected them ; yet to avoid all mistake, and keep all in its own bounds and order, he says, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth*. Thus he introduceth his present subject unto them in this very affectionate way, that he might win upon and engage their affections, and render his subject unto them the more engaging : we might gain a great advantage to ourselves, were we to observe this in our reading the Sacred Scriptures : it is by this the writers of the New Testament gain the hearts of those they address, and make way for the reception of their subjects, so as that they are received ere those they address are aware of the same : what could be more pleasant than this way of speaking ? *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it*. It is very like what the apostle says to the saints at Rome, " And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you, in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God." chap. xv. 14, 15. This is very similar to what is here before us ; but I will proceed to my next particular, which is,

2. To give the reason or affirmation why this our apostle wrote thus unto these saints. It was not because they knew not the truth, but because they knew it. *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it*.

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general knowledge of scripture, and reading it v
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you because ye know not the truth, but becaus
sometimes cross the mind, how can I address s
ject of communion with the Lord? how dare
thoughts and views of the Lord Jesus Christ t
far exceed me in their knowledge of Him, and
cern his kingdom? Sirs, it is for this very reas
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I am bold to say of you, and to say unto
You know Christ. He lives in you. His love
salvation is very precious to your mind. You
knowledge of Him, and in the enjoyment of Hi
walk with Him: to hold communion with Hi
know Him more fully; to enjoy Him more in
free accesses to Him. I know this must be the
“ye have an unction from the Holy One, an
Therefore I write unto you; being well persuad

powerfully influence your minds, and make you valiant
 And the more so, seeing it is so grossly insulted by the
 wretched errors will make you the more bold and
 use of God and Truth. This will redound to your
 our Lord says, Fear none of those things which
 ye may suffer for his name's sake. He says to
 one single individual. "Be thou faithful unto
 a crown of life." It is hereby your know-
 ed more and more evidently appear; it is,
 beloved, and all the Lord's people also,
 of the Person of Christ shine into our
 ave fellowship with Christ by means
 shed in the truths of his everlasting
 the Truth. Superficial views and
 lasting gospel, never established
 never will. It is far from being to
 the benefit of souls, to be neglecting the
 revealed and contained in the glorious gospel of
 concerning the Person, and salvation of our Lord
 There is a possibility of being taken off the knowledge of
 of the words Jesus Christ, more than we are aware of.
 it is the knowledge of Him who sustains these Titles
 Many hear of Christ, and profess Him, who are
 never received one good thought, nor spiritual appre-
 hensions into their minds: yet they will not be persuaded but
 more grace and holiness in their own minds, than such as
 vernal knowledge of Christ in their minds, and most
 vship with Him in their hearts. The matter of fact is this—
 owing to the Uction which teacheth all things, that the
 wholly, simply, and entirely dependant on Him. It is
 professor of Christ is distinguished from another: and such
 are always aiming after more enlarged and spiritual views of
 all those truths which are particularly connected with the
 is in Him. It is of real importance to have the gospel pro-
 l: the want of this is one of the great defects of our present
 of the Truth in the day in which we live: it is not that the
 preached, nor that some very essential and important points
 livered. No; nor is it that many things are not expressed
 calculated to free the mind from very many legal embarrass-
 distresses. I would very willingly acknowledge this; but the
 of our present dispensation of the word of truth lies in our
 he right statement of it. We generally give it according to
 our apprehensions of the same; whereas we should have
 lo with our own thoughts here: self should be wholly re-
 study should be to get the true statement of the whole
 ce, from the word of God. And if we have any ambition
 ourselves to be the Lord's true and real ministering ser-
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must be confined to the subject going before, concerning the antichrists which were then swarming, and to be met with in every direction. It was on this score he wrote now unto them, that they might carefully avoid them, most manfully withstand them, and vigorously oppose them. This they were well qualified for, seeing they had received an Unction from the Holy One, and they knew all things. It was a pleasure therefore to write unto them, as he did not want to begin with them, and preach and set before them a whole body of Divinity. No; they were well acquainted with Christ, and every truth in his most glorious gospel. They knew the truth and reality of his Person, and had received the knowledge of the same from the word of revelation, and by the Spirit of revelation into their hearts. It was therefore matter of real joy, pleasure, and holy satisfaction to write unto them, as it served to be of real and mutual advantage both to the apostle, and them also. It is so with us; let us be ministers, or believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—to speak, to preach, to write to such as know Christ, and understand his gospel, and have fellowship with Him in their own souls, He dwelling in their hearts by faith, is most truly blessed, and a real feast, and a spiritual ordinance to the ministers of Jesus Christ: so it is also an ordinance to those who are preached and written unto; because it revives and brings Christ and his truth to their recollection; by which means their memories are quickened, and their minds and affections are afresh drawn forth, and at times most divinely refreshed with the savour and fragrantcy of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that it is not because such and such know, enjoy, and have great, high, spiritual and personal communion with the Lord, they are therefore not to be written unto: it is because this is the case they are to be addressed: so says our apostle, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it.* Yet it will sometimes cross the mind, how can I address such and such on the subject of communion with the Lord? how dare I speak out, or write my thoughts and views of the Lord Jesus Christ to such and such, who so far exceed me in their knowledge of Him, and those things which concern his kingdom? Sirs, it is for this very reason you should: that they receiving what you say, it may make way for their communicating unto you what they know: and if their knowledge exceeds yours, it will lead you to see how far you have received the knowledge of Christ rightly and truly, and what your spiritual growth into Him is. It is by such means spirituality is increased: holiness in life and conversation promoted: saints are quickened, strengthened, and comforted, and our joys in the Lord abound. Surely our apostle conceived thus of it. He knew it was by such means spiritual communion and fellowship with saints was increased and promoted. He therefore says, *I write unto you because ye know the truth.*

I am bold to say of you, and to say unto you, ye are the Lord's. You know Christ. He lives in you. His love warms your hearts. His salvation is very precious to your mind. Your life is made up in the knowledge of Him, and in the enjoyment of Him. It is your delight to walk with Him: to hold communion with Him: to be following on to know Him more fully; to enjoy Him more intuitively, and have more free accesses to Him. I know this must be the case with you, because "ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Therefore I write unto you; being well persuaded the true knowledge of

Christ will most powerfully influence your minds, and make you valiant for the Truth. And the more so, seeing it is so grossly insulted by the antichrists. Their wretched errors will make you the more bold and courageous in the cause of God and Truth. This will redound to your honour and glory. Your Lord says, Fear none of those things which may befall you, or that ye may suffer for his name's sake. He says to you all, as if ye were but one single individual. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is hereby your knowledge of the Lord's Truth will more and more evidently appear; it is, and will be the case with us, Beloved, and all the Lord's people also, that the more the truth and glory of the Person of Christ shine into our minds, and our hearts, and we have fellowship with Christ by means thereof, the more we shall be established in the truths of his everlasting gospel, and be the more tenacious for the Truth. Superficial views and apprehensions of the truths of the everlasting gospel, never established any one individual in Christ yet; nor never will. It is far from being to the honour of Christ, or to the benefit of souls, to be neglecting the daily study of what is revealed and contained in the glorious gospel of the blessed God, concerning the Person, and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a possibility of being taken off the knowledge of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, by being more apprehensive of the term and sound of the words Jesus Christ, more than we are aware of. It is not the words, it is the knowledge of Him who sustains these Titles is life everlasting. Many hear of Christ, and profess Him, who are altogether strangers to Him. There are such under the ordinances of the gospel, who never received one good thought, nor spiritual apprehension of Christ into their minds: yet they will not be persuaded but that they have more grace and holiness in their own minds, than such as have the supernatural knowledge of Christ in their minds, and most blessed fellowship with Him in their hearts. The matter of fact is this—It is wholly owing to the Unction which teacheth all things, that the elect are brought to the true knowledge of Christ, and kept alive to Christ, and wholly, simply, and entirely dependant on Him. It is hereby one professor of Christ is distinguished from another: and such as have it, are always aiming after more enlarged and spiritual views of Christ, and all those truths which are particularly connected with the Truth as it is in Him. It is of real importance to have the gospel properly stated: the want of this is one of the great defects of our present ministration of the Truth in the day in which we live: it is not that the Truth is not preached, nor that some very essential and important points are not delivered. No; nor is it that many things are not expressed which are calculated to free the mind from very many legal embarrassments and distresses. I would very willingly acknowledge this; but the deficiency of our present dispensation of the word of truth lies in our not giving the right statement of it. We generally give it according to the best of our apprehensions of the same; whereas we should have nothing to do with our own thoughts here: self should be wholly rejected: our study should be to get the true statement of the whole system of grace, from the word of God. And if we have any ambition to distinguish ourselves to be the Lord's true and real ministering servants, it should be in our speaking correctly for Him: by the which I mean, to study the revelation he hath given us of Himself, in all the acts

of his will in Christ Jesus concerning us, as contained in his everlasting love to the persons of his Elect in Christ before the world was—in Election, Adoption, in the act of blessing us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, in the acceptation of our persons in the Person of Christ, God-Man, God's beloved. These are each of them distinct acts of the divine will, and as such they should be treated. They are all eternal and immutable acts of the divine will in Christ towards us, and concerning us. They spring from and owe their origin to the Father's absolute sovereignty. They are the effects of the good pleasure of his will. They are founded upon our relation to the Person of Christ, our eternal Head, in whom we were chosen, before all time. In whom we were by election. To whom we were united, and had life and grace in Him, before the foundation of the world. This does not any part of it belong to salvation, which is quite another subject: and it should be treated of as such: yet these subjects are too generally swallowed up in one; so that hereby there is no small diminution of the glory of each of these. Salvation is for the Elect, as sinners: they were not such when God chose them in Christ before all time; it was by Adam's fall they became so: they were not created so: if they had been they could not have been so by his fall: they were created in him pure and holy: he fell, and they fell from their creature purity and holiness in him. The covenant of the Three in Jehovah, was in consequence of the foresight of the fall. The fruit and effect of which, is the complete and everlasting recovery and salvation of the elect of Adam's posterity. This hath been wrought out, and completely accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him all his seed, are saved with an everlasting salvation: the whole of which is fully, freely, and clearly revealed in the scriptures; and this revelation constitutes the everlasting Gospel. It is the Holy Ghost who only can put life and efficacy into it, and make it the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Now we should give up our minds to the Lord the Spirit, for Him to give us the clear light and knowledge of this. We should never venture to say any thing on such subjects as these, but what we have clear warrant for; not from man; no; not from the best of men. Let it all be founded on a *Thus saith the LORD*: on his own word of revelation: then all will be right, and as it should be. One thing should be avoided by ministers, and such as are real believers, which is this—never to make their own attainments the rule to measure the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel by: this hath produced many errors and mistakes amongst preachers and hearers. It is the pleasure of the Lord to enligh'en the minds of some of his saints, with more high and glorious apprehensions of Truth than others. This is always accompanied with an experience and spiritual perception agreeable therewith, which makes a vast and visible distinction between the Lord's called people. There are seasons they do not rightly understand one the other. And younger saints will in consequence hereof, sometimes insult and sneer at older saints, merely because they exceed them. So amongst ministers themselves. They do sometimes insult such as do as truly love Christ, and as much aim at his glory, and the good of the church, as any of them can, merely because they are not favoured with the same clear and deep views and apprehensions of the mysteries of the everlasting gospel, as those others are. This should not be; it shews we do not love for the Truth's sake; if we did, we should value each other in proportion to our

receiving the Truth : and we should then honour each other, in agreement with the Truth, and having fellowship with each other in the same, we should most freely acknowledge every good in Christ Jesus, in each other. This was of a truth the case with the writer before us. He says, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* This brings me to my next particular, which is, to set forth before you,

3. The conclusion the apostle makes in our text : he says it is impossible truth and falsehood should agree ; he therefore says, no lie is of the truth. Whatsoever is contrary, and contradictory to the gospel of God our Saviour, cannot be true. *Ye know that no lie is of the Truth :* you cannot but be well assured of this ; *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* Therefore ye yourselves must be proper judges of what I am writing on : thus he appeals unto them.

As it needs no great proof that truth and falsehood can never agree and become one, or that no lie is of the truth, so here we have expressed the transcendent excellency of the everlasting gospel : there is no darkness in it : there is no lie in it : there is no error can arise out of it : there is no truth contrary to the Perfection of the Essential Nature of Godhead, or which is not perfectly equal with the Three Persons in the Self-existing Jehovah, and worthy of them. This is a point of vast importance, which it becomes us with all reverence to submit unto, and believe, whilst we can never fully understand and explain it ; it would be strange if we could : for surely if we cannot comprehend God, we cannot comprehend the reasons in God, why he willed so and so, either respecting one act, or another. We must let it be, as it cannot but be, swallowed up in divine sovereignty : and what is this divine sovereignty ? nothing but this, “ he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” The Book of God contains the revelation of this divine sovereignty : the end of all is the glory of the divine Persons in the one incomprehensible Nature, or Godhead. We are not called upon, in any part of the Word of God, to comprehend these truths : we have them set before us ; and it becomes us to receive them, because the Lord hath revealed them : we are to believe them, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken them. All revealed of Christ, and salvation, the Holy Spirit bears his witness to the truth thereof. He conveys the knowledge of it to our minds from the word : and what we receive therefrom, is pure unadulterated truth. If it be so, then no error being in it, no lie can spring from it ; which is what the apostle here says. *No lie is of the truth.* If we do not admit of this, we are not of one and the same mind with the apostle : neither are we with those to whom he wrote ; for he appeals to them on this very point ; saying, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* Here are two particulars he speaks to them of.

1st. He says *they knew the truth.* 2nd. He says they knew, *that no lie is of the truth.* If these things are so, how is it there were errors in the apostle's days ? and how is it some, if not all of the same exist in ours ? If there be no mistakes in the written word, how is this to be accounted for ? I answer, thus, there is nothing but light and truth in God's most holy word : every thing is therein stated as it exists in the immutable will of God. But we do not receive it wholly therefrom. Nor

are our minds so brought under the mighty power and influence of the same, as for the truths we receive from it to be stated in our understandings, as they are in the written word : no error, let it be of what sort it may, arises from the written word. No ; let God be true and every man a liar. God's truth, and that which he hath revealed of Himself, and the revelation of his grace, in the several articles of the same, are of equal truth with Him, who is the revealer thereof : now all error arises, not from the revelation of truth, but from the darkness, and sinfulness of the human mind, which under the influence of Satan, is so influential, as to dispose various persons so to act, that one puts a false gloss on this expression, and another on such a doctrine ; then they vent the same ; and under the deception of Satan's working on them, they fetch passages of holy scripture, and pervert them, so as to confirm their own errors thereby. This is the only means of error : it was by this means error was brought into the church ; it is by this means continued in the church ; nor will it ever be kept out of the church, but by closely adhering to the word of God, and in no wise departing therefrom. We must not put our own interpretations on the word of God ; we must seek to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in it ; we must no more depart from the form of sound words, in which the truths of the everlasting gospel are expressed, then we would from the Holy Spirit, who hath been pleased to give us the doctrine in such a form and mode of expression : neither must we be over curious about these. It is our cavilling at the truth ; and sometimes wanting to alter the mode of scripture expression, is the mean of our falling into error. It does not become any of us to be wise above what is written. Observe it when, and where you may, it will be always seen, those who abide most by scripture, and are kept simply in a dependance on the Holy Spirit, for his light into the mysteries of his grace, and his teaching his own mind and will, in the revelation he hath made, and given in the Scriptures of Truth, concerning the Father's love, and the Son's salvation, these are they who are best kept from all sorts and kind of errors. Some will be ready to say, there are none without some error. I confess whilst I am for disclaiming all perfection in the flesh, yet I do not altogether like such an assertion ; whilst at the same time I do not mean any man, in the church of God universally, knows the Truth of God in its utmost perfection and glory. It should be our study and prayer, our utmost aim and bent of our minds, to have the truths of God, received into our minds and stated in our understandings, exactly as they are in the word : for there they are expressed as they are in God himself : yet very few see such glory herein, as to animate them to seek to obtain this : too many are pleased with their own statements ; these too often spring from their own minds : they begin with what they think, and from thence they go to the word. This too much prevails ; hence it hath been said, and with a good deal of truth, that all our errors spring from, and are maintained by our good men, who though they may mean well, are very far from thinking and speaking well. Truth is one. It knows no change. It is immutable. It will never admit of error : yet it may be so preached, that abundance of error may be advanced at the same time, and the one swallowed with the other, that the one may be made use of, as the vehicle to convey the other. It is always persons who are, or have been under some sort of profession of truth, who are those who bring in errors, and heresies :

and it is by means of their going about to explain and settle some very momentous truths in their own way. It is very good, therefore, to remember these words before us, *no lie is of the truth*. No one truth of the gospel will ever alter: it will ever contain immutable truth in it. We may blend up error, and by altering the meaning of it, pass it off for truth, do injury to our own souls, and to the souls of others; yet this will never make error, truth; nor truth, error. No; says our apostle, it will not. It is not the many corrupters of truth, either in our times, or in any other times, could ever make the one, the other. I do think we in our present day have much to deplore, leaving out what may most justly be styled error—that few of those whom one would speak and think well of, preach, or aim to speak exactly and correctly with the word of God. They take a portion of the word for a text; this they do; yet they do not conceive they should consider themselves bound to open, and clear it from the context, and give us the meaning of the Holy Ghost in the same. Their whole design, if they have any end in view, is only to run over so fast as they may, something which may be swallowed, without the least need of any digestion, and there may be no more remembrance of it, except it be to say, it was very good: surely this can by no means be worthy of Christ, to bestow no better gifts on those he calls to ministers in the word and doctrine. The apostle tells us, our Lord's bestowment of his Spirit in his gifts and graces on the ordinary ministers of his word, was “for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Eph. iv. 12—15. There are a good many men, who are preachers in our day, whose preaching will never edify the church of God, nor build up believers on the Lord Jesus Christ; nor will it ever increase their knowledge of God, and communion with the Persons in God: and all which, in general, is said on their behalf is this—they preach Christ, and are good men. The former is not rightly said; the latter may be. They name Christ; but they do not preach Him: nor does it appear from all their prayers, which sometimes express and shew what they are towards the Lord, that they at present have received light sufficient from the word and Spirit, so to do. To preach, is a gift wholly from the Holy Ghost. He only can make a minister of the gospel. To preach Christ from the word, and set him forth as he is revealed therein, this must be wholly owing to the revelation of Christ to the mind of Him, who preaches Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself as the servant of the Church for Jesus's sake. There is too much stress laid on this, it is said of almost all the preachers, that they all preach Christ. It would be well if it were so; but supposing they do, and it were asked on whom do they build up the people? What answer must we return to this? could we in truth say any other than this?—upon themselves: for does not the whole centre in themselves? Is this right? Is it any thing like the apostle *Paul*? Let him speak; “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed

how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." 1 Cor. iii. 10—15. This should be closely attended unto by ministers. *John* says no lie, no error, nothing which cannot be found in and proved by the word of truth, as belonging to it, is the Truth. *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* May the Lord reflect his own light on our minds, in his word of truth, and on it, and us, that we may be kept from every evil and error on the right hand and on the left. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.—1 JOHN ii. 22, 23.

OUR apostle is such a lover of Christ, and of every truth which is in connection with Him, that he having said in the former verse, to the saints he wrote unto, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth*, puts this question; *Who is a liar?* to which he replies, *He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ.* Such was his zeal for Truth, he makes no scruple of calling such by this term, who would dare pronounce an untruth, let their profession and quality be what they might. We have had instances of this before—If any would venture to say they had fellowship with God, whilst they walked in darkness, he is bold to pronounce this to be a lie: if any professed they had no inward sinfulness nor sin in them, he declares this to be self-deception, and it is also wilful lying, and truth was not in such: if any professed himself to be in Christ, and lived carelessly and paid no regard to the Lord's commandments, he pronounces such an one a liar: he declares the truth of God is not in him. So here, he having appealed to those persons whom he wrote unto, concerning the truth of sound doctrine, and that no lie is of the Truth, he goes on to express more fully what he had in his eye, and would bring forward. Truth and a lie can never agree. They do, and will everlastingly differ from one the other. No lie is of the Truth. Christ is essential Truth. He is essentially true. His gospel is so, in, and throughout, every part thereof; in every word and doctrine of the same. Therefore no one thing, sentence, or, call it doctrine, if you will, which

differs one hair's breadth from that which the Lord hath delivered to his church, by his prophets and apostles, and pronounced Himself, can be any other than a lie. Our apostle therefore proposes this question, *Who is a liar?* He does not wait an answer: he gives it himself. He it is, says *John*, be he who he may, *that denieth that Jesus is the Christ*. If there be ever a seducer and an impostor in the world, this is he. This is one, and a chief one, who denies, either directly, or indirectly, and by consequence, that Jesus is the true and promised Messiah. To this the apostle adds, *he is antichrist*. So here he casts light on those whom he before styled many antichrists, and shews wherein the guilt and venom of their sin lay. I make no doubt but this was the sin against the Holy Ghost; which is styled the sin unto death; and would wish this to be kept in mind; and it would serve to help and clear up the subject, when we come to the particular sermon to treat on that sin; which some style the devil's sin.

He is antichrist, says *John*, *that denieth the Father and the Son*. He deserves that title. In so doing, he denies God the Father of Christ, by his denying Christ to be his Son. Such an one denies the Son directly, and in so doing and by consequence, he denies the Father, who testified of Christ by a voice from heaven, at his Baptism, Transfiguration, and before his Passion; as also by all the miracles which he did. It follows, therefore, whosoever denieth the Son, either in his Person, Godhead, Salvation, or Offices, hath not the doctrine of the Father's Personality, any more than he hath of the Son's. (*But*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*. Which last words are explanatory of the former: they are therefore in italics, as supplementary: yet I would by no means leave them out. Only that full justice may be done, I will here mention them, and mark them. (*But*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*. May the Lord the Holy Spirit so lead, influence and direct me, in opening this present text, as you may receive profit thereby. I think it will be needful to recite the full text, before I cast it into its division, and proposing of the same, unto you. As it is made up of question and answer, of affirmation and confirmation, and of explanation, you will the more distinctly perceive this, by the text being afresh pronounced to you. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*.

I will cast these words into the following division.

1. I will enquire into the question: *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* What is contained in this, I will endeavour to open, explain and set before you. It is a subject of vast importance; it may therefore be, that I may dwell the longer on it; you will therefore be patient and excuse the same.

2. The positive declaration of that *antichrist* which then troubled the church, and what his heresies were. *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*. In some Bibles the *an* is omitted; but it being in that before me, I retain it, as it by no means alters the scope of the text; it only designates the particular evil this antichrist was remarkable for. *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*: let it be in *John's* time, or at any other period. This is therefore to be noticed.

3. A solemn affirmation which concerns the church of Christ, and

which is of such importance that it ought to be always in remembrance; it is this. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:* to which is added in a supplement by way of explanation, (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.* This I shall include under this third particular.

Thus I have given you my whole plan, which now lies before me for execution. May the Lord guide me most blessedly through it, to the glory of his most holy Name. Amen. I am,

1. To enquire into this question. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* This is the question, which it may be necessary to explain, that we may the better understand both the apostle's question, and answer. All the holy apostles, and saints of the most high God, believed Jesus of Nazareth, who was born at Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king, at which time there went out a decree that all the world should be taxed, and who was crucified at Jerusalem, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, was the true and promised Messiah. They confessed Him as such: and had from God himself, incontestible proofs and evidences of his Messiahship, as also of his having been declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. What they knew of Him, and believed concerning Him, was inmutably true. The Being and Existence of Godhead was not more true. He was promised immediately on the fall, as the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. He was revealed in and throughout all the types, and prophecies, and by all the prophets during the Old Testament dispensation. The time of his open appearing was fixed, the very place of his birth declared, the miracles he should perform, yea, the whole of his life, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection and ascension, had been so fully recorded and testified of, there could be no resisting the evidence given in the scriptures, concerning the realization of all this in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, who was raised from the dead, was received up into glory, who had sent down the Holy Ghost, to proclaim him to be both Lord and Christ, under whose influence the apostles had wrought such miracles as proved Jesus to be both Lord and Christ. Now to deny this to be the true Messiah was to sin point blank against the Truth: and this was the peculiar and heinous sin and guilt the apostate unbelieving Jews fell most tremendously into, and were overwhelmed in. Towards the final close of the Jewish state, the great body of them insisted on it, Messiah had not been seen in the flesh—that he was not come: and some who had professed that He was come, began to deny this. To these, and of such as these, who were aiming to deny the appearance of Christ in the flesh, this apostle is here speaking; insisting on it they were liars. *Who is a liar?* this is the question: and the answer is, *he is a liar that denieth that Jesus is the Christ.* This was the greatest liar in the world. This was one indeed who was an adversary to Christ: a seducer, one who put himself in the room and stead of Christ: it was all this virtually. This was the antichrist which very particularly plagued the church of Christ in the apostle's time. He is therefore so particularly disposed to ask this question, to the intent he may the more particularly describe him. *Who is a liar?* who is antichrist? who is he, who is an adversary to Christ, who would depose Him were he capable of so doing, and set up himself in his room? who is he who would seduce

the people, and draw them off the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, the glorious Messiah, the Christ of God? I reply, says the apostle, this is he, that denieth that Jesus is the Christ—that most adorable One, *which was from the beginning, whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes*, whom our hands have handled as the Word of life, who hath been manifested in the flesh, and we have seen him in the flesh, and bear witness of the reality of his having been incarnate. We shew unto you in our testimony of Him, that he was that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. He that denieth this Jesus to be the very Christ of God, he is a liar; by so doing, he does what in him lieth to overturn the whole scriptures, and to make God himself to be a liar, who hath borne his testimony of Christ's being his true, coequal Son, when he by a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" and which, long before this, was pronounced by the Divine Father of him, in the ministry of the prophet *Isaiah*, "Behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." To deny that Jesus is the Christ of God, is the direct form and substance of antichrist: it paved the way for all the antichrists which followed after, and included in that sin of sins every error which could naturally exist in the minds of men, then, and throughout all succeeding generations; for on the truth of Christ's Person, and incarnation, the whole scheme of divine revelations rested—the doctrine of the Holy and incomprehensible Trinity—the everlasting love of the Three subsisting in the divine nature—the Person of Christ—the salvation of the elect by Him, all centered here. If he had not been in the flesh, if he were not true and very man, as truly as he was God, if he had not lived, and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, then salvation was not finished, neither were the scriptures fulfilled, of, and concerning Him; so that the whole was a mere nullity. But this not being the case, but all testified by the apostles, of, and concerning Him, being as true as God is true, then to deny this was to be a *liar*; so great an one, as that the devil himself could not conceive or invent what would form a greater, or be better pleased with any of his own servants and subjects, than for them to propagate such an untruth. Then here in the first place, I say this question and answer as I have spoken of them, in their first meaning, have to do with the first breakings out into a positive denial of the truth and reality of that Jesus Christ, who was preached by the apostles, to be the true Shiloh; the great Prophet that should come into the world, the Son of God, the Messiah, the glorious One, who was sent by the divine Father, according to divine transactions in the settlements of grace, to save his people from their sins. This was that antichrist which led millions it may be, into the commission of that damnable sin, in such a total, malicious, and horrible rejection of Christ, for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world, or in the world to come. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* The error thus began: but it did not end here. His most glorious incarnation and manifestation being denied, other heretics improved on this, so as to philosophize on the true doctrine of Christ, and so transfigured it, as to form up quite another Christ, than the apostles knew any thing of. So that *Ebion* and *Cerinthus* who were both alive in *John's* time, were as truly antichrists as those before mentioned. These were very active in opposing Christ's Godhead, and therein, and therewith the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. All the enemies

to the doctrine which the devil raised up then, and ever since, however they might differ in other respects, yet they were all one in this, that there was no such doctrine as that of the Trinity in Unity: well knowing, this glorious and immutable truth lay in the way, against their establishing their errors and heresies. The whole gospel is full of mysteries. There is a depth in gospel truth, the more we search into it, the more profound it appears. It may be said, the Person of Christ, and the mystery of the Trinity, are the greatest in the word of God. The mystery of Christ's Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial and Resurrection, is a great mystery; but that of the Trinity is greater, and without controversy the greatest of all, being the beginning and end of them all. Take away the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, with it you remove the Godhead and Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ, and weaken his salvation. To shake the article of faith in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, is to overturn the only way of salvation which God hath revealed in the scriptures. This is the very reason the devil sets himself so vigorously against it. One says, persons were not admitted to the ordinance of Baptism, till they made profession of their faith in the Holy Trinity: and it was the custom of the ancient church to instruct those who were to be baptized, for the space of forty days, in the doctrine of the Trinity. I conclude then, that all the ancient heretics in *John's* time, and succeeding ones, are most justly to be included in the antichrist *John* is here speaking of: and that they are all liars. One as truly as the other; though it may be, and doubtless was, and still is, in various ways. It is now mostly in a doctrinal way; corrupting the doctrine, and insisting on it as the only Truth, and thereby influencing the mind; whilst what the apostle speaks of, in the text, more principally consisted in denying the Messiah had been incarnate. He saying, *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* This was to give the lie to the Holy Trinity. One would have thought it impossible any should have thus sinned in the apostle's days, so soon after our Lord had been personally on earth, had we not proof of it from the holy scriptures. We need not wonder the apostle calls them liars to their face. He so describes their sin, in the lie which they were in, and in the which they persisted, that we cannot mistake them. They denied that Jesus is the Christ; that he who was lately crucified at Jerusalem, was in personal union with the Son of the living God, and was God over all, blessed for ever. Amen. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* I pronounce him to be a liar. He hath no part nor inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God. This cursed denial, how contrary to the blessed saints who saw Christ in his incarnate state. *Nathanael* whom *Dr. Lightfoot* will have to be the same with *Bartholomew*, he cried out on our Lord's having given him an evidence of his Omniscience and Omnipresence, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." John i. 49. "Then *Simon Peter* answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 68, 69. *Martha* the sister of *Lazarus*, saith unto him, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." John xi. 27. *Stephen*, who lived after our Lord's ascension, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened,

and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts vii. 5, 56. Saul of Tarsus heard Christ's voice, and saw his glory, since he was in heaven. Hence he is addressed by Ananias thus. "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and obey that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth." Acts xiii. 14. All which serves this most noble and positive assertion of John, that he was a liar, an antichrist indeed, who denied that Christ was come in the flesh. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?* There is no liar to be compared with him. He sins against truth, light, witness, and the clearest of all evidence. So that there is nothing but hatred and malice in his heart against the Messiah. There can be therefore no hope of him, either in this world, or in the world to come. This I conceive will most fully appear, when we come to the 7th and 8th verses of the ensuing chapter. I have mentioned this before, again and again; that when the sin against the Holy Ghost shall be stated, opened, and explained, the hints here, and elsewhere dropped may so occur as to make the same the more easily understood and comprehended by us all. I hope what hath been thus far delivered is clear and plain unto you, so as to give you clear insight into the words before us; and that you may so far understand the apostle's meaning, as to be profited thereby: this is all I aim at: beyond this I cannot go. I will therefore proceed to my next particular, which is this, viz.

2. To shew and take notice of this positive declaration of that antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son, which then troubled the church; and what his heresies were. The apostle says, *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* In some Bibles the *an* is omitted; but it being in that which is before me, I retain it, as it by no means alters the scope and design of the text; it only designates the particular evil this antichrist was remarkable for. *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*

The identical antichrist here spoken of, as hath been before suggested, most certainly is that one, who denied that Christ was come in the flesh: in so doing, he denied both the Father and the Son. Because the Father and the Son, being one in the same Incomprehensible Nature; yet the Father not manifesting himself in salvation but in his Son; therefore to deny Christ was come, this was to deny the Father's faithfulness in fulfilling his great promise, of raising up unto Israel a Saviour, even our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle therefore, pointing out one antichrist in particular, says, *He is an antichrist.* I ask, who is he? John replies, he is the one, be he otherwise who he may, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whilst in the first place, it will, and cannot but be, most readily granted, that one grand and particular antichrist in the apostle's day, and especially towards the close of the apostolic hour, was such as denied our Lord Jesus to be the true Messiah, and in so doing the Personality of the Father and the Son were in fact denied: yet, it is to be here observed, it being the proper place for notifying the same, it is a real matter of fact, that, together with the rejection of Christ, there followed the rejection of the doctrine of the Holy, blessed and incomprehensible Trinity. This took place amongst the Jews, and spread amongst the churches of the Gentiles by means of false teachers; so that there were various antichrists. As I

conceive all these, who were then, and in following ages, Anti-Trinitarians, are to be included. My reason for it is this. Whilst it must be acknowledged he speaks in the singular number, saying, *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* He then says farther: *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* I am inclined to think these two distinct parts of the text, are to be viewed, and treated of, separately and distinctly; the one as immediately belonging to the wretch, who denied the reality of Christ's incarnation; the other to such as had been, and were most desperately set upon transforming, and as much as in them lay, to destroy the doctrine of the Divine Personality in the Essence. It is hereby the antichrist, here spoken of, is marked out, and by this to be known. He was one that denied the Personality of the Father and the Son; this was one of the errors and heresies of the then present day, as hath been observed before, in two individual blasphemers, in that age, who rejected the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; for to deny his Divinity was to deny his Personality. If he was not, as Personally considered in the Self-Existing Essence, "the Son of the Father, in truth and love," there could be no acknowledgment of the Personality of the Father; so that hereby the doctrine, so essential to salvation must be given up; which was what this antichrist aimed at. It is therefore that the apostle says, *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*: he expressly noting out hereby, an antichrist.

Here I would likewise observe, that not only those in the days of the apostles, but also in succeeding ages, who perverted, and corrupted, the great truths of the Gospel, may be considered as included in the antichrist, which he is here speaking of: especially, and also positively such, as should be found enemies to the mysteries thereof, and corrupters, and depravers of the doctrine of the divine Personality of the Father and the Son; which he here so very particularly notices; saying, *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* All Anti-Trinitarians deny the distinction of Persons, in the unity of the Divine Essence. Satan made his assault on this great truth, almost immediately on the first revelation of Christ, and all along under the Patriarchal, and Levitical dispensation. Hence it was there were so many false gods. And also since the New Testament dispensation, he hath done what in him lay, and he still does, to corrupt the minds of men, to prevent them from receiving into their minds, from the sacred record of truth, right conceptions of this most inestimably precious, divine, and important doctrine. It is generally affirmed by the learned, that *Simon Magus*, and his followers, denied a Trinity of Persons, affirming the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are but divers names under various and divers operations. About 38 years after the ascension of Christ, *Ebion* and *Cerinthus* were very active in their opposition to the doctrine of Christ's Godhead. Against them our apostle wrote his Gospel by divine inspiration. Many others, from time to time, shewed themselves to be enemies to this sacred Truth. These, let them differ as they might in other things, yet they all agreed in this—that there was no such thing as a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of one and the same Incomprehensible Essence. Some of these denied the Deity of Christ. *Arius* denied the Son to be consubstantial and equal with the Father; this raised a terrible storm in the church; for though his doctrine was condemned as heresy, in the famous council of *Nice*, which was the first

general council, about the year 325; yet the flame increased, and much blood and persecution followed. And never was a more cruel and barbarous persecution while it lasted, which continued 36 years. It was at last extinguished, and the church again triumphed, and Truth prevailed against the gates of hell. Before this was quite over, *Posthinus*, about the year 350, denied the Deity of Christ, and his Pre-existence before his Nativity. *Macedonius* bishop of *Constantinople*, about the year 360, denied the Deity of the Holy Ghost. Others allowed only of a nominal Trinity. As *Praxeas* and *Hermogenes*. Anno 171. After them, *Noetus* in 240; but more especially *Sabellius* a disciple of his, about 260, was so active in spreading this heresy, that therefrom it was called *Sabellianism*. All these heresies were during the first four hundred years after Christ. There was what is to the present day, called *Tritheism*, a doctrine that not only makes the Godhead to consist of three Persons, but also three Gods. This error was also professed by some. There are who charge the *Hutchinsonians* with this: but they are most certainly clear from this heresy: they will insist on it, that the Names of Father, Son, and Spirit, are not Names of Nature, but of Office; yet they confess and acknowledge the Personalities in the Divine Nature, as the one Incomprehensible Jehovah. All these which have been before mentioned, in the course of four hundred years after our Lord, may be looked on as antichrists, and in their respective places, and their false doctrines, were enemies and adversaries to Christ: and a species of all these remain, under a variety of forms, down even to this present day. I will just repeat the text before us. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* "That man," says *Dr. Guyse*, "is to be looked upon, as one that directly opposes Christ, and deservedly bears the name of antichrist, who, notwithstanding all the strong, and full, and complicated evidence, given in the scriptures of truth, denies the Father as the *Father*, and the Son as the *Son*, and denies that God the Father has sent him into the world as the promised Messiah, and his beloved Son." And this is the antichrist, the apostle very particularly points at here: saying, *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* As I apprehend all sorts of Unitarians, and Anti-Trinitarians, are included and comprehended in these words, let it therefore be carefully attended to, by us. The Personality of the Father and also of the Son, are to be confessed and truly acknowledged, in their relative and distinct relations to each other, in the one, same, infinite, incomprehensible Essence. This should be confessed in clear and scriptural terms. We are not to enquire into this subject, as if we could comprehend the modus of distinction in the Essence. It only concerns us, to receive, and believe, the Personality of the Father, and the Son, which involves the distinct Personality of the Holy Ghost, as it is revealed in the sacred word. This brings me to my last particular, which I now enter upon;

3. To take notice of this most solemn affirmation; which concerns the church of Christ, and which is of such vast importance, as it always should be had in remembrance: it is this. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:* to which is added in a supplement, by way of explanation, (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.* This latter I shall include under the present head: only I here observe, respecting this last part of the verse, that, whilst some

object against it, because it is supplementary, the very excellent *Dr. Guyse* says, "The last part of this verse, which stands in different characters, is wanting in most *Greek* copies; but is supplied from some others of good credit, and from several *versions*; and is reasonably supposed to have been dropped, through carelessness, where it is left out, rather than foisted into the text by a wicked designed interpolation." I will here recite all the words, that the whole subject contained in them, may be the more fully seen and apprehended. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

The former part of these words have been opened and explained: what remains, is what concerns the denial of the Son, which the apostle speaks of in such general terms as these. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* The word *whosoever*, is vastly extensive, and comprehensive. Its latitude is so great, as that all who blaspheme the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, under what form soever, are included in it: and such as deny the divine and eternal Sonship of Christ, as the Son of the living God, with his Personality and coequality with the Father, are very particularly marked out in, and by it: so that, I conceive, we ought to receive these words as cautionary: in order to prevent our being too free and presumptuous in the statements we may receive, or give, concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; of his Personal relation to the Father, and how he is *the Son of the living God*—that He is *the only begotten Son of God. The Son of God.* In former times there were in our country, such as the great *Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Owen, Dr. Gill*, and others, who took on them to give their views from the scriptures, how these things were, and are so. Now I confess, I do not look on it, their testimonies of this ineffable subject ought to be laid aside, yet I do not conceive we are called upon to comprehend, or explicate these great points: we are called to receive the revealed account of the divine Personalities: to believe the scriptural revelation made of them; and to rest in the same; without asking why, and wherefore it is so. It is a matter of faith; not of sense. It is the fruit of divine revelation. It cannot be explored by reason. It is therefore best for us to rest in the same, as simply recorded in the word. This is my sincere view of the subject. To deny the Sonship of Christ is very dangerous. It makes way for to deny his Personality. To undermine it, this is to set aside the Personality of the Father: the one depends on the other. This is what the apostle says in the words before us. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* The denial, or not confessing the Person of the Son of God, as subsisting as distinct from the Father and the Spirit, in the Incomprehensible Essence,—this is not to confess the true faith of the everlasting gospel. It destroys the right order of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. It sets the Personality of the Father aside: for if there is no Son, there can be no Father: these relations depending one on the other; so that whosoever denieth the one, denieth the other also. Nor must the Person of Christ, as one in the Godhead, be explained away, by what he undertook to be, and became, in consequence of the everlasting covenant: but what He is in the Essence must be the foundation of what He is in His Person, and must be founded on that in the Essence, which distinguishes Him to be *the Son of God.* And this must

be essential to the Essence. And as the Son of God, in the essence, as Personally distinct from the Father, He is to be worshipped and adored, as coequal and coeternal with the Father, and the Spirit, as the one true, ever living, everlasting God. To acknowledge Him to be the Son, is to acknowledge the Father also. Not to acknowledge Him to be what He is, this is to reject the Personality of the Father. Let this be done under what pretence it may, it is contrary to scripture. Our Lord put this most important question to his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" "Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To which our Lord rejoined; "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 15—18. On this confession of faith, which contains immutable truth, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," I found my church: and against this truth, He hath declared, the gates of hell shall not prevail. Our Lord professed himself to be *the Son of God*, when he said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Those who heard him understood him thus: they therefore on this sought to kill him, as a blasphemer, "because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." John v. 17, 18. He said a little before his Passion to the Jews, "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" John x. 36. The centurion cried out at the cross, "Truly this was the Son of God." *Paul* began his ministry, with this most important article of our most holy faith; "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Acts ix. 20. The lord high treasurer of the Queen of *Ethiopia*, was baptized on this very confession of his faith: he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts viii. 37. The apostle speaking of his life of faith, expresseth himself thus. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. Why we should be wise above what is written, I know not. I conceive it most safe to believe this most important article of faith, just as this is declared and expressed in the scripture terms, and revelation of the same; ever remembering what our apostle here says, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*; which brings me to the addition of these words: (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*: which is only an explanation of the other. There can be, therefore, no necessity for rejecting them: and more especially as *Dr. Guyse* says from *Beza*, and others, that these words are to be found in some *Greek* copies of this verse, which are reputed to be true and genuine. From them we are led to understand, that he in the visible church of Christ, be he a private, or public member, who acknowledgeth the Son of God, who expressly confesseth, and continues in the doctrine of Christ's being Personally, essentially, and truly the Son of God, he in so doing, acknowledgeth the Father's Personality also. So that leaving aside our pre-conceived prejudices of this part of the text, only because it is as supplement, we see no addition, or subtraction from the doctrine of the text: and were it read without it, nothing would be gained, even

by those who are adversaries to it : because the whole doctrine concerning the Personality of the Father and the Son is contained therein.

Let us take, and make use of this text, first without the addition. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is an antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* It most evidently appears, here is the whole substance of the text itself; what follows does by no means add to it. Let it be spoken for, or against, it does not corrupt the doctrine in it. No one can say in truth it does. It is only an explanation of it. Or, it is an affirmation of the same. In the former clause of it, the apostle declared him to be *an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*. Then he said, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*: which is setting the subject in each point of view, so as for it to be most easily and clearly understood: so that the doctrine of the text is most completely stated, to which the supplement adds nothing: it being only affirmative. It only contains an explanation and testification of all which went before. I now leave what hath been delivered, to your minds, for the benefit and improvement of them. May the Lord follow the same with his blessing, and render the same profitable unto you. This is all I aim at, and desire, except it be the honour and glory of God hereby. May it please Him to bless the same. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.—1 JOHN ii. 24.

FROM the 18th verse, and on to this, the apostle treats of and sets before the saints, the antichrists which were in the last time, or hour of the apostolic age. He shews how it came to pass they had been, and were still preserved from the contagion. It was owing to their having received an Unction from the Holy One, and were admitted to the true knowledge of all necessary things, respecting Christ, and spiritual matters. He having these views of them tells these saints, that he wrote to them, not because they knew not the truth, but because they knew it, and that no lie is of the truth. This made way for him to ask the question in the former verse, concerning *who was a liar?* To the which he replies—such an one as denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He then points out antichrist. He sets him forth, and distinguishes him to be one that denieth the Father and the Son. To this he adds, “*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*” In this present verse, he exhorts them to abide in the Truth which they had heard: and as sure as they did, they would most assuredly continue in the doctrine of the Divine Personalities. *Let*

that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

In which words are contained the following particulars.

1. An exhortation to these saints, that those truths which they had heard from the beginning might abide in them. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*

2. He expresseth the utility of this, with the benefit they would receive and derive from the same. *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

3. The blessedness of this continuation shall be expressed. If these heads of discourse are properly filled up, we shall have the whole sum-total of each, and every particle and particular of the words before us. May the Lord lead me comfortably through the same, to the real profit of his people, and to the glory of his most holy Name, to the praise of his glory. Amen. So be it, O Lord.

I am to take up these words in my text, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*; and to enter on the same, and consider them to be as already expressed, viz.

1. An exhortation to these saints, that those truths which they had heard from the beginning might abide in them. It may not be amiss to take up, and enlarge on all contained in this, as it may be the most certain method to unfold the same. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*

The word *beginning* is used by the apostle in this Epistle in two senses. In the first place he uses it, as it respects *eternity*. In this view of it, he uses it, when he begins his Epistle and speaks of the eternity of our Lord Jesus Christ. "That which was from the beginning."—Here it is expressive of eternity: it is spoken of Christ, and is equal to what he says of himself. "These things saith the Amen the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Rev. iii. 14. The apostle most certainly uses the word *beginning*, in the same sense, when he writes to those whom he entitles *fathers*: to whom he says, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Which I conceive respects the eternity of the Person of Christ. Which he expresseth again, saying, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." The apostle most certainly uses this same word in another sense here, and also in other parts of this Epistle, both before, and after this: and it concerns the commencement of the gospel, as preached by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. I conceive the word *beginning* here hath its peculiar and proper respect to this: they had from the beginning, that is from the commencement of our Lord's personal ministry, heard those eternal invaluable truths, which contained every thing, which could be of use and benefit to them. They might receive increasing light into them, and also have increasing communion with Christ in the spiritual knowledge and apprehension of them; to abide, therefore, in the true knowledge of the same was all which they needed. This they most truly and absolutely needed. He therefore here exhorts them to this—that those truths of the everlasting gospel, which they had heard from the beginning, might abide in them. He had observed before, that such an one as denies the

by those who are adversaries to it: because the whole doctrine concerning the Personality of the Father and the Son is contained therein.

Let us take, and make use of this text, first without the addition. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is an antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* It most evidently appears, here is the whole substance of the text itself; what follows does by no means add to it. Let it be spoken for, or against, it does not corrupt the doctrine in it. No one can say in truth it does. It is only an explanation of it. Or, it is an affirmation of the same. In the former clause of it, the apostle declared him to be *an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*. Then he said, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*: which is setting the subject in each point of view, so as for it to be most easily and clearly understood: so that the doctrine of the text is most completely stated, to which the supplement adds nothing: it being only affirmative. It only contains an explanation and testification of all which went before. I now leave what hath been delivered, to your minds, for the benefit and improvement of them. May the Lord follow the same with his blessing, and render the same profitable unto you. This is all I aim at, and desire, except it be the honour and glory of God hereby. May it please Him to bless the same. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.—1 JOHN ii. 24.

FROM the 18th verse, and on to this, the apostle treats of and sets before the saints, the antichrists which were in the last time, or hour of the apostolic age. He shews how it came to pass they had been, and were still preserved from the contagion. It was owing to their having received an Unction from the Holy One, and were admitted to the true knowledge of all necessary things, respecting Christ, and spiritual matters. He having these views of them tells these saints, that he wrote to them, not because they knew not the truth, but because they knew it, and that no lie is of the truth. This made way for him to ask the question in the former verse, concerning *who was a liar?* To the which he replies—such an one as denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He then points out antichrist. He sets him forth, and distinguishes him to be one that denieth the Father and the Son. To this he adds, “*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*” In this present verse, he exhorts them to abide in the Truth which they had heard: and as sure as they did, they would most assuredly continue in the doctrine of the Divine Personalities. *Let*

that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

In which words are contained the following particulars.

1. An exhortation to these saints, that those truths which they had heard from the beginning might abide in them. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*

2. He expresseth the utility of this, with the benefit they would receive and derive from the same. *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

3. The blessedness of this continuation shall be expressed. If these heads of discourse are properly filled up, we shall have the whole sum-total of each, and every particle and particular of the words before us. May the Lord lead me comfortably through the same, to the real profit of his people, and to the glory of his most holy Name, to the praise of his glory. Amen. So be it, O Lord.

I am to take up these words in my text, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*; and to enter on the same, and consider them to be as already expressed, viz.

1. An exhortation to these saints, that those truths which they had heard from the beginning might abide in them. It may not be amiss to take up, and enlarge on all contained in this, as it may be the most certain method to unfold the same. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*

The word *beginning* is used by the apostle in this Epistle in two senses. In the first place he uses it, as it respects *eternity*. In this view of it, he uses it, when he begins his Epistle and speaks of the eternity of our Lord Jesus Christ. "That which was from the beginning."—Here it is expressive of eternity: it is spoken of Christ, and is equal to what he says of himself. "These things saith the Amen the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Rev. iii. 14. The apostle most certainly uses the word *beginning*, in the same sense, when he writes to those whom he entitles *fathers*: to whom he says, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Which I conceive respects the eternity of the Person of Christ. Which he expresseth again, saying, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." The apostle most certainly uses this same word in another sense here, and also in other parts of this Epistle, both before, and after this: and it concerns the commencement of the gospel, as preached by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. I conceive the word *beginning* here hath its peculiar and proper respect to this: they had from the beginning, that is from the commencement of our Lord's personal ministry, heard those eternal invaluable truths, which contained every thing, which could be of use and benefit to them. They might receive increasing light into them, and also have increasing communion with Christ in the spiritual knowledge and apprehension of them; to abide, therefore, in the true knowledge of the same was all which they needed. This they most truly and absolutely needed. He therefore here exhorts them to this—that those truths of the everlasting gospel, which they had heard from the beginning, might abide in them. He had observed before, that such an one as denies the

divine Personality, and Mediatorial office of the only begotten Son of God, denies not only the Father's testimony of Him, as the true and promised Messiah; but also by consequence denies the Father's relation to Him, as the Son, and so takes away the distinguishing characters of both, and the Personal and peculiar glory of both, which belongs to them respectively in the œconomy of salvation. But such as most cordially own, believe, and confess the Son of God to be a divine Person, and the only Saviour, believe and own that he is the eternal Son of the Father, and was sent by Him; and thus, and hereby he pays a suitable honour both to the Father and the Son. He therefore proceeds to exhort the saints in that age, and their successors in all succeeding ages, to stand fast in the faith of the Gospel, according and agreeable to that spiritual unction which they had already received. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*; especially what concerned the Personality of the Father and the Son, and their concern in the œconomy of grace: the one being most evidently connected with the other: nor could the one be maintained but as founded on the other: they being most naturally and necessarily connected together with each other; so as that to drop the one, was to give up the other also. He therefore delivers to them this exhortation. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*: concerning the Person, incarnation, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you have received these important truths from the lips of Christ himself: others, some of you, from us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. And as I have endeavoured to set before you, in this Epistle I now write unto you, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Person, and office of Christ, and the Person, gift, and office of the Holy Ghost, with his indwelling in your souls, and his enlightenings and influences on your minds, I would have you, as you have heard these truths, from the very beginning of the gospel's being preached unto you, *abide in these truths*, and by no means depart from them. That by the term *from the beginning*, here respects the preaching of the everlasting gospel unto them, seems to me to be confirmed, by what the apostle says before in the 7th verse, where he says, "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning:" and in the words before us, he calls upon them, to let that abide in them, *which they had heard from the beginning*. So that I think this is sufficiently cleared, that the word *beginning* as used here, and some other parts of this Epistle refers to the everlasting gospel, and the preaching the same; as in the 1st chapter, and also in verses 13 and 14, of this, it respects the eternity of the Person of Christ. To let that therefore abide in them, which they had heard from the beginning, implies they should not give it up for any new doctrine, which might be proposed by the antichrist of that day. It is an expression made use of by Christ. As our apostle wrote as directed by the Spirit of Christ, so Christ himself was so present with him, and so precious unto him, that he not only writes in the spirit of his Master, but he frequently does in the very words of his Lord. Our Lord had said in his last sermon which he delivered after the institution and administration of his holy Supper, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the

vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 3—5. So that here we have the word *abide* made use of by our Lord, in the same sense, and for the same purpose with our Lord's design in the use of it. He would in an especial manner have them abide in the doctrine which so especially concerned the Personality of the Father and the Son, and their concern in salvation. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* There is a blessedness in hearing the Truth. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." But they must first hear it : for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. It is good to hear. It is better to know. It is an additional blessing to receive it, the reality of all this is proved by our retaining the same. We only profit so as to continue in the Truth, as it abides in us, and we abide in it. And we want no new truths : these saints had received the whole system of Truth : they are, therefore, exhorted to let it abide in them. It would be a real and lasting blessing to them : as they would thereby have it on all occasions, influencing their minds and hearts. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* When we have been led to know, receive, and understand *the Truth as it is in Jesus*, there remains nothing but for us, to let it abide in our minds just as we have received it. Not to be looking out for more truth, but to cleave to and live over what we know and have embraced. I know many are so set upon the search for what they style the Truth, that they are not contented with that which they know, but they are always on the search after what they know not : which hath often led me to say, I do not want to know any more of Christ, than I do already : by which I mean, I do not need to know Christ more truly ; I only need to know him more spiritually, personally, and comprehensively, so as to have more free and immediate access unto Him ; and so as to have Him more advanced in my mind, and the knowledge of Him more effectual and influential on my heart. The true knowledge of Christ draws the whole mind after Him. It fixes the whole soul upon Him. It engages the whole heart with Him. It centres us wholly in Him. This is the very essence and glory of it, Christ is in us, and Christ is to us All in All. This is a very great point in experience. It is absolutely necessary for our establishment and spiritual happiness. Our real saintship is proved hereby. The apostle exhorts to this, when he says to the saints at *Colosse*, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him : Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." chap. ii. 6, 7. It is of the same equal importance with this here, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* What we have heard concerning Christ, of the Father's everlasting love to us in Christ, of the salvation of Christ, of the glory, perfection, and excellency of the same, and of the way in which it is received into our minds, and how we enjoy the same in our hearts, this should be so retained and remembered by us, as we should never forget it, nor depart therefrom. No ; not on any consideration whatsoever : let the pretence be ever so plausible. We can know no truths which constitute our saintship but these : nor any more essential to our spiritual being and well-being beyond these. We cannot go off them but with

loss and injury to our own minds. We may know them more comprehensively, and enjoy them to a greater extent and enlargement of mind, but if we have been taught them from the word, and by the Lord the Spirit, we can never know them more truly and effectually. Therefore the words before us, are of utility unto us, as they were to the saints to whom they were addressed. As it is necessary the truth of Christ's gospel, and He the substance of the same should abide in us; so it is also absolutely necessary we should abide in Him, and his Truth; and to this the exhortation itself tends. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* They needed no more. It would be well to have a right knowledge of this. Many there are who do not stand so much in need of hearing Christ preached, as they do of having Christ formed in them; without which they cannot be established. When we have heard Christ preached, and have actually received Him, we then need such preaching as that we may be established in Him. The first great act of the Spirit towards us, is to reveal Christ in us, and unto us: which when he hath done, it is his next great work so to fix our minds on Christ as that we become established in Him, so as not to depart from Him: and this is the very completion of his work within us. Our living Christ, and having communion with Him, and with the Father in Him, is the fruit and effect of this; not the cause of our centering in Christ, it is the fruit and effect thereof. To have heard of Christ from the beginning and the very commencement of the Gospel, be it either from Christ, or from the apostle's ministry, must have been a special blessing. So as it may respect any of us, it most assuredly is to be looked on, as a most special favour, if we were blessed with hearing Christ, most clearly preached, and were blessed with a true spiritual, scriptural apprehension of what we heard, when we were first led to hear preaching. I do esteem it, next to the true knowledge of Christ, the greatest blessing ever bestowed by the Lord on me, that I should be brought under the ministry of *Mr. Romaine*: who so preached Christ, that the Lord the Spirit working with it, the mind was immediately opened to the object, and the heart quickened to believe on Christ to life everlasting. By this very means, the life which follows upon it, is the study and contemplation of the Person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father's love in Him: and this is so congenial to the enlightened mind, that light cannot suit the eye, more than this subject does the regenerate mind. To have Christ dwelling in us, is the essence of christianity. And he cannot dwell in us, but our minds must be engaged in dwelling on Him. It is very good for us to remember, how we first received Christ—what views we then received into our minds concerning Him; and—what that was in Christ which in a more particular manner affected us. I can say for myself, I was most especially overcome and affected with the bounty and generosity of the Lord Jesus Christ—His bearing down all before Him, with his surprizing, surpassing, and transcendent grace; it was this overcame me; and still has, and will for evermore have its weight, influence, and attraction on me.

It is high time to be proceeding with our subject, I will therefore get to our next head and particular of this discourse, as I conceive I have filled up the present, as well, and so far as my slender abilities will admit.

2. The apostle expresses the utility of what he hath been exhorting

the saints unto, with the benefit they would receive, and derive from the same, saying, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

There is a real blessedness which is connected with, and follows on a right clear apprehension of Truth, and on being enabled to retain it in the mind. It is so in an especial manner, as it respects fundamental Truth: such as is hinted at in our text: there can be no guard against error of sorts, like having the Truth abiding in us. Hence the apostle says, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide, or remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* Nothing could be of greater moment, or be of greater utility unto them, than giving themselves up to the practice of that to which they had been exhorted. As their saintship was evidenced by their having heard and received the truth; so it would be most completely evidenced by the abidance of Truth in them, and their constant and uniform abiding in it. They would receive the following benefits from the same—It would render the Lord Jesus Christ increasingly dear and precious to their minds—They would be enabled hereby to maintain their confidence in Him—they would not be easily moved from the hope of the gospel—They would be very free in their accesses unto Him: and have the more free and open communion with Him, and the Father in Him. Hereby they would most blessedly and comfortably be preserved from the antichrists of that time, in the which they lived; and especially from that antichristian doctrine which was levelled at the doctrine which concerned the Sonship and Person of Christ, as the only begotten of the Father. The apostle says to these saints he here writes unto, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* It most clearly follows from hence, that they had heard from the beginning, the doctrine of the Trinity, and had been principled in the knowledge of the Personality of the Son, and of the Father, or it could not have been said unto them, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* The continuance in the Son, and in the Father, must mean I conceive, a continuance in the doctrine of the true and real Personalities of the Father and the Son, which is confirmed by the former verse; in which the apostle said, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” If, says he, this doctrine which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, if what ye have heard concerning this mystery which respects God himself, and expresses the distinct, proper, and personal *subsistences* in the incomprehensible Godhead, and which hath been most clearly made known and manifested by the incarnation of the Essential Word, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, so that greater evidence cannot be given of the distinction of Persons, than has been realized hereby: then if you, who have heard concerning all this from the beginning, be stedfast, and what you have heard concerning this, remain and abide in you, the blessed consequence will of necessity be, ye will abide in the belief, and also in the confession, and profession of the same. I would here observe, it absolutely follows from the apostle’s words, that he had, and the rest of the apostles also, preached this gospel

concerning the distinctions in the divine Essence unto them: without it he could not have preached the gospel. We need only read the gospel which he wrote, and we shall have the most abundant evidence of this. He reciting again and again of what our most adorable Lord is, concerning his being personally distinct from the Father, whilst he insists on his coequality with him, saying, *I and my Father are one*: not in Person, but in Essence. Our Lord says, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*. John xiv. 11. The Union of the Trinity in Godhead is an Essential one. There cannot be a greater unity. Nothing can be more one, than the *Father, Son, and Spirit are one*. It is an unity that consists with *order and distinction*. The Unity of the Trinity doth not take away the distinction of the Persons, nor confound their order. They are *one*, yet *Three*. They keep their distinct Personalities, and their distinct Personal operations, and their different manner and order of working. It is an everlasting and an inseparable union. For in the Divine Nature or Essence there can be no change. It is from the unity of the Persons in the same Essence, ariseth their Essential Inbeing in each other. All the persons having the same Essence, and being in one and the same Essence, it follows that, in respect of the Essence, one Person is in another. Our Lord says, *The Father is in me, and I in him*. *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? — Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me*. See John x. 38. chap. xiv. 10, 11.

Now these transcendently glorious truths are scattered up and down in our apostle's writings. They had been delivered by Him expressly in his ministry and gospel; so that he might well refer them to what they had heard from the beginning. He had himself been a preacher, without all doubt to many of them. He had delivered nothing for Truth, but what was founded on, and quite agreeable to the gospel which went under his name; in the which it is expressly said, *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand; and the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth*. John iii. 35: v. 20. The Father loveth the Son, as his Son; not merely as Mediator, but as the Son of his Nature, the Son of himself. He is called *the Son of his love*. *His beloved Son*. *His dear Son*. He is said to be *in the bosom of the Father*. See Matt. iii. 17. Col. i. 13. John i. 18. Which last is expressive of intimacy, and oneness, familiarity, and delight. *As the Father loveth the Son, so the Son loveth the Father, and the Holy Ghost loveth them both*. So that we must give up the Bible as containing a true and faithful record for God, when we give up the doctrine of the Father and the Son. The apostle might therefore well say, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*. It is a matter of vast importance for Truth to remain in the mind: it is by that mean we grow into a further knowledge of it, and learn how to value it, and also to apprehend what communion we are to expect from it. In our present day, there are but few who are calculated to hear the gospel, which in its own nature is most profoundly deep: it being the wisdom of God in a mystery. It must therefore of necessity require the exercise of the spiritual judgment to take into the same, those mysteries which are revealed therein, and preached therefrom. Most of the bearers are unacquainted with these; therefore they do not prize them: and many of those who do

profess to know them, have never found the life of their souls contained in them; so that the bare acknowledgment of the same, is all which is to be found in the generality of persons under a profession of the Truth in our present day. We therefore for the general find, very few can be addressed as lovers of Truth. They at the very best are such as have very partial views of the truths contained in the gospel of the blessed God, and it is more a matter floating in their heads, than a true and spiritual knowledge of the same: we could not with any propriety address these, as the apostle doth real saints, saying to them, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*; because we cannot but doubt of their ever having their understandings opened to receive the Truth: and it cannot be, Truth should remain in the mind into the which it was never received. I will come to my next and last particular, which is this, to consider

3. The blessedness of this continuation of Truth in the mind. It most certainly must be a very blessed evidence of our perseverance in the ways of the Lord.

The continuance of believers in the pure faith of the gospel, proves they are truly united to Christ, and unto the Father in Him, the fruit of which union is everlasting life. Your abiding in the doctrine, which was preached unto you, from the very beginning or commencement of the same; and your perseverance therein to the present, and your life and conversation, proving you have received the grace of God in truth, these are some of the blessings which result therefrom. You as members of Christ, have Him living in you. He dwells and remains in you, by his word of grace and truth, which you have received into your hearts, by the Unction of the Holy One, which teacheth all things; and you have hereby communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; so that you have in your own souls, a most blessed evidence of the distinction of Persons, that the Son is not the Father, neither the Father the Son: and if this truth remain in you, then your continuance in the knowledge, belief, and maintenance of the same, will prove that you have the true doctrine of the Person of the Son, and of the Father: which will be of singular advantage unto you: and it will redound to the praise of God. You cannot prosper in your own souls but by this doctrine; neither can you worship God aright but in the scriptural, and spiritually realizing the same, as set before you in the everlasting Gospel. The greatness of the Father's love to you, is recognized in his so loving as to give his only begotten Son: therefore it is absolutely necessary to continue in the belief of this truth, concerning Christ's being *the Son*; otherwise, the great love of God, in so loving as to give his only begotten Son, on which so great an emphasis is laid, must be entirely lost upon you. It is no small blessing for you to continue in this doctrine—that Christ is the Son: and in this which is a branch of the same—that the Father is the Father. You will thereby know, it is not required of you to comprehend the doctrine, nor to ask any question, how the Son is the Son, and the Father, the Father: No; I, for my own part, cannot conceive the angels in heaven, who may be styled saints of the Divine presence, know how it is so. They cannot know it is so, but by the revelation God is pleased to make of the same to

their minds. In the revelation of the same they must heartily acquiesce. In their worshipping the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, they have distinct communion with them, as the one living, true, blessed, and everlasting God ; and have all the evidence of the Personalities in the One Essence, they can possibly desire. And our minds should never enquire into this mystery : we should submit unto it ; yielding obedience unto it, because the Lord hath revealed it. This is done by our receiving the same into our minds : and believing it with our whole hearts. The Lord be praised for it ; I never found any difficulty in believing and resting in the most hearty acknowledgment of this fundamental article of faith, and on which the whole Bible is founded : because I never understood I was called to understand it, any more than I am called upon to understand Godhead. Therefore conceiving I had nothing to believe concerning this mystery but what the Lord himself had been pleased most graciously to reveal of Himself, I have ever been delivered from all sort, and kind of speculation about the mystery of it : nor have I ever found to this present moment a desire to know the same. I ascribe this, under God, to my mother, who when I was but 5, or 6 years of age, taught me, I must never think my own thoughts in reading the Bible ; but look on it as the Book of God, and treat it with the utmost reverence ; and go to Him for light and instruction into what is revealed and set forth in it.

As it respects what the apostle here speaks, concerning abiding in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, as a great part of that blessedness which results therefrom, this is most undoubtedly the case : because without this, we can never have, neither can we maintain, any clear consistent views of gospel salvation. Here I conceive many who profess themselves to be the Lord's, want light, and correction. The covenant of grace originates from a plan conceived in the mind of the Eternal Three : the transactions between the Three in the One Incomprehensible Jehovah, are the covenant itself : the parts acted by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are demonstrative of their existence in the self-existing Essence : and here it is we should rest, and go no further. This which hath been thus briefly stated, I conceive the Lord's people want light into, so as they having more clear views of the acts of the Holy Trinity towards them, and their covenant offices, in and by which they manifest themselves unto them, would see how they are interested in the divine Persons, and how the divine Persons are interested in them ; and by this means would know how to worship the divine Persons accordingly. It must be acknowledged, they might receive great light into this part of the subject, by attending to the prayers which are upon record in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament ; as by them we should see the accesses of the spiritual mind towards the divine Persons in the Essence. It would lead in prayer, in every ordinance, in preaching, and contemplation to make clear and right distinctions, so as to keep up, and maintain proper acknowledgments of their offices and personal acts in grace and salvation. This would be attended with this advantage, we should hereby give to each their proper praise ; we should all be hereby led to make access to the Father, Son, and Spirit, as they stand related to us, and, by presenting ourselves before them, according to their relation unto us ; our faith would be led out into particular acts of faith and worship towards them, which would keep up, and also maintain in our minds their personal distinction. Our apostle, in his second Epistle,

which is directed by him to an honourable person, whom he addresses by the title of the elect lady and her children, saith at the 9th verse, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Which is for the substance of it the same with our text: to which he adds, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." v. 10, 11. Of such importance was this doctrine, and the acknowledgment of the same in the view and apprehension of *John*. He looked on him who denied and corrupted it, to be an antichrist. May the Lord the Holy Ghost keep us in the Truth. Let us be contented with expressing ourselves on the momentous articles of our most holy faith, in scriptural terms. Let us not aim to be wise above what is written; nor give ourselves liberty of speculating on such deep and unsearchable mysteries. Let us, as we know the Father in his love, the Son in his salvation, and the Holy Ghost in his revelation of the same, be thankful. Let us reflect on what our Lord said to his divine Father,—"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. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Matt. xi. 25—27. *Mr. Joseph Hussey*, tells us, there was a time in this land, when whole churches of the saints confessed that the doctrine of the Trinity was the life of their souls, and they were kept alive in their worship by it. I would now leave to your study and for your spiritual consideration what hath been delivered. May the Lord the Spirit make these truths an ordinance unto you. May you be led to look on what is revealed in the sacred page, and by our apostle, to be of the greatest importance, both as it respects the glory of the Godhead, and the Persons in it: and also of infinite concern to our immortal welfare. Attend to the Scriptures of Truth, and avoid cavilling at them. Rest in the full belief of what is revealed. Let the same abide in you, and with you, so shall ye continue in the Son, and in the Father: in communion with whom, ye shall enjoy everlasting life. The Lord bless his word unto you. Amen.

SERMON XXIX.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.—
I JOHN II. 25.

WE are, as I conceive, arrived at the close of our present subject, which the apostle began at verse the 18th concerning antichrist, and his followers. He sets before these saints to whom he wrote, how they were

preserved from such. They had an Unction from the Holy One. They were led into all Truth. He expresseth his full satisfaction in them : and professeth he did not write unto them, as if they were unacquainted with Truth. No ; it was because they were so well acquainted with it. They knew no lie could have any connection with it. He then asks a question, to which himself returns an answer—He is a liar, be he who he may, who denies Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Christ of God. He is anti-christ, whoever he be, who denies God to be the Father of Christ, by denying Christ to be his Son : such an one denies the Son directly, and by consequence denies the Father, who testified of Christ by a voice from heaven, and by all the miracles which he had wrought. He exhorts these saints to abide in the doctrine which they had heard from the beginning, and he expresses the blessed effects which would follow therefrom. They would thereby continue in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, which would be full proof of their being truly members of Christ and the beloved of God. Then by way of encouragement he says, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* And as sure as you continue in the faith of the gospel, you may be fully persuaded this eternal life is actually bestowed on you, and belongs to you, and shall be enjoyed by you, in uninterrupted communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the house eternal in the heavens, for ever and ever. What follows in the remainder of this chapter, contains his reason why he wrote as he had done. He exhorts them to abide in Christ, by which we are to understand the doctrine of Christ ; for to abide in the one, is to abide in the other. And closes with saying, that such as own and acknowledge Christ to be righteous, know that such as walk in the path of righteousness, are born again. They are regenerated and made new creatures in Christ, and are born of Him. Thus you have the outline from our text, to the end of this second chapter. The words of my text are altogether animating and divine. Life, eternal life, spiritual life, everlasting life, and this promised unto us, bestowed upon us, enjoyed by us, and continued unto us, for ever ; surely nothing, *nothing* can be beyond this ! The text seems to have the following particulars in it, which are worthy of discussion. Here is a promise. The Promiser. The person to whom the promise is made : with what is contained in the promise. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* In explaining my text, I will set it before you, in the following particulars.

1. By shewing what we are to understand, as included in the term *promise*, as it concerns the scriptures, and God's promises in them. *And this is the promise.*

2. Who the *He* here is, who is spoken of as the Promiser. *He hath promised.*

3. To whom the promise in the text is made. It is to *us*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us.*

4. What is contained in the Promise. It is, *eternal life*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* The word *even* is put in by way of explanation ; yet it seems here to be unnecessary, as the passage is quite full and complete without it. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life.* Of these heads and particulars in their order. I am

1. To shew and express, what we are to understand, as included

and implied in the term *promise*, as it concerns the scriptures, and God's promises in them. *And this is the promise.*

God's promise, or promises must imply and contain the good pleasure of his will, to bestow such and such fruits of his grace on such and such, out of his own mere bounty, as the sole and entire prerogative of his royal, divine, and exceeding free grace: out of which he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. The promise is the outward testification of the heart of God, who before all time loved his people: and he foreappointed all things for them, and concerning them. He made an allsufficient provision for their complete salvation. In the Person and work of Christ he sets all this before them. And as he knows all they are, with all their necessities, wounds, wants, miseries, and temptations, so the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath made an ample supply for all this in the everlasting covenant, and this in the fulness of his Son: in whom it hath pleased Him, that all fulness should dwell; and that of his fulness we should receive grace in time, and glory in eternity. To the intent we might have a true, clear, and spiritual knowledge of the same, it hath pleased the Lord, to set it before us, in the exceeding great and precious promises, scattered up and down in the scriptures, as so many stars in that glorious firmament of grace; by the which we may know the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, and take sanctuary in Him accordingly; and by this very mean have real communion with Him in his grace and mercy, at all times, as our cases call for, and require—to sum up this, I apprehend the term *promise*, as applied to God, and as made use of in the holy scriptures of truth, includes and contains the whole good pleasure of his will, respecting his love to our persons, how he will meet with us, how he will bless us, how he will guide us, how he will order all things concerning us, how he will heal us, pardon us, comfort us, strengthen us, and lead us in the way everlasting. Some of the promises extend themselves so far, as to express what the Lord God, in all his Persons, will be to us, in the display of his perfections on us, in glory everlasting. God's promises, are the fruits and expressions of the good pleasure of his will, in Christ Jesus, towards us before all time, and in what way he will make the same known, and realize the truth contained in them, to us in time, and this in being all contained in this one declaration, *I am the LORD thy God. And this is the promise.* And it concludes all others; it is the grand comprehensive promise, in the which they are all contained, in the which they begin, and in which they all issue, and which the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father in Him, hath made in the gospel, and will most certainly fulfil to us, who shall be found to abide in the doctrine of the Father, and the Son—*everlasting life. This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* Cruden in his Concordance, gives this explanation of the word *Promise*. "It is," says he, "an assurance, that God has given in his word, of bestowing blessings on his people. 2 Peter i. 4. The word in the New Testament is often taken for those promises that God heretofore made to Abraham, and the other patriarchs, of sending the Messiah. It is in this sense that the apostle Paul commonly uses the word promise, Rom. iv. 13, 14, and Gal. iii. 16." The promises of the new covenant, are called better than those of the old, because they are more clear, extensive, and universal, than those of the old covenant were. The whole

revelation of Christ, in all the grace and gospel part of the Old, and New Testament, may be considered as a Promise: and the completion of it, with the gift of Him; and all the blessings of salvation by Him, when actually bestowed on us, revealed unto us, and realized in us, may be considered as the fulfilment of God's promise unto us. The Holy Ghost is the gift of God to us. He is contained in the promise of God, in Christ Jesus unto us. The apostle says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." God in all his Persons hath been pleased to give himself to his Church by promise. The Divine Father says, *I will be thy God*. The Son hath loved us, and given himself for us. The Holy Ghost hath bestowed himself on the Church. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*. And he so loved that he gave the Spirit. The apostle speaking of Christ, says, *And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him*. Acts v. 32. I proceed to consider

2. Who the *He* here is, who is spoken of as the Promiser. *And this is the promise that he hath promised*. To find out this, so as to speak clearly and expressly, we must go back to the verses which precede this.

The apostle declared in verse 22nd—he was an antichrist, let him be otherwise whatsoever he might, who confounded or denied the Personalities of the Father, and the Son. *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*: to which he addeth, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*. Then he says to the saints whom he writes unto, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*: on which come in the words of my text, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. The Father being spoken of immediately before, who can be the Person to be conceived of, when it is asserted in our present verse, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*, but the Father? Surely it can be understood of none but Him. This I conceive receives confirmation, as we respect, and reflect on the order and œconomy of the sacred Trinity in their operations and actings in the œconomy of grace. The Father plans all. He proposes all. He provides all. He promises all. He gives all. The Son works from the Father. He performs all. He acts all. He obtains all. The Holy Ghost, in the same order and dispensation of grace, witnesseth to all, and sets his seal to all the Father hath revealed, and declared concerning his love in Christ Jesus to the elect: as also concerning the Person, and Mediatorial work, and office of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that it can be only that which belongs to the Father, what is here asserted. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. It is a peculiar glory which is the very perfection of the sacred writers, and their writings, to keep up in all their discourses, the true and proper distinction of the coequal Persons in the Godhead; and also the order in which they act distinctly one from the

other : as also their distinct way and manner in which they operate in us, upon us, and within us. Now I take it for granted, enough has been expressed to shew the Father is the Promiser in our text. *Paul* most expressly says, writing to *Titus*, " In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began ; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." chap. i. 2, 3. So in his writing to *Timothy*, he says, " be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God ; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Epis. i. 8, 9. So in the 1st chapter of the *Thessalonians*, and 1st Epis., you have these words, *unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*. The same you have in the 1st chapter of the 2nd Epis. v. 1. " Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And in the 1st chapter to the *Ephesians* you have it thus. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenlies in Christ : According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." I conceive also from all these quotations of scriptures, undeniable evidence cannot but arise, to prove to a demonstration, it is the Majesty of the divine Nature in the Person of the Father, who is spoken of here, as the Promiser, when it is here said, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*—A promise worthy of Himself : equal to His greatness : in which an infinity of grace is involved ; which can never be fully comprehended, explored, or enjoyed. He who loved the persons of the elect, and gave them being and existence in Christ before all time, and formed them in his own will, and vast designs, for his own glory, to shew forth his praise, blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ, suited to the being he gave them *in Christ* : and in the foreviews of the fall, he was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. On the footing of this, when the world was created, man formed, and lost all bestowed on him as a creation natural head, then the divine Father, in the Person of the glorious Saviour promulged his royal grace contained in that first promise or declaration of grace in which it is said that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*. Gen. iii. 15 ; which was fulfilled in due time. And so it might well be said, that God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. The Father gave the promise of Him to the church. This one and first promise was vastly comprehensive. It contained all others. Life and salvation were in it. All grace and glory were therein. He who is of such worth and excellency, as all the saints and angels in glory, will never be able to comprehend, and whose glory is beyond any conception and ideas which can ever be formed in their minds of the same, throughout the ages of eternity, was to be given by the Father, out of his bosom, to become incarnate—To be a covenant for the people—To live in our nature—To be the sacrifice for sin : and to be life and salvation to the whole election of grace. This gift could only be from the Father's bounty. It originated from his everlasting love. The promise of Him was the fruit of covenant engagements. It was the Father's act to promise Him—To give Him—To send Him—To qualify Him—To

accept Him—To honour and glorify Him—To bear his testimony for Him: and in the issue to crown Him both Lord and Christ. He was wrapt up in the Promise, which the Father gave of Him to an elect world, for four thousand years; and in it all other promises were contained. They all centered in Him, who was promised. All the promises of God were in Him. They were in Him, yea; and they were in Him, Amen. *Peter* says to them who have obtained like precious faith in the righteousness and atonement of God the Saviour, that unto those are given exceeding great and precious promises. It is good for us to take into our minds, that it is the Father who promised Christ; this proceeded from his own free grace and everlasting love. It should be remembered by us, how he hath fulfilled this one great, and the foundation of all other promises unto us. We may well be satisfied with this, and say with the apostle, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 31, 32.

All the elect angels around the throne of the Divine Majesty in heaven, can never conceive, or apprehend the depth of grace expressed to the elect of human race, in the Promise of Christ; nor the love of God in bestowing Christ on them; and yet we to whom Christ was given, are very seldom raised up to magnify the Lord for this stupendous expression of the Father's love to us. In this promise, and from this Promiser, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a spiritual, supernatural, and heavenly life, whereby we live unto God: this is the way to eternal life; so says the apostle. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 23. Christ is the fountain of spiritual and eternal life to his people. He hath promised it unto them. He bestows it on them. Christ himself says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The eternal happiness, glory, and blessedness, which the saints enjoy in Heaven, all flow into their souls from Him. As the blood, which, with the spirits contained in it, is the support of natural life, so the Promise of God, conveys through the Spirit of God, such knowledge and understanding of the Truth, doctrine, and salvation of Jesus, as supports that life which is conveyed to the inner man, and feeds and nourishes it up unto everlasting life. "I am come," says our Lord, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10. Now they could not have this life more abundantly, but as it should please Him to convey more light, and let it in upon their minds, so as they should more and more, receive his Truth in the love of it. The Father is the *He*, who is the Promiser. The promisee he made, was the gift of Christ. This promise hath been fulfilled. When it was it drew out the hearts of saints then on earth to bless and magnify the Lord. *Zacharias* filled with the Holy Ghost, said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he

would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Luke i. 68—75. All this praise is offered to the Divine Father, as all the salutations with which most of the Epistles begin, are addresses to the Father of our Lord Jesus. As for example. "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." 2 Cor. i. 2, 3. But having shewed what we are to understand by the term promise, and also who we are to consider as the *Promiser*, I proceed to my next particular, which is,

3. To shew to whom the promise belongs. It is to *us*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us.*

It belongs to *us*: that is, to the whole church of Christ. The whole election of grace are included in this *us*: more especially those saints who are here written to, who having received an Unction from the Holy One, and knew the Truth, and were kept sound in the acknowledgment of the doctrine of the confession of the Son's Personality, and the Father's also, and continued in the same, it is to these the apostle addresses these words, *And this is the promise that he had promised us, even eternal life.* And they come in by way of encouragement, to shew them what they will in the issue enjoy; which being by God himself bestowed upon them by promise, and He being that God that cannot lie, they therefore might well anticipate the blessing, even before they had the full realization of it in the world of glory. It is a truth all God's people are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. There is no one promise of grace and glory, of Christ and salvation, but belongs to them all. So of this, even taking it in the sense I have given it, as belonging to the saints here addressed, it may also be said to belong to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's, and our's." It is a most blessed consideration that the promise of Christ was given to his whole church. All his saints were interested in it. His relation to each and every individual member of it is one and the same. His love for them, his mercy towards them, his righteousness and sacrifice, are to each and every one of them, equally the same. They are all equally saved in Him. They all shine alike in Him. They are all equally complete in Him, and God in Christ is their portion, inheritance, and exceeding great reward. So the Holy Spirit is promised to the whole church. *All thy children shall be taught of the LORD.* It is an undeniable truth, the promises are more extensively fulfilled and realized in the cases, and experiences of some saints than others; yet there are no saints, but enjoy and inherit the substance of them. And it is their blessedness, when they view this to be the very essence of them, that hereby they are all assured the Lord is their God; for these words may be looked on, as the sum total of them, *I am thy God.* To have this therefore brought home by the apostle *John*, to the saints to whom he wrote, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life,* must have been very encouraging. It could not but be comfortable unto them, to be confirmed in their views and hopes of a glorious immortality: surely nothing could exceed this, but the full and complete enjoyment of the same. It seems to me, the apostle here expresses himself thus by way of shewing them, they would most cer-

tainly enjoy and partake of all this, in that vision and sight they would have of Christ—God-Man in the kingdom of glory. How most blessed it is, to view the subject which *John* has been treating of, and what it will finally issue in. The *us*, who had communion with the Father and the Son—whose blood was their everlasting purity and perfection—who had Him for their Advocate and Propitiation—who had from Him their Holy One received the Holy Ghost; by whose divine teaching they were preserved from the antichrists who were in that day, these having been exhorted to continue in the doctrines of the ever-blessed gospel they had received from the beginning, and abide in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, are comforted with these words, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* Surely nothing can be added unto this: we may see from hence the transcendent excellency of free, sovereign grace; and of the gospel which contains the revelation of it. The blessings of it are so spiritual and divine, that nothing can be set in comparison with the same. The blessings enjoyed in communion with God, and Christ, through the Spirit, exceed all the joys of sense, and are real, permanent, holy and heavenly. It may therefore be well said, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” There is no love in God’s heart towards us, but he hath expressed it, and set it before us in Christ. There is no blessing he wills to bestow upon us, and will ever communicate unto us, but he hath expressed it, and set it before us, in the word of his grace, and in the exceeding great and precious promises contained therein; and our text is so comprehensive as to include them all. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* It is a most blessed life to live on what is revealed in the promises. I conceive this is to live Christ, and to live in Him, and upon Him. I apprehend Christ to be the jewel, and the promise to be the cabinet in the which he is hid: and that receiving and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a real spiritual apprehension of Him. It is as the glass in which we see Him, and by that very means our hearts are drawn out into holy breathings and aspirations after Him. As we see Christ in the promise, and live Him over in our minds as so recorded and testified of in the word, this is to live by faith on Him. We must have a rule for our faith, and a directory also: we must have a warrant for our faith, and a foundation for it also: and where shall we find it but in the written word? and what part of it is it to be found in, but in that, which contains God’s revelation of Christ? and what are the promises but this very revelation? Surely it is in them we have the complete revelation of the whole of Christ. We can have no spiritual apprehension of Christ without them. The whole of Christ is contained in them: and though it is impossible we should ever be able to comprehend the whole of Christ set before us in them, yet He cannot be more fully declared in his church upon earth, than he is by them. May I not here say, and if it be not so, who will make me a liar, and in these particulars, nothing worth. I know it is by the good hand of my God upon me, I thus understand it. Blessed be God, all the elect are one in Christ, and one in Him. They have had being and well-being in Him, ever since He was constituted to be their Head: and that before the foundation of the world. They were then bound up in the bundle of life with Him. They were secured in Him from everlasting. All the promises were made to them in Him be-

fore all time: and all God's love to them in Him, and the whole good pleasure of God's will to them in Him, is all wrapt up in his promises to them. The whole gift of Christ, with all contained in his Person, and salvation, may be said to be given unto them by promise. The apostle speaks most sweetly on this subject, when he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. iii. 16. Christ and his people are one. He is their head, and they are members in Him. The love of the Father to them, began in Him. The covenant of grace was entered into with Him, on their behalf, and as their representative; yet it so belongs to them, that the divine Father saith to them, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Zech. ix. 11. And all the promises which belong to the church, were made first to Christ. They have been fulfilled in Him, and He is in the actual possession of all the good contained in them. It is out of his fulness we are to receive the communication of the good, be it grace, or glory; be it for body or soul; be it for this time state, or for the glory state; it is to be communicated from Him to us: *Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace*: so says our apostle, in his Gospel, ch. i. 16: and another apostle says, *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*. Col. i. 19. All our blessedness is in Christ. When we are brought to the knowledge of Him, then he begins in us. We have the blessed commencement of it. Which is increased in our communion with Him, and by the same confirmed. And by his Holy Spirit we increase more and more until we arrive at his everlasting kingdom of glory. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. The word *even* may as well be omitted now. I did not like it should before; because it was only understood to be, a notifying with an emphasis, the blessing of blessings spoken of in our text: yet it seems to be more emphatical to read it thus, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*: and being now brought to the last and closing particular of my text, I shall omit it. Whilst I

4. Shew what is contained in the promise. It is *eternal life*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*. The Divine Father is the promiser. It is *us*, whom this promise is made unto. We are the heirs of it. The promise contains all which God can bestow: we are the subjects of the same. The promise is altogether of grace. There are no conditions in it. This is wholly and absolutely an unconditional promise. But what I am now to be engaged in, is to shew what is contained in it, which is *eternal life*. And what eternal life is, much come first under consideration. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life*. This points out who those are who have everlasting life in them; and what is the evidence of everlasting life: but it does not express what everlasting life is. Our Lord says for himself, speaking of the Divine Father, *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting*. But even this is only saying what it is included in, it is not expressing what everlasting life consists in. We must therefore go to what our Lord says to the Divine Father, in his address to him, in the 3rd verse of the 17th chapter of John. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*. It is in the revelation it

hath pleased God to make of his Nature, Persons, and perfections, in the Person of Christ, who is both God and Man in one Person, God manifest in the flesh, the true knowledge of God is made known : and it is as the Holy Ghost is pleased to impart this knowledge of God in Christ to our minds we have eternal life. Our eternal life consists in this. Which is made more and more clear unto us, as we are further drawn forth in the exercise of our minds, into further and clearer discoveries of the same. The knowledge of Christ is eternal life. It is in the knowledge of Him, our eternal life consists. It is from the knowledge of Him, eternal life flows in upon our minds. It is in real union and fellowship with Him, we have the manifestative enjoyment of it in our hearts. It is by the same we are nourished up unto everlasting life. The true knowledge of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as they stand in relation to us, in the Person of the God-Man, and have shined, and will for evermore shine forth in Him, is the utmost expression of blessedness, and the fountain and spring of immortal joy to all the saints, in the state of glory. It is the exercise of our spiritual minds on this, will be the consummation of our bliss, in heaven, and be our everlasting life when we are in Glory.

I speak thus by way of preface, to what is to be introduced in going over this present part of our subject : which is to shew, what is contained in this promise in the text. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life.* Our heavenly Father hath promised us, eternal life. This life is in Christ. And He is our life. It is in Him. He liveth in us : and we live in Him : yet our having the promise of eternal life exceeds all which hath been mentioned ; except it be what this eternal life consists in : which is the knowledge of Him from whom it flows. And I would lay the whole weight and emphasis of this, on the knowledge of the Holy Ones—The Holy Father, the Holy Son, the Holy Spirit, as they have been pleased to make themselves known in the word of revelation, and by the Spirit of revelation unto us ; so as for us to receive the knowledge of the same into our minds from the word of inspiration. This lays the foundation for the true knowledge of God within us. This is our spiritual and everlasting life. All which springs herefrom are the fruits and effects of it. We should know it is only the acts and fruits of it : I conceive in this lies a vast distinction in the blessedness of elect angels, and elect men. The former, it is most probable know the love of God, in its causes and effects, by intuition, in one, and by the same apprehension in one moment : whilst saints of the human race, know the same only by degrees, and in and by its effects. Whilst the former see all in its first, and incomprehensible cause, and the vast and glorious effects which flow from that first cause, and that also at once, I suppose were it to be spoken out in one sentence, is the reason why the minds of elect angels are so swallowed up in God, as that their wills are impeccable, and cannot sin to eternity. Well, so as it respects saints as saints : their blessedness is not in themselves : they have it not in themselves. It consists not in what they are, or ever will be. No ; it is wholly out of them. It will be so, even in Glory. They will have the enjoyment of it in their minds ; but it will be communicated unto them, from Christ, God-Man ; and by, and from him, all their blessedness, glory, immortality, and life eternal will flow : so as their minds will be perpetually engaged on Him, and swallowed up in Him. So that let their com-

munion with Christ, and enjoyments be what they may, it will not take off their thoughts from Christ one single moment. He will be their All. What He is will be their eternal delight. It is in Him, not in themselves their eternal life will be : and their real participation of it, will consist in that perpetual communion they will have with Him, in an uninterrupted manner, and to an unspeakable degree to the ages of eternity. This is eternal life. It will consist in an activity of the mind on the Person of Christ, who will be the one object of his people's blessedness and felicity for ever. Now it is the vision of Christ will be eternal life to his saints in Heaven. Life is the perfection of being. We had a being in Christ from everlasting : but it is life added to it, is the perfection of it. This was given us with it : yet this is only manifested to us in regeneration, and in our living a life of faith on the Son of God, and in real, spiritual, and supernatural communion with Him. This life is all activity. It wholly consists in the exercise of the spiritual mind on Him. So it will be in glory everlasting. The mind will be intensely fixed on Him. The understanding, will, and memory swallowed up in Him : so for them to be filled with such an intellectual comprehension of Him, as to be suited to the expression, of being *filled with all the fulness of God*. By which I apprehend such an extension of the faculties of the mind, and such an intuitive light and apprehension of all of God which can be made known of God, and his love, and wonderful designs in Christ, towards all creatures and the work of his hands, and of what He is in Christ to the whole election of grace, as will swallow up the mind in God for ever and ever. God himself, in the full revelation of himself, in Christ, God-Man, being the subject of the saints' contemplation in glory, so their eternal life is in this. It flows from this. It is from hence it will be maintained in their minds for ever. So that in the apostle's saying, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*, he sets before them, what their present blessedness was, as also what their future blessedness would consist in. It was eternal life to know God in Christ. It was eternal life to have fellowship with Him, and with the Father. For he was that eternal life, which was with the Father from everlasting, and was manifested in the fulness of time by his open incarnation. These saints had now present fellowship with Him. This might be interrupted, but it could never be broken off. It cannot but be suspended in the very article of death ; for there must be a momentary suspension of the senses and faculties, or death could not take place : yet this cannot put a stop to that blessed communion or to this fellowship : and on Christ's part, it can be no interruption, no not in death itself ; for he can have and hold communion with us, when we cannot with Him. This is a very comfortable consideration : all-sufficient to carry us above all fear and concern about any thing which may befall us in the article of dissolution. So the views of what we shall be, and enjoy of Christ, are a most blessed mean of excitation of our minds on the glory which is to be revealed in us. We are to see Christ face to face. We are to live in his immediate presence : to live with Him in his glory : to see Him face to face : to behold his glory : to live as He does : to have Him live in us : to dwell in us : to fill us with those joys, which flow from the throne of God, and himself, who is the Lord of glory. In whom, from whom, and by whom, all the glory of God is reflected on the minds of all the elect angels and saints. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life. We, us, you*

and myself, says *John*, are the very identical persons to whom this promise is made. We are the persons to whom all in it belongs. It is ours. We are those very *us*, to whom the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath promised eternal life, and this life is in his Son. We are already possessed of it. We have now the enjoyment of it in our own souls. We are looking forward for the fullest enjoyment of the same, and the very uttermost blessedness contained therein, by being admitted to the beatific vision of Christ in his glory, and to such personal communion with God in all his Persons and perfections as is suitable therewith. Thus the apostle closes this very particular part of his subject. We may well conclude it must have made a most blessed impression on their minds, and added weight to all the former subjects. This being drawing Truth into one great and grand focus, so as for the rays of it to shine fully and in its meridian on the whole church in Christ, in his kingdom of glory. It is in its whole design, transcendently glorious. Its impression on the saints could not but be in proportion to the views they received into their minds concerning the same. So it will be with us also. Therefore it becomes us to consider this. We cannot be impressed with Truth, but in proportion to our receiving the knowledge of it into our minds. We may admire Truth, but it is the true reception of the same into our minds, by which we only can be benefitted by it. May the Lord bless what hath now been delivered, if it please Him, and give you to receive the same into your minds, so as to apprehend and digest it, that you, mixing faith therewith, may grow thereby. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

—I JOHN ii. 26.

THE apostle being very affectionately concerned for, and disposed towards these saints to whom he here writes, is very desirous they should fully understand his motives for writing to them; especially on the foregoing subjects. It was not that he suspected their defection from the faith, or that they were not sufficiently instructed in the Truth, so as to be able to withstand every artifice of the enemies. No. He was fully persuaded of this. What he had written, was to set in a clear point of view the errors and heresies of those seducers they had to withstand. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* It is not because saints may be well taught and established in all the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel, that they are not to be written to, when errors and heresies abound; that they are not to be addressed on the peculiar articles of our most holy faith; that they are not to be addressed on those most momentous points; on the contrary, it is rather a reason why they should. When errors and heresies abound, such churches as are firmly grounded in the knowledge of Christ, are to

be informed of the same. The names, persons, and errors are to be pointed out, and what the particular evil in them consists in : we see this in what is here set before us. In the preliminary verses, we have the apostle speaking to these saints of their having heard that antichrist should come : that there were many antichrists at this time in the world. It was an evident proof the last hour of the apostolic age was come. He scruples not to decipher them, and their doctrines also. They went out from the true churches of Christ. They went forth with their pernicious tares, which they would, if possible, sow, and scatter, so as to disturb, and distress the Lord's beloved ones. In the whole conduct and doctrine of these apostates, it was manifest they never were of the true church of God : yet they had been numbered with them ; but their going out from them, carried its own evidence with it, that they were not all of us, says *John*. To keep up the true and proper distinction, the apostle speaks out what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for these saints. He had bestowed the Holy Ghost upon them. They were led by Him into the knowledge of all Truth, so far as it was necessary for them : that he wrote to them in the full apprehension of this ; not as if they did not know the Truth, but because they knew it : consequently they must be fully persuaded nothing contrary to the faith once delivered to the saints, could be truth. He sets before them who was a *liar*—That man who denied Jesus was the Christ, the true and only Messiah. He declares who is an antichrist—He is, who denieth the true and proper and distinct Personality of the Father, and the Son. He exhorts the saints to abide in this doctrine. He declares if they continued in what they had heard from the first preaching of the gospel unto them, this would be the case. He then comforts them with the assurance of eternal life. They had the promise of it ; and they would in the Lord's time enjoy all contained in it, in the immediate presence of God, and the Lamb, in immediate communion with them, in a sight of the beatific vision, which will be transporting, and which will complete their blessedness for ever and ever. To these he says, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*. Which words are now to be the foundation for our present subject ; which I will set before you in its divisions, and then fill up ; in the which I hope to explain the same, and give you in so doing, real satisfaction, and information.

1. By observing the care of the apostle to preserve the saints from error. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*.

2. That all erroneous persons are *seducers*.

3. Who these aim and particularly desire to seduce. It is *you, saints*.

4. The only preservative from their seduction. This I shall shew to be contained in the sound knowledge of the Truth : for it is in this it is fixed by the apostle, in verse 20. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*. Thus you have the outline of the words, which I am to open as hath been expressed : and which I now enter upon.

1. By observing the care of the apostle to preserve the saints from error. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*.

To preserve the churches of Christ from error of every sort and kind,

was most certainly the great care of this, and all the apostles, in their particular directions, and as things fell out in the various parts to which they were destined. It was of the utmost importance to deliver the Truth to them : which once done, it was then the next great and most important matter to preserve and maintain it unadulterated amongst the people who had professedly received it. There could be no shadows if there were no substances. It is the reflection is the shadow. So with respect to the Truths of God, the reflections from these, and the false apprehension of these, are the causes of all the errors and heresies in the world. If there was no such doctrine as that of the blessed Trinity in the Bible, there would be no deniers and corrupters of that most sacred and ineffable mystery : yet there is nothing in the revelation of it, which causes the error about it : this comes wholly from men of corrupt minds, destitute and reprobate concerning the Truth. It is from the darkness of the un-renewed mind, and the influence of the devil on it, errors are conceived, received, lived in, and propagated. It is of dangerous consequence to receive into the mind any thing contrary to the truths of God revealed in the scripture. We are to take heed unto them. Not to preach nor receive any thing, word, or doctrine, but what is revealed in them. It becomes the churches of the saints to be very careful to preserve the Truth. So it also does the ministers of the churches, to hold forth the word of life, clearly, and exactly, as it is set before them in the word of truth. The apostle's care to preserve the saints from error, is fully expressed, by all which went before our text, and by all which follows, to the end of this very chapter, so that it supersedes the necessity of a recapitulation of it. He gives his reason here in my text why he wrote as he had unto them. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* What he must be immediately referring unto, must be the persons, and doctrines he had been setting before them. It appears from hence, that persons and errors are not to be concealed. They are, should, and ought to be expressed. Not only Truth, which alone can guard the mind from error, should be freely and fully stated and explained, that it may be fixed on the minds of the godly : but such errors as are, or may be, at any particular time, or place, and by any particular person, or persons broached, should be called up, and named, to the intent the church of God, may be guarded against, and preserved from the same. It is what some cannot bear, to hear errors detected and exposed. The reason is this—too many look on some of the most momentous truths of the gospel, but speculative points, which are of no real importance—that we should not be concerned so much about what is believed as about what persons are, in temper, life, walk, and character. I protest, men and brethren, I must hold up both my hands here, and against this. I do not look on one truth of the everlasting gospel as speculative—which may, or may not be believed. I do not conceive we can with the least safety to our own souls drop one of them. I conceive they form the whole of our knowledge of God. They contain all we are to believe concerning the everlasting love of God : the Person, grace and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ : as also what we are to believe of the Person, office, and work of the Holy Ghost. And we cannot give up one single atom of Truth, but we must be losers thereby, and the glory of God will also be broken in upon. The Truth of God is our *Magna-Charta*. It contains our salvation. It is the bread of life.

Our title to Christ, to heaven, and glory, is in it. I will freely confess, some truths are more clear to some, and other truths to others. I do not think all saints see alike, and are one equally with another, impressed with all Truth. No; I am speaking of my conceiving, that real saints, as such, are not for dropping any one truth made known in the Book of God: but are in their own spiritual minds, for knowing, and receiving all truths into their minds, that they may worship God, in receiving and believing the same. If Truth should be clearly stated in the ministry of the word of the gospel, errors should also be expressed and exposed: and it should be done to the glory of God: for the benefit of saints, and to the confutation of error, and heresy: and in so doing, zeal for the honour and glory of God's Truth is discovered, and love to the real saints of Christ also. Nor should any who profess the true gospel of our Lord and Saviour ever oppose it. One great end in the ministers of Christ, in and throughout every part of their ministry, should be to exalt His Person, to increase his fame, and make his Name glorious. It should ever be engraven on their minds, what the Lord saith, "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Our apostle had been speaking of the errors, and persons who propagated them in his day; and says to those he wrote unto, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*—To guard you from them—To preserve you from their seduction—To keep you in the faith: that my love for you might be manifested; my care for you appear: and that you might have a full proof of my sincere regard for you in Christ Jesus. It is much the same, for the spirit, subject, and meaning of it, with what he says in the ensuing chapter, "Little children, let no man deceive you:" and again in his 2nd Epistle, v. 7. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Here he joins such as denied Christ, such as insisted on it, the true Messiah had not been in the world, with a deceiver and an antichrist. Such an one being an adversary to our most precious and glorious Lord Jesus Christ. I would here repeat it, although it has been observed already, that one way in which the devil shewed his enmity against our Lord Jesus Christ, and his church, and beloved ones, and against his true gospel, was by corrupting the minds of some, who had made a solemn and declarative confession that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Christ, the very Messiah, of whom all the prophets wrote and spake, as the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Shiloh, the Prophet of whom *Moses* spake, who was to be like unto him, of whom the multitude when they saw the miracle which Jesus did, said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." John vi. 14. Of whom, and to whom, the Holy Ghost bore testimony on the day of Pentecost, that God had raised him from the dead, set Him at his own right hand, crowned Him with Glory and Power everlasting, and made him both Lord and Christ. Yet toward the close of the apostolic age, many there were, who audaciously denied our Christ to be the true and promised Messiah. This it might be, they attempted to build on the de-throning Him, as it respected his distinct Personality, in the infinite Essence, from the Father. Hence the apostle might well write these one with the other, as he does, when he asks the following question. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the

loss and injury to our own minds. We may know them more comprehensively, and enjoy them to a greater extent and enlargement of mind, but if we have been taught them from the word, and by the Lord the Spirit, we can never know them more truly and effectually. Therefore the words before us, are of utility unto us, as they were to the saints to whom they were addressed. As it is necessary the truth of Christ's gospel, and He the substance of the same should abide in us; so it is also absolutely necessary we should abide in Him, and his Truth; and to this the exhortation itself tends. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* They needed no more. It would be well to have a right knowledge of this. Many there are who do not stand so much in need of hearing Christ preached, as they do of having Christ formed in them; without which they cannot be established. When we have heard Christ preached, and have actually received Him, we then need such preaching as that we may be established in Him. The first great act of the Spirit towards us, is to reveal Christ in us, and unto us: which when he hath done, it is his next great work so to fix our minds on Christ as that we become established in Him, so as not to depart from Him: and this is the very completion of his work within us. Our living Christ, and having communion with Him, and with the Father in Him, is the fruit and effect of this; not the cause of our centering in Christ, it is the fruit and effect thereof. To have heard of Christ from the beginning and the very commencement of the Gospel, be it either from Christ, or from the apostle's ministry, must have been a special blessing. So as it may respect any of us, it most assuredly is to be looked on, as a most special favour, if we were blessed with hearing Christ, most clearly preached, and were blessed with a true spiritual, scriptural apprehension of what we heard, when we were first led to hear preaching. I do esteem it, next to the true knowledge of Christ, the greatest blessing ever bestowed by the Lord on me, that I should be brought under the ministry of *Mr. Romaine*: who so preached Christ, that the Lord the Spirit working with it, the mind was immediately opened to the object, and the heart quickened to believe on Christ to life everlasting. By this very means, the life which follows upon it, is the study and contemplation of the Person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father's love in Him: and this is so congenial to the enlightened mind, that light cannot suit the eye, more than this subject does the regenerate mind. To have Christ dwelling in us, is the essence of christianity. And he cannot dwell in us, but our minds must be engaged in dwelling on Him. It is very good for us to remember, how we first received Christ—what views we then received into our minds concerning Him; and—what that was in Christ which in a more particular manner affected us. I can say for myself, I was most especially overcome and affected with the bounty and generosity of the Lord Jesus Christ—His bearing down all before Him, with his surprizing, surpassing, and transcendent grace; it was this overcame me; and still has, and will for evermore have its weight, influence, and attraction on me.

It is high time to be proceeding with our subject, I will therefore get to our next head and particular of this discourse, as I conceive I have filled up the present, as well, and so far as my slender abilities will admit.

2. The apostle expresses the utility of what he hath been exhorting

the saints unto, with the benefit they would receive, and derive from the same, saying, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

There is a real blessedness which is connected with, and follows on a right clear apprehension of Truth, and on being enabled to retain it in the mind. It is so in an especial manner, as it respects fundamental Truth: such as is hinted at in our text: there can be no guard against error of sorts, like having the Truth abiding in us. Hence the apostle says, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide, or remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* Nothing could be of greater moment, or be of greater utility unto them, than giving themselves up to the practice of that to which they had been exhorted. As their saintship was evidenced by their having heard and received the truth; so it would be most completely evidenced by the abiding of Truth in them, and their constant and uniform abiding in it. They would receive the following benefits from the same—It would render the Lord Jesus Christ increasingly dear and precious to their minds—They would be enabled hereby to maintain their confidence in Him—they would not be easily moved from the hope of the gospel—They would be very free in their accesses unto Him: and have the more free and open communion with Him, and the Father in Him. Hereby they would most blessedly and comfortably be preserved from the antichrists of that time, in the which they lived; and especially from that antichristian doctrine which was levelled at the doctrine which concerned the Sonship and Person of Christ, as the only begotten of the Father. The apostle says to these saints he here writes unto, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* It most clearly follows from hence, that they had heard from the beginning, the doctrine of the Trinity, and had been principled in the knowledge of the Personality of the Son, and of the Father, or it could not have been said unto them, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* The continuance in the Son, and in the Father, must mean I conceive, a continuance in the doctrine of the true and real Personalities of the Father and the Son, which is confirmed by the former verse; in which the apostle said, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” If, says he, this doctrine which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, if what ye have heard concerning this mystery which respects God himself, and expresses the distinct, proper, and personal *subsistences* in the incomprehensible Godhead, and which hath been most clearly made known and manifested by the incarnation of the Essential Word, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, so that greater evidence cannot be given of the distinction of Persons, than has been realized hereby: then if you, who have heard concerning all this from the beginning, be stedfast, and what you have heard concerning this, remain and abide in you, the blessed consequence will of necessity be, ye will abide in the belief, and also in the confession, and profession of the same. I would here observe, it absolutely follows from the apostle's words, that he had, and the rest of the apostles also, preached this gospel

concerning the distinctions in the divine Essence unto them : without it he could not have preached the gospel. We need only read the gospel which he wrote, and we shall have the most abundant evidence of this. He reciting again and again of what our most adorable Lord is, concerning his being personally distinct from the Father, whilst he insists on his coequality with him, saying, *I and my Father are one* : not in Person, but in Essence. Our Lord says, *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*. John xiv. 11. The Union of the Trinity in Godhead is an Essential one. There cannot be a greater unity. Nothing can be more *one*, than the *Father, Son, and Spirit* are *one*. It is an unity that consists with *order* and *distinction*. The Unity of the Trinity doth not take away the distinction of the Persons, nor confound their order. They are *one*, yet *Three*. They keep their distinct Personalities, and their distinct Personal operations, and their different manner and order of working. It is an everlasting and an inseparable union. For in the Divine Nature or Essence there can be no change. It is from the unity of the Persons in the same Essence, ariseth their Essential Inbeing in each other. All the persons having the same Essence, and being in one and the same Essence, it follows that, in respect of the Essence, one Person is in another. Our Lord says, *The Father is in me, and I in him*. *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? — Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me*. See John x. 38. chap. xiv. 10, 11.

Now these transcendently glorious truths are scattered up and down in our apostle's writings. They had been delivered by Him expressly in his ministry and gospel ; so that he might well refer them to what they had heard from the beginning. He had himself been a preacher, without all doubt to many of them. He had delivered nothing for Truth, but what was founded on, and quite agreeable to the gospel which went under his name ; in the which it is expressly said, *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand ; and the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth*. John iii. 35 : v. 20. The Father loveth the Son, as his Son ; not merely as Mediator, but as the Son of his Nature, the Son of himself. He is called *the Son of his love*. *His beloved Son*. *His dear Son*. He is said to be *in the bosom of the Father*. See Matt. iii. 17. Col. i. 13. John i. 18. Which last is expressive of intimacy, and oneness, familiarity, and delight. *As the Father loveth the Son, so the Son loveth the Father, and the Holy Ghost loveth them both*. So that we must give up the Bible as containing a true and faithful record for God, when we give up the doctrine of the Father and the Son. The apostle might therefore well say, *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*. It is a matter of vast importance for Truth to remain in the mind : it is by that mean we grow into a further knowledge of it, and learn how to value it, and also to apprehend what communion we are to expect from it. In our present day, there are but few who are calculated to hear the gospel, which in its own nature is most profoundly deep : it being the wisdom of God in a mystery. It must therefore of necessity require the exercise of the spiritual judgment to take into the same, those mysteries which are revealed therein, and preached therefrom. Most of the bearers are unacquainted with these ; therefore they do not prize them : and many of those who do

profess to know them, have never found the life of their souls contained in them; so that the bare acknowledgment of the same, is all which is to be found in the generality of persons under a profession of the Truth in our present day. We therefore for the general find, very few can be addressed as lovers of Truth. They at the very best are such as have very partial views of the truths contained in the gospel of the blessed God, and it is more a matter floating in their heads, than a true and spiritual knowledge of the same: we could not with any propriety address these, as the apostle doth real saints, saying to them, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*; because we cannot but doubt of their ever having their understandings opened to receive the Truth: and it cannot be, Truth should remain in the mind into the which it was never received. I will come to my next and last particular, which is this, to consider

3. The blessedness of this continuation of Truth in the mind. It most certainly must be a very blessed evidence of our perseverance in the ways of the Lord.

The continuance of believers in the pure faith of the gospel, proves they are truly united to Christ, and unto the Father in Him, the fruit of which union is everlasting life. Your abiding in the doctrine, which was preached unto you, from the very beginning or commencement of the same; and your perseverance therein to the present, and your life and conversation, proving you have received the grace of God in truth, these are some of the blessings which result therefrom. You as members of Christ, have Him living in you. He dwells and remains in you, by his word of grace and truth, which you have received into your hearts, by the Unction of the Holy One, which teacheth all things; and you have hereby communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; so that you have in your own souls, a most blessed evidence of the distinction of Persons, that the Son is not the Father, neither the Father the Son: and if this truth remain in you, then your continuance in the knowledge, belief, and maintenance of the same, will prove that you have the true doctrine of the Person of the Son, and of the Father: which will be of singular advantage unto you: and it will redound to the praise of God. You cannot prosper in your own souls but by this doctrine; neither can you worship God aright but in the scriptural, and spiritually realizing the same, as set before you in the everlasting Gospel. The greatness of the Father's love to you, is recognized in his so loving as to give his only begotten Son: therefore it is absolutely necessary to continue in the belief of this truth, concerning Christ's being *the Son*; otherwise, the great love of God, in so loving as to give his only begotten Son, on which so great an emphasis is laid, must be entirely lost upon you. It is no small blessing for you to continue in this doctrine—that Christ is the Son: and in this which is a branch of the same—that the Father is the Father. You will thereby know, it is not required of you to comprehend the doctrine, nor to ask any question, how the Son is the Son, and the Father, the Father: No; I, for my own part, cannot conceive the angels in heaven, who may be styled saints of the Divine presence, know how it is so. They cannot know it is so, but by the revelation God is pleased to make of the same to

their minds. In the revelation of the same they must heartily acquiesce. In their worshipping the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, they have distinct communion with them, as the one living, true, blessed, and everlasting God; and have all the evidence of the Personalities in the One Essence, they can possibly desire. And our minds should never enquire into this mystery: we should submit unto it; yielding obedience unto it, because the Lord hath revealed it. This is done by our receiving the same into our minds: and believing it with our whole hearts. The Lord be praised for it; I never found any difficulty in believing and resting in the most hearty acknowledgment of this fundamental article of faith, and on which the whole Bible is founded: because I never understood I was called to understand it, any more than I am called upon to understand Godhead. Therefore conceiving I had nothing to believe concerning this mystery but what the Lord himself had been pleased most graciously to reveal of Himself, I have ever been delivered from all sort, and kind of speculation about the mystery of it: nor have I ever found to this present moment a desire to know the same. I ascribe this, under God, to my mother, who when I was but 5, or 6 years of age, taught me, I must never think my own thoughts in reading the Bible; but look on it as the Book of God, and treat it with the utmost reverence; and go to Him for light and instruction into what is revealed and set forth in it.

As it respects what the apostle here speaks, concerning abiding in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, as a great part of that blessedness which results therefrom, this is most undoubtedly the case: because without this, we can never have, neither can we maintain, any clear consistent views of gospel salvation. Here I conceive many who profess themselves to be the Lord's, want light, and correction. The covenant of grace originates from a plan conceived in the mind of the Eternal Three: the transactions between the Three in the One Incomprehensible Jehovah, are the covenant itself: the parts acted by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are demonstrative of their existence in the self-existing Essence: and here it is we should rest, and go no further. This which hath been thus briefly stated, I conceive the Lord's people want light into, so as they having more clear views of the acts of the Holy Trinity towards them, and their covenant offices, in and by which they manifest themselves unto them, would see how they are interested in the divine Persons, and how the divine Persons are interested in them; and by this means would know how to worship the divine Persons accordingly. It must be acknowledged, they might receive great light into this part of the subject, by attending to the prayers which are upon record in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament; as by them we should see the accesses of the spiritual mind towards the divine Persons in the Essence. It would lead in prayer, in every ordinance, in preaching, and contemplation to make clear and right distinctions, so as to keep up, and maintain proper acknowledgments of their offices and personal acts in grace and salvation. This would be attended with this advantage, we should hereby give to each their proper praise; we should all be hereby led to make access to the Father, Son, and Spirit, as they stand related to us, and, by presenting ourselves before them, according to their relation unto us; our faith would be led out into particular acts of faith and worship towards them, which would keep up, and also maintain in our minds their personal distinction. Our apostle, in his second Epistle,

which is directed by him to an honourable person, whom he addresses by the title of the elect lady and her children, saith at the 9th verse, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Which is for the substance of it the same with our text: to which he adds, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." v. 10, 11. Of such importance was this doctrine, and the acknowledgment of the same in the view and apprehension of *John*. He looked on him who denied and corrupted it, to be an antichrist. May the Lord the Holy Ghost keep us in the Truth. Let us be contented with expressing ourselves on the momentous articles of our most holy faith, in scriptural terms. Let us not aim to be wise above what is written; nor give ourselves liberty of speculating on such deep and unsearchable mysteries. Let us, as we know the Father in his love, the Son in his salvation, and the Holy Ghost in his revelation of the same, be thankful. Let us reflect on what our Lord said to his divine Father,—"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. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Matt. xi. 25—27. *Mr. Joseph Hussey*, tells us, there was a time in this land, when whole churches of the saints confessed that the doctrine of the Trinity was the life of their souls, and they were kept alive in their worship by it. I would now leave to your study and for your spiritual consideration what hath been delivered. May the Lord the Spirit make these truths an ordinance unto you. May you be led to look on what is revealed in the sacred page, and by our apostle, to be of the greatest importance, both as it respects the glory of the Godhead, and the Persons in it: and also of infinite concern to our immortal welfare. Attend to the Scriptures of Truth, and avoid cavilling at them. Rest in the full belief of what is revealed. Let the same abide in you, and with you, so shall ye continue in the Son, and in the Father: in communion with whom, ye shall enjoy everlasting life. The Lord bless his word unto you. Amen.

SERMON XXIX.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.—

I JOHN II. 25.

We are, as I conceive, arrived at the close of our present subject, which the apostle began at verse the 18th concerning antichrist, and his fore-runners. He sets before these saints to whom he wrote, how they were

preserved from such. They had an Unction from the Holy One. They were led into all Truth. He expresseth his full satisfaction in them : and professeth he did not write unto them, as if they were unacquainted with Truth. No ; it was because they were so well acquainted with it. They knew no lie could have any connection with it. He then asks a question, to which himself returns an answer—He is a liar, be he who he may, who denies Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Christ of God. He is anti-christ, whoever he be, who denies God to be the Father of Christ, by denying Christ to be his Son : such an one denies the Son directly, and by consequence denies the Father, who testified of Christ by a voice from heaven, and by all the miracles which he had wrought. He exhorts these saints to abide in the doctrine which they had heard from the beginning, and he expresses the blessed effects which would follow therefrom. They would thereby continue in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, which would be full proof of their being truly members of Christ and the beloved of God. Then by way of encouragement he says, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* And as sure as you continue in the faith of the gospel, you may be fully persuaded this eternal life is actually bestowed on you, and belongs to you, and shall be enjoyed by you, in uninterrupted communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the house eternal in the heavens, for ever and ever. What follows in the remainder of this chapter, contains his reason why he wrote as he had done. He exhorts them to abide in Christ, by which we are to understand the doctrine of Christ ; for to abide in the one, is to abide in the other. And closes with saying, that such as own and acknowledge Christ to be righteous, know that such as walk in the path of righteousness, are born again. They are regenerated and made new creatures in Christ, and are born of Him. Thus you have the outline from our text, to the end of this second chapter. The words of my text are altogether animating and divine. Life, eternal life, spiritual life, everlasting life, and this promised unto us, bestowed upon us, enjoyed by us, and continued unto us, for ever ; surely nothing, *nothing* can be beyond this ! The text seems to have the following particulars in it, which are worthy of discussion. Here is a promise. The Promiser. The person to whom the promise is made : with what is contained in the promise. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* In explaining my text, I will set it before you, in the following particulars.

1. By shewing what we are to understand, as included in the term *promise*, as it concerns the scriptures, and God's promises in them. *And this is the promise.*

2. Who the *He* here is, who is spoken of as the Promiser. *He hath promised.*

3. To whom the promise in the text is made. It is to *us*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us.*

4. What is contained in the Promise. It is, *eternal life*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* The word *even* is put in by way of explanation ; yet it seems here to be unnecessary, as the passage is quite full and complete without it. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life.* Of these heads and particulars in their order. I am

1. To shew and express, what we are to understand, as included

and implied in the term *promise*, as it concerns the scriptures, and God's promises in them. *And this is the promise.*

God's promise, or promises must imply and contain the good pleasure of his will, to bestow such and such fruits of his grace on such and such, out of his own mere bounty, as the sole and entire prerogative of his royal, divine, and exceeding free grace: out of which he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. The promise is the outward testification of the heart of God, who before all time loved his people: and he foreappointed all things for them, and concerning them. He made an allsufficient provision for their complete salvation. In the Person and work of Christ he sets all this before them. And as he knows all they are, with all their necessities, wounds, wants, miseries, and temptations, so the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath made an ample supply for all this in the everlasting covenant, and this in the fulness of his Son: in whom it hath pleased Him, that all fulness should dwell; and that of his fulness we should receive grace in time, and glory in eternity. To the intent we might have a true, clear, and spiritual knowledge of the same, it hath pleased the Lord, to set it before us, in the exceeding great and precious promises, scattered up and down in the scriptures, as so many stars in that glorious firmament of grace; by the which we may know the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, and take sanctuary in Him accordingly; and by this very mean have real communion with Him in his grace and mercy, at all times, as our cases call for, and require—to sum up this, I apprehend the term *promise*, as applied to God, and as made use of in the holy scriptures of truth, includes and contains the whole good pleasure of his will, respecting his love to our persons, how he will meet with us, how he will bless us, how he will guide us, how he will order all things concerning us, how he will heal us, pardon us, comfort us, strengthen us, and lead us in the way everlasting. Some of the promises extend themselves so far, as to express what the Lord God, in all his Persons, will be to us, in the display of his perfections on us, in glory everlasting. God's promises, are the fruits and expressions of the good pleasure of his will, in Christ Jesus, towards us before all time, and in what way he will make the same known, and realize the truth contained in them, to us in time, and this in being all contained in this one declaration, *I am the LORD thy God. And this is the promise.* And it concludes all others; it is the grand comprehensive promise, in the which they are all contained, in the which they begin, and in which they all issue, and which the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father in Him, hath made in the gospel, and will most certainly fulfil to us, who shall be found to abide in the doctrine of the Father, and the Son—*everlasting life. This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* Cruden in his Concordance, gives this explanation of the word *Promise*. "It is," says he, "an assurance, that God has given in his word, of bestowing blessings on his people. 2 Peter i. 4. The word in the New Testament is often taken for those promises that God heretofore made to *Abraham*, and the other patriarchs, of sending the Messiah. It is in this sense that the apostle *Paul* commonly uses the word promise, Rom. iv. 13, 14, and Gal. iii. 16." The promises of the new covenant, are called better than those of the old, because they are more clear, extensive, and universal, than those of the old covenant were. The whole

revelation of Christ, in all the grace and gospel part of the Old, and New Testament, may be considered as a Promise: and the completion of it, with the gift of Him; and all the blessings of salvation by Him, when actually bestowed on us, revealed unto us, and realized in us, may be considered as the fulfilment of God's promise unto us. The Holy Ghost is the gift of God to us. He is contained in the promise of God, in Christ Jesus unto us. The apostle says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." God in all his Persons hath been pleased to give himself to his Church by promise. The Divine Father says, *I will be thy God*. The Son hath loved us, and given himself for us. The Holy Ghost hath bestowed himself on the Church. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*. And he so loved that he gave the Spirit. The apostle speaking of Christ, says, *And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him*. Acts v. 32. I proceed to consider

2. Who the *He* here is, who is spoken of as the Promiser. *And this is the promise that he hath promised*. To find out this, so as to speak clearly and expressly, we must go back to the verses which precede this.

The apostle declared in verse 22nd—he was an antichrist, let him be otherwise whatsoever he might, who confounded or denied the Personalities of the Father, and the Son. *He is an antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*: to which he addeth, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*. Then he says to the saints whom he writes unto, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*: on which come in the words of my text, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. The Father being spoken of immediately before, who can be the Person to be conceived of, when it is asserted in our present verse, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*, but the Father? Surely it can be understood of none but Him. This I conceive receives confirmation, as we respect, and reflect on the order and œconomy of the sacred Trinity in their operations and actings in the œconomy of grace. The Father plans all. He proposes all. He provides all. He promises all. He gives all. The Son works from the Father. He performs all. He acts all. He obtains all. The Holy Ghost, in the same order and dispensation of grace, witnesseth to all, and sets his seal to all the Father hath revealed, and declared concerning his love in Christ Jesus to the elect: as also concerning the Person, and Mediatorial work, and office of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that it can be only that which belongs to the Father, what is here asserted. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. It is a peculiar glory which is the very perfection of the sacred writers, and their writings, to keep up in all their discourses, the true and proper distinction of the coequal Persons in the Godhead; and also the order in which they act distinctly one from the

other : as also their distinct way and manner in which they operate in us, upon us, and within us. Now I take it for granted, enough has been expressed to shew the Father is the Promiser in our text. *Paul* most expressly says, writing to *Titus*, " In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began ; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." chap. i. 2, 3. So in his writing to *Timothy*, he says, " be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God ; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Epis. i. 8, 9. So in the 1st chapter of the *Thessalonians*, and 1st Epis., you have these words, *unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*. The same you have in the 1st chapter of the 2nd Epis. v. 1. " Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And in the 1st chapter to the *Ephesians* you have it thus. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenlies in Christ : According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." I conceive also from all these quotations of scriptures, undeniable evidence cannot but arise, to prove to a demonstration, it is the Majesty of the divine Nature in the Person of the Father, who is spoken of here, as the Promiser, when it is here said, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*—A promise worthy of Himself : equal to His greatness : in which an infinity of grace is involved ; which can never be fully comprehended, explored, or enjoyed. He who loved the persons of the elect, and gave them being and existence in Christ before all time, and formed them in his own will, and vast designs, for his own glory, to shew forth his praise, blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ, suited to the being he gave them in Christ : and in the foreviews of the fall, he was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. On the footing of this, when the world was created, man formed, and lost all bestowed on him as a creation natural head, then the divine Father, in the Person of the glorious Saviour promulged his royal grace contained in that first promise or declaration of grace in which it is said that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*. Gen. iii. 15 ; which was fulfilled in due time. And so it might well be said, that God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. The Father gave the promise of Him to the church. This one and first promise was vastly comprehensive. It contained all others. Life and salvation were in it. All grace and glory were therein. He who is of such worth and excellency, as all the saints and angels in glory, will never be able to comprehend, and whose glory is beyond any conception and ideas which can ever be formed in their minds of the same, throughout the ages of eternity, was to be given by the Father, out of his bosom, to become incarnate—To be a covenant for the people—To live in our nature—To be the sacrifice for sin : and to be life and salvation to the whole election of grace. This gift could only be from the Father's bounty. It originated from his everlasting love. The promise of Him was the fruit of covenant engagements. It was the Father's act to promise Him—To give Him—To send Him—To qualify Him—To

accept Him—To honour and glorify Him—To bear his testimony for Him: and in the issue to crown Him both Lord and Christ. He was wrapt up in the Promise, which the Father gave of Him to an elect world, for four thousand years; and in it all other promises were contained. They all centered in Him, who was promised. All the promises of God were in Him. They were in Him, yea; and they were in Him, Amen. *Peter* says to them who have obtained like precious faith in the righteousness and atonement of God the Saviour, that unto those are given exceeding great and precious promises. It is good for us to take into our minds, that it is the Father who promised Christ; this proceeded from his own free grace and everlasting love. It should be remembered by us, how he hath fulfilled this one great, and the foundation of all other promises unto us. We may well be satisfied with this, and say with the apostle, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 31, 32.

All the elect angels around the throne of the Divine Majesty in heaven, can never conceive, or apprehend the depth of grace expressed to the elect of human race, in the Promise of Christ; nor the love of God in bestowing Christ on them; and yet we to whom Christ was given, are very seldom raised up to magnify the Lord for this stupendous expression of the Father's love to us. In this promise, and from this Promiser, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a spiritual, supernatural, and heavenly life, whereby we live unto God: this is the way to eternal life; so says the apostle. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 23. Christ is the fountain of spiritual and eternal life to his people. He hath promised it unto them. He bestows it on them. Christ himself says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The eternal happiness, glory, and blessedness, which the saints enjoy in Heaven, all flow into their souls from Him. As the blood, which, with the spirits contained in it, is the support of natural life, so the Promise of God, conveys through the Spirit of God, such knowledge and understanding of the Truth, doctrine, and salvation of Jesus, as supports that life which is conveyed to the inner man, and feeds and nourishes it up unto everlasting life. "I am come," says our Lord, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10. Now they could not have this life more abundantly, but as it should please Him to convey more light, and let it in upon their minds, so as they should more and more, receive his Truth in the love of it. The Father is the *He*, who is the Promiser. The promise he made, was the gift of Christ. This promise hath been fulfilled. When it was it drew out the hearts of saints then on earth to bless and magnify the Lord. *Zacharias* filled with the Holy Ghost, said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he

would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Luke i. 68—75. All this praise is offered to the Divine Father, as all the salutations with which most of the Epistles begin, are addresses to the Father of our Lord Jesus. As for example. "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." 2 Cor. i. 2, 3. But having shewed what we are to understand by the term promise, and also who we are to consider as the *Promiser*, I proceed to my next particular, which is,

3. To shew to whom the promise belongs. It is to *us*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us.*

It belongs to *us*: that is, to the whole church of Christ. The whole election of grace are included in this *us*: more especially those saints who are here written to, who having received an Unction from the Holy One, and knew the Truth, and were kept sound in the acknowledgment of the doctrine of the confession of the Son's Personality, and the Father's also, and continued in the same, it is to these the apostle addresses these words, *And this is the promise that he had promised us, even eternal life.* And they come in by way of encouragement, to shew them what they will in the issue enjoy; which being by God himself bestowed upon them by promise, and He being that God that cannot lie, they therefore might well anticipate the blessing, even before they had the full realization of it in the world of glory. It is a truth all God's people are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. There is no one promise of grace and glory, of Christ and salvation, but belongs to them all. So of this, even taking it in the sense I have given it, as belonging to the saints here addressed, it may also be said to belong to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's, and our's." It is a most blessed consideration that the promise of Christ was given to his whole church. All his saints were interested in it. His relation to each and every individual member of it is one and the same. His love for them, his mercy towards them, his righteousness and sacrifice, are to each and every one of them, equally the same. They are all equally saved in Him. They all shine alike in Him. They are all equally complete in Him, and God in Christ is their portion, inheritance, and exceeding great reward. So the Holy Spirit is promised to the whole church. *All thy children shall be taught of the LORD.* It is an undeniable truth, the promises are more extensively fulfilled and realized in the cases, and experiences of some saints than others; yet there are no saints, but enjoy and inherit the substance of them. And it is their blessedness, when they view this to be the very essence of them, that hereby they are all assured the Lord is their God; for these words may be looked on, as the sum total of them, *I am thy God.* To have this therefore brought home by the apostle *John*, to the saints to whom he wrote, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*, must have been very encouraging. It could not but be comfortable unto them, to be confirmed in their views and hopes of a glorious immortality: surely nothing could exceed this, but the full and complete enjoyment of the same. It seems to me, the apostle here expresses himself thus by way of shewing them, they would most cer-

tainly enjoy and partake of all this, in that vision and sight they would have of Christ—God-Man in the kingdom of glory. How most blessed it is, to view the subject which *John* has been treating of, and what it will finally issue in. The *us*, who had communion with the Father and the Son—whose blood was their everlasting purity and perfection—who had Him for their Advocate and Propitiation—who had from Him their Holy One received the Holy Ghost; by whose divine teaching they were preserved from the antichrists who were in that day, these having been exhorted to continue in the doctrines of the ever-blessed gospel they had received from the beginning, and abide in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, are comforted with these words, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* Surely nothing can be added unto this: we may see from hence the transcendent excellency of free, sovereign grace; and of the gospel which contains the revelation of it. The blessings of it are so spiritual and divine, that nothing can be set in comparison with the same. The blessings enjoyed in communion with God, and Christ, through the Spirit, exceed all the joys of sense, and are real, permanent, holy and heavenly. It may therefore be well said, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” There is no love in God’s heart towards us, but he hath expressed it, and set it before us in Christ: There is no blessing he wills to bestow upon us, and will ever communicate unto us, but he hath expressed it, and set it before us, in the word of his grace, and in the exceeding great and precious promises contained therein; and our text is so comprehensive as to include them all. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* It is a most blessed life to live on what is revealed in the promises. I conceive this is to live Christ, and to live in Him, and upon Him. I apprehend Christ to be the jewel, and the promise to be the cabinet in the which he is hid: and that receiving and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a real spiritual apprehension of Him. It is as the glass in which we see Him, and by that very means our hearts are drawn out into holy breathings and aspirations after Him. As we see Christ in the promise, and live Him over in our minds as so recorded and testified of in the word, this is to live by faith on Him. We must have a rule for our faith, and a directory also: we must have a warrant for our faith, and a foundation for it also: and where shall we find it but in the written word? and what part of it is it to be found in, but in that, which contains God’s revelation of Christ? and what are the promises but this very revelation? Surely it is in them we have the complete revelation of the whole of Christ. We can have no spiritual apprehension of Christ without them. The whole of Christ is contained in them: and though it is impossible we should ever be able to comprehend the whole of Christ set before us in them, yet He cannot be more fully declared in his church upon earth, than he is by them. May I not here say, and if it be not so, who will make me a liar, and in these particulars; nothing worth. I know it is by the good hand of my God upon me, I thus understand it. Blessed be God, all the elect are one in Christ, and one in Him. They have had being and well-being in Him, ever since He was constituted to be their Head: and that before the foundation of the world. They were then bound up in the bundle of life with Him. They were secured in Him from everlasting. All the promises were made to them in Him be-

fore all time: and all God's love to them in Him, and the whole good pleasure of God's will to them in Him, is all wrapt up in his promises to them. The whole gift of Christ, with all contained in his Person, and salvation, may be said to be given unto them by promise. The apostle speaks most sweetly on this subject, when he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. iii. 16. Christ and his people are one. He is their head, and they are members in Him. The love of the Father to them, began in Him. The covenant of grace was entered into with Him, on their behalf, and as their representative; yet it so belongs to them, that the divine Father saith to them, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Zech. ix. 11. And all the promises which belong to the church, were made first to Christ. They have been fulfilled in Him, and He is in the actual possession of all the good contained in them. It is out of his fulness we are to receive the communication of the good, be it grace, or glory; be it for body or soul; be it for this time state, or for the glory state; it is to be communicated from Him to us: *Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace*: so says our apostle, in his Gospel, ch. i. 16: and another apostle says, *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*. Col. i. 19. All our blessedness is in Christ. When we are brought to the knowledge of Him, then he begins in us. We have the blessed commencement of it. Which is increased in our communion with Him, and by the same confirmed. And by his Holy Spirit we increase more and more until we arrive at his everlasting kingdom of glory. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. The word *even* may as well be omitted now. I did not like it should before; because it was only understood to be, a notifying with an emphasis, the blessing of blessings spoken of in our text: yet it seems to be more emphatical to read it thus, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*: and being now brought to the last and closing particular of my text, I shall omit it. Whilst I

4. Shew what is contained in the promise. It is *eternal life*. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*. The Divine Father is the promiser. It is *us*, whom this promise is made unto. We are the heirs of it. The promise contains all which God can bestow: we are the subjects of the same. The promise is altogether of grace. There are no conditions in it. This is wholly and absolutely an unconditional promise. But what I am now to be engaged in, is to shew what is contained in it, which is *eternal life*. And what eternal life is, much come first under consideration. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life*. This points out who those are who have everlasting life in them; and what is the evidence of everlasting life: but it does not express what everlasting life is. Our Lord says for himself, speaking of the Divine Father, *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting*. But even this is only saying what it is included in, it is not expressing what everlasting life consists in. We must therefore go to what our Lord says to the Divine Father, in his address to him, in the 3rd verse of the 17th chapter of John. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*. It is in the revelation it

hath pleased God to make of his Nature, Persons, and perfections, in the Person of Christ, who is both God and Man in one Person, God manifest in the flesh, the true knowledge of God is made known : and it is as the Holy Ghost is pleased to impart this knowledge of God in Christ to our minds we have eternal life. Our eternal life consists in this. Which is made more and more clear unto us, as we are further drawn forth in the exercise of our minds, into further and clearer discoveries of the same. The knowledge of Christ is eternal life. It is in the knowledge of Him, our eternal life consists. It is from the knowledge of Him, eternal life flows in upon our minds. It is in real union and fellowship with Him, we have the manifestative enjoyment of it in our hearts. It is by the same we are nourished up unto everlasting life. The true knowledge of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as they stand in relation to us, in the Person of the God-Man, and have shined, and will for evermore shine forth in Him, is the utmost expression of blessedness, and the fountain and spring of immortal joy to all the saints, in the state of glory. It is the exercise of our spiritual minds on this, will be the consummation of our bliss, in heaven, and be our everlasting life when we are in Glory.

I speak thus by way of preface, to what is to be introduced in going over this present part of our subject : which is to shew, what is contained in this promise in the text. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life.* Our heavenly Father hath promised us, eternal life. This life is in Christ. And He is our life. It is in Him. He liveth in us : and we live in Him : yet our having the promise of eternal life exceeds all which hath been mentioned ; except it be what this eternal life consists in : which is the knowledge of Him from whom it flows. And I would lay the whole weight and emphasis of this, on the knowledge of the Holy Ones—The Holy Father, the Holy Son, the Holy Spirit, as they have been pleased to make themselves known in the word of revelation, and by the Spirit of revelation unto us ; so as for us to receive the knowledge of the same into our minds from the word of inspiration. This lays the foundation for the true knowledge of God within us. This is our spiritual and everlasting life. All which springs herefrom are the fruits and effects of it. We should know it is only the acts and fruits of it : I conceive in this lies a vast distinction in the blessedness of elect angels, and elect men. The former, it is most probable know the love of God, in its causes and effects, by intuition, in one, and by the same apprehension in one moment : whilst saints of the human race, know the same only by degrees, and in and by its effects. Whilst the former see all in its first, and incomprehensible cause, and the vast and glorious effects which flow from that first cause, and that also at once, I suppose were it to be spoken out in one sentence, is the reason why the minds of elect angels are so swallowed up in God, as that their wills are impeccable, and cannot sin to eternity. Well, so as it respects saints as saints : their blessedness is not in themselves : they have it not in themselves. It consists not in what they are, or ever will be. No ; it is wholly out of them. It will be so, even in Glory. They will have the enjoyment of it in their minds ; but it will be communicated unto them, from Christ, God-Man ; and by, and from him, all their blessedness, glory, immortality, and life eternal will flow : so as their minds will be perpetually engaged on Him, and swallowed up in Him. So that let their com-

munion with Christ, and enjoyments be what they may, it will not take off their thoughts from Christ one single moment. He will be their All. What He is will be their eternal delight. It is in Him, not in themselves their eternal life will be : and their real participation of it, will consist in that perpetual communion they will have with Him, in an uninterrupted manner, and to an unspeakable degree to the ages of eternity. This is eternal life. It will consist in an activity of the mind on the Person of Christ, who will be the one object of his people's blessedness and felicity for ever. Now it is the vision of Christ will be eternal life to his saints in Heaven. Life is the perfection of being. We had a being in Christ from everlasting : but it is life added to it, is the perfection of it. This was given us with it : yet this is only manifested to us in regeneration, and in our living a life of faith on the Son of God, and in real, spiritual, and supernatural communion with Him. This life is all activity. It wholly consists in the exercise of the spiritual mind on Him. So it will be in glory everlasting. The mind will be intensely fixed on Him. The understanding, will, and memory swallowed up in Him : so for them to be filled with such an intellectual comprehension of Him, as to be suited to the expression, of being *filled with all the fulness of God*. By which I apprehend such an extension of the faculties of the mind, and such an intuitive light and apprehension of all of God which can be made known of God, and his love, and wonderful designs in Christ, towards all creatures and the work of his hands, and of what He is in Christ to the whole election of grace, as will swallow up the mind in God for ever and ever. God himself, in the full revelation of himself, in Christ, God-Man, being the subject of the saints' contemplation in glory, so their eternal life is in this. It flows from this. It is from hence it will be maintained in their minds for ever. So that in the apostle's saying, *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*, he sets before them, what their present blessedness was, as also what their future blessedness would consist in. It was eternal life to know God in Christ. It was eternal life to have fellowship with Him, and with the Father. For he was that eternal life, which was with the Father from everlasting, and was manifested in the fulness of time by his open incarnation. These saints had now present fellowship with Him. This might be interrupted, but it could never be broken off. It cannot but be suspended in the very article of death ; for there must be a momentary suspension of the senses and faculties, or death could not take place : yet this cannot put a stop to that blessed communion or to this fellowship : and on Christ's part, it can be no interruption, no not in death itself ; for he can have and hold communion with us, when we cannot with Him. This is a very comfortable consideration : all-sufficient to carry us above all fear and concern about any thing which may befall us in the article of dissolution. So the views of what we shall be, and enjoy of Christ, are a most blessed mean of excitation of our minds on the glory which is to be revealed in us. We are to see Christ face to face. We are to live in his immediate presence : to live with Him in his glory : to see Him face to face : to behold his glory : to live as He does : to have Him live in us : to dwell in us : to fill us with those joys, which flow from the throne of God, and himself, who is the Lord of glory. In whom, from whom, and by whom, all the glory of God is reflected on the minds of all the elect angels and saints. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life. We, us, you*

and myself, says *John*, are the very identical persons to whom this promise is made. We are the persons to whom all in it belongs. It is ours. We are those very *us*, to whom the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath promised eternal life, and this life is in his Son. We are already possessed of it. We have now the enjoyment of it in our own souls. We are looking forward for the fullest enjoyment of the same, and the very uttermost blessedness contained therein, by being admitted to the beatific vision of Christ in his glory, and to such personal communion with God in all his Persons and perfections as is suitable therewith. Thus the apostle closes this very particular part of his subject. We may well conclude it must have made a most blessed impression on their minds, and added weight to all the former subjects. This being drawing Truth into one great and grand focus, so as for the rays of it to shine fully and in its meridian on the whole church in Christ, in his kingdom of glory. It is in its whole design, transcendently glorious. Its impression on the saints could not but be in proportion to the views they received into their minds concerning the same. So it will be with us also. Therefore it becomes us to consider this. We cannot be impressed with Truth, but in proportion to our receiving the knowledge of it into our minds. We may admire Truth, but it is the true reception of the same into our minds, by which we only can be benefitted by it. May the Lord bless what hath now been delivered, if it please Him, and give you to receive the same into your minds, so as to apprehend and digest it, that you, mixing faith therewith, may grow thereby. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.
—I JOHN II. 26.

THE apostle being very affectionately concerned for, and disposed towards these saints to whom he here writes, is very desirous they should fully understand his motives for writing to them; especially on the foregoing subjects. It was not that he suspected their defection from the faith, or that they were not sufficiently instructed in the Truth, so as to be able to withstand every artifice of the enemies. No. He was fully persuaded of this. What he had written, was to set in a clear point of view the errors and heresies of those seducers they had to withstand. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* It is not because saints may be well taught and established in all the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel, that they are not to be written to, when errors and heresies abound; that they are not to be addressed on the peculiar articles of our most holy faith; that they are not to be addressed on those most momentous points; on the contrary, it is rather a reason why they should. When errors and heresies abound, such churches as are firmly grounded in the knowledge of Christ, are to

be informed of the same. The names, persons, and errors are to be pointed out, and what the particular evil in them consists in: we see this in what is here set before us. In the preliminary verses, we have the apostle speaking to these saints of their having heard that antichrist should come: that there were many antichrists at this time in the world. It was an evident proof the last hour of the apostolic age was come. He scruples not to decipher them, and their doctrines also. They went out from the true churches of Christ. They went forth with their pernicious tares, which they would, if possible, sow, and scatter, so as to disturb, and distress the Lord's beloved ones. In the whole conduct and doctrine of these apostates, it was manifest they never were of the true church of God: yet they had been numbered with them; but their going out from them, carried its own evidence with it, that they were not all of us, says *John*. To keep up the true and proper distinction, the apostle speaks out what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for these saints. He had bestowed the Holy Ghost upon them. They were led by Him into the knowledge of all Truth, so far as it was necessary for them: that he wrote to them in the full apprehension of this; not as if they did not know the Truth, but because they knew it: consequently they must be fully persuaded nothing contrary to the faith once delivered to the saints, could be truth. He sets before them who was a *liar*—That man who denied Jesus was the Christ, the true and only Messiah. He declares who is an antichrist—He is, who denieth the true and proper and distinct Personality of the Father, and the Son. He exhorts the saints to abide in this doctrine. He declares if they continued in what they had heard from the first preaching of the gospel unto them, this would be the case. He then comforts them with the assurance of eternal life. They had the promise of it; and they would in the Lord's time enjoy all contained in it, in the immediate presence of God, and the Lamb, in immediate communion with them, in a sight of the beatific vision, which will be transporting, and which will complete their blessedness for ever and ever. To these he says, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*. Which words are now to be the foundation for our present subject; which I will set before you in its divisions, and then fill up; in the which I hope to explain the same, and give you in so doing, real satisfaction, and information.

1. By observing the care of the apostle to preserve the saints from error. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*.

2. That all erroneous persons are *seducers*.

3. Who these aim and particularly desire to seduce. It is *you, saints*.

4. The only preservative from their seduction. This I shall shew to be contained in the sound knowledge of the Truth: for it is in this it is fixed by the apostle, in verse 20. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*. Thus you have the outline of the words, which I am to open as hath been expressed: and which I now enter upon.

1. By observing the care of the apostle to preserve the saints from error. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*.

To preserve the churches of Christ from error of every sort and kind,

was most certainly the great care of this, and all the apostles, in their particular directions, and as things fell out in the various parts to which they were destined. It was of the utmost importance to deliver the Truth to them : which once done, it was then the next great and most important matter to preserve and maintain it unadulterated amongst the people who had professedly received it. There could be no shadows if there were no substances. It is the reflection is the shadow. So with respect to the Truths of God, the reflections from these, and the false apprehension of these, are the causes of all the errors and heresies in the world. If there was no such doctrine as that of the blessed Trinity in the Bible, there would be no deniers and corrupters of that most sacred and ineffable mystery : yet there is nothing in the revelation of it, which causes the error about it : this comes wholly from men of corrupt minds, destitute and reprobate concerning the Truth. It is from the darkness of the unrenewed mind, and the influence of the devil on it, errors are conceived, received, lived in, and propagated. It is of dangerous consequence to receive into the mind any thing contrary to the truths of God revealed in the scripture. We are to take heed unto them. Not to preach nor receive any thing, word, or doctrine, but what is revealed in them. It becomes the churches of the saints to be very careful to preserve the Truth. So it also does the ministers of the churches, to hold forth the word of life, clearly, and exactly, as it is set before them in the word of truth. The apostle's care to preserve the saints from error, is fully expressed, by all which went before our text, and by all which follows, to the end of this very chapter, so that it supersedes the necessity of a recapitulation of it. He gives his reason here in my text why he wrote as he had unto them. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* What he must be immediately referring unto, must be the persons, and doctrines he had been setting before them. It appears from hence, that persons and errors are not to be concealed. They are, should, and ought to be expressed. Not only Truth, which alone can guard the mind from error, should be freely and fully stated and explained, that it may be fixed on the minds of the godly : but such errors as are, or may be, at any particular time, or place, and by any particular person, or persons broached, should be called up, and named, to the intent the church of God, may be guarded against, and preserved from the same. It is what some cannot bear, to hear errors detected and exposed. The reason is this—too many look on some of the most momentous truths of the gospel, but speculative points, which are of no real importance—that we should not be concerned so much about what is believed as about what persons are, in temper, life, walk, and character. I protest, men and brethren, I must hold up both my hands here, and against this. I do not look on one truth of the everlasting gospel as speculative—which may, or may not be believed. I do not conceive we can with the least safety to our own souls drop one of them. I conceive they form the whole of our knowledge of God. They contain all we are to believe concerning the everlasting love of God : the Person, grace and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ : as also what we are to believe of the Person, office, and work of the Holy Ghost. And we cannot give up one single atom of Truth, but we must be losers thereby, and the glory of God will also be broken in upon. The Truth of God is our *Magna-Charta*. It contains our salvation. It is the bread of life.

Our title to Christ, to heaven, and glory, is in it. I will freely confess, some truths are more clear to some, and other truths to others. I do not think all saints see alike, and are one equally with another, impressed with all Truth. No; I am speaking of my conceiving, that real saints, as such, are not for dropping any one truth made known in the Book of God: but are in their own spiritual minds, for knowing, and receiving all truths into their minds, that they may worship God, in receiving and believing the same. If Truth should be clearly stated in the ministry of the word of the gospel, errors should also be expressed and exposed: and it should be done to the glory of God: for the benefit of saints, and to the confutation of error, and heresy: and in so doing, zeal for the honour and glory of God's Truth is discovered, and love to the real saints of Christ also. Nor should any who profess the true gospel of our Lord and Saviour ever oppose it. One great end in the ministers of Christ, in and throughout every part of their ministry, should be to exalt His Person, to increase his fame, and make his Name glorious. It should ever be engraven on their minds, what the Lord saith, "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Our apostle had been speaking of the errors, and persons who propagated them in his day; and says to those he wrote unto, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*—To guard you from them—To preserve you from their seduction—To keep you in the faith: that my love for you might be manifested; my care for you appear: and that you might have a full proof of my sincere regard for you in Christ Jesus. It is much the same, for the spirit, subject, and meaning of it, with what he says in the ensuing chapter, "Little children, let no man deceive you:" and again in his 2nd Epistle, v. 7. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Here he joins such as denied Christ, such as insisted on it, the true Messiah had not been in the world, with a deceiver and an antichrist. Such an one being an adversary to our most precious and glorious Lord Jesus Christ. I would here repeat it, although it has been observed already, that one way in which the devil shewed his enmity against our Lord Jesus Christ, and his church, and beloved ones, and against his true gospel, was by corrupting the minds of some, who had made a solemn and declarative confession that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Christ, the very Messiah, of whom all the prophets wrote and spake, as the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Shiloh, the Prophet of whom *Moses* spake, who was to be like unto him, of whom the multitude when they saw the miracle which Jesus did, said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." John vi. 14. Of whom, and to whom, the Holy Ghost bore testimony on the day of Pentecost, that God had raised him from the dead, set Him at his own right hand, crowned Him with Glory and Power everlasting, and made him both Lord and Christ. Yet toward the close of the apostolic age, many there were, who audaciously denied our Christ to be the true and promised Messiah. This it might be, they attempted to build on the dethroning Him, as it respected his distinct Personality, in the infinite Essence, from the Father. Hence the apostle might well write these one with the other, as he does, when he asks the following question. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the

same hath not the Father : (but) he that acknowledgth the Son hath the Father also." Such an one, or such ones, were in *John's* day, deceivers, seducers, and antichrists. And if such are still to be found, they must be still the same. To guard the saints against these, the apostle wrote to the saints. He expressed and set before them who these persons were — what their errors and heresies consisted in : that they might avoid them, and have no sort of conversation with them. I would here observe, the apostle *Paul* says, " A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." It becomes us to avoid all erroneous men : to have no fellowship with them. It becomes us to avoid all conversation with them : to hear none of their preachments : none of their false doctrines : to read none of their books. There can be but one Truth : there may be many false interpretations about it ; but the whole system of Truth once delivered unto the saints can never alter. Let us therefore closely abide by the same. I proceed to my next particular, which is this :

2. To observe that all erroneous persons, are *seducers*. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.*

The apostle here expresses more the intent and design of these erroneous persons, than what they had really done. It was their design to seduce such and such from the true doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. By what He had said before, they could gain no ascendancy over these saints to whom the apostle writes. It was because *they had received an unction from the Holy One, and they knew all things*. But I am to speak of these antichrists, in the days of the apostle, as *seducers*. This is the term the apostle gives them : for in saying, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*, it is calling them by that name. If they aimed to seduce, they most certainly must be *seducers* : so that we may well acquiesce with the name given them. And there is that which is very important in the term : for these were seducers from the faith : from the doctrine of Christ : from all testified of and concerning Him, by all the prophets which had been, since the world began. What hath been briefly hinted before is sufficient to prove this : for as they disclaimed him as the true Messiah, the Sent One of God, and that he was not Personally, truly, and essentially one in the incomprehensible Essence with the Father ; this was all expressed, and contained in it, which was giving the lie to the whole Scriptures of Truth. To be *seducers* of this description must be to be *seducers* indeed ! Such, as no words can describe their sin. This must have been to be guilty of the unpardonable sin ; for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world, or in the world to come. If you read verses 18, 19, and verses 22, 23, you will not think, or say, I have laid on my colouring too thick : and should we ever arrive at the 8th verse of the ensuing chapter, I conceive we shall have awful evidence of the truth of all this. And if they were *seducers* from the Truth, and aimed to seduce the real saints and children of the most high God, from their faith in Christ, in the profession of the same, and from their close attachment unto Him, then they must have been the worst of seducers : so as no conception or thought, can convey any adequate idea of to our minds. Whilst I should conceive there will never any like these, arise up in the outward visible church of Christ ; because these, and their errors and heresies, were very particularly suited for the devil to express his implacable malice and hatred

by, against the Person of Christ; therefore he rose up such as denied His Godhead, His Personality, and Messiahship. And this was the grand error and heresy of that day. It may be these deceivers did not see so much into the devil's end and design in all this, as he himself did. Be that as it might, he worked with and by them, so as that he might, if possible, destroy the very foundation and fundamentals of the gospel. Whilst the essence of the same evil remains, in every doctrine which is contrary to the honour, glory, dignity, and truth of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God, and all who promote any sort of error, be it in doctrine, or worship, are seducers; yet they are variously diversified: and the term *seduce*, or *seducers*, should serve to put the children of God on their guard. I should conceive the term ought to convey this very idea to our mind—That they are all enemies to God, and Christ, and the Spirit—That they act very secretly, and with very great subtilty. How should they act otherwise? Seeing they are all under one and the same agency and influence. Their doctrines may be various; yet they are all deceitful. They may seem to be vastly different; yet they all unite in disfiguring the glorious plan of grace. The Arian robs Christ of his divinity. The Socinian denies the mediatorship of Christ. The Arminian robs the whole Trinity—The Father, of the glory of his grace, in his free and sovereign love, in choosing his people in Christ before the foundation of the world. They rob the Son of God, of the glory, perfection, and efficacy of his life and death. They rob the Holy Ghost of the glory due to him, for his efficacious grace. And the Antinomian, whom I conceive to be only an idealist, robs the eternal Three of their revealed glory, expressed in the scriptures of truth, by turning the whole of it, so as most completely to overset it, and to raise of it universal salvation for the whole human race. *Paul* hints of some, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Eph. iv. 14. These must have been *seducers*. And it was by their cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive, they gained and accomplished their end and design. He expressed his jealousy for the church of God at *Corinth* thus. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. In the same chapter, he speaks of “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” v. 13—15. All these must have been *seducers*. They must all have been in the apostle *John's* time, seeing he outlived all the apostles. Yet he was more particularly exercised with antichrist, as the other apostle was exercised with such as corrupted the doctrines of grace, and the ordinances of worship. Thus it is very plain that all erroneous persons are seducers: some to one party to pull down another: some set up one doctrine to set aside another: some one preacher to overset another. All which is only a spirit of contention; which in the general springs out of, and is the fruit of error. Now as in all ages, and throughout all past generations of the church, there

have been in the churches and out of the churches, antichrists and seducers, and the apostle tells us, evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived, let us be on our guard, that we be not overcome by them. Which brings me,

3. To set before you who these seducers aim, and particularly desire to seduce. It is *you* saints. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.*

It is the true saints the devil hates with an invincible hatred. On these he forms his particular attack, and most especially by these seducers. Hence he furnishes them with a spirit accordingly. They are in general cunning men; gifted ones; who are deep, subtle, sagacious; who can penetrate into the mind; are masters of argumentation; who with good works, and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. These get amongst the churches of Christ: they sometimes get into them; will when opportunity offers, ask questions concerning the most important truths in the gospel, as if they wanted light and further instruction into the same; whilst their whole intention is only to mark an opportunity to suggest some objection, hoping it will so operate on the minds of those they thus address, as will either cast them into confusion, or administer some doubts to the mind concerning such and such expressions; concerning the statement of such and such articles of faith—would it not be better it should be omitted? Were not these doubtful points? Could we not do as well without them? Were it not best to drop them altogether? It is by such sly insinuations as these, much evil is produced. In such an artful way as this, *seducers* lead off many from the Truth to believe a lie: and by carnal argumentation against the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, the faith of some is shaken, and the faith of others overturned. This is the case in the article of the Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity. Why, say *seducers*, who want, were it possible, to undermine this essential truth, can you tell us how three can be one, and one three? If you cannot, why would you have us to believe such an absurdity; surely we shall never be damned for not believing what we cannot apprehend—which is so absurd in itself, and which we are certain you cannot comprehend. In this way, these *seducers* from true belief in the doctrine of this great article of faith work, and hereby prejudice the mind against it, and thus convey their poison: which wholly consists in working on the mind by their subtle inventions, proposed in their own words and theories. The doctrine of the Trinity is the subject of revelation. It is a truth to be apprehended by faith: not to be comprehended by sense. There is no absurdity in it. We have a demonstration of it in the material system of the universe. The heavens in their three conditions, Fire, Light, and Air, are an outward display of the Essence and Personalities in Jehovah. The Essence of the heavens is one. It is a fluid body. Fire, light, and air, are the heavens in its three distinct conditions. These exist and coexist in one and the same essence, and in each other: yet they have each their respective and distinct properties. We understand the essence of fire, light, and air to be but one: yet we confess the properties of fire, light, and air to be distinct. So that here we believe one in three, and three in one; yet we do not believe that three are one, and one three in any way contrary to sense and rationality. We believe the Godhead to be but One, and that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, exist, and coexist in that incomprehensible

Essence. And they are in Jehovah the Self-Existing Essence one and the same. Now this is not believing they are One in Three and Three in One, in a way of contradiction. We believe they are Three in One, and One in Three thus—That Jehovah, the name for the incomprehensible Essence is Essentially One—That the Persons in the Essence, though essentially one with the Essence, are Personally distinct—That the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost the Father or the Son; but that they are Personal Subsistencies in the Godhead, and their Subsistencies are as eternal as Godhead itself. So that we do not believe three to be one, nor one to be three, in any way of contradiction, no not even to reason itself. We only believe the Lord to be One. And that the Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are, as distinct and distinguished by their personal relations to each other, Three. “There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” These *seducers* will at times insinuate, as though we laid all the stress of religion on persons’ believing such doctrines, and they were perfectly safe if they did so. This is also insinuated to corrupt the Truth as it is in Jesus. We do esteem a sound creed. I do indeed: yet I do not conceive that believing all the doctrines of grace, is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation. We cannot believe on Jesus Christ, without the doctrine of Christ: yet we may rest in the theory to the neglect of the substance. I conceive the doctrine of grace, and the grace part of the doctrine are very distinct. We are first made new creatures in Christ, before we can have the faculty of believing: and this faculty must be enlightened, and opened, before we can believe. Nor can we believe, but as we have clear views from the word and Spirit, of what we are to believe. It is the word in which the object and subject of faith is revealed. It is the Holy Spirit shining on the revelation made of Christ, and salvation in the word, is the mean by which he reflects the true apprehension of the same on our minds. It is by his enlightening our minds herewith, that he gives us true and proper apprehensions and perceptions of the same: so that hereby, Christ and his salvation, and what we believe of Him and his most glorious finished work, hath its real existence in us. Christ is hereby in us, both objectively, and subjectively. He is formed in us. He lives in us. He dwells in us. He makes his abode in us. Whilst this is all reality, yet we have, in this our day, such *seducers*, as would fain call all this into question: some, by calling it enthusiasm; others, by saying this is to deny the work of the Spirit; whilst others would by no means admit it could be so, merely because it is no part of their experience: and some, because they clearly perceive, there is nothing which they ventilate as truth, hath the least tendency to promote the least atom of this, in the mind of any of their hearers. Beloved, they are very miserable days we live in: and they will be worse. There are such as I would forbear calling *seducers*, yet most certainly it is, and they themselves make it evident, they are more concerned for their own glory, than they are for the Lord’s. If the people are but pleased with them, and their nostrums, all is well. They are not concerned for the Truth: nor for the purity of Truth: nor to build the people up in the Truth. Their greatest aim is creature affection, and self-admiration, and applause: and this always brings the true gospel of Christ into contempt: and such as preach it are spoken of in an undermining way: any and every thing which may

serve to lessen them in the esteem of their hearers is brought forward; it is freely and falsely reported: all this goes down for a season, until such as look at them narrowly, see there is no truth in one half of it; and sometimes find these defamers are in their own persons, and tempers, by many degrees more faulty than those very persons they have been so very active in criminating. As all *seducers* are dangerous persons, and as they most especially mean, if possible to seduce the people of God, and lead off their minds from the Truth, so the people of God are to be guarded against them. We may therefore see the propriety of the apostle's saying, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* It is you saints, these *seducers* have their eye upon; they would if it were possible beguile you: they would fain work on your minds: they would get you to hear them: that you might see and take notice of their astonishing gifts and greatness. I would here ask, is it not so with all dissemblers and seducers? Are not their gifts their commendations? And, what are their gifts? Just like themselves: they all savour of themselves: they consist in crying up themselves, and crying down the true ministers of Jesus Christ; and this is done with so much pious fraud and cunning, that it is not always discernable. It is kept up by some of these for years together; so that sometimes the very lambs of Christ's fold, are overcome by them and think they never heard any thing like unto it: which gives room and reason, for breaking forth, and saying in the words of the apostle unto such, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Gal. iii. 1. But I hasten on to enter on my last particular,

4. To set before you the only preservative, from the seduction of all these *seducers*. For if they were addressed, and asked for in their own names, it must be confessed they might well say, our name is *Legion*; for we are many. So they are indeed. And these in our day, have so many different creeds, that none, no not one of them holds exactly alike. Now the apostle says, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 4—6. The best preservative from all seduction, and from all seducers from the Truth, is the sound knowledge of the Truth; for it is in this it is fixed by the apostle, v. 20. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." It was by this means these saints to whom our apostle wrote, were preserved from the seducers, and their seducements.

It was on this he founded his exhortation, exciting them to continue in the Truth. Which if they did, they would continue in the doctrine of the Son, and of the Father, and have and enjoy all contained in the promise of eternal life, in communion with the Son, and with the Father on earth, and also in heaven. This was the foundation of his writings to them concerning these *seducers*—To give them to understand there could be no better way of overcoming them, than to avoid all communion and communication with them, and to persevere in the truths of the everlasting gospel, which they had heard, received, and been established in. Here we have reason to complain, very few preach the whole doctrine of the gospel, in all its parts and branches, in all its causes and effects, in all its bearings and dependencies: yet there can be no better

furniture for the spiritual mind than the right and clear apprehension of this. Our preservation from error lies here. So that if the hearers and professors of the glorious gospel of Christ, were but truly and rightly instructed in the great and fundamental doctrines of grace, and apprehended them to be the architectural pillars which sustain and bear up the whole building and superstructure of what we call Truth, they would most clearly know and understand, whatsoever that is, let its appearance be as it may, which weakens Truth, makes way for shaking the whole connected with it. We have for these very many years past, been more for what we call experience, than for the true knowledge of the doctrines of Christ, and for the ordinances of Christ. And we now live to see the fruit and effect of this. We find very few have so much as the very theory of Truth. The preaching Doctrinally is dropt. Nothing goes down but preaching practically and experimentally. Thus the great truths of the everlasting gospel have been brought into contempt. Beloved, Popery is most assuredly making very great progress in our land. It is very probable it will most awfully prevail. If it does, neither you, I, nor any one will be able to overcome it by any experience of our own. No. Indeed we cannot overcome it, but by the doctrines of grace, which as they give us clear conceptions of the whole counsel of God, so these being received into our minds, by the light, teaching, and grace of the Holy Spirit, they produce in us, such an experience of the truth and efficacy contained in them, as makes us strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. What we want in the churches of Christ in our day, is men of truth. Who are valiant for the Truth. Who can cut the very sinews of error and heresy : and as champions for Truth, wield the two-edged sword, to a very good purpose. It is not producing a set and number of scriptures, is either opening the great articles of our most holy faith, or defending them, any more than naming Christ ever so frequently is preaching him. No. It is not. We want such as can open every truth in the Bible : unveil the glorious mysteries of God's everlasting love : the Person and royalties of Christ, God-Man : who can express and declare his heart and bowels of love and mercy : who can set forth the glories of his Righteousness and Salvation : who can present him in all his Robes, with the crown-royal on his head ; with all the blessings of Salvation in his fulness ; with all his enemies, Sin, Satan, Death and Hell beneath his feet ; and the saying, Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else. It is such as these we want in the churches in this very present day. And it is only such as these, who can ministerially trample down error, and preserve the churches from heresies. It is such as these only, who can build up the saints, joint them rightly into their proper sockets, as members of churches should be, so as that they may become an holy temple in the Lord. It is by such alone, that saints can be ministerially established in Christ, in Truth, in Church order, in the fellowship of saints, and walk before the Lord unto all well pleasing. You shall have the apostle *Paul's* judgment of this, in his own words, and his words also with which he introduceth it. " And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him : Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in

the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily :” or, Personally. The whole of this is worthy of being looked over and over, again and again, and I think it is quite to the point we are upon, and for the which it was brought. It is Truth, well founded and stated, just as it is recorded in the word : and it should be confirmed by the same, and all should be bottomed on it. This would be more satisfactory to the spiritual mind, than any other way of treating the subject whatsoever. Truth is mighty and must prevail. It is the honour of God in his truth we stand up for. Not for our own ; nor to shew how ably we can defend it ; nor to let others see how skilful we are in the word of righteousness ; nor for the sake of triumphing in carrying our own cause. No : none of these things are looked at : the Lord forbid they should. It is the honour of the Lord is sought : and that in the maintaining and defending his own truths : as his own manifestative glory lies in them, and comes out of them, as also the good and benefit of his people. It is too little considered, that to pass by in a careless way and manner, any truth in the word of God, let the pretence for it, be what it may, is to cast disrespect on God himself, who is the fountain of Truth, and the author thereof. There are some truths we conceive to be of eternal importance. It becomes us to be very clear in the knowledge of these : to abide by these : to stand fast in the belief of them. This is the only preservative from seduction, and *seducers*. For they generally attack such as they conceive to be wavering, doubtful, and uncertain ; they generally make their attempts on such : being fearful they shall be manfully and as the common phrase is, masterly overcome by such as are more established. There is a truth in this. There are some saints who have hearts like lions, and can through spiritual skill, sling stones from, and use the bow and quiver of, God’s most holy word, in defence of the truths of the everlasting gospel, and also against the enemies of it, to an hair’s breadth and not miss. Such are worthy of being most highly esteemed. And had it not been for the writings of such as these, and which we now inherit, we should not have had Truth so clearly preserved, and so properly secured to us, as it now is. Let us bless God for the same, and seek grace from Him to improve it. We shall all be called upon, to stand up for one particular truth in our day and generation. Let that truth be what it may, it cost the blood of Christ to publish it. He also sealed the truth of it, and confirmed it with his own most precious bloodshedding. Let us therefore value it, and study it down from the word of God ; and seek to be rooted in it from an increasing light into it from thence ; we shall most assuredly find our account therein. It will be the mean of our being rooted and stablished in the same. The apostle says, “ Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” That is with, and in the doctrine of grace. Heb. xiii. 9. Beloved, we ought to think, and treat with reverence every truth of God. It being of more worth than ten thousand worlds. We ought to seek after such a knowledge of it, as will be the instrumental means, of our having communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost thereby. It is by this we are preserved from all, and every thing which is opposite to us, and serves to prejudice our minds

against it; nor is it a small mercy to be kept in the Truth. Our apostle says to the well beloved *Gaius*, "I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." 3 Epis. v. 3, 4. We cannot stand fast in the belief of God's everlasting love to us, in Christ Jesus, but as we abide by the doctrine of eternal election: neither can we abide in the belief of Christ, that He is ours, that we are His, and are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation, but as we abide by the doctrine of this, as recorded and revealed, and set before us in the sacred word. All our true belief of Christ, and our trust and confidence in Him, must be founded upon what is revealed of Him in the sacred scriptures: hence our Lord said to the people of the Jews in the days of his flesh, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." John v. 39. The scriptures are the sole foundation of all we are to think, speak, and believe, as essential to our salvation. Christ is the sum and substance of them. The Holy Ghost is alone the true Interpreter of them: and the revelation made in them, of the nature, life, blessedness, and glory of Godhead, set before us in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is manifested in the God-Man, is the one and only foundation of the whole contained in, and throughout the same. May the Lord the Spirit give us to see the truth of this. It will be our preservative from every sort and kind of error. It is a blessed thing to be on the search for Truth, and to be seeking to be also established therein. But let the Bible be the book, and what is contained therein the one only ground and standard: so far as it is, we shall not fail of having true and right apprehensions thereof. For it is by it the Holy Spirit inspires the regenerated people of God, and leads them into all truth necessary for them to know, and keeps them from error and heresies. May he teach us Truth, and keep us from error. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.—1 JOHN II. 27.

THE apostle had before shewn how these saints had been preserved from errors. It was owing to their having received an Unction from the Holy One. He here declares how they would be continued in the Truth, through the same Unction remaining in them. Christ had shed the Holy Ghost. He had imprinted divine truth on their minds. He had set it on with his own broad seal on their hearts. They were fully acquainted with the same. So that they needed not to be taught these things afresh by any man. Not that they were above and beyond the ordinance of

preaching. No; that they were not. As believers in Christ they needed to be exhorted and warned, to persevere in the Faith, and to avoid errors and heresies: yet as they had the true Anointing, which teacheth, who is the Spirit, and there can be no sort or kind of error or heresy in any part of what He is pleased to enlighten, and influence the minds of his people with, so he gives to all to whom he pleases such spiritual wisdom and judgment, as is sufficient to preserve them from falsehood and deception respecting the truths of the everlasting gospel, and to prevent them from receiving what may be termed lying vanities. As these persons had been taught by the Holy Ghost, so the apostle comforts them, with the assurance that they should abide in Christ, and hold out, and continue in the Truth even to the end. This is the outline of the text, which I will aim to set before you under the following particulars.

1. What the apostle says to these saints by way of encouragement, which is this. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.*

2. That these persons needed not any man's teaching; and in what sense this is to be understood. *And ye need not that any man teach you.*

3. That they were so taught as to be preserved from error. *But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

4. I will endeavour to express the benefit of abiding in Christ, or in the Truth, the one being here equal with the other. I conceive in going over these particulars, the substance of the text will be unfolded. May the Lord be pleased to shine, and bless, and guide me through the same. Even so, Amen. I am

1. To set before you, what the apostle says to these saints, by way of encouragement: which is this. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.*

Nothing could exceed this. They needed encouragement, at a time, when many were leaving the churches and ministers to whom they belonged: when many were come out of the true churches, and had cast off their profession of the true gospel, and had corrupted it; and were employed in speaking lies, in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with an hot iron: for such must have been the case with those apostates who were the antichrists in *John's* day. Now whilst the saints were not in the least danger from them, they being taught and guided by the infallible Spirit of God; yet they needed to be encouraged, and confirmed in the Truth. It is therefore they are here thus addressed. The apostle speaks all out to them, and sets all before them which could possibly contribute unto this: it is one way, pursued by all the sacred writers—They all are for comforting, strengthening, and encouraging the church and people of the Lord, let their personal, or church trials be what they may; and this, as is altogether suited to them. It is evidently so here: what could have been more suited to the case of these saints here addressed, than what the apostle here expresseth? He had warned them of there being many antichrists, of many who were adversaries to Christ. This naturally involved with it, the necessity there was, these saints should be on their guard against them. What could defend them, so as they might not, nor should be carried away with the error of the wicked, and so fall from their own steadfastness, but their being fully and thoroughly established in the Truth? It must have been esteemed by

them of real importance, and what could not but yield satisfaction to their minds, to know what the apostle's own thoughts were concerning them. This he here gives them. And he does this in a very satisfactory way and manner in the words before us. He would have them to know and be fully satisfied they were most truly and divinely illuminated. That they had received their instruction and light into the sublime mysteries of the everlasting gospel from Christ, through the unction of his Holy Spirit. That this unction was altogether without any mixture. It was true and genuine. They could not possibly imbibe any error from it, because it was wholly, and altogether without mixture of any error in, or with it. And what they had received from Christ continued with them: so that there was no kind of danger of their being led off the Truth as it was in Jesus, in consequence of any thing which could start up, and be proposed by the antichrists of that day. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.* Christ is the *him*, here spoken of. He is the Holy One. The Holy Spirit descends from Him. It is He who communicates Him, in his gifts and graces to his members. These saints had received him. He had taught them the true knowledge of Christ, and of the Father in Him. It was from Him alone, they had received the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—How they stood in Personal relation to each other in the infinite Essence: not so as to comprehend it, but so as to believe and acknowledge it; as this was cleared up unto them, as they were led into the acknowledgment of the same, by the scriptural and right apprehensions given them thereof, as clearly discovered by the transactions of the Holy Trinity on their behalf in the Person of Christ for them, and in the transactions of the Father with Christ, on their behalf. What light and knowledge of these deep and profound mysteries of grace, they had been taught concerning these things, in which the life, and everlasting salvation of their souls consisted, remained in them, and with them. The anointing which ye have received of Christ, abideth in you. It is by this you are what you are: and by this you will ever remain to be what all others are not. Now, I would have you, says the apostle, know this for your comfort and encouragement. I have written to you concerning the *seducers* of the present age: concerning those that attempt to seduce you; they cannot; their attempts on you are altogether in vain, and fruitless. The reason of it is this—you are better taught. Your instruction is wholly divine. Christ himself hath taught you: and that since his glorious ascension into heaven. He hath poured out of his Spirit upon you. He hath shed his Spirit richly on you. He hath sent his Holy Spirit into your hearts. He hath formed you as a people for his praise. You have from him received the Unction which teacheth all things; which abideth in you, and with you. And this is allsufficient and effectual: so as that hereby ye know all things, are led into all necessary truth; are built up and established in the same; and have the same holy Inspirer remaining and abiding with you. This is your present case, and I cannot but rejoice in it; and encourage you from it. As there cannot be a greater evidence of your being the Lord's, and of your having been brought nigh unto Him by the blood of the Lamb; I therefore say unto you, by way of excitement and encouragement, and also to distinguish you from all other professors, and such as have been carried away by the false brethren and antichrists of the present day, *But the anointing which ye have received of him abid-*

eth in you. This is an invaluable blessing. It cannot be too highly esteemed. The worth of it exceeds all conception. It transcends all praise. It may not be here unacceptable to recite and shew the connection of these words with the former, going back to the 24th verse. Where the apostle says, *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. You have here the whole connection and coherence of the text; which I am very fond of: because I conceive it reflects light on the text itself. It most assuredly in this before us, serves as full proof and evidence of what the apostle had declared. These persons were most blessedly illuminated. The Lord had fulfilled his new covenant promise in them, and unto them, and hereby proved them to be his beloved and chosen ones. It had pleased the Lord to say to his church by the mouth of his servant *Jeremiah*, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." chap. xxxi. 33, 34. In the fulfilment and realization of this unto them, the Lord had wrought his work so effectually within them, and upon them, that they were partakers of the divine nature; as *Peter* styles it: 2 Epis. i. 4. In which, everlasting life, with all the seeds and principles of grace and holiness were contained. They were also instructed so effectually by the Holy Spirit's teaching, as to know every thing which was necessary to their salvation. Our Lord before his Passion, and after that, and before his ascension into his kingdom of glory, said to his apostles—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 16, 17:—"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." John xvi. 13. Now this having been fulfilled at the very commencement of the church, immediately upon, and at, the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and many of these saints having most richly enjoyed this divine benediction, as the apostle also had, he might well say to these, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things:" and as he does in the words now before us. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* Let our Lord's words as they have been quoted, and our text be compared with them, and the one is the foundation of the other, and they mutually explain each other: and serve to give us the

true meaning of the text. The Spirit bestowed by the Lord Jesus Christ; on these persons, together with his own divine unction, or teaching, which they had received from Him, it abode with them. This was evident in their abiding by what he had taught them. They esteemed the Person of Christ. They believed and professed the same of him which they had from the beginning: so they did of the Father also. So that they were stedfast in the Truth, and not to be shaken from it, by any errors or heresies, let them arise from whatsoever men, or quarters they might: yet the apostle would have them sensible from whence this originated, and unto whom they were indebted for all this—It was to Christ their Holy One, and His Spirit which had anointed and consecrated them to be the Lord's, who had led them into the knowledge of all Truth, and also established them in the same. And this brings me to my next particular which is this,

2. To shew these persons needed not any man's teaching, and in what sense this is to be understood. *And ye need not that any man teach you.*

If these persons were taught of God, agreeable to his promise in the 31st chapter of *Jeremiah*, which hath been already quoted, and which for the refreshment of our memories I will recite as it is mentioned by the apostle *Paul* in the 8th chapter of his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he says, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." v. 10—12: now as this is a new-covenant promise which belongs to gospel times, and which was most gloriously fulfilled to the apostles, and the church of Christ, when the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, and these persons were then led into all truth, so it may, as thus considered, be thus expressed, *And ye need not that any man teach you.* And so have a very and most especial regard to the express words of the promise; "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother," &c. and this having been so punctually fulfilled, that it was immediately from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost these persons had been taught, it might be the reason why the apostle thus expressed himself in the words before us, *And ye need not that any man teach you.* It could not be with any design to cast off all preaching and ordinances which are for the spiritual instruction of the people of the Most High God. The gifts which our Lord Jesus Christ, since he entered into heaven, hath bestowed, and still continues to bestow on his ministering servants, are expressly said to be for the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. iv. 12, consequently our apostle does by no means intend the setting these aside. No; he does not. He only intends to point out the honour Christ had conferred on these persons. Many of these were favoured with the extraordinary illumination of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, so that Christ was so fully revealed in them, and had been realized, and testified of to their minds, as they could not but believe on Him, and abide by Him as the true Messiah, the Son of God which was spoken of by all the prophets in the

scriptures of truth, and who had been manifested to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Others of them, had been fully convinced of all declared by the holy apostles concerning Him, as the Christ of God, that they needed no man to speak unto them concerning these essential, immutable, and eternal verities. In the which view of the subject, we must all confess the propriety of what the apostle says, *And ye need not that any man teach you*: that Christ had been incarnate—That he was the true Christ, the Son of the living God—That he was testified of, and borne witness unto, by the Father and Holy Ghost. Whilst in his incarnate state, at his Baptism, Transfiguration, immediately before his Passion—at his Death—Resurrection—Ascension, Glorification, Coronation; and by the Father and Spirit on the day of Pentecost; these persons were so fully instructed into the knowledge of all this, they needed no man's teaching concerning these great and grand subjects: They had received their knowledge into these most grand, divine, and essential truths, from Christ himself, by the immediate teaching of the Holy Ghost. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you.* They might need, they must have needed to be put in remembrance of this. They must also have needed to be put in remembrance of the same, over and over again. They needed continual confirmation in the same, and to abide in Christ, and the doctrine and profession of his truth: yet they needed not to begin anew, as if they had not known Christ; for they could never know Christ more truly and apprehensively, though they might more comprehensively. I conceive I have done the text justice; which at all times I would most certainly aim at. And I should like to have every scripture to be considered as true in the very letter of it, as well as in the substance of the same. Not, it may be, that we can always see it, and make it so clear as to give full satisfaction. Such of the Lord's people as are brought to the knowledge of Christ, it is from the word, and by the Spirit, they receive this knowledge into their minds: where this is truly the case, they know Christ as truly as they ever will even in heaven. Not so fully, nor so immediately, nor so comprehensively; I am not speaking on these subjects, I am speaking of the realities contained in these subjects. Some, as one most justly expresses it, do not want Christ to be preached unto them; they want Christ to be formed in them. Now Christ must be first preached and believed in, or he cannot be received into our minds: and then the Holy Ghost giving us a clear apprehension of Him, as set before us in the everlasting gospel, he forms him in our hearts: then He becomes our *All in All*. Many persons say, they want to know Christ. I must for myself say, I do not. Many startle when they hear me so express myself; yet there is no cause for the same. My friends, I know Christ as really and truly as I ever shall: I shall ever be aiming to know Him more fully, more spiritually, more comprehensively: yet this is not to know Him more truly. If you do not make these distinctions, I do. I can trust on Christ no farther than I know Him. If I did not know Him in his mediatorial Person, love, office, work and power; I could not, nor would I, trust my present and everlasting concerns with Him. It is what I know of Him, from the gospel of his grace, and the teachings of his Spirit, who hath revealed Him in me, is the only ground of all my faith and confidence in Him. We shall all need the continual teaching and inspiration of his Spirit, all

the way to heaven: yet we who are brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ shall never need any new truths, or revelations of Him. No; indeed we shall not; neither can it be. We shall need fresh light into the same truths: we shall need fresh sights and communions with the same most precious Lord Jesus: we shall need the continual renewings of the Holy Ghost: yet the whole of this, is only a very blessed recital of the same truths and subjects. We know Christ; we go on and increase more and more in the knowledge of Christ; we increase more and more in real communion with the Lord Jesus: but we need no new acquaintance or apprehensions of Him, we only want the Holy Ghost continually to re-inscribe in our minds, what he hath already taught us, and to exercise our minds most blessedly on the same: then we have all we can have, this side heaven. The Lord's people will never get to be above the use of ordinances, let them be ever so established, strengthened, and confirmed in Christ. He hath promised his presence to his ministers, and churches in the use and observation of them to the end of the world. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Now were these ordinances to be discontinued, Christ would not have given this promise of his Spirit, blessing, and presence. And none set a more true and proper value on all, and every part of instituted worship, than grown, established saints: so that whilst it may be said to them, *Ye need not that any man teach you*, yet there are none of a more teachable spirit, or more willing to be taught, even of man, than these are, so far as is consistent with the word and truth of God. And we cannot be partakers of a greater blessing than to be taught by the Spirit, and led into the true knowledge of the Father and the Son; for *who teacheth like him?* None; in what sense these persons, *John* here addresseth, needed not any man's teaching, I have aimed to set before us: as also how these words are to be understood, I have shewed you; I will now just join the whole of the period together, hoping thereby the full light of the same, may shine forth, and reflect its whole brightness on your minds. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you.* What Christ had taught them, remained in them; so did the holy Teacher, and his teaching also. Hence it was, in the sense as hath been expressed and explained, they needed not that any man should teach them. And this brings me

3. To shew that these persons were so taught, as to be preserved from error. *But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him, or it:* for so it is in the margin, referring back to the word *truth*. *But as the same anointing teacheth you of things, and is truth—ye shall abide in it:* that is, in the truth of the everlasting gospel, or Christ who is the substance of the same. In going throughout our present head, we will take in both.

Truth is the alone preservative from error: these saints were taught by the infallible Spirit: they were taught all things. Our apostle seems to have fixed his eye on these words of Christ, who said to his disciples, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." This had been fulfilled, and these very persons were partakers of the benefit: they had the

true Anointing : they needed not to be taught by any man, as if he could bring any truth to them they were not fully acquainted with. The anointing abode upon them, and with them. It, says the apostle, teacheth all things ; which is the very expression our Lord himself useth, in the words just quoted from Him. There is no error, nor the least possibility of it, in the teaching of the Holy Spirit : what he teacheth is truth. It is wholly, and nothing but truth : as these persons had been taught the Truth by the Lord the Spirit, so it was certain they would abide in the Truth, even in Christ ; and also in the truths and in every truth, of the everlasting gospel. Thus the apostle expresseth himself to these saints on the subject of their continuance in the faith, and perseverance in the same. They knew the Truth : they had received it from the Lord Jesus Christ. He had given them his Holy Spirit who had led and guided them into all Truth : and who was engaged according to the Divine settlements, to keep them in the Truth, and to abide with them for ever. It is on this the apostle both exhorts and encourages them : and it is only on the same foundation we can encourage each other, and thereby go on with alacrity to the city of habitation. It is of great importance to be thus taught of the Lord. It produces many most blessed effects within us. His divine teaching abideth with us : we cannot wholly lose it. He sets it on with his own divine impression. He gives us to see and view it in his own light : by the which the glory of it is so reflected on our minds, as that we cannot reflect, by any communication we may make of it to others, the full glory and splendour we see in it ourselves. When we see the glory of Christ, the excellency of his righteousness, the virtue and efficacy of his blood and sacrifice, in the light, and are led into the true knowledge and apprehension of the same, by the intuitive light and teaching of the Holy Spirit, the whole of these important verities appear far more glorious, and important, than all these do, when only spoken of, and taught us by the mere teaching of men. And while we are not to despise the teaching of men, so far as it is in real unison and conformity to the written and revealed word, and will of God, yet it is the unction, or teaching of the Holy Ghost, which only can make the outward teaching and preaching of the gospel profitable unto our souls : for it is he only who can lead us into the life-giving sense of it, and give us, and make us partakers of, the life-giving meaning of it, so as that we may be quickened up into real communion with the Lord thereby. Such as the Lord the Spirit teacheth, he gives them to distinguish truth from error. He keeps them in the Truth, and hereby he preserves them from error. He gives them to value Truth as truth. He gives them to know, the scriptures are the sacred and grand repository of all Truth—That Christ is the Jewel in this glorious cabinet—That in Him are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—All which is set before us, in the ever-blessed gospel. It should here be observed, that whilst no man is to be looked on as infallible, nor any, or every thing he says to be so, yet every one, so far as he hath received the knowledge of the Truth, or, any one single truth into his mind, as the Lord the Spirit hath taught it him, so far he is infallibly taught. Which most especially appears, when the Truth and the person's spiritual apprehensions of the same, are altogether congenial with the written word. For whatsoever we receive for Truth into our minds, which is not exactly as the word of God expresses and states it, is not the teaching of

the Spirit of God. It may be for this reason, the apostle here says, *and ye need not that any man teach you*. Alluding to the false teachers in that day; some of whom denied that Christ was come in the flesh; others, who denied the Personality of the Son, by the which they denied the Personality of the Father also. Now these saints had been taught the truth of Christ's incarnation, and his distinctive Personality from the Father, and this by the Unction which they had received from Christ himself, consequently they did not want to learn this from any man. The truth of this always remained in their minds. It abode within them: and all connected with the same, and belonging thereto, it was all incorporated in their renewed minds, by the Anointing which they had received from the Holy One. Let us see if this is not the substance of our text, by reciting it afresh. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* Christ the Person spoken of by the term, *him*, is *yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever*. His own promise is like himself, immutably the same. He shed his Holy Spirit, the true Unction on his Church; which abideth for ever. This was agreeable with his promise. Hereby it was his Church, and the true members of the same, knew the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest. They had the Spirit's teaching first, and man's teaching afterwards. The same most blessed anointing they had received, led them into all truth. The Holy Ghost taught them all things. He was Truth. The Spirit of Truth. He led them into all Truth. He guided them into it. There was not the least possibility of mistake in any of his communications of Truth unto them. This amongst the blessings of his teaching is one—that as they had been taught by Him, the true knowledge of Christ, so through the same Teacher, and teaching they should abide in Christ; which the apostle is confident of. He speaks it out unto them for their comfort and encouragement, and that they might be confident in the same also. In the margin, the word is *it*: *ye shall abide in it*. Which, if the word *it*, be admitted, must then refer to the truths of the everlasting gospel, to each and every one of them, as these are set before us in the word of God, as they are particularly stated in the mind and will of God: therefore from the greatest to the least of them, they must be of vast importance to each, and every one of the children of the Most High. And consequently to be assured and confirmed in the belief of a continuation in them, by this assertion from the apostle, must have been very acceptable to the saints here written unto. Christ is the substance of the everlasting gospel, and every truth contained in it, is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The love of the Holy Trinity, with their vast designs of grace towards the whole election of grace, are explained, unfolded, and expressed in the whole, and throughout the whole system of divine truth, which we most commonly express by the term, the doctrines of grace: which the Holy Spirit only, can lead into the true knowledge of, give us true light, and right spiritual apprehensions of; so as that we may receive Christ by them into our minds, have real communion with Him, and the Father in Him, in the knowledge of these, by the grace of the Spirit: and thus be established in Christ, and in the doctrines of his grace, so as to abide in Him, and in his truth, and not to depart therefrom. Which brings me to my next and last particular—

4. To endeavour to express the benefit of abiding in Christ, or in the Truth, the one being here equal with the other. *Ye shall abide in him.* I will once more repeat the text. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

I have done my best in going over, and through the former heads of my discourse, and hope the Lord will be pleased to guide me through this with equal satisfaction. Our apostle seems here, to have our Lord's words and exhortation in view. He said to his disciples in his last sermon with them, immediately before his Passion, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John xv. 4, 5, 7. All of this is very congenial with our text. Such as have received the true anointing, they abided in the truth, and the truth abideth in them. The teaching they have received they can never lose. They have received the knowledge of all things necessary to their salvation. What the Holy Ghost hath taught them, and every truth they have received from Him, is as true as he himself is, which is the teacher of the same. This being the case, they shall abide in it, agreeable to his teaching: so that all this is positively asserted by the apostle. Ye shall abide in Him; this the apostle asserts shall be the case with all those who are taught of the Spirit. It cannot be otherwise: for as the new-birth in the soul is immutable, so the faculties of it, being opened, enlightened, and taught the truths of the everlasting gospel, by the Holy and infallible Spirit, it must be, that what is received from Him into the spiritual mind, must abide therein for ever. Not that it is always alike operative; yet it is always remaining therein: so that when the Holy Spirit is pleased to breathe afresh, there is an outgoing of heart and soul, of thought and affection toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father in Him. To abide in Christ is to continue in the true faith and confession of Him; and of all which concerns Him—His truths, his ordinances, his worship, and the right confession of Him. To abide in Christ, is to persevere in the truths of Christ's everlasting gospel, and to continue in it unto the end. And there is abundance of real blessedness, contained in this. It is the very *coronis* of manifestative and influential grace. To know the Person of Christ,—it is the greatest blessing which can be made known to us, or which we can enjoy, this side heaven: for the knowledge of the Person of Christ, is the key which unlocks all other mysteries: none of which are rightly and spiritually understood, except his Person, who, and what He is, is first taken into the mind. And this knowledge wholly springs from revelation; "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost:" and the stedfastness of our faith and dependance on Him, depend on our true and right knowledge of Him. We prove we abide in Him, when we are contented with the revelation made of Him in the word: and when we are well pleased, to receive all our real apprehensions, and increasing views of Him, from the same immutable record

concerning Him; this is good evidence for us, that we are taught of the Spirit, and that we abide in Christ; for it proves to demonstration, that we are satisfied with what we know of Him. It does our souls good. It draws out our hearts and souls after Him. He becomes our centre and circumference. We see and perceive by the knowledge and light let in upon our minds concerning Him, there is that in the Person of the God-Man, which will satisfy our spiritual minds to, and throughout the ages of, eternity.

Now to abide in the views, belief, and spiritual apprehensions of Christ, so as by this very mean to be fixed on Him, and not depart herefrom, must be in and of itself, real blessedness: and as there can be no abiding in Christ, but as there is an abiding in the truths of the everlasting gospel, which is what Christ is, immutably one and the same for evermore; so both are included here. And the blessedness of knowing the Truth, and abiding in the same, is very advantageous to the spiritual mind. To abide in the doctrine of God's act of eternal election, is to continue in the belief of the Father's everlasting love to the persons of the elect, whom he loved in Christ, and chose in Christ, and blessed in Christ, and accepted in his Person before the foundation of the world. There is a blessedness in knowing this, as truths and doctrines of the grace of God, which have their existence in his mind, and which have been put forth towards us, and upon us, which can never be fully comprehended in our minds, no, not in heaven: because the love of the Eternal Three, in Christ, to the Elect in Him, is infinite; and the minds of the whole election of grace, are but finite. Therefore when they are filled through and through with the utmost comprehension of it, the infinite love of God towards them in the Person of Christ, will never be known by them in the uttermost of it: yet what they know of it, and enjoy of the same in their minds, will constitute their complete blessedness and felicity to eternity. So that in proportion to what they know of the same now, their blessedness is, as it respects their real communion with the Eternal Three, in Christ, in God's everlasting love to them, and as it concerns their real enjoyment of the same in their own souls. It is therefore the essence of blessedness, to abide in Christ—To be living over in our minds, what is revealed of Him, and concerning Him, in the sacred word of revelation: we hereby more sensibly enjoy the blessedness of this, than it is in our power to explain. Nay, I am fully persuaded, there are many blessed outgoings of the mind after Christ, many very blessed apprehensions and conceptions formed in the same, by the grace and influences of the Holy Ghost, concerning Christ, and what the Father is to us, in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, which cannot be spoken out: nor the blessedness either, which is at times enjoyed by the saints of the Lord, in such acts of personal communion with Christ, as they are at seasons favoured with. It is wholly mental, spiritual, supernatural, and intuitive. This accompanies an abiding in Christ: and such as are under the true unction of the Spirit, are more or less favoured with it. The apostle says, *ye shall abide in him*, or *it*. The Lord's people are here, if I may so say, confirmed in this abiding in Christ, and in the truths of his most blessed word. And for the apostle to set his seal to this, is of vast importance: nor should this be overlooked by us. It is of more importance, than the assertion of all the real ministers of Christ, now on earth. Not but their's, founded

on truth, is worthy of very high respect; yet they not being, or professing to be, apostles, their testimony of Christ falls lower than that of an inspired penman of sacred scripture. Now this word of confirmation, *ye shall abide in him*, with all the blessedness contained in it, is founded on what went before; which is this, *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* Then most assuredly, all the blessedness contained in our abiding in Him, will be produced in us, as the virtue of his Person, love, righteousness, atonement, and salvation is made known in our hearts, by the truths and doctrines of his heavenly grace, as they in all their weight, and authority, are opened and explained inwardly, and spiritually from the word, and by the unction of the Holy Ghost. So that I conceive, I have set before you, the whole contained in the words of my text. I do not mean I have exhausted it; nor do I mean no more can be said of it. No; God forbid such vain thoughts should be mine. I only mean, I conceive you have the outline of all contained in the general subject of it. Now, beloved, I shall leave the whole with you; to reflect and think over the same. And I shall also leave it with the Holy Spirit, for Him to bless it, and make use of it, just as seemeth good to his Divine Majesty.

May He favour you with his continual teachings: and maintain, in a way and manner agreeable to the good pleasure of his will, what he hath taught you concerning Christ, and his great salvation. May He confirm you in the Truth, and confirm the Truth in you. May He keep you in the Truth, and save you from every error and heresy. May He give you to partake of all the blessedness contained in the knowledge of the Person of Christ, and in every truth, and doctrine of his everlasting gospel. And thus I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able "to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." May the Lord bless his Truth to you. Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.—
1 JOHN ii. 28.

THE apostle has been warning the saints to whom he wrote concerning the antichrists of that present day. He gave an account of what their leading doctrines were. One sort of them denied Jesus of Nazareth was the true Christ of God: the others denied Christ, to be the true and co-equal Son of God: this broke in upon the Personality of the Father and the Son, which was by no means to be given way to, it being a most destructive and pernicious error, and heresy, which sapped the very

foundation of the whole system of grace. He therefore exhorts the saints to abide in the same truth concerning the Person of Christ, and in the same acknowledgment of the Father, which they had heard and received from the beginning of their hearing and receiving the everlasting gospel, as this would be the mean, by which they would enjoy in their own souls, all contained in the promise which was promised them, eternal life. He wrote what he had written to them, to guard them against seducers. He encourages them from the consideration of their having received the true Unction, that they would most assuredly abide in Christ. His words are these, "But the anointing which ye have received of him" (that is Christ, the Holy One) "abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Then he gives the following exhortation, *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* In which we may observe the following particulars, and in the opening of the same, we shall have the full outline of our text. I would aim to open it thus, we have

1. The exhortation, thus most affectionately addressed. *And now, little children, abide in him.*

2. The reason which the apostle gives for this address. *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

3. What is to be understood concerning Christ's coming.

4. What is meant by these expressions. *That, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

May the Lord lead me through each of these divisions, so as to explain them, without putting any false comment, or gloss on them. I am

1. To open the exhortation, which is thus most affectionately addressed to these saints. *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

As these persons had union to the Lord Jesus Christ, interest in Him, and communion with Him, the apostle would have them to abide in the full and constant profession of this; which would be the best outward proof they could give of the reality of the same: and hereby the reality of their grace would most evidently appear. This hath been urged upon them over and over again. We should learn from hence, not to be too scrupulous of expressing the very same terms, truths, and words, over and over as it may be necessary to the subjects which may come before us, in the ministry of God's most holy word. Our Lord sets us an example. According to the sacred evangelists, he delivered over the same sermons, and parables, and expressed many of his divine sentences over and over again, and almost in the same words. We therefore need not be ashamed of following his example in this. We, be we either preachers or hearers, believers or public persons in the congregation of saints, cannot act better in any of our stations, than by expressing ourselves when we set forth the truths of God, in such words as are most suitable to convey our clearest apprehensions of the same to others. Our apostle was all love. It is said in Ecclesiastical History, as he lived to a great age,

as to that of an hundred, so he could say no more when he came into the assembly than this, "Little children, love one another." I cannot think our Lord would keep such a man as the apostle *John* was, here, merely for this. His simple address here, leaving out his reason which he gives for his address, is this, *And now, little children, abide in him.* Every word deserves notice. He is towards the close of his present subject. He gives them an item of it. He knits what he hath to say together, that it may not be lost upon them. *And now*, this is the upshot, and close of my present subject, which you will do well to remember, and make a proper use of. *Little children*, I know not how to speak out my love for you in Christ Jesus, and my bowels of affection for you in Him, but by this most simple expression of my christian regards for you. What I would most earnestly request of you is this, that *ye would abide in him.* *And now, little children, abide in him.* Let Christ be your object. Let Him be your subject. Let Him be your centre, and your circumference. Let Him be your *Alpha* and *Omega*. Let Him be your beginning and your end: your first and last. You have been favoured with the true knowledge of Him. You have been blessed with most clear, free, and blessed communion with Him. You have been kept fast and firm to his cause and interest, notwithstanding all the storms and blasts of hell, and the most awful apostacy of the times. Whilst there are many antichrists, and deceivers, who aim to seduce you from the faith, yet ye have been preserved in the true acknowledgment of the Truth, in the acknowledgment of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. I would you should cleave to the acknowledgment of His Person. I would ye should abide in the confession of His Name, Salvation, Righteousness and Sacrifice. Little children, abide in His truths and doctrines—In His commands and institutions—In His order, fellowship and ordinances, as you have them delivered by Him, just as he gave the commandment for them, and for the observance of them, during the space he abode with his church, from his resurrection to his ascension. My little children, you have the whole of my heart. I love you for the Lord's sake. I can do you no greater service than to bestow on you this exhortation. It contains every thing which can be beneficial to you. No life will ever be to you, this side heaven, beyond contemplation on all contained in Christ. He is Heaven's wonder. He is Heaven's glory. Therefore as you live over Christ in your minds, you will have life everlasting in your hearts. You will have inward fellowship with Him who is your life. Your present life—with Him who is the God of your life, who is your spiritual and eternal life. This will cause you to abide in Him, and not depart in one single instance from Him, so as to seek life, perfection and happiness in any beside Him. This is the substance of the exhortation. Which is as necessary now, in the present time, for us, and to be administered unto us, as it could be for them. It is a blessing, if it can be pronounced of us, that we have received the true knowledge of Christ into our minds, and have the real love of Him in our hearts. If this be so ever so truly, yet we want establishment; so as to abide in the truths and ordinances of the Lord Jesus: and not to be so hot at one time for them, as though our salvation was contained in them. And at some other period to live so, as that we treated these important things, as of very little, or no importance. By looking more distinctly and particularly at these words before us, *And now, little children, abide in him*, it seems to me, as if

the Person of Christ, was the immediate object, and subject the apostle hath his own mind most particularly fixed upon, and which he would have theirs fixed on also—To abide in the true and right belief of the Person of Christ, that He is truly, properly, distinctively, and essentially the Son of the living God, and that by the union of an individual humanity with His Person he is thereby God-Man; and as such is the object of our faith and hope—of our worship, confidence, love, joy and delight—in whom our whole salvation is contained, and who is the rock of our strength; and to have unshaken confidence in Him, at all times, and for all things. This is of the utmost consequence to us in our walk before the Lord, and also as it respects our profession of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before men. We all need to be well acquainted with the Person of Christ, and this from the scriptures of truth. We all need to be exhorted in the most affectionate manner to abide by them, and the revelation and testimony given and contained in them concerning our Christ—That we may never cease to look at our Lord Jesus Christ, as set most gloriously before us in them: and not in any one instance depart from the same. This abiding in Him, is to receive the doctrine of Christ's Personality: to abide, or continue in the belief of the same: and not to be diverted from it, by any errors, and heresies which may be vented contrary to the true doctrine given thereof, in the volume of inspiration. I am persuaded if you will look back to verse 18th, and proceed on to the verse now before us, you will find it punctually and precisely; you will clearly perceive, the apostle is warning saints against antichristian errors; and encourageth the saints to stand fast in Christ, and in the faith of all the truths, doctrines, ordinances, and holiness of the gospel; his reasons for which are expressed and included in these words, *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* I have gone over these subjects again and again, hoping thereby you will clearly understand the context; which will be a great mean of understanding the true meaning of the text itself; which I cannot conceive can be properly apprehended but by this mean. Therefore if I may have seemed tedious unto you, on this account, I say then unto you, Brethren, forgive me this wrong. I proceed

2. To shew, and give the apostle's reason for this his address, as set forth and expressed by him in these words, *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Person spoken of by *Him* and *He*. It is He who is to appear. The *we* here spoken of may comprehend the apostles and the saints. The abiding in Christ, would give both to the saints and apostles, confidence: so that they should not be ashamed before Christ at his coming. What is meant here of Christ's coming, as also what is to be understood by the expressions *that, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*, are not to come forward under this present head, as to be fully opened and explained, but are reserved to be the two last closing heads of this discourse. I am now, only to give the apostle's reason, for this his address to these saints, His address to them was, *And now, little children, abide in him.* The reason is this, *that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* It seems to be opened by these words in his 2nd Epistle, verse 8. Where our *John* says, "Look

to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, or, gained, or which ye have gained, but that ye, or but that we receive a full reward." There are many gone forth of whom I have warned you, who preach contrary to the glorious gospel which I have delivered unto you. Should you embrace what they teach, *we* should fall short of the glory, of your having received, embraced, professed, and practiced that gospel which we delivered unto you. *We*, should you fall into their errors and heresies, lose the comfort and glory we hoped to have, in being the honoured instruments of your being effectually called to the true knowledge and faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, under our ministration of the true, pure and everlasting gospel unto you. Now to prevent all apostasy from the truths of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that is the reason I write thus unto you. I am fully persuaded for myself that ye will abide in the faith, and persevere unto the end; yet it appears to me right to give you an idea of my being very mindful of you in the Lord. Therefore I would have you to take in to your own minds, what the effects would be, were you to verge from the Truth. We should be ashamed of our confidence in the Lord touching you. We should have no confidence in the Lord, that we should have to present you before Him, as the Seals of our apostolical ministry. And some amongst you, as the first fruits of our ministry unto Christ. We shall be ashamed before Him at his coming, that we have thanked Him, for giving you to us, as seals to the truth of what we have preached to you, concerning Him, should it be found that after all your past profession of Him, you should by any means drop your most holy profession, and not cleave with full purpose of heart unto Him. My beloved, these are the reasons of my so writing thus; not so much out of fear of you, as by way of caution and direction: that by giving you a hint of what consequences would follow, you being forewarned, will be forearmed, against all evils of every sort, and by abiding in Christ, and all which concerns him, all may be well with you. This is my design in the whole, which I have written, or may again write unto you. If you abide in Christ, this will be your security. I therefore do not want to multiply words; I only request you, and this I do with the very uttermost earnestness, to abide in Christ. *My little children*, you are dear to me as mine own soul: some of you are mine, as begotten to the knowledge of Christ, and faith in Christ, under my ministry. I prize your real Spiritual growth into Christ, and your increasing communion with Him, above my chiefest joy. I well know how this is promoted—By what means this is to be kept up—Nothing will be so advantageous to you, as increasing in the knowledge of Christ: there is a sufficiency in the same, to feed, and keep up your minds with perpetual, and everlasting vigour; yea, it will in Heaven, without the least abatement, to the ages of eternity. I therefore say unto you, *And now, little children, abide in him*: be well pleased with Him; study Him; go over his beauties and perfections; look upon, and contemplate what He is, in his Person, beauties, charms, excellencies, graces, fulness, perfections. Survey Him as the Lord your Righteousness, purity, and perfection. Look on yourselves as one in Him, and as complete in Him. Consider what you are in Him. You have life in Him. You have light, righteousness, holiness and perfection in Him. You cannot look on Him, and on your persons in Him, but you must be perfectly satisfied with Christ, and your persons also, as in Him. All the riches of grace and

glory are in Him. He is the glorious Person in whom they are all contained. He hath the key of David. He can give you such views of Himself, as will fix your minds as truly and immutably on Him, as you will never be capable of going off Him for evermore. This will be the case in the state of glory. *My little children*, study his Person. Think on his love. Meditate on his salvation. Go over every part of the same. You will certainly find a glorious allsufficiency in Him, and all which concerns Him, as will be engaging, attracting, assimilating, and influential. I am fully persuaded of all this for myself. And I am fully persuaded of all this for you. I want you to live in the real belief, apprehension, and enjoyment of all this continually. I want you to be so fixed in the belief, as never to wander in the least herefrom. It is on this very account, and with this very view, aim, and end I write unto you. *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* Thus I have given you my reason for thus addressing you. It is out of love to you, and for the Truth's sake. That you may go on and "abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Phil. i. 9—11.

As I have given you the apostle *John's* address to these saints, with his reasons for the same, I would, before I enter on the other particular heads of this discourse which are to follow, give you some remarks which may be beneficial to us, as naturally arising out of what hath been delivered. It is very evident from it that the saints' being taught by the infallible Spirit, and guided into all Truth, and knowing all things, does by no means supersede their being instructed, exhorted, directed, and cautioned by those who are over them in the Lord: so far from it, that it is most highly becoming in them, to submit to all this, and be thankful for the same. Nor should the ministers of Christ, even those who have the greatest light and knowledge into the greatest mysteries of godliness, and who have been most free in their communications of the same, think it needless to exhort the saints with whom they are in connection, to hold fast, and cleave with their whole souls, to the truths of Christ's gospel which have been delivered unto them. Our apostle in the words of the text now before us, is giving his reason why he exhorted saints to abide in Christ—in the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity—in the true acknowledgment of Christ's person—of his open and manifest incarnation—of the reality of his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and all which was connected herewith; he says, he does it on account of Himself, and the rest of his brethren in the ministry: that they might have confidence, when he, and they should have to appear before the Lord Jesus, and that they might not be ashamed before Him at his coming. Surely it is also implied, these persons to whom He, and they ministered, could not but be involved in the same, with himself, and the other apostles, and ministers of the word. The following passage may serve as a clue to guide us to a right apprehension of what is now before us. "Obey them that have the rule, or guide over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account,

that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Heb. xiii. 17.

Saints cannot fall from the grace of God; yet they may be remiss, and slothful: they may be careless and inattentive to Truth: they may cease to obey, and submit to such as the Lord Jesus Christ hath set and placed over them as their spiritual guides, pastors, and teachers. This ought not to be; because they watch for their souls, as they which must give an account to Christ, and before Him, of what they deliver unto them. Now let the doctrine be ever so purely dispensed, if it be not received as delivered, it cannot produce its proper effects in the mind, and the hearers are not what they ought to be, in proportion to the clear, ever-blessed, and everlasting gospel, which hath been delivered unto them. So that when the ministers give up their account at the Throne of grace, concerning the spiritual and supernatural truth and mysteries of grace they have been delivering to the people, they cannot do it with joy before the Lord. It is with grief. Because though they have delivered the Truth according to God's most holy mind and will, set forth in the word of truth, yet it has not been received by saints, as the word of God, which worketh effectually in them which believe; which is cause of grief, before the Lord, in the minds of ministers in their giving an account of their ministry, before our Lord Jesus Christ: and it is also unprofitable to such, of whom this account is given. As I conceive this cannot but cast light on the subject, so I think the following quotations also may. The apostle speaking of Christ, says, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Col. i. 28, 29. *Paul* is speaking of saints, as he is also to them. Those to whom he ministered he warned them—To avoid every error—All sorts of evil—Sin of every kind. He preached Christ to them to the very uttermost of his knowledge of Him. He taught and instructed those who were committed to his charge, in all the mysteries of the kingdom of God. His end was that he might present every man perfect in the knowledge of Christ Jesus: and he laboured to obtain this with might and energy. It hath from hence been concluded, Apostles, and the ministers of Christ, will have to deliver up their flocks in the New Jerusalem state, and give their ministerial accounts of them to the Lord. And if we are thus to understand it, we cannot but confess there is a great and glorious propriety in it. The apostles might well be tenacious of their flocks, and of what reception they gave to the word of Christ; seeing though our Lord could not lose one of his beloved ones—they might. And this may cast light on the apostle's words to the saints at *Thessalonica*; of whom, he was fully persuaded of their election of God. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ? For ye are our glory and joy." 1 *Epis.* ii. 19, 20. I proceed to our next particular, which is this, to shew and express in this head

3. What is here to be understood concerning Christ's coming. *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

My present enquiry is, what is here to be understood in this place concerning the coming of Christ. And this I shall aim to be as clear in

the explanation of, as I possibly may, as the Lord shall be pleased to enable me.

With respect to the coming of Christ, as expressed in the New Testament, it is spoken of under a variety of circumstances. 1. He speaks, and is spoken of as coming, when the destruction of the Jews, Jerusalem, and Judea is foretold by him, and his apostle. The following passages of scripture will confirm this. Our Lord foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem to his disciples, says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matt. xxiv. 29—31. Our Lord when adjured by the high priest to say, if he were the Christ, the Son of God, affirmed it, and said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. xxvi. 64. What for?—To execute wrath on the Jewish nation. Our Lord when he delivered out what would come on the people of the Jews, and their nation, for their rejection of Him, and putting him to death, said to his own disciples, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke xxi. 36. All contained in this coming of Christ, is now finally past. Before it, *Peter* and the rest of the apostles, on, and after the day of Pentecost spake of it. He called it the "great and notable day of the Lord." *Paul* referring to it, says to the saints at *Philippi*, "The Lord is at hand." chap. iv. 5. And speaking of the Jews, he says, "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sin alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." This refers to the vengeance executed on them by our Lord Jesus Christ, by the Romans. The apostle *James*, referring to our Lord's coming to avenge himself of his Jewish enemies, and to encourage the suffering saints to the exercise of patience says, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." And, "behold, the judge standeth before the door." chap. v. 8, 9. *Peter* refers to it, and calls it "the fiery trial." He expressly says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:" by which he means the temple at Jerusalem, "and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 12—18. It was but a narrow escape of such as believed on Christ. Who if they had not attended to our Lord's words, of leaving Jerusalem and Judea, instantly, when they saw what must follow on the people, who should remain any longer in that land, and if they had not then gone over Jordan into a little village called *Pella*, they must have been consumed. There are other comings of Christ spoken of. As 2. His coming by death and taking his saints to heaven. 3. His coming to the conversion of the body of the Jewish people, which is so expressed, as if there would be a

visible appearance of Him in the heavens, so as that He shall be seen in the open region of the air. 4. He speaks of his coming to bring on the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Rev. iii. 11. 5. He is spoken of as coming with ten thousand of his saints to judge the ungodly. 6. *Paul* speaks of Christ's coming at the end of time, and what is then to take place. And *John* speaks of the church and Christ in the new Jerusalem state. All these are important acts, which complete one vast and immense dispensation of judgment and truth.

I conceive a few brief hints are necessary, as thereby we shall have the more enlarged view of our subject, and the better opportunity of knowing what we are to understand of our Lord's appearing in our text. I will therefore notice Christ's coming to his saints by death. I conceive the following scriptures suited to this. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke xii. 35, 36. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John xiv. 1—3. With respect to our Lord's coming to the conversion of the body, or bulk of the Jewish nation, I conceive the following scripture is very expressive of it. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Rev. i. 7. If every eye is to see him, then it must be a visible appearance. And where can this be but in the open region of the air? And if those who pierced him are to see Him, who are these but the Jews? Place this passage of the prophet *Zechariah* against it, "and I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born;" and say, if the one does not open the other? and if you want more, supply it with these words from the fourteenth chapter, verses, 3, 4, 5. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Our Lord speaks of his coming in a way of judgment, on such as are professors of Him, yet not in truth nor in love: but altogether otherwise; and promises to preserve the *Philadelphian* church state from it. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. iii. 19. *Enoch* the seventh generation from *Adam*, as quoted by the apostle *Jude*, spoke of Christ's coming. "With ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." v. 14, 15. Christ's coming

at the end of time, is spoken of by the apostle *Paul* thus. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven." "He shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire." The apostle *Peter* says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. iii. 10. The consequence of Christ's appearance will be, the full gathering of the whole election of grace—The resurrection of the elect, in their bodies from the grave and power of death—The change of the bodies of the elect who will remain in them to the very moment that change takes place. And *John* speaks of all the elect as completely glorious, and in the presence of Christ in the new-Jerusalem state, as presented by Him to the divine Father, with, lo, I, and the children thou hast given me. Now the question is this, what does the apostle mean in our text, by these words, *when he shall appear*? Christ is the Person spoken of. His appearance seems to be, either his coming in his wrath against the Jews, and Jerusalem: or his second coming in his kingdom and glory. As the apostle lived in the same age with the former, I should have no objection to conceive it might have respect to that event: nor to the latter also in a qualified point of view. As the destruction of the Jews drew on, the apostacy, or falling off from the profession of Christ, and his gospel very greatly abounded. So *John* might express himself, as he here doth, to denote how little confidence he should have in such and such, should they not abide in the true knowledge of the Truth as it is in Christ; he should not have confidence in presenting them to Christ, as such as his Majesty would approve. This seems to be countenanced by what another apostle says. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. xi. 2. It appears to me, both these apostles, are upon one, and the same subject. I would add, as casting light on *John's* expressions, *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*, that our Lord spoke of his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, under this very term; and of *John's* remaining in the body, until this event should be accomplished. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" John xxi. 22. Well then, if we give the meaning of it to be this—That the apostle was very desirous of finding these saints so truly kept from all sorts of errors, that when Christ should come to take vengeance on Jerusalem, and the Jews, he should not be ashamed before him, of these his converts: to which we must add, so far as these were real saints there could be no doubt of this: yet he might thus express himself, as *Peter* doth. "Ye therefore, beloved; seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 Epis. iii. 17. The marginal references to scriptures, are most certainly to the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his kingdom and glory, at his Personal appearing. Of which our *John* says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." But there is this most evident difference in the design of the apostle in these, so that they do not exactly suit together. This is to comfort them, and fill them with joy unspeakable, setting before them

what they now are, and what they will be when Christ shall appear. Our text is an exhortation to them to continue and abide in Christ : and whilst he could not speak more highly of them, nor more confidentially than he did of their continuance in the Truth ; yet there might be many in their communion, who might stand in need of understanding the reason of his address, as well as the address and what was contained in it. If we prefer it to respect the second coming of Christ, it must then refer to the personal presentation of saints, by the apostle, and others, to Christ, as the fruits of their own personal ministry. And rather refer to their own thoughts on these subjects now, in this present time state, than any thing which can possibly be the case then. I proceed to my next particular ; and, it may be, more light may be cast on the subject, by

4. Considering what is meant, or we may understand by these expressions. *That, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. And now, little children, abide in him ; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

If we take it of our Lord's second and Personal coming ; when he appears we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is. Then we shall be without sin : consequently there will be no want of confidence in Him, nor in ourselves, or others : because we shall be in an immortal state, and be immortal in our bodies and minds. The apostle *Paul* says, " When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Col. iii. 4. And in the resurrection state, and in the New-Jerusalem Church, these words will be pronounced on all the saints, " Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." So that here will be nothing to be ashamed of. It must follow from hence, and also from the exhortation, that all this must belong to a time state. And the expressions, that we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming, can only suggest, the great affection of our apostle, and all the rest of them, together with all the true ministers in that day, included in word *we*, to impress on the minds of all their beloved spiritual children what pleasure it gave them to impart the gospel unto them. How earnestly desirous they were that they should be established in every truth and doctrine of the gospel of the blessed God. So far as they saw the fruits of their ministry, instamped on the minds of those whom they looked on as seals to their ministry, they could not but rejoice therein. They were confident many of them were the Lord's—That they would be presented by them as such, when Christ should appear. It would have grieved these holy men to have thought otherwise. It is on this the address is founded, and to this very end it is expressed—To the end that they abiding in Christ, the apostle and others, might not be ashamed of their confidence in these persons : but that by their persevering in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, and by no means going off the same, they thereby appearing to be the Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men to be such, there would be no cause of being ashamed of them, at Christ's coming. I would here add, and wish it to be observed, that just before the destruction of Jerusalem, there were the greatest number of apostates in any period of time. Hence it is, so much is said in the Epistle written to the *Hebrews* on this most tremendous subject. This may give light into these expressions, and what is

simply and really designed by them. *That, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* It would be putting the apostles in their own minds to the blush, to find such and such, who had in appearance, and as far as could be judged, by confessions and acknowledgments made of Truth, really received Christ, and that they were established in the same, to have such fall off, and fall away from their most holy and solemn confession of Christ, and his gospel, and ordinances, this could not but have been very grievous to the apostle. Yet it is more than probable, it was what they all had, from time to time been exercised with. And it proved they had no ground for confidence in all who professed Christ. They had to be ashamed of some who had made a very splendid profession in words and confessions. Therefore this gave room for the apostle to write as he here doth. And to back his exhortation with the reasons which he here assigns. And as he wrote under the immediate teaching of the Holy Ghost, it must fall with weight, and have its uses, even on the minds of the Lord's beloved ones. It would lead them to consider they were all to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. That they were to give account of themselves to God. That the secrets of all hearts were one day to be disclosed. That Christ was to be the judge. That every one is to give an account of himself to God. Therefore it behoved saints as saints, to act as in his immediate view. To be upright and sincere in their profession of Truth. That this would influence them in their whole conduct and deportment. So that whilst the apostle is concerned for himself, and others, who with himself were concerned in the good, spirituality and happiness of the churches of Christ, and in the good and prosperity of every spiritual and individual member of the same, he also gives these saints he here addresses, an opportunity of thinking and considering also for themselves, how much it became them to attend to all this: as it would prevent them from being ashamed the apostle should have confidence in them—That they were holy, and beloved; the partakers of Christ, seeing they proved the truth of all this, by abiding in Christ, and in the truths, and ordinances of his own most sacred institutions. *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* His reasons are most cogent and powerful. Such as must have had their proper weight and influence on the minds of those who were thus addressed. If we were to consider it an apostolical address, to all the churches of the saints, reaching down to the second coming of Christ, I conceive we might then understand the meaning of it to be this. That what this apostle had written in this Epistle, was of that importance, he would all saints should attend closely to the same. That at the appearing of the Lord of glory, there might be no cause to be ashamed as though the apostles had not freely and fully made known to the churches, all they were intrusted with: nor be confounded before Him, as if they had been negligent in not giving a full and faithful account of the same. This seems to me to be a tolerable explanation of the verse. It is the best I can give. This I assure you it is. *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming:* as though we had not fully set before you, the only preservative against all antichristian doctrines, and all antichrists, let them be who they may, and appear in what periods of time they may. This may be compared

with this exhortation of *Paul*, which is a very extensive one, and reaches down to the very present day, and how much farther we cannot say. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. It is like for the substance of it, that apostolical charge given in these words to *Timothy*, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season; out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. 2 Epis. iv. 1, 2. The exhortation in my text, and those quoted, may serve to cast light one upon the other. I must now leave what hath been delivered to your consideration. May the Lord bless the same to you, so far as seemeth good in his sight, and lead you to receive into your minds, such light and instruction from the same, as will be beneficial unto you. This is my simple aim and end, together with the advancement of his glory. The Lord's blessing will best appear, as it may produce in you the fruits of faith and holiness; which can only be produced in proportion, as we receive the word into our minds, and it operates within us. Hence our Lord said in the days of his flesh, to one who cried out, blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked: yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. May you be of this number, and enjoy this blessedness in your own souls. Then you will find matter for continual praise, and for giving glory to God. The Lord grant it may be thus with you. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.—1 JOHN ii. 29.

THE apostle has been speaking to these saints to beware of seducers. He shewed how they were most divinely fortified against them, by the Anointing which they had received from the Lord Jesus Christ. This most divine Unction abode and remained with them. They were taught by Him who is Truth itself. The apostle assures them they should abide in the same. On this he bestows on them this exhortation. *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* As this abiding in Christ, in the truths and doctrines of his gospel, and ordinances of his most holy gospel, will most clearly, openly, and manifestly appear by your unfeigned faith in Christ, and your holiness of walk and conversation, so I cannot but address you, with what you are fully acquainted with, that there is not an individual who knoweth Christ

to be righteousness itself, but he is constrained to be righteous also, in his walk and conduct. And this is an outward evidence that such are born of God. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* Your union unto, and personal interest in Christ, are best proved outwardly, by your continuation in your holy profession of Him : and in your living forth the grace which ye have received from him. Your owning, confessing, and acknowledging Christ to be righteous, this is openly done, by your bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, to his praise and glory. Such hereby declare themselves to be regenerated persons. They are new creatures in Christ : which is all from the grace of the Holy Spirit, who hath wrought effectually and powerfully within them, and upon them, and made them, to use *Peter's* expression, partakers of the divine nature. 2 Epis. i. 4. Hereby real believers are manifested. They know Christ to be *the Righteous One*. They know his gospel in its truth and doctrine, its ordinances, precepts, commands, and injunctions are holy, just, and good. Hence they know that such as perform righteous acts are born of God : and this is the outward evidence of the same. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* In which words we have the following particulars, which if rightly opened will be explanatory of the text, and give us a clear view and apprehension of the same.

1. The apostle here appeals to these saints regarding an immutable truth, concerning Christ ; that He is righteous : that they knew He was so. This was a certainty with them. They could not call it into question. He introduces it with an *If*. Yet not as doubting or calling in question the same. He only does it by way of application, or affirmation—Seeing it is so ; Or, forasmuch as it is so. *If ye know that he is righteous.* The Person spoken of is Christ. He is the Righteous Branch. The Righteous One. The Lord our Righteousness. He is the Just One. The Holy One.

2. He makes a second appeal to those whom he here addresses. And it is contained in these words. *If ye know Christ to be righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

3. The new-birth is here attributed to Christ, as it is elsewhere to the Father, and the Spirit. See 1 Pet. i. 3. James i. 17. John iii. 3—8. *Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* That is, of Christ.

4. Regeneration is the foundation of all righteousness in the soul, and the principle from whence it originates ; and the exercise of it, is an outward evidence of our being born again, and that we are interested in the glorious and most complete righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus you have before you the heads and generals of our present sermon. I am

1. To set before you, how the apostle in the words of my text, appeals to these saints, concerning an immutable truth, which concerns Christ himself. *If ye know that he is righteous.* The word *He* refers to Christ. This is clear from the former verse. *And now, little children, abide in him ; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* The appeal is concerning Him. It is addressed to saints. They are

addressed with an *If*. Not as calling any part of what is contained in the matter expressed into question ; but to fix it the more effectually on their minds. It is as much as though he had said, inasmuch as ye know so and so : which as it is immutable truth, I appeal to you as the Lord's witnesses hereof. You have in your own souls, a real conception and apprehension of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was holy and righteous as man. He was so inherently. He was so outwardly. He was purity without spot. He was holy in heart and life. The law of God was inscribed on it. His whole life was the transcript of it, and that in its most consummate perfection. These saints knew this. As also they knew Christ was essentially holy and righteous. They knew He was Personally holy and righteous. They knew and acknowledged Him to be Mediatorially holy and righteous. They also confessed Him to be holy and righteous, as the Head and Surety of His church. He having for all his people been made as their Surety, under the law : and he having fulfilled the same for them, was the end of it for righteousness to every one that believeth. He was the Lord their Righteousness. In whose righteousness they were made the righteousness of God in Him. The prophet says, *In the Lord shall all the children of Israel be justified, and shall glory*. Now there can be no saintship without the knowledge of this. Therefore the address is not made to them, as though there were any darkness on their minds respecting it. No ; it is quite otherwise. This is the reason and motive with the apostle for it—That he might deduce such an inference, as would be fully and freely acceded unto by them ; that all such as apprehended the Lord Jesus Christ, and had actually received Him in into their minds, would make this outwardly and visibly evident, by walking righteously, holily, and godly in this present world : this was his motive, end, and design in what he says in the words before us. He is not here speaking of their knowing Christ to be their everlasting righteousness and perfection in the sight of their heavenly Father ; who beheld them in Him before the foundation of the world, who had most graciously shone manifestatively upon them, from heaven, the habitation of His glory, in the real glory and efficacy of his love on their minds, and admitted them again and again, into real communion with Him, and his Son Jesus Christ. The apostle well knew, these persons had most glorious and realizing evidence of all this in their own souls. He is speaking of the outward evidence of all this ; which appeared in the outward conformity to the righteousness and example of our most precious Lord Jesus. If ye know that He is righteous, and that He is the Lord our righteousness, if ye know what it is, to live in daily meditations on Him, ye cannot but know and acknowledge, this produces conformity unto Him. Thus the apostle secretly and covertly, yet in a most effectual manner, affirms they did know Christ : and that He was both holy and righteous—That all perfection was contained in his life—That every grace was displayed and shone forth, in every temper and expression of his mind—That He was holiness to the Lord for us—And is holiness from the Lord with us—That we cannot converse with Him, but it will produce in us, its most blessed fruits and effects. This the apostle does, to put down, and discountenance that spirit of licentiousness which was predominant amongst some careless professors in that day, of apostacy, and looseness. It should most certainly be kept in remembrance, that the apostles is here

in this very verse, speaking by way of discrimination. This most clearly appears on the very face of the words. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* It is neither our being new-born, or doing righteousness, is our holiness, or righteousness in the sight of God : but it is by these we are distinguished in the sight of men : and by these proof and evidence is given unto them, that we are real believers in Christ, and have Him dwelling, ruling, and abiding in us. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Holy One. The Just One. The Righteous One. He is Jehovah the Righteousness of His whole church. In Him they are holy, righteous, and complete ; without, and abstracted from any thing in themselves but sins and miseries, wants and vanity. But this is not the subject here. The apostle is writing to such as were cleansed in the blood of Christ from all sin ; who had him for their Righteousness, Advocate, and Propitiation ; who were admitted into fellowship with Him, and with the Father in Him. He is speaking of what they knew of the influence and effects of this on their minds, so as to be a mean of regulating their outward walk and conversation before others. Whereby proof and evidence was given that they were true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is that which is here designed by the words before us. If ye know that Christ is righteous—that He fulfilled all righteousness in His life for us—that in Him we have the perfection of all righteousness set before us—that there is nothing contained in His doctrine, precepts, commands, and ordinances, but that which conduces to the outward observance and practice, but that which constitutes and promotes the practice of righteousness, then, as I appeal to you for the truth of this, and am fully persuaded, as sure as you know Christ, you will affirm, and confirm this to be immutable truth : so I shall be bold to make a further appeal unto you, which is this ;

2. *If ye know Christ to be righteous, then ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* This I am also confident you will be very ready to set your seals to.

This, as the former was, is set forth by the apostle, as an outward evidence of such and such being most really and truly the Lord's. Christ the righteous One, who is the righteousness of His whole church, where he dwells, rules, and reigns, produces in his saints a life of conformity to Him. This is the spirit of the present scripture before us. It is hereby the grace of Christ shines forth, and is displayed. What our Lord is in the mind and view of his saints, is hereby evidenced and made known, so that those who are without may so far see and take notice of it, as to confess the truth thereof, as being clearly evidenced by the fruits and effects produced. Such as know Christ, and receive, and are kept looking unto Him, as the Lord their Righteousness, and live on Him as their present and everlasting perfection in the sight of God, do not perform one single act of righteousness, that they thereby may be righteous before the Lord. No ; this is very far from their minds. No ; but the grace, salvation, presence, and teaching of Christ which they are favoured with, have their blessed and powerful influence within them, and upon them, so that they are sweetly drawn and constrained to act as such as are Christ's representatives in this present evil world : and this is one reason why Christ will have his church continued for a season in this present state. Hence the apostle *Peter*

says to the saints, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Epis. ii. 9. They did by no means make themselves what they were: nor could they continue by any means, what the Lord had wrought in them. They could only act as they were acted upon. It was the Lord alone who could work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure; yet they only could be seen and distinguished by others, as they walked righteously and holily in this present evil world. It should ever be understood thus, when we are on these subjects: then we should never turn them as matters which make against us; so far from this, that the more freely and fully we receive the knowledge of Christ into our minds, the more we are excited to live by faith on the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. This produces most holy and blessed communion between Him, and us. In the which holiness and righteousness are produced in our souls: the fruits and effects of which are to be seen in our lives and conversations: so that we are hereby distinguished from those, even from such as profess the same Truth, who yet are not consistent with themselves. They walk carelessly. They yield to their own carnal lusts and passions. They do not by any means study to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. It is in this very point, and to preserve the proper distinction between a real believer, and a mere nominal professor of Christ, the apostle made this appeal. He well knew the true knowledge of Christ, would produce real genuine christianity: therefore says he, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* I know says *John*, true practical christianity springs from, and is maintained in all its parts and branches, from the knowledge of Christ. His Person, Incarnation, Righteousness, Sacrifice, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension, and Priesthood in heaven is the foundation and soul of it. He is the Holy One. You have received the Uncction from Him. The same Holy Ghost who anointed Him as the Christ of God, hath anointed you also. As our Lord received His Name from the Holy Ghost, so you do also. Ye are the anointed ones: Christians: so called from Christ, whose Spirit hath consecrated you, and set you apart for his worship, service, praise and glory. Now it is to you I appeal. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* Is not this the Truth? If it be so, then such, be they who they may, who walk carelessly, and give way to sin and self, and fall by the same, give no proof and visible evidence of their being taught by Him. It does not appear they have received the Uncction from the Holy One. It is by no means evident, that they are led and taught by the Spirit. I would, therefore, this distinction should be kept up amongst you: that you may neither deceive nor be deceived, by looking on such as Christians who are not. No doubt but there was great cause why proper distinctions should be kept up in the apostle's time, between true believers, and nominal ones. Or, he had not dwelt so much throughout his whole epistle on this. He gives us the true portrait of what real personal christianity is, and what it consists in. He also set it forth, and he likewise illustrated the same, in, and by what he says to real saints, in, and throughout this very important document of his, written and sent unto them. He does this very simply, expressly,

and clearly ; so that what he wrote could not be easily mistaken. Real saints would not overlook what he wrote. Others who did, proved themselves thereby to be what they were—destitute of the Spirit. It must have been of great satisfaction to the saints, that the apostle should thus appeal unto them ; as it carried its own evidence with it, of his thinking well of them. And whilst they were by no means elevated by this, yet it could not but be very satisfactory to them, that whilst he was very suspicious of others, yet he wrote to them with much assurance of what the Lord had done for them, and how they gave full proof of this by their outward walk and behaviour. What the Lord had taught them, it abode with them. They were under the mighty power and influence of the same. It produced in their minds, an experimental sense and apprehension of what was contained therein ; which influenced their minds and affections, which produced suitable tempers, dispositions, conversations and practices, answerable to the same. So that he could thus address them, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* Sirs, an unrighteous man, a man who is unrighteous in his practice, walk, and conversation is not a Christian : nor should he be looked upon by us as such. No ; notwithstanding he may be numbered with us. No doubt many such were in the churches in *John's* time. If not, there could be no propriety in his writing thus ; for the very proof of saintship lay in doing righteousness : in performing righteous acts. Now their performing righteous acts did not make them righteous persons ; yet it proved them to be so. As on the contrary, such as confessed the same Lord Jesus Christ, and did not perform righteous acts, proved thereby they were not righteous persons. As he appears twice over to the saints, saying, If ye know that he, i. e. Christ is righteous, and hath left us an example that we should follow his steps, so ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him ; so also he hereby gives them to apprehend the spring, root, and principle, from whence all this proceeded. The material and distinguishing difference between them, and all others whatsoever ; let their profession be what it might ; yea, let it be in words and sounds, equal and exactly like their own, was in the new-birth. The one were born again, the others were not. Mark this ; you have it in the words before you. I will therefore recite them, that you may for your own profit observe it. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* All who are openly of the family of heaven, are distinguished by a heavenly, spiritual, supernatural birth ; which being holy and heavenly, nothing but what is suitable with this can proceed from it. And if you survey the text, you cannot but perceive the apostle fully suggests, this is the very root of all righteousness in life and conversation. For as the regenerate person, in his regeneration is made partaker of a supernatural faculty, suited to a spiritual apprehension of Christ, so he receives by this medium, such views and conceptions of Christ, through the Holy Spirit's illumination, as none without this spiritual birth can. And this brings me

3. To observe this new-birth is here attributed to Christ as the author of it, as it is elsewhere to the Father, and the Spirit. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* This most assuredly is ascribing the new-birth to Christ, as the author thereof. It may be, the apostle speaks thus here, to shew,

the propriety there is, in the conduct of such as are born again and of Christ, as it respects their outward conduct and deportment in the world. He was righteous in all, in every sense. The true knowledge of Him, produces a conformity unto Him. His image is inscribed on the regenerate mind : therefore it cannot but be, there must be a similarity between Christ, and such as receive a new and divine birth from Him : hence the very propriety of what the apostle says in his address to the saints, most strikingly appears. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

Our Lord when he spake on the subject of the new-birth to Nicodemus, ascribed it to the Spirit. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 5—8. The apostle James attributes the new-birth to the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." chap. i. 17, 18. And Peter blesses God for it, as the first act of God, which he puts forth within us." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Epis. i. 3—5. It is what all Divines unite in, that all the acts of the Holy Trinity, without them, and which are put forth towards us, within us, and upon us, are variously attributed to each of the Divine Persons. This is the reason why regeneration is thus attributed to each of them. *Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* That is of Christ. This is in close connection with the former verses. *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you : but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* And now, little children, abide in him ; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* Now as regeneration is here attributed unto Christ, and the spiritual light and unction they had received as regenerated persons from Christ also, so we see the effects of this in walking righteously, are ascribed unto Christ also. It was because they knew Christ they were righteous and holy. Their knowledge of Christ was in their renewed minds. Its being there, sanctified their wills. It influenced their affections. It fixed their hearts on Christ. It led them to look wholly and altogether on Him. So that they could not but desire to follow his steps. This sprung from the inward operation of the Holy Ghost within them. It became congenial unto, yea, it was an evident part of their renewed minds to follow after righteousness. To be

the practitioners thereof. So that it was their continual practice, to clothe their minds, memories, and consciences, by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the garment of salvation; which having done, they could not but give evidence of the influence and effect which this produced in their outward walk. They were righteous in their walk. They having a sight of their real and everlasting perfection in Christ Jesus, lived in a view of it, and under the influence of the same; and this was an outward evidence for them to others, to whom they belonged. It proved they were born again; that they were born of Christ; that they had the Spirit of Christ: whereas, such as were not so walking, let them say of the Saviour, and profess of him what they might, yet it was evident to real saints, let it be as it might in the eyes of others, that such were not the real children of God. This was a truth which was immutable. It could not be given up. It was, and will be so down to the very end of time. It can never vary. *If we know that he is righteous, we know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* We being born again of Christ, receive his Spirit; who makes us acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ; who dwelleth in us. We by that spiritual faculty wrought in us by regeneration, are drawn forth spiritually to think on, converse with, and delight ourselves greatly in Him. We see Him. We converse with Him. We have communion with Him. We walk with Him. We walk before Him. We delight so to do. This is no part of our salvation: we disclaim it altogether in this view of it. As we have Christ for the whole of our salvation, this is the outward effect which the true knowledge of it produceth in us: and we are hereby only distinguished from all other professors of Christ, by the walking even as Christ walked. In reading the whole of this Epistle through and through, it should be noticed, the apostle does not call upon us to be so and so, but he shews we cannot but be so and so, if we are in Christ: if we have communion with Christ: if we have fellowship with his Father and our Father in Him, we walk in the light as he is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. And the true knowledge and enjoyment of this, produces those blessed inward and outward effects, which the apostle speaks of in and throughout the whole of this, and the former chapters, and in all the following ones. Causes cannot but produce their proper effects. Grant this, and you have the key to this whole Epistle. You may then see clearly into every part of it, and also into the whole design of the apostle in the same. There will not then be found any one thing to stumble you throughout it. For it is only in proportion as Truth prevails and operates on the spiritual mind, such and such blessed fruits and effects are produced. So this is the foundation of all. Real believers being one with Christ, and they having received from Christ, the Holy Spirit, to live and abide with them for ever; who leads them into real communion with the Father, so they are hereby influenced by the same to walk in the light of holiness and truth—To love where Christ, and such as Christ loveth—To hate that which Christ hateth—To have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them—To walk as Christ walked—To express this to be the very sentiment of their souls, and to walk agreeable unto it, and at all times to abide by it—That such as know and acknowledge Christ to be righteous, that He is their everlasting righteousness and perfection, in whom the Divine Father beholds them everlastingly righteous; the true apprehension and belief of this, constrains

them to be righteous in their conduct and walk before men—That this is the outward proof and evidence, by the which they are distinguished from all others : and a most glorious proof that they are born of Him ; and are his beloved ones, created in Him unto good works, which he hath foreordained that they should walk in them. I would now proceed to observe, that as the new-birth of these saints is here attributed to Christ, as it is elsewhere to the Father, and the Spirit, which shews how the Eternal Three are jointly concerned in the whole work of grace, and in all, in every gracious act and influence of grace, within us, and upon us. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* So I would in my last particular of this discourse, set before you,

4. That regeneration is the foundation of all righteousness in the soul, and the very sole principle from whence it originates. And the exercise of it, is an outward evidence of our being born again, and that we are interested in the glorious and complete righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord insists on the necessity of regeneration in these words of his, which are recorded by our apostle, in the 3rd chapter of his gospel. "Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." v. 3. It is our very entrance into the spiritual world, just as our natural birth is our entrance into this natural world. It is by natural generation and birth we are introduced into this present visible world ; and it is by spiritual regeneration we are brought into Christ's spiritual and invisible world. Adam is the root of natural generation. Christ is the root of spiritual regeneration. It is from Him, by virtue of our secret and eternal union to Him, founded on the election of our persons in Him before the foundation of the world, that we receive the Spirit of life from Christ, and are formed for his praise : which as it was an act of the Divine will towards us from everlasting, so it takes place within us, and upon us, in the day of the Lord's power, when the Holy Ghost, as the breath and Spirit of life enters into us, and makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Spirit takes up his residence in us. He is pleased to produce that in us which was not there before. The Scriptures call it a new birth—The inner man—A new creation—A new creature—The new man—The hidden man of the heart : and other terms are used to express it. The apostle *Peter* says to the saints to whom he writes, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently : Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away : But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. i. 22—25. He addresses these new-born persons thus. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby : If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." chap. ii. 1—3. He opens and sets before us all contained in this new, divine, spiritual and supernatural birth in these words, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and

godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Epis. i. 3, 4. In this new-birth is contained all the life and grace of Christ, which will ever be inherent in the mind. The Holy Spirit is pleased to draw it out into act and exercise, on Christ, and the Father's love in Him, as it seemeth good in his sight. And this divine nature is the foundation of all inherent righteousness: the very sole principle from whence it originates. This suits with what our most precious Lord Jesus Christ says himself on this subject. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John iv. 14. The drawing out into open view, act and exercise, what the Holy Ghost hath wrought in the soul, is entirely and alone, the work of the same Holy Ghost who hath wrought this whole work of God within us: and the exercise of our spiritual minds on Christ, is a clear evidence of our interest in the Lord Jesus. It is hereby we are proved to be the beloved of God: called to be saints: that we are interested in the all-glorious and everlastingly precious righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not interested in Christ hereby; nor are we entitled to his salvation in consequence hereof. Yet we are hereby capacitated for the enjoyment of Christ, and all the blessings of his great salvation. Without this new-birth, we can neither spiritually apprehend, nor enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ; for without it, we have no faculty suited to him. This spiritual birth is not our salvation; nor is it any part of our holiness and righteousness before God; but it is our meetness for glory; without which we can have no communion with the Three in Jehovah this side heaven, any more than we could in glory. This should be more closely attended unto, than it is in general. If we have not in us a new nature, it is impossible for us to delight in Christ Jesus. Do we not find we love to hear Christ's voice? To delight in Him? Is it not sweet to meditate on his love? From whence springs all this? Most assuredly from the Holy Spirit. But how is it we feel all this in our own souls? Yea, feel and enjoy what we ourselves are wholly unable to express? Surely it is because we have senses and faculties inherent in our minds, most exactly suited and agreeable to the objects and subjects presented to us, and set before us, in the glass of the everlasting gospel. We may think and talk otherwise, but if we are unregenerate we cannot perform one holy act: and it is expressly said, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. It is the practice of holiness there, and the practice of righteousness here, both these passages are upon. And when we have an holy and righteous principle wrought in us, in our new and spiritual birth, then we cannot, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, but act agreeable unto it. And where is there any thing in all this to lead us off Christ, or to lead us into ourselves? Nothing; no indeed there is not. 'Tis the universal acknowledgment of all saints, that as surely as we know that Christ is righteous, so we know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Then it follows from the apostle's words, that such have an inward disposition to righteousness. And from whence can this spring and originate, but from the new birth: and how can this detract from Christ, seeing it is here attributed to Him. It is because such are born of Him, that they are disposed to live to Him, and for Him. They cannot live to

Him, but they must in their outward walk be righteous persons. It seems to me to be altogether to ascribe our whole salvation to the Three in Jehovah, and to give them their proper glory for their distinctive acts in the same. The Father is to be praised for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, in giving Christ for us, and giving Him, with all the blessings contained in his great salvation unto us. We may well praise our Lord Jesus Christ, for his love to us, and for his washing us from our sins in his own blood, and saving us in himself with an everlasting salvation. We cannot but love the Holy Spirit, for revealing Christ in us, and unto us; for forming Him in us, and so testifying of Him to our hearts, as to render Him everlastingly precious unto us. We cannot under believing views, but be desirous to shew forth his praise: this is the very spirit of our text. This is to be done before men; then it must be by shewing forth, and declaring in and by our outward walk, and deportment, that He who is the Lord our Righteousness, is pleased to lead us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. So if we look over the whole of this chapter, we shall find, that the real saints, not being led away by the many antichrists, and their not following these, together with their abiding in the true and only right doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ, were all so many proofs of their being the Lord's: who had both taught them, and kept them; who led, guided, and defended them: who was so gracious unto them, that whilst there were on every side, such as were only mere speculists in the gospel, and only nominal professors of the same, yet these had real and spiritual communion with Christ, and proved the reality of this, in being in their walk, tempers, and conduct, what the disciples of Christ should be, righteous persons: by the which, proof was given, there was every thing in the knowledge of Christ, and his gospel, which most effectually disposes to, and effectually promotes, and produces all this. We must confess, it becomes us to acknowledge this, and prove the truth of this in our own persons. It is good for us to look on ourselves, as vastly interested in the whole contained in what the apostle delivers. It would be well were we to consider the whole, so far written to us, that we should attend to the whole of the same. Is it not because we too heedlessly pass over what is written in the inspired Epistles, that we reap no more advantage from them? I confess I look on it for myself, one of my greatest sins, the reading the sacred pages with too little attention, and self application. May the Lord the Holy Spirit lead us to reverence them as the oracles of God: to esteem them as the means of making us wise unto salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus. I must now leave what is contained in this present sermon with you; praying the Lord to follow it with his blessing so far as it seemeth good in his sight. The more you receive the light, truth, and knowledge of Christ into your minds, the more you will delight to walk with Him. It is in your walking with Him all grace will abound towards you. This will be your preservative from every evil and error. You will aim to glorify the Lord in all things: and with all you have and are. I cannot put life into God's word: but the Holy Spirit can. He does. He fills it with such an energy as cannot be resisted. May it please Him so to do, at all times, when you hear, read, meditate, and attend on the preaching of his most holy word: giving you to hear his voice in it: to mix faith with it. May you be not only hearers but doers of it. May it be to you the ingrafted word which shall save your souls and bodies

from all sin and evil. Thus I express my good will, and best wishes for your temporal and spiritual welfare. May the Lord himself say *Amen* to the same. May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Righteousness shine upon us, and shine within you, and invigorate your whole souls with his holy and heavenly influences. May he make your path as the path of the just, as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. May the Spirit of Christ and glory rest upon this: then you will confess, *If we know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* The Lord bless his Truth unto you. Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.—1 JOHN iii. 1.

IN this verse the apostle breaks forth, in reflecting some glorious beams of light and love, on the minds of such as were born of Christ, and were made partakers of the divine nature, as the apostle *Peter* terms it, 2 Epis. i. 4. As the doctrine of the Holy Trinity runs throughout every article of our most holy faith, and the distinct acts and operations of the Sacred Three, are one grand part of the New Testament, so our apostle in this verse now before us, calls on these he writes unto, to behold, to take into their minds, and consider the love of the Divine Father unto them—To view it in this instance of it: they were called the sons of God. It was but a title; but they had therewith all contained in it: therefore the manner of love, the freeness of it, the sovereignty of it, the eternity of it, with the blessings contained in it most truly deserved their most spiritual and deepest attention. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* It is pure, it is infinite love. It is God's own act of grace towards us. He is a fountain of everlasting love. We are his children by adoption: and our regeneration is the fruit thereof; so that this title and honour do most truly belong unto us. This is the very reason why the whole world out of Christ, unbelievers, and those who know not God, can neither conceive, nor judge, nor have the least apprehension of our state before the Lord. And because they cannot, therefore it is they contemn, and hate us. It is because they knew not our Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnate state; nor do they know us in the state of regeneration into the which we are brought; nor our blessed deliverance from the state of sin, guilt, and condemnation in which we were in our state of unregeneracy, out of which we are now for ever delivered. It is with us as it was with Christ: the world, the people of the Jews, knew not the Lord of Glory, when he appeared amongst them in the form of a servant. *The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* In order, and with a design to open these

words, so as if possible the whole excellence and force of them may be preserved, I will give the outline of them in the following particulars.

1. I will notice the word *Behold* with which they are introduced.
2. What we are called upon to *Behold*. It is *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us*.
3. The speciality of this, what it consists in, as here taken notice of. It is, *that we should be called the sons of God*.
4. That though this be the case, yet the world knoweth us not, as so called, and thus distinguished by free sovereign favour: neither did they our Lord, before us. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not*.

I hope in going through these particulars, we shall have the whole of our text explained and set before us. May the Lord command his blessing on the same. My first attempt is to notice the introduction of the text. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not*. I will

1. Notice the word *Behold*, with which the words of my text are introduced; which gives an item of the vast importance of what is contained in them. It is used by the Lord himself, by the Prophets, and Christ, and the Evangelists on some very particular occasions, both in the Old and New Testament.

When the Lord God is speaking of the Person, Incarnation, and work of Christ, he speaks thus. "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." Isai. xl. 10. When the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, is pleased to set forth his coequal Son, in the full glory of his Person and mediation, he is pleased to make use of this word, to fix the attention of the mind on this one grand object and subject: intimating hereby, there is no other object or subject on earth or in Heaven worth consideration but this alone. He uses this word, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Isai. xlii. 1. Again, when the Divine Father would have Joshua, and his fellow priests look on Christ the glorious Mediator, as the foundation stone, and on Him as the one only Mediator and Saviour, and view Him in the complete and glorious accomplishment of his work, this word is made use of. "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." Zech. iii. 8, 9. The prophet *Isaiah* when speaking of the Incarnation of Christ, uses this word. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." chap. vii. 14. When our *John* speaking as a Prophet is on the subject of Christ's appearing, he uses this word. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Rev. i. 7. Our Lord himself uses this word on the great subject of communion with himself. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

v. iii. 20. On the coming down from God out of heaven, of the New Jerusalem, this word is used. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with them, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. xxi. 3. Again, v.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new:" and in the next chapter, our Lord Jesus Christ says, v. 7, "Behold, I come quickly."—v. 12, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." That this word *Behold* is used in the sacred page, by God, Christ, the prophets, and apostles, as introductory to the most grand and important subjects revealed and recorded therein. The Father uses it, when he sets forth Christ, as God-Man, Mediator, and Saviour, and before the church, the same point of view he takes of Him, and hath in his own vast mind: as also when he would give a view of Him, and his most perfect relation, by the ministry of his servants, *Isaiah* and *Zechariah*. The prophets and apostles use the same word, when they would express the most important truths to us. Our Lord Jesus Christ doth the same; so doth our apostle here before us. He would have us to contemplate this subject—The love of God to us. It is most certainly designed to engage our minds: to fix our thoughts: to fill us with holy wonder: to draw us out into an holy admiration, at the subject he is about to set before us; which leads me to my next particular which is this:

2. To set before you, what we are called upon to behold—It is what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*

The *us* are saints—The very same *us*, who had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; whose blood was their present and everlasting purity before God; whose righteousness was their eternal perfection; whose life of priesthood and advocacy was their everlasting security. The *us* here, are the same who had received an Unction from the Holy One, who were born of Him. As all their blessedness, and blessings were the fruits and effects of the Father's love, the apostle would have them take a view thereof. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* He is not here calling us to believe the love wherewith God hath loved us; nor is he calling us to receive the knowledge of it into our minds, that we may receive the same into our hearts. He is calling us to behold it: to look at it: to contemplate it in its original—In its spring and fountain—In its freeness and sovereignty—In the nature of it—In the manner of it—In its fruits and blessings. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!* It was actually bestowed upon them. They had an actual enjoyment of the same: yet, as it exceeded all they could ever have the enjoyment of, either in earth, or heaven, he would therefore have them look off all their real enjoyments of it, to this love, as it was in God the fountain of it. This the very word *Behold* implies. If they were to *behold* this love wherewith the Father had loved them, and what freeness, sovereignty, and greatness was contained in it, then they themselves, or what they enjoyed of the same, made no part of the subject which they are here excited to consider. The elect are the objects and subjects of the Father's love; yet all his love to them is in Himself. It is not in the saints, be they in earth, or in heaven, but by revelation, manifestation, and reflection. It is in God as the fountain of it. He

only is the spring of it: and it is the good pleasure of his will, to love his Elect in Christ. There is no cause to be assigned why he should love them; but because it is the good pleasure of his will. God's love is an act of his will. His predestinating purpose respecting them, is an act of his understanding. The eternal Three in the one incomprehensible Essence, have but one will. They therefore love the Elect with one and the same love. Not one more than the other. It hath pleased them to manifest their loves so as to give full proof of the distinct act of their wills towards them. Yet love in God is but one act: and it is an act in the mind of God. Therefore it is eternal, and immutable. The Elect are the objects and subjects on whom the will of God terminates. He loved them, and therefore he chose them in Christ. This is the first act of his love towards them. All the acts of his grace towards them in Christ, are the effects of his love to their identical persons, as the objects of his eternal love and complacency. He loved them so intensely, as to choose them in Christ, and thereby give them being and well-being in Christ before the world was. And farther to express the same, he blessed them in Christ, their Head, with all spiritual blessings suited to their relationship to the Person of Christ, and which were to remain their's in Him, for ever. Whilst all this originates from the everliving, everblessed Three, in the one same and everglorious Godhead, yet it is generally attributed in the holy Scriptures, to the Divine Father. It is so in the 1st chapter of the *Ephesians*; where all the eternal acts of God's will, in Christ, towards the elect are enumerated. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. v. 3—6. It is here to be observed, all these fundamental acts in the infinite mind, respecting the whole election of grace, are attributed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And also the original of these, is wholly ascribed "to the good pleasure of his will." And, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." The good pleasure of God's will is the fountain cause. The praise of the glory of his grace, is the end and issue of all. So as it respects salvation; according to the express statement of it, as set before us in the everlasting gospel, it originates from the Father: it is executed by the Son, and revealed and set forth, and brought home to us, by the energy and witness of the Holy Ghost. It is the one ever-living, everlasting, everblessed God, in his Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, manifesting himself as the God of all grace, in the glorious œconomy of the same, expressing his everlasting love, so as to give us a blessed apprehension of the obligations we are under to the Holy Trinity, for their Personal acts in the everlasting council and covenant of grace towards us. It is doubtless with a design to this, the apostle directs our views to the love of the Divine Father in the words before us. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! That we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* The love of God is a subject for the minds of God's saints to contemplate. They may well behold, survey, and take a view of it, by

faith. It is the greatest thing in God himself, which we are concerned in. His love to us, is a free love. It is also sovereign love. It proceeds from himself alone. It is a love fixed on us. It is a love of complacency and delight. It is an immutable and an everlasting love. It was in God's heart towards us, before the world was. It will never cease being in his heart towards us, throughout the ages of eternity. The blessings of which we are to enjoy, in communion with Him, now, and for ever. Surely then, the views and reviews we take into our minds of this infinite and inexhaustible subject, cannot but be very profitable unto us. *Behold*; let your minds, then, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, be engaged and exercised on the subject of the Father's love to us. On the greatness of it. The eternity of it. The fixation of it. On the immensity of it. On the blessings contained in it. On the continuation of it. On what we shall for ever and ever enjoy as the objects and subjects of it. On what hath been already bestowed on us, and on what we have enjoyed, and do enjoy out of, and from this infinite Ocean. You will find enough to delight your minds—To comfort your hearts—To fill you with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the true knowledge of, and exercise of your spiritual faculties on the subject. It is, therefore, I thus address you. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!* not simply conceived towards us, and willed unto us; but hath actually bestowed upon us, and given us the real knowledge, perception, and enjoyment of! To give us to know we are the *us* whom he loved in our own identical persons, in Christ, with such a love, as will know no end. Let us who are the objects and subjects of it, behold the same, in its original: as springing up, and conceived in the infinite mind of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from everlasting: from whence flow all the blessings of the divine favour, and good will of God into our souls. By a true, and spiritual survey of it, we shall have some blessed apprehensions of the same in our minds; so as to see what the prophet says, and have a real and spiritual enjoyment thereof. "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. iii. 17. To take this into the mind, to have it realized in the heart; to live in the views and belief of this continually, this is to have communion with the Father, in all the blessings of his love. We have not the blessings and consolations which flow from this, and then we know that God loves us: we have the knowledge of his love to us first; then the real enjoyment of it flows into our minds. Then we being led to survey all this in its original and fountain cause, are led into communion with God himself, as our Father. Thus the eternal acts of God in Christ towards us, are opened unto us, by the light and teachings of the Holy Spirit. And we are led to value God's love to us, beyond all the gifts of God's love: and to value the gifts for the giver's sake: and to value them because they all flow, from God's eternal favour and the good pleasure of his good will towards us, in Christ his Son. It is a great attainment in the school of Christ, to apprehend the love of God, in distinction from all his gifts: and these as the fruits of it: and to have a view of them as proceeding one from the other. Election is the first act of God's love to us. This is the greatest act of God towards us. It hath wholly to do with our persons. This contains the very uttermost of the good pleasure of God's good will towards us. The whole and the

very uttermost of God's everlasting love to us, is herein contained. Our being chosen in Christ is the fruit of this. When we behold and survey this in the light of faith, taking in the subject as revealed in the gospel of the grace of God, we cannot but be astonished thereat. As we further survey and proceed in our contemplations of this subject of God's everlasting love to us, in the Father's ordaining Christ to be our Head, and that all the blessings of grace and glory should flow into our souls, by virtue of our union, and relation to and interest in Christ as members in Him, we perceive fresh wonders of everlasting love to us, shining forth upon us in this apprehension of the same; and thus we are led on to know and apprehend the blessings which belong to us, in consequence of Christ's being our Head; which are wholly and altogether supernatural ones. And all the fruits of Election grace: and those which flow on us, from Christ as the Redeemer, and Saviour. It would be well, were the real Church of Christ, led to keep every one of these subjects apart, and place them in their proper and distinct order. I conceive the scripture before us, gives countenance to such an assertion, as the apostle is here only upon one single branch of the love of God, and that as an act of the Father towards us. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.* Survey it in election: in predestination: in adoption: in salvation: in the blessedness of personal communion. It is vast-glorious. It surpasseth all finite understanding. Our apostle is all for positive assertions. We have no argument, or argumentative method of writing in this Epistle. As all is truth, so the apostle treats and builds on it as such. We may here observe the manifold wisdom of God, as illustrated in the variety of gifts which he is pleased to bestow on his ministering servants. We have in the writings of the apostle *Paul*, solid arguments, so laid as the foundation to support what he writes on, as cannot be set aside, or overturned. In this Epistle, we have truths solemnly asserted, and these are carried into experience. And we find the same in the ministry of the word. Some ministers treat their subjects in a doctrinal way. Some in a way of solemn assertion of what Truth is. Yet both are blessed by the Spirit of God, to various hearers. No doubt but all this is in the infinite wisdom of God, suited to the various spiritual capacities the Lord is pleased to bestow on his ministers and people. But I will proceed to my next head of discourse, which is

3. The speciality of this. What in the love of the Father it is which the apostle would have these saints to take special notice of. It is this, *That we should be called the sons of God.* *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*

"It is," says *Dr. Goodwin*, "but a title which is here expressed." "Yet," says *Mr. Romaine*, "God bestows no empty titles." He gives all contained in it. Therefore the greatness of the love of God is contained herein. To be a son of God, is to be an heir of glory; therefore the title of it bestowed by the Lord himself on us, must be to convey assurance of the same to the minds of his called people. It is a confirmation thereof. Hence the apostle would have the saints take notice of it; that they might be led to admire both the love of the Father unto them, and also the manner in which he is pleased to manifest and give them undeniable evidence hereof. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of*

God! It is an high honour to sustain this title. It is the more so as bestowed on us by the Lord. He says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Isa. xliii. 4. With respect to the grace of adoption, it is the fruit of eternal predestination. It is founded upon the marriage union which subsists between Christ, God-Man, and the church, which is his bride and spouse. The grace of it is contained in the personal election of the Person of Christ to be the Head of his body the church, and the actual election of the church in Christ, before all time. We are made partakers in regeneration of the grace of adoption. We are not made the children, and sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty thereby. But by it we are made manifest to be the Lord's. To this effect we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power, or right, or privilege, to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 11—13. This is a very surprising instance and act of divine grace towards us; which draws after it innumerable blessings; all of which are wholly supernatural. It is here ascribed to the Father. He is the author and fountain of it. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* Survey it in all the glorious dimensions as far as you can by faith: the more you see into it, the more the glories of it, will break forth, and shine upon you. The blessing and the grace contained in it, is already bestowed on you, so as that you have had a real and sensible enjoyment of the same. Yet what is contained in the whole of it, and you will one day possess and enjoy in consequence of the same, exceeds your highest conception. The apostle *Paul* speaking on it, and on the Spirit of adoption which is bestowed on the adopted ones, who being born again, receive the Spirit of adoption, and by Him are led to call God their Father, says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. viii. 16, 17. To be heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ, in all the riches of God's communicable grace and glory, this is the fruit and blessedness which flows from the grace and royalty of Adoption. God is our inheritance: and we are his inheritance. The foundation of which as laid in the Divine mind is as follows. The Essential and only begotten Son of the living God, being predestinated into creature-existence, and set up before all time in the will, council, decrees and purposes of the Three in Jehovah, to be God-Man—it was in Him the church was chosen. She was predestinated to be his bride. She was presented to Him—Given to Him—Married to Him—United to Him. He was her Eternal Head, and Husband; thus they were united, and related to each other. As the Father was the God and Father of Christ our Head, so by this union of the elect to Christ, they became the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty: and as such, stand in relation to God and Christ, as none beside do. No; not the elect angels of God in heaven. Hence their union and relation to the Person of Christ, contain the very essence and perfection of all the Father's grace towards them. The whole of this springs from election, and is founded thereon; so doth all the honours, privileges, blessings

and benefits which flow herefrom. God is their Father, they are his children. They are Christ's spouse, He is their Elder Brother. He is their Pattern, they are to be conformed to his glorious likeness. The apostles says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. viii. 29, 30. Christ the first-born of many brethren, is the pattern draught, set up, and drawn in the Divine mind, after which all the rest are to be conformed; which will be effected in them by the free grace of God, without their having any concern in it. They will be the subjects of this conformity; but they will never have any hand in it. But I will here go back to my text, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* If we in the light of God's word and Spirit, survey this love, we cannot but be astonished at it. That we should be included in this *us*, if believed and apprehended, must fill us with increasing wonder. It is grace beyond what the church of the first-born in glory can fully comprehend—Even what is contained in this grace and title, that we should be called *the sons of God*. More especially when we add to this, we have not only the title bestowed upon us; but also all contained therein. Surely the subject is beyond the very uttermost of our conception. I should conceive it will be so even in glory. That this with all which cannot but follow it, flows out of the ocean of everlasting love, the knowledge of this, only serves to increase the idea of what it must be, for God to love us in Christ with an everlasting love. Surely this is heaven! this is glory! this is life everlasting! to have the mind perpetually filled with the knowledge of it, and engaged in the perpetual enjoyment of the same. As grace is glory in the bud, it is therefore our only blessedness here in this time state, to have our spiritual faculties exercised on those most blessed subjects, in which they will be engaged when we see and enjoy the love of God, by being admitted to a sight and vision of Christ, face to face, within the veil. It well became therefore the apostle, to call on saints, to *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* This is our title even now, whilst we are here below. Notwithstanding our inherent sin and deformity. It is the excellency of the inspired writers to bring their subjects home. To make an immediate application of them. This they did under the immediate influence and energy of the Holy Ghost; which must have been of great advantage to those to whom they sent their apostolical epistles. Here before us, the apostle brings the whole weight of this vast subject down to the *us* whom he is addressing. Surely they must have felt the influence of the same. It could not have been otherwise. He had before said every thing which could possibly have encouraged their faith. He wrote with the express design to increase their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. He had been going on to remove every obstruction and impediment out of the way, which might by any means be an hindrance to this; which he did so ingenuously, as to bring no kind of sin, or charge against them. And that he might ministerially let in upon them, all the rays, beams, glory, splendour, and warmth of the love of God on their minds, he says, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that*

we should be called the sons of God! Most assuredly, it must as designed and expressed by the apostle, have been very advantageous to these saints. The subject could not but have entered the more forcibly into their minds; which must have most divinely influenced them. To have the acts of God in Christ towards us, set before us, as stated in the written word, and also the Love of God as the spring of all, in election, predestination, adoption, acceptance in the Person of Christ, with God's beholding us in Him, the Beloved, must be a mean in the hand, and by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit, of increasing our communion with the Holy Trinity. It therefore should be observed, it being most justly worthy of being remarked, that in, and throughout the whole of this Epistle, every thing is delivered by it, which is calculated to improve, promote, and increase this. I would here insert the most important scripture in all the Bible, in which the gracious act of God's adoption is fully expressed. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. i. 5, 6. This, with what is mentioned in the two former verses, are wholly and all of them supralapsarian blessings, founded on the relation of the persons of the elect, to the Person of Christ, God-Man: to and in whom by virtue of their election they were united and interested from everlasting. I cannot on these great subjects, but go over the same things again and again, as I wish as far as I possibly may, to make them clear and plain to the lowest and weakest spiritual capacity. I come now to my last particular, which is this

4. That though this be the case, that we are, and are called, *the sons of God*, and this title is bestowed on us, by our heavenly Father, yet the world knoweth us not, as so called, and as thus distinguished by free sovereign favour; neither did they our Lord before us. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* We are at present in our undress. They do not see us shine forth, as we do even now, in the sight of our heavenly Father: nor as we shall one day in theirs, when our Lord shall appear. At which season, we shall also appear with Him in glory. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

The everlasting love of the Father, towards the *us*, and *we* expressed in the words before us, had been made known and manifested to these, by the Incarnation of Christ. The Holy Spirit had led them into the true knowledge of the Person, and salvation of the Son of God, and into real, and spiritual communion with Him, and the Father in Him. The apostle has been calling on these blessed and highly favoured ones, to survey, so far as the eye of faith could, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and agreeable with the revealed account given of the same, in the written word, the love of the Father unto them. He well knew it would refresh their souls: it would increase their esteem and high valuation of the same; it would feed and feast their minds: it would enlarge their faculties: it would give them whilst here below, to partake of the joys of heaven: it would lift them up, above the body of sin, and death: it would enable them to bear and sustain the troubles, trials, and persecutions, they had to encounter in this present state. He would have them know, and clearly understand, the world could not by any means

understand, or know them, to be what they were. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* The *him* is Christ : who when he became Incarnate, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." His Person, his glory, was not known by them ; yet it was constantly before them ; shining round about them—In his life and actions.—In his ministry—In his miracles, and supernatural arts ; yet they saw nothing in Him, or his actions, which led them to confess, and make a true and right acknowledgment of Him. As the case was with Him, so it was with these saints ; though the God of all grace had distinguished these saints, by calling them into fellowship with himself, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and bestowed on them the title of sons of God, yet the world did by no means, love or esteem them for this. So far from it, they had not the least perception of the dignity and honour their heavenly Father had conferred on them ; nor must these blessed ones, expect they would. Yet to carry their minds above all the insults and contempts they might receive from them, the apostle reminds them, this was so far from being to be wondered at, it was only what might have been naturally and of necessity expected. It being exactly the same, with the carriage of the Jewish world, and people, toward their royal Lord and master. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God ! Behold ! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us ! that we should be called the sons of God.* You enjoy the blessing, and blessedness contained in this, in your own souls. You have blessed prospects of eternal glory hereby. You are in consequence of your spiritual and supernatural views of it, advanced into most glorious, high, and exalted communion with your heavenly Father. Yet if you think this, or your expressing the truth and substance of this, will bring you into esteem with the world, you are entirely mistaken. It was not the case with the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It will not be the case with you. Let the love of the Father be unto us, let it be displayed towards us, and let us be distinguished by it as we may, the world will never love or regard us on that account. I would therefore this should be settled in your minds. And I would you should ever remember this is the reason of it—They knew not Christ—They know not us. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* It is the same to the very present moment : yet we wonder at it : whilst there is not the least cause for it, if we but reflect one moment. How can contraries unite ? When I first went forth to preach Christ, according to the measure of light given me, I really conceived the spirituality and majesty of the subject, would have captivated and carried all before it. I suppose some of you, know not how to account for it, that truths so sublime and spiritually excellent as those you have received into your minds, concerning the love of the Father towards the Elect in Christ, are not most cordially received, embraced, and very highly esteemed. The longer you live, beloved, the more you will find supernatural truths disrelished. The present day is not that in which any are persecuted for their profession. Yet it is a day when supernatural truth, and the supernatural gospel, and a supernatural profession of them, were never more heartily despised. Nor where there ever, it may be, since the reformation from Popery, more despisers of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God, than are now existing in the United Kingdom. This should be no cause of discouragement to real saints : so far from it, they should only thereby be led to consider what is here de-

clared by the apostle in the words before us. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* Our Jesus was the Lord from heaven. As Man, he was truly heavenly. In his life, all the perfection which will ever be found in heaven, in all the saints and angels, was contained. He was perfectly resigned to the whole will of God. He most cheerfully acquiesced, and was most perfectly satisfied with the whole. No doubt but this will be, in all the saints in glory, both elect angels and saints, their highest grace. Our Lord was all this in every act of his mind, all the while he tabernacled here below. Yet none saw this. It was an internal act of his mind. It shone forth in the whole of what he was, and performed. Yet it was wholly before the Lord, in his sight and view. It was not perceived by the world. They therefore knew Him not : neither in his Person, as the Son of the living God, manifested in the flesh, nor in the wonderful exercises of his grace, nor in his wonderful love to the elect sons of men. The world knew Him not. Therefore they could not love, nor admire Him : neither does it know us : nor as God hath been pleased most graciously to distinguish us. They know not that, in which our chief dignity consists. They know not the way in which the Lord honours us. They know not in what our riches consist. Neither can they have the least perception of our blessedness, which consists in our real, free, and personal communion with the Lord. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* It is herein the great distinction lies. It is this in which we differ from all others, be they whom they may. We have received an Unction from the Holy One. We are the partakers of a new, and supernatural birth. God hath sent forth his Spirit into our hearts, whereby we cry Father, Father. We find all the blessings of grace and glory, and have an inward, true, and actual enjoyment of the same, as we are enabled to survey, and contemplate the love of our heavenly Father, as the original, fountain, and spring, of our eternal life, blessedness, perfection and glory. My beloved, I have gone through the words of my text as well as I could. It may be you will exceed all I have delivered in your own private spiritual contemplations on the same. This will be your mercy. I will again recite the words of my text. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God : therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* This is the very reason given why the world knoweth us not ; because it knew not our Lord Jesus Christ. If so, then our being unknown, slighted, despised, and opposed by them, is a part of our conformity to him. May the Lord the Spirit lead you daily, and continually, to behold, and survey the love of your heavenly Father, towards you, personally, and individually in the Person of Christ, in all the acts, instances, outgoings, gifts, and blessings thereof. This will be blessedness indeed to your renewed minds. You will in these apprehensions approach God as your exceeding joy. It will give you the best idea of Heaven, of the heavenly state, and of what the happiness and blessedness of the saints in glory consists in, which you possibly can receive, before you enter, to join them in the very same participation of the same ineffable blessedness. May the Lord bless what hath been thus feebly delivered unto you. Amen.

SERMON XXXV.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN iii. 2.

THE apostle here reflects in upon the minds of those who were born of Christ, some blessed beams of everlasting love, and sovereign favour; well knowing that contemplations on the same, would do them good: as it would be the mean of their having communion with the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father thereby, as it would of the Son also. He had begun to speak of the grace of adoption, and here he proceeds with the same most important subject: shewing according to it what we now are—That the further glory of the same doth not yet appear; this is reserved for us, when our Lord shall come the second time without sin unto salvation: then we in consequence of our being the sons of God, shall be like our Lord; for we shall then see him as he is. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* In both these verses, the subject is brought home and applied. It is *us* and *we* in the former verse. It is *we*, in this now before us, which is an explanation of the former; in the which are contained the following particulars.

1. The address. *Beloved.*

2. The subject. *Now are we the sons of God.*

3. That what saints are, and what will be fully manifested, and be in future bestowed on them, *doth not yet appear. And it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* But the apostle adds, by way of casting light on the whole of this subject,

4. *But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

May the Spirit of God and of glory, rest upon me, whilst I open these particulars, that the glory of them may appear, and be reflected forth on us. Amen. I am

1. To speak and take notice of the address. *Beloved.* It differs from all the former. It comes in here very pertinently. It is very suited to the subject. For surely if these persons were the sons of God by adoption, and *John* was one of them, contained in the terms *us*, and *we*, he could not but love these, they being *the beloved of God.*

Moses the man of God, speaking of the tribe of *Benjamin*, and pronouncing his blessing on the same, says, *The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.* Deut. xxxiii. 12. The apostle *Paul* addresses the saints at *Rome* thus—*beloved of God.* When he is addressing the members of the church of Christ at *Colosse*, to the exercise of various graces towards each other, he uses the most endearing terms, saying, *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved.* The apostle *Peter* uses the same expression writing to the church of Christ at *Babylon*, he says *Dearly beloved.* And in his 2^d Epis. iii. 17, he addresseth

the saints with the word, *beloved*. The Spirit of Christ in all the apostles, was one and the same. The Lord's people, who were the beautiful flock, the flock of slaughter, redeemed, washed, sanctified, and purified in the blood of Christ, and brought nigh unto God, by the Mediator's blood and obedience, were exceedingly precious unto them, and beloved by them; not more by one, than the other: yet *John* was one whose whole soul seemed to breathe it out in such an affectionate way, as if there had been nothing but love in him, and as if he were swallowed up in it: and as he here uses it, it is very congenial with the subject before him. These persons were the beloved of God. They were the sons of God: on whom the Father had fixed his love from everlasting: whom he *had predestinated to himself, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will*. This he had manifested unto them, by bestowing this title upon them, that they should be called *the sons of God*. They had the grace of sons. They were born of God. They had the spirit of sons. The Holy Ghost the Spirit of adoption was bestowed upon them, whereby they called God, *Abba, Father*. They had the privileges and blessings, and benefits of adoption bestowed upon, and enjoyed by them; so that they were openly manifested to be the beloved of the Lord, and the blessed of the Lord, which made heaven and earth. The apostle had a most comprehensive view and apprehension of all this in his own mind. He addressed them thus, on the knowledge he had in his own soul of all this. He knew they were accepted in the Beloved; Christ being eminently so: He being the Son of God's love. The Father therefore having accepted their persons in Him, carried the strongest evidence with it, that these persons were the beloved of God. If so, they might well be beloved by the apostle. The elect of God are the beloved of God. And they are the elect of God because they are the beloved of God. They are not beloved because they are elected. But they were beloved, and therefore they were elected. It is an act of electing love towards them, their being the sons of God by adoption: and all the fruits of the same, are to be considered as so many acts of love, and blessing which flow therefrom. This love and grace in the will of God, is immutable. No change can take place there. This therefore having been manifested to these saints, the truth of it could never be broken in upon. The whole heart of God was fixed on the objects and subjects of His love. His grace could not be more gloriously expressed towards these, than it has been in the grace of adoption, and the blessings and privileges bestowed on these, as the beloved. They were now what they would ever remain to be. Neither time nor eternity would make any alteration in what they were as the sons of God. They were by adoption, sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ: so that hereby God himself became their inheritance and their all. To view the title of the address, which the apostle here makes use of, and with which he here speaks to saints, is very cheering and refreshing. *Beloved*. Why my good friends, what can exceed this! To be the beloved of God! To be beloved by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with all the love of everlasting complacency of good will and delight; this must be grace unspeakable! It must be grace which can never be fathomed! No. Not to the ages of eternity. It is no wonder the apostle should break out, as he did in the past verse. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of*

God! If this deserved to be thus introduced, with the word *Behold*, to mark the importance of the subject, surely, unless he would have used the same word, none could be better than the word *Beloved*. Which is here prefixed, when he is going to cast light and explain this most glorious and surprising subject of free, sovereign, and glorious grace. The word grace, and love, are one and the same, as used in the book of inspiration. If there be any difference designed by them, it is only to express the freeness and sovereignty of God's love, in the displays thereof. I might here observe, as the address, *Beloved*, suits the subject, so by it was way made, for the reception of the same into the mind. It was as a preface to set the subject forth in all its glory. It opened the heart to receive what was about to be pronounced, before it was actually delivered. If they were beloved by the apostle, it was for the Lord's sake. If the Lord loved them, it must be from Himself alone. And according to his own heart. Then the blessings of his love, and which he had bestowed on them, must be proportionable to the same. The true apprehension of this, could not but enlarge their minds, and make way, for a more full, and clearer apprehension thereof. But we will proceed

2. To the subject. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.* A vast subject. It is a present one. It is *now*: even now, at this present time, and in this present world in the which we *now* are, that we are the sons of God.

The subject contains an immensity of grace: such as can never be fully opened. No; not in all the different and distinct ages, and periods of time, nor in heaven, throughout the ages of eternity. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.* If what we were in the former verse said to be, those on whom the Father hath bestowed the grace of adoption, and the title of adoption, so as that we wear it as our proper badge, it being our very peculiar armorial bearings, *the sons of God*: and we in Christ, and with his righteousness on us, and as washed in his blood, possessed by his Spirit, adorned with all his graces, by virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, walk up and down in the name of the Lord of hosts, and wearing this for our coat of arms, *the sons of God*; surely this is honour which is personally and peculiarly ours. Then, seeing we are at present the subjects of sin, and are always discovering and perceiving more of the same in us, than we do of grace, it must be most truly blessed to be informed from good authority, we are even now, the sons of God. We have not only the title and dignity of it, bestowed on us, but we are really so. *Beloved, now*, at this very present time, feel what we may of sin, and corruption in our mortal bodies, *are we the sons of God.* This is by the grace of adoption: let this therefore be remembered. It was opened in the past sermon, Christ is the Son of the living God, in a personal, distinct, and peculiar way, in the which we are not. He is the Son of the living God, by personal distinction from the Father, and Spirit, in the same infinite, incomprehensible Essence. He is *the only begotten Son of God*: of the same Essence, glory, majesty, eternity, and self-subsistence with the Father and the Spirit: one and the same ever-living, everlasting God. He is also God-Man, in one Person. It is as God-Man, He was chosen and appointed to be the Head, Bridegroom, the Lord, the Saviour of his church. It is by virtue of our union to his Person, we are married unto Him, and are the sons of God. This we are now: we have but poor glimmerings of it in this present time state;

for the glory and perfection of this is all to break forth and fully appear in life everlasting; when we shall be admitted into that state, where Christ our Head in glory is; and where he shines forth in the glory of the Father. We are now in our non-age, as it respects our knowledge of the Father, of Christ, of our state and perfection in Him; of what we are as the sons of God: of what we must enjoy and be partakers of, in consequence of all this: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* Here by faith we have a certain knowledge of all this. We know Christ to be our Head. We know we are to be like him in glory and blessedness. This is to be with a difference of degrees, between our Head and us. He as Head hath our All. We as members, are to receive our all from Him. We shall never-communicate to Him. But He will in heaven, be communicating out of his immensity of glory, all blessedness to us. He will when he appears, so enlarge our spiritual faculties, as that we shall receive into our understandings, such clear knowledge of his glorious Person, as will satisfy our minds, with the fruition and enjoyment of his presence for ever. We shall also have clear apprehensions of his union to us, love and delight in us. This will afford us unceasing joy and consolation throughout the ages of eternity. All this will be enlarged on, as we get into the particular heads of this discourse, to which the same most properly belongs. Here indeed our subject is this particular part and branch of the subject, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.* We, us, you, all of us, whether apostles, ministers of the Lord and Saviour, or you believers in Christ: we are all one in Christ: we all equally share in the blessings of adoption. It is an ancient and high act in the mind of our heavenly Father towards us. It is grace beyond the very uttermost extension of our present comprehension. The more we survey it, the more we are lost and swallowed up in what is comprehended in it. We therefore say to you, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Believers in Christ, we are now as truly in Him, as we shall be, when we are with Him in heaven. Now are ye the sons of God, as really, as you will be, when all the glory and perfection of that glory which belongs to this relationship shall break forth towards you, within you, and upon you in eternal Glory. It is good for us to be spiritually engaged in contemplations of these subjects: that is the way, in the which we enjoy and receive the benefit of the same into our minds, and have real communion with the Father, and the Son in our hearts, in the true knowledge and belief of the subject, by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost within us. Our union to the Person of Christ, is in this life as perfect as it ever will be in glory. We are as truly the sons of God, as we ever shall be. Our text lays a mighty emphasis on this. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.* Our union and sonship to God, are founded upon our union and marriage to Christ. The glory of sonship which we have is by free gift. *Dr. Goodwin* expresseth himself on this great subject thus: "Christ's being the Son of God, is the highest glory of

Christ, and more than all, even the foundation of all. If we consider Him as Second Person simply, He is the Son of God Personally, as one in distinction from the Father and the Spirit. If we consider Christ as Man, he is the Son of God, by personal union, unto the Second Person. If we consider ourselves as the sons of God, it is by adoption, and union with Him, who is Essentially and Personally, the only begotten Son of God." These are great and most sublime truths: calculated to lift up our hearts to worship, praise, and bless the Lord for what was conceived in the incomprehensible mind of the Three in Jehovah, concerning us before all worlds. The whole volume of revelation, consists in setting before us the will, counsels, decrees, and secrets of the Most High towards us: so that we are hereby led into the knowledge of the same, and thereby also, into real and personal communion with the Three Persons in God. Now as this Epistle was designed to promote, increase, and enlarge the communion of saints with each other, and the Trinity in Unity, it is therefore the apostle brings forth this great truth here. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God*—To suggest to them, there was in the true knowledge and apprehension of this, a cordial which contained in it everlasting consolation. Our apostle seems to be more taken with the grace part of the gospel, than with the doctrinal part of the same. And herein it is, he writes so differently from the other apostles. We may from hence observe, such of the Lord's ministering servants as are led most immediately into personal communion with Christ, are generally led out in the general course of their ministry to express themselves in an heart warming manner on the most glorious and sublime Truths in the everlasting gospel. The truth of the matter if rightly stated is as follows. The doctrinal part of the gospel is the foundation of the grace part of it. Yet the grace part is that in which the essence and marrow of it is to be found. Some are chiefly attracted with the one, and some with the other. *Paul* is by far greater in the doctrine than *John*, and the latter more on some points of grace which are wholly and altogether spiritually experimental than on those very points which are most truly sublime. Some think all ministers of Christ are alike; and that the Lord makes an equal use of them: this is not the case; nor can one minister do the work of another. The work to be done by each of them is, and it must be agreeably with the gifts the Lord hath bestowed on them. For example, take these two apostles, *Paul* and *John*. None were beyond them in the church of the living God, for gifts, grace, and usefulness. Yet *Paul* could no more have written this Epistle, nor expressed what is here recorded, than either of us could. Nor could *John* have written as *Paul*, or *Peter*, or *James*, or *Jude* did, because it was not suited to the gift of grace bestowed on him. If the churches of Christ would notice the gifts of grace, bestowed on those persons whom they have chosen, and set over them in the Lord, and neither contrast them with others, nor expect more from them than they have a right unto, it would be of very great use, and promote very beneficial effects amongst themselves. No minister should aim at going out of the gift, and the way the Lord hath led him, to imitate another. He should be sensible of the gift of grace bestowed on him. He should be thankful for it, and be very industriously employed in the cultivation and improvement of the same; and leave it with the Lord to follow the same with his blessing, as seemeth good in his sight. It is a title given the saints of the Most High,

both in the Old and New Testament, *sons of God*. "As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." Rom. ix. 25, 26. The promise of God to his church runs thus. "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.—And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18. The title, *sons of God*, seems to have been of very ancient date. We read it as given to the professors of the true faith before the flood. Gen. vi. 2. And in *Job's* time. chap. i. 6. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." And again, chap. ii. 1. "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord," &c. In the 38th chapter of *Job*, in which the Lord puts such questions to *Job* as it was impossible he should be able to answer, we read thus. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding: Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Some by the morning stars, and sons of God in this place, conceive the angels of the Divine presence to be spoken of: if so, then they are called the sons of God. Be it so: I have no objection unto it: but if this be granted; yet they are not here, nor throughout any part of scripture, styled the sons of God by adoption. This grace, royalty, honour, dignity, and privilege, is bestowed only and wholly, with all included and contained in it on elect men in Christ. And what these will in the issue be, in glory and excellency does not yet appear: nor can it at present be conceived of by them. *Beloved, now are ye the sons of God*: as truly as we the apostles of Christ are. *And it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. The title is great. The new-birth which is the fruit of it is greater. The grace contained in the act of adoption goes beyond all this. The glory which must flow in upon, and be communicated to the saints, as the immediate consequences hereof, far surpasseth what we can possibly conceive: which brings me to this particular,

3. To observe, that what saints are, as the sons of God, and what will be fully manifested, and be in future bestowed on them, doth not yet appear. The apostle says, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be*.

We are now the sons of God; and this founded upon the marriage-union with Christ. So that our very bodies and souls are united to the body and soul of Christ, God-Man. What we shall be when this union is openly declared at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, doth not yet appear. What we shall then be, as the sons of God, can only then be made manifest.

It is in this respect with us, as it was with Christ himself. Or rather what was the case and state of Christ, God-Man, during his incarnate state, may serve to illustrate the subject before us. He was as truly the Son of God manifested in the flesh, the brightness of glory, the heir of all things, in whom the uttermost manifestation of the glory of

Godhead would shine forth to eternity : yet all this glory was suspended whilst he remained in his incarnate state. It was to break forth, and shine in its full splendour, after he should have completed the work of salvation. Having fallen asleep in his body in the arms of death, and been laid in the grave : it was to dawn forth at his resurrection : to shine brighter on his ascension : and He was to be in his Personal Glory in Heaven, and shine forth in the same at the right hand of the Majesty on high. None of this could enter into the minds of his saints and followers, with whom he conversed in the days of his flesh : nor did he give the least hint to any of them, except to *Peter*, and *John* and *James* his brother. He did this by his open transfiguration before them. When his face was like as the sun, and his garments white and glistening. Yet at that season, neither of these highly favoured ones knew what all this meant. So with respect to *us* saints ; for it is to such only I can now appeal—We know to be the *sons of God*, contains what we cannot fully conceive : we have the witness and testimony of our being the sons of God, inherently in our minds from the Holy Spirit. He bears his witness to our spirits that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. He gives us the earnest of this. He feeds our minds at certain times with the prospect of the same. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. Shews us those words of Christ in the which the glory which is to be revealed in us is contained. He fills our minds at certain seasons, with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; yet all this does not give us the clear and absolute knowledge of what we shall be, at the appearing of Jesus Christ ; any more than Christ's shining forth in glory on the mount, was his shining forth at the right hand of God. It was a glorious pledge and proof of it : so are the communions we are favoured with, of our being predestinated to immortal glory, and eternal blessedness. Christ was as truly God-Man in his incarnate state, as he is God-Man, now that He is in his exalted state. Yet Christ did not on earth, enjoy and shine forth, as he doth now in heaven—He being the Son of the living God ; of whom, He speaking as Mediator saith ; “ For as the Father hath life in himself ; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” John v. 26. He was the Son of God, dwelling personally in the nature of man. His miracles were outward demonstrations, that He was God-Man : God manifested in the flesh ; or the Son of God dwelling Personally in the Man Christ Jesus. Now like as we cannot comprehend the Personal glory of Christ in heaven, no, nor the Mediatorial glory of Christ in which he shines there, no, nor the relative glory of Christ in which he reflects such a lustre, as fills the saints within the vail with bliss which is unspeakable even by them, so neither can we conceive, for it doth not yet appear, what we shall be, when the splendour of our glory union shall appear. We are now the sons of God. We are as truly, personally, individually, perfectly, and everlastingly beloved by each of the Three in Jehovah, now, whilst we are in our present mortal state, as we shall be for evermore. It would be our blessedness to receive the truth of this into our minds, so as to have it always uppermost in our hearts. But how the glories of this are yet to break forth towards and upon us, doth not yet appear. Our thoughts are contracted ; our minds are too narrow at present ; the present body must be laid aside : we must be in a different state : most of us must be in two different states, even

of glory, before we can entertain adequate ideas hereof. We are in a state of regeneration; or, our text itself could not belong to us. At our dismission from our bodies we shall be admitted into the state of glory, where we shall be present with the Lord. Doubtless we shall there understand and take into our minds, what we shall more fully appear to be in the succeeding state, which will be that of the glorious resurrection. Why may we not conceive that all the states through which the elect pass, they will receive into their minds; and receive that into them, which will fit them for the ensuing state? I see nothing of absurdity in it. The state of purity in creation, was succeeded by the fall; in the which, we are in a state of sin, guilt, pollution, and misery. On this follows the state of life, grace, and salvation, into the which the Lord brings his elect openly and manifestatively, by regeneration: this issues in eternal glorification, which commences by death. It is manifested by the vision of Christ's Person and presence in heaven. It proceeds in the resurrection state, to further and more glorious sights of the God-Man, Christ Jesus: who will then shine on our glorified souls and immortal bodies as he never did manifestatively and apprehensively, in the states passed through before: and even which, when he shines upon us, in the ultimate state, will be everlastingly put down. Now as we cannot but acknowledge, the apostle knew the truth of all he writes, immediately from the teaching and inspiration of the Spirit of God: so he might well say to saints as saints, *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. It should be remembered, he casts himself, and all the saints into one and the same *us* and *we*: making no distinction. They were but one and the same church to Christ, howsoever they might be otherwise distinguished. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be*, in consequence of being heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ. Surely this could not but draw out their minds to study what they were as the sons of God. What they were entitled unto as the heirs of God. What they might expect and enjoy in the unseen state, in consequence of this. It is our misfortune to scarcely look off ourselves at any time; nor to look above our experiences, and spiritual attainments; yet there is no faith in all this. Here, in what is set before us, we can have nothing to do with the objects and subjects before us, but in the exercise of our faith. We cannot feel ourselves to be the children of God. We receive the knowledge we are so, and enjoy the comfort of knowing and believing that we are so, merely by faith alone. We cannot apprehend our adoption, the grace contained in it, the blessings contained in it, and connected together with the same, and the glory which will ultimately follow thereon, but by faith. Now as the other apostle says, we see through a glass darkly; and know but in part, and shall then only, see face to face, and know even as also we are known: so our apostle *John* says the same. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. We know at present that which we cannot communicate to any. We can utter and express what we know of Christ, and of our heavenly Father's love in Him, but we cannot convey the least idea of the same. So far from this, we often find, when we speak the clearest, concerning our views and inward apprehensions of these subjects, those very persons to whom we thus communicate our conceptions, have not so much as the least spiritual apprehensions thereof. So as it respects ourselves, we cannot

apprehend how glorious we are to be, and shall be as the sons of God, when our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear. We must leave all our present views, thoughts, apprehensions, and conceptions of the same, aside, in this point : as falling short, everlastingly short of what will be the case, when the glory of our union to the Person of Christ, and our sonship which is founded on our union with Him shall break forth, and appear. This is the outline of what the apostle here says : *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.* And this brings me to my last particular head of discourse, which is this.

4. The knowledge saints have, of what they cannot as yet comprehend, and of that which doth not yet appear, concerning the glory which is to be revealed in them, and the glory which will break forth upon them, and what it will produce in their souls and bodies. *But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*

We have in our regeneration, those spiritual faculties wrought in our souls, by the which we receive the knowledge of Christ, and have an actual enjoyment of Christ, now, and for ever. The same will remain in us for ever. It is by these the glory of Christ will be let into our minds in heaven, when we see Him face to face. It is by these as the mediums, we shall see and enjoy Christ for ever, in the ages of eternity. The saints of God have a knowledge of the truth and blessedness of the intellectual state of glory. They cannot comprehend it, yet they have spiritual apprehensions of it formed in their renewed minds by the Holy Ghost, of the objects and subjects which they will then have to converse with. If it were not so, the apostle would not express himself as he here doth. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.* Then it is we are to partake of that glory which belongs unto us, as the fruit of the Father's everlasting love to us. Which he expressed in *choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world.* And in *predestinating us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Saints have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them. It is he who hath wrought in their souls a meetness for eternal glory. He is the earnest of it. He gives them foretastes of it. By him they are taught that their completeness of bliss, both in body and soul is to be fully and finally accomplished at the second coming of our Lord ; of the which *Paul* says, speaking to the *us* in which he was included, *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Titus ii. 13. The appearing of Christ is believed in by the saints. They expect and wait for it. He will appear in all the glory, majesty, and perfection of his Person, as God-Man, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. Christ shone forth in this glory on the mount of transfiguration. He shines forth more fully now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He will shine forth in his full orb'd glory, when he shall descend as the Lord from heaven, to change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. The glories of Christ's body and soul, will be the subject of all the perfection,

and glory, and blessedness of Heaven. His Godhead being personally united to it, will be the sustainer of it. From this Tabernacle, as it is so called by our apostle in the 21st chapter of the *Revelation*, v. 3, all the glories of Godhead, will shine forth, and be reflected on the saints—on their souls and on their bodies; which will now be like unto his: and that in a suitable proportion and conformity: for Christ's glory and the church's glory are distinct glories. The human nature of Christ, taken into union with the Son of God, will have a glory, which is his Personal glory: wholly incommunicable. The Glory of the Son of God, who is God united to Man, in one Person, and the glory which flows herefrom, is the glory which will be reflected forth on the elect, when Christ our life shall appear. The saints in the resurrection state, will have a participation of their sonship union with Him, in degree and proportion, suited to their relation to Him, and to God in Him. They are now the sons of God. It is then to shine forth, and that in the same glory in which it will be continued in heaven, in the immediate presence of God for ever. It is this will make them like unto Christ. They seeing Him as he is, in his relative glory, in his Mediatorial glory, in his Personal glory, which is his ultimate glory, it will stamp his image so completely on the minds of his saints, and they will be so filled in their supernatural faculties, that they will be like Him, both in body and soul. A most glorious subject. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* To see Christ as He is, must consist in that intuitive sight and apprehension of the Person of Christ, as will consummate the blessedness of the glorified, and keep up their minds in perpetual activity on His Person for ever. It is such a sight of Him, as their Head of union, and communion, as will be to them everlasting life—Immortal bliss—A source of eternal joy. Agreeable with this our Lord says, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” This request when answered, will issue in such a glorification of the saints, that they will be with Christ, and be made so perfectly like Christ, in their measure and degree, as that the glory of their marriage union with Him will break forth on them, and shine forth in them to such a degree as cannot now be so much as conceived of by them. Our faith at present may contemplate it: and we may thereby have some conceptions of it in our spiritual minds: that is all we can attain unto whilst in the body; this is what the apostle himself here says. We shall never be more united to the Person of Christ, for our bodies and souls, our whole persons consisting of body and soul, are united to the body and soul of Christ, to his whole Person, God-Man, and we shall have all the glory which is contained in this union, shine forth in us, and reflected on us for ever. We shall see his face, and his name will be in our foreheads.

These are subjects worthy of our contemplations and study. They require the closest attention of the spiritual mind. They should be viewed in the light of the word, and in the exercise of faith. The spirituality of the mind is discovered by our love and delight in these subjects. We must leave out all we are, and all we think of ourselves, wholly and entirely, with all our own thoughts of future glory, and con-

fine our thoughts to what is revealed of the same in the gospel. It would be well for us to go over our election union. Our representative union. Our marriage union. Our covenant union. Our manifestative union. Our glory union: and consider what must flow in upon us, sooner or later in consequence of the same. When our Lord removes us to Himself, and we see Him face to face in Heaven, the glory of all these unions will not flow in upon us. We shall then be only in the state of glory. This is our first remove from the state of grace. It will be a most blessed one: nor can we at present have adequate conceptions of it—To be delivered from the whole body, and freed entirely and for ever from the whole inherency of sin, this will be most glorious, and such a blessing as we only can at present anticipate—To be on this presented by Christ, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, immediately on our entrance into Heaven, this will be most glorious and divine. After having been in this state for a season, to be removed into another, which will be the case: for the resurrection state differs from the glory state: whilst both are states of glory, yet there is a distinction in them, and the one will be more glorious than the other: as in the one we shall only be glorious in our souls, and in the other we shall be as truly glorious in our bodies, as they will be like the glorious body of our Lord. It is then we shall be like Him. It is then we shall see Him as He is: for our bodies as well as our souls will then be fitted for the real vision of Him; so that we shall have His full shine on us, which will fill our spiritual bodies, as well as our minds, through and through with His glory. He will shine upon us, and within us, as our Head of Glory. He will fill us with the reflection of the same. We shall shine forth therein, just as we shone forth in Him, in eternal predestination before all worlds, in all the glory and perfection of our divine adoption and sonship. *We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* Where, and on whatsoever the sun shines, it leaves its glory on the same—Christ shining on the souls and bodies of his saints in the resurrection morn, and during the resurrection state, he will put his own glory on them: so that they will be like Him. This will be increasing blessedness unto them. Believers, think on these words, *We shall be like him.* Then will be accomplished in us, all the effects of what our Lord expresses in these words to his Divine Father. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” Surely this must be the glory union, which is to shine forth most brightly from Christ on his whole church at the last day. Then it is he will give and present his church, to the Father, and that in the same glory in which he received them at his hands, before the foundation of the world. It is then we shall see the God-Man, as he is, and this will everlastingly satisfy us. Then the glory union will break forth upon the saints, so that he shall be glorified in them, and appear wonderful. This will make them as truly glorious, and like Christ, and as conformable to his glory, as can be admitted of: for the church can never have the Personal glory of Christ on her. No: it cannot be, any more than she can the

essential glory of Christ. She will be admitted to see Christ in his Personal Glory; but she cannot partake of it. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Christ's Personal glory is his ultimate glory: and the beholding Him in his glory as God-Man, will be the ultimate glory and blessedness of his saints. The glory he will put on them, is a glory suited to them as his members: and this will be everlastingly sufficient. And that they may never centre in their own communicated glory, blessedness, and perfection, they will be raised up and be admitted to see Christ in his Personal glory, which will so swallow up the whole of their minds, as that God in all his Persons and perfections, will be to them *All in All*. I have gone through this subject to the best of my ability; yet the whole is so much, and so far beyond me, that though I have the scriptures before me, I am vastly short of comprehending what is revealed in them concerning these great, glorious, and most divine subjects. You will therefore pardon me. Study these subjects for yourselves. It will be of very great use and benefit to you. The Lord forgive what is amiss. The Lord bless what is good in his sight. Amen.

SERMON XXXVI.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—1 JOHN iii. 3.

IN the two former verses the apostle had been speaking on these important subjects—on the manifestation of the divine Father's love to us, in adoption, so as to bestow on us the title of sons, and making us such. We are acknowledged and dealt with by God as such; yet carnal, earthly minded professors, neither esteem, nor love us, but hate us on this account, and for our profession of the same; which is very easily accounted for—They knew not Christ—They know not us. If they had known Him, they would have known us. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* It is a blessing beyond our estimation, that we should be graced by God with the title, — sons of God. It becomes us to consider the love from whence it originates. As to what the world think or say of us, it is not worth our notice. They only deal with us, and by us, as they did with and by our most blessed Lord: they knew Him not: so neither do they us. This may well carry us above all, to be informed of what you really are in the view of, and as it respects your relation to God himself. *Beloved, now are we, at this very time, and in the present state you are now in, the sons of God. You are at present, in this present evil world: there's no visible discovery to you, or others, of the glorious condition which awaits you; of the*

glory which ere long will be revealed in you : of what you are to be the partakers of. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.* It is only by faith, and the earnest, witness, and testimony of the Spirit, in the word of truth ; and in perfect harmony with the same, his bearing testimony to our spirits concerning what is written in them ; that we look for the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we inwardly know, and are assured, that when Christ shall appear, we shall be made like unto Him : we ground it upon this, we are *the called according to God's purpose.* And *whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.* We are fully persuaded, that as *we now bear the image of the earthly Adam in our present mortal bodies, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Adam.* And this likewise in complete holiness and happiness. *For we shall see him as he is.* We shall then enjoy him in the most immediate, intimate, personal, and intuitive manner : we shall behold Him in his manhood, in all his glory : this is what *Job* spake of when he said, " I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; or not a stranger." *Job* xix. 25—27. The confession respects his seeing God in our nature : or, his glorious Redeemer in a body like our own, as it respects the reality of it, at the last day. These words are to the same effect, " As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." *Psa.* xvii. 15. When the saint should see the Person of Christ at the resurrection-morn, he would then be satisfied : not with his conformity to Him, but with Christ, the image of the invisible God. As in these two verses which begin this present chapter, Christ is not expressly mentioned, it may be asked, why I have applied the *he* to Christ, without giving a reason for the same ? My friends, it is most certain, our Lord is to appear. It is not the Father, nor the Spirit : yet our Lord is not mentioned in the text, but by the term *he* : so that I concluded it might be, the question would be proposed ; and for my own satisfaction, and your's also, I would refer back to the 28th verse of the former chapter, where you read these words, " And now, little children, abide in him ; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." This I think will give you complete satisfaction. The words of my present text are in close connection with the former ones : and may be considered as expressing the fruits and effects, which the hope, and expectation of the appearing of Christ, and seeing Him as he is, and of being like unto Him, produceth in the hearts and lives of such, as are interested in Christ, and have this real and blessed apprehension of the subject. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* I will set before you the particulars contained in the words thus.

1. Christ the Person spoken of under the term *him*, and as the object of the saints' hope, that when he shall appear he will be seen by them, and they shall be made like unto Him.

2. What effect the true knowledge of this vastly important article of our most holy faith, hath on every one that rightly receives and embraces it. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

3. What is contained in this ?

I conceive under these particulars, we may have some general outlines of the verse now before us. May the Lord bless the same, so as that we may be profited thereby. Amen.

A true gospel hope, of seeing Christ ; of being made like unto Him, of seeing Him as He is, hath its most blessed effect on the minds of saints. Such, depending on the sure and certain accomplishment of all this, in the Lord's time, and in the Lord's way, cannot but shun all evil, and aim after the utmost perfection of practical holiness ; hereby proving their meetness for that state, into the which they are to be introduced by Christ, at his coming, and in his kingdom ; that so they may hereby have as glorious a perception of the same, as they possibly can before their personal introduction into it. I am

1. To consider the Person of Christ as spoken of, under the term *him* : and as the object of the saints' hope. And that, when he shall appear he will be seen by them, and they shall be made like unto Him. All this is included in the former verse, and it is the foundation of the present verse ; which is only carried into this, and exemplified in the experience thereof. The former words were, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.* Then follows these words : *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Now it is very evident Christ is spoken of, as the Person that shall appear. His appearance is the object of the saints' hope. It was so in an especial sense, in the apostolic day. This was a great means of increasing their personal holiness—of making them very spiritual in all manner of conversation and godliness. It was this which kept them looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. If it had, and actually produced these effects in them, the same true apprehensions of the coming of Christ, would most certainly produce the same, in us, in our lives and conversations. It could not be otherwise. The saints addressed by *John*, were saints indeed. Their true saintship consisted in their true and supernatural knowledge of Christ, and of the Father in Him : and in the supernatural communion they had, and held with them, by the influence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Christ was their All. His glories had attracted them. His love had yielded an heaven unto them. His salvation was the subject of their song. They found themselves under everlasting obligations unto Him. Therefore their very expectation of his appearing, of their seeing Him face to face, of their seeing Him as he is, of their being with Him, of their being like Him, was very refreshing to their minds. It at some times, transported them : at other times it exhilarated them : and again it encouraged them, and carried them above, and beyond all their present experiences, afflictions, and distresses. "For I reckon" (says one of them) "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. viii. 18. "Our conversation, or citizenship is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. iii. 20. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Col. iii. 4. "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus,

which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. From these quotations, and others might be added, it appears that the coming and appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, Personally and visibly, was the object of the hope of saints. It is called by the apostle *that blessed hope*. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Tit. ii. 13. Real saints happily enjoy the prospect and anticipation of this hope. They were encouraged in the expectation of this hope in their observances of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. By the one they were led to commemorate the sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now most assuredly if he rose to immortal life, death can have no more dominion over him. If he lives then, it must be in glory everlasting. If he be on his throne, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, invested with all power in heaven and in earth, He must reign, till he hath put all things under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The ordinance of the supper, which is a solemn memorial and celebration of the sacrifice and death of Christ, is to remain in the church until the Lord come. A full proof the Lord will come. Or the apostle had never said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew, or shew ye the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 26. But when shall he come? At the appointed time. What will he do at his coming? Raise the bodies of the elect dead. Change the living saints. Set fire to this world, and hereby dissolve it. Make new heavens and a new earth. Introduce the saints into it. Then give them all up, most completely perfected to the Divine Father, as a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. As in Adam all die, or as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive. But there will be an order in the resurrection. Christ the first fruits is risen. When he rose, some of the saints were raised together with him, in their bodies to life everlasting, and a state of immortality: yet there is a vast term of time run out, and will still run on between the resurrection of Christ the head, and those saints who were then raised in their bodies, and the general resurrection of the just. So says the apostle. "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits." He is risen. He censures the whole harvest. He is the earnest of the same. He hath consecrated the whole. Afterward, at the appointed season, then they that are Christ's at his coming, will be raised. Then cometh the end, when he, i. e. Christ, shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. It is God the Father is spoken of as *He* who is to put all things under the feet of Christ, and our Lord must reign till all enemies are made his footstool. Even death itself shall be destroyed: which will be by the resurrection of the bodies of the elect from the grave of death to die no more: and by the change which will pass on the bodies of the living Elect, so as they will thereby become immortal. It is written in the 8th *Psalm* concerning the God-Man, the glorious head and only Mediator, that the Divine Father hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. The Divine Father gave and appointed Christ, God-Man, to the whole of his work and office of Mediation: when he hath so completed the execution of the same, as that every

purpose, end, and design of it is accomplished, he is to render up the whole, with an account of his execution of the same, to Him that appointed Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Christ the Mediator, then shall he, the Son, in his official capacity and Mediatorship, be subject unto him, i. e. to Jehovah the Father, that God may be all in all. That is, that the Three Divine Persons in the Godhead, may more clearly and fully appear than they do under the present dispensation of grace. For the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost will never cease to be what they are, as it respects their Existence in the Essence: nor in their Personal and Relative Existence in the one Self-Existing Essence. No; nor either in relation to their transactions on the behalf of Christ, and the elect in Him: but when all the present dispensation is completed, and saints are in their resurrection state, then Christ will cease to exercise his mediatory office as he now doth. I thought by casting in this here, we should have the more clear and enlarged view of the subject before us. It serves to shew, and prove, that saints expected the appearing of Jesus Christ: that his appearing was the object of their hope. They expected in, and at, and by his appearing, the consummation of all their hope. They fully and clearly apprehended they should then see Him as he is: That they should be like Him; be with Him; live with Him; reign with Him, and be ever with Him their Lord: this they were fully confirmed in. They only waited for the accomplishment of the same. This their hope in him was founded on the revelation made thereof in the inspired volume. Our apostle, and *Peter*, had full demonstration given them of this, by being admitted to see Christ on the holy mount. They had thereby not only a glimpse of the Personal glory of Christ, but had also hereby an item given them, of the glory in which Christ would shine forth, when he should appear the second time without sin unto salvation. It may be from hence it is, he says in the former verse, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.* *Peter* entitles himself, "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." 1 Epis. v. 1: and speaking of our Lord's appearing, says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." 2 Epis. i. 16—19. The apostle freely and fully signifies here, that the transfiguration of Christ, was a discovery of the glory and majesty in the which he will appear, when he cometh to glorify his saints, and make them most fully blessed at his appearing. So that the saints, from what they had heard of this, were fully expecting it. They longed for it. They were fully persuaded of it. And Christ, and his appearing was their hope and joy. Hence the apostle *Paul* speaking of what through grace he had done, and what his own expectations were, expresseth also what was the chiefest and highest

expectation of all the saints. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. We see from all the scriptures, that saints had a most blessed hope and expectation of the coming of our Lord—Of his Personal appearing—That He would appear in his glory, and all his saints with Him. They also expected they should see Him in his glory—That he would reflect it on them—That they should see Him as He is—That they should be made like unto Him both in soul and body. This was the one hope of them all: and this hope and expectation was encouraged in their minds by the writings of the holy apostles: and it produced its most blessed effects. Three of the apostles, *James, Peter, and John*, had seen Christ in the glory in which he would appear. This could not but create longings in their minds, for to behold him in the same glory. The Lord himself had spoken of the glories of the resurrection state, saying, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. xiii. 43. So that they might well understand they should then be like unto Christ. When he the Sun of Righteousness should shine upon them, and within them, filling them through and through with the beams of his light and glory. This would make them in their souls and bodies like unto Christ. The true knowledge and apprehensions of the same, could not but have their mighty weight, influence, power and authority on their minds. Brethren and beloved, do but consider the subject: every one that hath the expectation of seeing Christ as he is! of being made like Christ! of having the whole image of Christ completely stamped on his soul and body, of being made like unto his glorious body, and thus fitted for the eternal fruition of Christ, and to be for ever with the Lord, what effects must these truths, views, and expectations produce in them? Why verily the same as the apostle here speaks of. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* The knowledge and belief of the same gospel truths, will always, at all times, places, and ages, produce the same most blessed effects. They have not lost, nor will they ever lose any of their virtue and efficacy, nor cease to produce their own genuine and proper effects on the mind: yet they will not produce these effects in unbelieving minds: nor will they produce these most blessed and glorious effects in believing minds, any farther than they are received; and we are led to live in the believing views and apprehensions of them. It is a defect in general with us all. We look to the effect just so far as we have the experience of the same, or see it in others; and judge of the cause thereby. Yet it should be with us to look off all the effects, to the only cause which can produce them: and every truth revealed in the everlasting gospel, spiritually known, believed, and received into the spiritual mind, will produce its proper fruit and effect in the heart, life, and conversation. But I proceed

2. To set before you, what effect the true knowledge of this vastly important article of our most holy faith, hath, on every one that receives and embraces it. The apostle expresseth himself on this part of the subject thus, *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

This is spoken universally. It concerns every saint. It reaches and extends to each and every one of them : for it is such, and only such that have Christ for their *hope*. It is they, and they only, who are now the sons of God. It is they only who are to see Christ as he is. All will see Him : but it is the saints only who will see Him as He is. They will be fitted for this sight so as none besides themselves will be ; for elect angels will not see Christ in spiritual bodies ; whereas the saints will have spiritual bodies, by the eyes of which they will see Christ ; and by the ears of which, they will hear Christ. And the whole body of Christ which is the mirror and compendium of all perfection, will reflect a glory and splendour on all the bodies of the saints ; and they will converse with Christ in their bodies ; which will afford an infinity of satisfaction ; such as will last for ever. All which will be peculiar to the elect of God, of Adam's posterity. The elect angels will be spectators of the joy and blessedness of the saints, and will be attendants on them : yet they will not partake of the same, in their way and manner. All the whole collection and congregation of saints will have a like participation in this sight of Christ—In this one complete and perfect conformity to Christ—In this complete glory union and communion with Christ, and he will shine forth on them manifestatively, as he never did before. It is these only who will be made like unto Him, by seeing Him as He is. It is such, therefore, who, whilst they remain in a time state, alone have in their own souls, the hope and expectation of all this. It is, therefore, only such the apostle is here speaking of. He does not here address them to be so and so ; but he declares what such and such are : and that, in each and every one of the individual persons ; *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* This text as in union with the former verse, fully contains what this hope is, which every man in the profession of Christ is influenced by, to purify himself even as the Lord is pure ; which hath been fully opened in the former part of this Sermon ; yet it must not be dropped, because it contains the whole foundation of it. All the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are here included and comprehended ; to shew this the apostle uses the term *every man* : which brings it down to each and every individual believer. He speaks of them, of each and every one of them, as alike influenced with the hope and expectation of the glorious and Personal appearing of Christ : of what would follow thereon : of the vision they would have of Him : of the effects it would produce in them. Not that it follows from hence, that all saints in the church militant are in their own individual minds, favoured with the very same glorious apprehensions of what is really contained in these most glorious subjects. No ; we cannot admit of this, because it is not found to be the case. Yet this we cannot but allow, that Christ, as Head, Lord, Mediator, Saviour, is one and the same to them all : and they are all one in Christ Jesus : so that though they do not all attain to the same full knowledge and comprehension of Him, and of all which is revealed of and concerning Him in the everlasting gospel, yet they being all equally united, interested in, and related to Him, what the Scriptures give ground and reasons to expect of His glorious appearing, and of the effects which it hath produced, may, or doth produce in any of the saints, may be considered as expressive of what is inherently in the hearts of all saints, be it drawn forth into act and appearance or not. It is in the heart of all saints to expect the

Personal appearing of Christ; yet in such as are babes in Christ, it can only be in embryo: but there it is: there can be no spiritual life without it. Yet it may be without its being drawn forth into act and discovery. So that this universal expression, may be very expressive and descriptive, of what belongs to all saints as saints: of their one common faith and hope—That Christ is their one object and subject—That when he went to glory, and whilst he continues in that state, his heart is here upon earth: so his heart opened to them on earth, in the everlasting gospel, hath carried up their hearts unto Him in heaven, and there is thus a mutual longing after each other, in a real sight of each other, and communion with each other in the world of Glory. Hence the expectation of seeing Him as He is, becomes to them so most truly desirable. Now this produces in those saints in whom this expectation is wrought, effects correspondent herewith. Every one, each individual which hath this hope, or expectation wrought in him, by the Spirit of the living God, that he shall see Christ, Personally, in the kingdom of Glory first, then in the Resurrection state, in the New Jerusalem state, and in the ultimate state; *purifieth himself, even as he is pure*. He does not make himself meet for this sight, but he acts as one who is already made meet for it. He does not purify his body and soul from all sin; but he acts as one who is washed in the blood of Christ, and covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness: and he labours to live, and act, and think, and speak, and walk, as one who expects to be clothed with immortality and eternal glory. This is agreeable to what the Lord hath spoken and commanded. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke xii. 35, 36. The effects of expecting the appearing of Christ, of seeing Him, and of being made like Him, are as follows. Such—it may be brought down to an individual, and be thus expressed; such an one, will aim to be in a state of fitness and readiness to meet his Lord—By dismissing all needless cares of a perplexing nature and kind—He will be laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset him—He will look to Jesus as his object—He will make Him his subject. In a very special manner he will be engaged in true spiritual meditations on the glories of Christ. As he will account all things, seen and unseen, as nothing in compare with Christ; so he will more especially think and exercise his mind on the Essential Glory of Christ—On the Personal Glory of Christ—On the Relative Glory of Christ—On the Mediatorial Glory of Christ—On the Glory of Christ's Saviourship—How He may be expected to shine forth in all these glories at his appearing, and in his brightness of splendour and Majesty, so as to shed and reflect the brightness of all this on his saints. Most assuredly, true and scriptural apprehensions of these, must be very suited to fit the mind of saints for the coming of the day of God: as also an absolute renunciation of this present evil world, and having the heart wholly lifted up above and beyond it. This will be the effect which will be produced in the mind, by holy and close meditations on the things which are most closely connected with these subjects. As he believes "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are

therein shall be burned up;" he will see and feel the propriety of the apostle's address, " Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall meet with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Pet. iii. 10—14. A true spirit, framed according to the true scripture apprehensions of these subjects, and faith in them, must be what *John* speaks of, when he says, *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* It is true, we have to the very present our natural and sinful infirmities: nor shall we ever be without them, until we lay down these bodies of sin and mortality: this we know and expect will shortly be the case: our present meanness in consequence of the same, in our own eyes, and that of others, is very great; yet what we know of the Lord Jesus Christ, of what He is to us, and of what we are to Him, keeps us up. We are now the sons of God; what the consequence of this will be, and what it will produce in us, when our Lord shall appear, we at present know not: but this we know—" that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And we know, from the effects which the knowledge of this hath produced in our own minds, that every one that hath this hope in Christ, in the appearing of Christ, and a real expectation of seeing Christ, and of being made like unto Christ, by seeing Him as he is; such an one will purify himself, even as Christ is pure: this is the very effect which it will naturally and necessarily produce in him. The prospect of eternal glory, to be enjoyed in the vision of Christ, and our real prospect and hope of the same, will infallibly and invincibly increase communion with the Lord, and promote holiness, and conformity to Him. It will be the course and practice of every individual who is a member of Christ, and hath Christ in him, objectively, and subjectively, he will on the footing of his well grounded hope in Christ, of seeing Him, and being like unto Him, by seeing Him as he is, be powerfully influenced to aim, at all possible purity, in heart and life, in imitation, and conformity to Him, in his superlative purity and holiness; and this, not that we might be holy, righteous, and pure, in the sight of the world; but be all this in the sight of fellow saints, and thereby prove to them, and all others with whom we converse, the mighty efficacy which the knowledge of Christ hath in our hearts. This then is the effect the true knowledge of this vastly important article of our most holy faith, hath on every one that rightly receives, and embraces it. It is the means of promoting conformity through the whole man, and the whole of the new man in Christ, a most blessed conformity to Christ. We are not conformed to Christ, and then brought to know Him. No, not so; but we are first brought to know Him; then to walk with Him; then to walk before Him; then to walk conformable unto Him: and as the increasing knowledge of Him is let in upon the renewed enlightened mind, so our delight in Him is increased: our affection to Him excited. As his glory and unsearchable riches are more and more opened up, and we understand more and more, of what we are to know of Him, and may expect to receive of

Him, and his glory into our minds, and shall enjoy of Him in personal fellowship, this constrains us to purify ourselves, even as he is pure. He hath washed us in his own blood: that is our purity before Him: but we expecting to stand before Him, we would be as a bride adorned for her husband, and put on himself, as our glorious apparel, and be adorned with the full, and in the full exercise of all the heavenly graces of his Spirit, perfumed with every celestial odour and fragrancy to meet our Lord, when it shall be proclaimed, the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And this hath brought me to my last particular, which is this,

3. What is contained in this? *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Mr. Romaine once said, he knew *no greater mistake than by confounding faith, and its fruits together.* It is a great mistake frequently made, to blend Truth and its effects, so as that the one is taken for the other. Christ and his salvation, should be kept in their proper place. The revelation of Christ, the knowledge of Christ, faith in Christ, and communion with Christ, should follow in their order: then the fruits of faith, and these also in their order and degree. It would be for the real benefit of the real saints of the Most High God, were these attended unto, orderly, regularly, and as one actually depends and follows on the other. As in the grace part of the gospel, it is of great importance to have the doctrines thereof stated rightly and properly, as they are recorded in the word; so as it respects the experimental, and practical part of the gospel, it is of real importance to have the same, just as correctly stated, as the grace part; the one depends on the other: and it is by the right state of both in our minds, much of our true experience and practice depends. It is a very sad prevailing error in the present day; our good men are vastly fond of it; they really continue it: and this is it—They all insist on a work of grace, which is not the very exact semblance of the Truth as it is in Jesus; whereas, what the scriptures speak of, is a work which is the exact copy of the grace of God, expressed in the word. It is the foundation of the same, created in the renewed mind, by the Holy Ghost. Hence it is drawn out, fed, nourished, strengthened, and quickened, as the doctrines of grace are preached, opened, and explained. Another error is this—There is too much preached about what is experienced; or as they say, should be felt and known inwardly; or what must be the case, or all cannot be right with the soul: all which is wrong; because this is not preaching Christ to a sinner: and there cannot be any spiritual life in the soul, before Christ is there; and the only way to discover if Christ be in any, is to preach Christ unto them. Another mistake is, to lead people to their own experience, and encourage them in it, and build them up in the same, instead of leading and building them up in Christ. Another is, always insisting on the fruits of faith, to the neglect of setting forth the Person, work, worthiness, righteousness of Christ, and the fountain of his blood. It is a very preposterous way to go by marks and signs, to point out a man's interest in Christ. Some will be ready to say, what do you make of the words before you? Is it not the case here? does not the apostle say, *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* Pray what is this, but proving interest in Christ and glory, by an outward walk? Stop you man; it is not so. Indeed, in-

deed it is not. Let you and me think of it as we may, the apostle says nothing of our must be, either this, or that. He is not on any subject here which requires any proof of it from us. He is speaking of the grace of adoption, and to the adopted sons of God—of what they would most assuredly partake of: and that on the appearing of Jesus Christ—of the blessedness of all saints at that time: they would then see Christ: they would be made like Christ. This would be completed in each and every one of them, by their seeing Him as he is. Now, says he, the knowledge of this, and a personal and particular belief of this, have a most blessed effect on all the sons of God. This is the very genuine effect of it: and every one, without exception, that hath this hope in Him, i. e. in Christ, and that when Christ shall appear, he shall be like him by seeing him as he is; such an one, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure. Not, that he may inherit this ineffable blessing; or to obtain a right and title to it; or to ensure it to himself. No; it is free grace; yet it will issue in eternal glory. It is all beyond the attainment of man: yet elect men are to have the full enjoyment of the same. As they cannot but aspire after it, so they cannot but be conforming to Christ in every thing, so far as they are possessed with the true knowledge, faith, and apprehension of the same. Hence it is the apostle saith, *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* He that is pure is Christ. Even He is the Hope of Glory. And it is his blood which purifies the church, and sanctifies it, and makes it clean from all sin. The purity spoken of in my text, is distinct from this: and I am to explain the same. It is the effect of it, and this is what is contained in it; viz. a conversation such as becometh the gospel of Christ: a conformity to Christ: such as can only be produced by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost: and which is the fruit of and flows from his own divine workmanship in the soul: it is a conformity, in the which supernatural grace is both exercised, and openly displayed. I should consider a great part of it may be conceived to consist, in a most devout spiritual outgoing of the soul in fellowship with the Holy Trinity. In high admiring thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in such contemplations on Him as perfume the whole mind: sanctified the affections: made way for free and intimate communion with Him; so that hereby the heavenly and spiritual aspirations of the heart are more and more manifested: this, improving the mind more and more for heaven and glory; hence, I conceive, it is expressed by the term purity: and the saint is here said to purify himself, as hereby he gets above himself, and all carnal entanglements. He delights to draw nigh unto God: to converse with Christ: to view Him. In all these most holy exercises, the Holy Spirit is pleased to shed his most gracious influences on the mind. He lets in such light on it, as makes known more of heaven and glory, than is conceived of, and apprehended any other way. Now this, as I conceive, interprets our text, and gives it its own proper gloss; and this without any mixture of legality, or any thing of self. I will therefore here recite the whole of my text, and then leave you to judge for yourselves, concerning the light I have cast on the same. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* And there is no means by which purity of heart, and holiness in life and conversation are more increased, and enlarged, than by being frequent at the throne of grace, and in free and spiritual accesses to Christ Jesus. The more, and oftener

SERMON XXXVII.

sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the law. And ye know that he was manifested to the world in him is no sin.—1 JOHN iii. 4, 5.

introduces a new subject—How such as are the transgressors of the law of God: consists the essence of all evil: and the law, is a transgression of the law. In the close of the 10th, the nature and character of sin, as being a transgression of the law of God, and holiness, as the work of the devil, and the distinction between the two seeds, the children of God, and the children of the devil. As this was written as a general, or catholic epistle, so all through it, the apostle writes unto, and distinguishes between two sorts of people who were under a profession of Christ. One sort were born from above, the other were not. It is true he does not particularly address the latter; yet he fully deciphers them; so as they could not but know his true judgment of them: and most undoubtedly he knew this was the most effectual method of dealing with them. He conceived it also, it seems, from his pursuing this plan throughout the whole of this Epistle, the best way of laying even before the saints, such instructive hints concerning sin, and its exceeding sinfulness, and the danger of committing the least sin, as might be of the greatest use and service unto them; whilst they would not be wounded with his delivery of the same; he not charging it in the least upon them. I would not venture to add, as the apostle, in and throughout this Epistle, writes only to saints, so agreeable to the tenor thereof, he pursues his subject, expressing nothing to alter this view of it. In the words now before us, which are these, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*, we have the following particulars.

1. Here is a general declaration concerning *whosoever committeth sin*. What he doth. *He transgresseth the law. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.*

2. What sin is in its consequences, even in any act of it. *Sin is the transgression of the law.* It is, therefore, most carefully to be avoided.

3. The antidote these saints had, which was allsufficient to bear up their minds, and lift them up in holy confidence, above and beyond the law, sin, and its curse. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.*

4. The perfection of this, both as it may be attributed to Christ, and his church also. *And in him is no sin.* No; nor in his Church either, under gospel considerations.

This contains the outline of what I shall aim, if the Lord please, to

Him, and his glory into our minds, and shall enjoy fellowship, this constrains us to purify ourselves, even as he hath washed us in his own blood: that is our purifying. Expecting to stand before Him, we would be as He is, and put on himself, as our glorification with the full, and in the full exercise of the Holy Spirit, perfumed with every celestial of the Lord, when it shall be proclaimed, that the Lord and his wife hath made herself ready for the last particular, which is this,

3. What is contained in this promise, *in him purifieth himself, even as he*

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SERMON XXXVII.

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And ye know that he was manifested to
in him is no sin.*—1 JOHN III. 4, 5.

On a new subject—How such as are the
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to the close of the 10th, the nature and
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the whole of this Epistle, the best way of laying even before the saints,
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we are in Christ's company, the more we are assimilated into his likeness. We grow the more dead to all out of heaven, and the more desirous of being in heaven, because our best friend even Jesus is there. This is the way in the which we advance on to the city of the living God : where, when we see him shine, as he now doth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, it will cause us to long to see Him shine forth on his whole church on the resurrection morning. One state of glory will succeed on the other, and doubtless will each exceed the other : so as the glory of Christ will shine out in each, and so as for it to be an increasing, shine of glory. May the Lord give the sons of God, the heirs of glory, increasing apprehensions thereof, and make the subject familiar unto them. It is a most overwhelming consideration, that we, the sons of God, are to have the glory of Christ, shine on us, immediately on our entrance into heaven, at the resurrection of our bodies from the grave of death, and during our continuance in the New Jerusalem state, and in the state of ultimate Glory, and that for ever. May the Lord give us such conception hereof, as may increase our desires after it, and whet our appetites for the full fruition of it. Now, my dearly beloved, and longed for, I must leave what I have thus feebly hinted, and put together, with you, to judge of for yourselves. I have aimed to open some of the glories of Christ to your view, and give you little items of what you may with very good reason expect from Him. It is the Holy Spirit only who can give you real and glorious apprehensions of the subject, so as to draw your whole souls with it, into real fellowship with Christ, who is the Lord of Glory, and who will be the fountain and spring of eternal glory unto your souls and bodies for ever. I will therefore leave what is delivered with you, for your instruction, improvement, benefit, and consolation. May the Lord command his blessing on the same. I would just beg your attention to this one remark—You will never have a greater apprehension of what future glory is, than when the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to shine on your souls, in a way of special and personal communion. It is then you have a foretaste of what must be contained in future glory. May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is blessed for evermore, give you to live much in the thoughts of future glory : of what it will be, to be swallowed up in the vision of God, in the Person of Christ, God-Man. He will be your perpetual Sun, who will shine with everlasting light and splendour on you for evermore. The Lord the Holy Ghost put forth his indwelling presence, glory, and influences within you, and fill you with all the fulness of God. Amen, and Amen. Lord Jesus do thou say, Amen. And thy Name will thereby be magnified. Even so, Amen.

SERMON XXXVII.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.—I JOHN iii. 4, 5.

I CONCEIVE the apostle here begins a new subject—How such as are the Lord's should avoid all sin: it being a transgression of the law of God: so that in the commission of sin, consists the essence of all evil: and the least sin, as we so express ourselves, is a transgression of the law. In this and in the following verses, to the close of the 10th, the nature and evil of sin are set forth, and that as being a transgression of the law of God: as contrary to grace and holiness, as the work of the devil, and as that which distinguisheth the two seeds, the children of God, and the children of the devil. As this was written as a general, or catholic Epistle, so all through it, the apostle writes unto, and distinguishes between two sorts of people who were under a profession of Christ. One of these were born from above, the other were not. It is true he does not particularly address the latter; yet he fully deciphers them; so as they could not but know his true judgment of them: and most undoubtedly he knew this was the most effectual method of dealing with them. He conceived it also, it seems, from his pursuing this plan throughout the whole of this Epistle, the best way of laying even before the saints, such instructive hints concerning sin, and its exceeding sinfulness, and the danger of committing the least sin, as might be of the greatest use and service unto them; whilst they would not be wounded with his delivery of the same; he not charging it in the least upon them. I would here venture to add, as the apostle, in and throughout this Epistle, writes only to saints, so agreeable to the tenor thereof, he pursues his subject, expressing nothing to alter this view of it. In the words now before us, which are these, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*, we have the following particulars.

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SERMON XXXVII.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.—1 JOHN iii. 4, 5.

I CONCEIVE the apostle here begins a new subject—How such as are the Lord's should avoid all sin: it being a transgression of the law of God: so that in the commission of sin, consists the essence of all evil: and the least sin, as we so express ourselves, is a transgression of the law. In this and in the following verses, to the close of the 10th, the nature and evil of sin are set forth, and that as being a transgression of the law of God: as contrary to grace and holiness, as the work of the devil, and as that which distinguisheth the two seeds, the children of God, and the children of the devil. As this was written as a general, or catholic Epistle, so all through it, the apostle writes unto, and distinguishes between two sorts of people who were under a profession of Christ. One of these were born from above, the other were not. It is true he does not particularly address the latter; yet he fully deciphers them; so as they could not but know his true judgment of them: and most undoubtedly he knew this was the most effectual method of dealing with them. He conceived it also, it seems, from his pursuing this plan throughout the whole of this Epistle, the best way of laying even before the saints, such instructive hints concerning sin, and its exceeding sinfulness, and the danger of committing the least sin, as might be of the greatest use and service unto them; whilst they would not be wounded with his delivery of the same; he not charging it in the least upon them. I would here venture to add, as the apostle, in and throughout this Epistle, writes only to saints, so agreeable to the tenor thereof, he pursues his subject, expressing nothing to alter this view of it. In the words now before us, which are these, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*, we have the following particulars.

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set before you. May he be with me of a truth, and bless the same both to you, and me. The former part is most awful and solemn and tremendous. The latter is most truly blessed and divine. It may be, the first part may, in the hand of the Spirit, be made use of, that we may receive the latter with the greater affection. I am

1. To observe, here is a general account, or declaration concerning, *Whosoever committeth sin*. What such an one doeth. *He transgresseth the law*.

By the law is here to be understood, the law of God, in and by which he hath commanded perfect and unsinning obedience to every precept of it: and pronounced an eternal curse upon each and every violation of it. Which law is as immutable as the nature and will of God: it can no more change than God himself. What is styled the curse of it, is the righteous displeasure of God against the evil which is expressed by the term sin: and is the transgression of God's most holy law. Sin hath been committed by the angels of God's presence. Some of them transgressed his most holy law, and were everlastingly damned for it. *Adam*, the head of the whole human race, committed sin, and by it he lost the image of God in which he was created, for himself, and all his posterity. And to the present moment, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law*. This deserves to be attended unto: to prevent from sinning: to guard us against it: to keep us at the greatest distance from it. The general extension of the words, leaves no one out: all who commit sin are included in it. As in the former verse it was, *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*: so here it is by way of contrast, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*. They come from the apostle's pen, as though he had some great design in them. No doubt but he had some very particular end and design to answer by them. I conclude he must, or he had not thus expressed himself. I conceive thus from his peculiar phraseology, such as he did not use before. *Whosoever committeth sin*. He did not himself allow the saints were without it: they were not delivered from the body of it: the whole inherency of it was in them: therefore if they were overcome with it, and fell by it, this was no more than might be expected. I am in hopes, therefore, we shall not have the saints overcharged: especially by this apostle who loved them next to Christ himself; yet God forbid I should soften his expressions. I know what he saith he will stand to. Let me only say, I think he is here drawing a line of distinction between one professor and another. It was needful so to do in the apostle's day. It is very needful in ours. Yet it needs peculiar light, peculiar grace, and a peculiar spirit; because sharp cutting words must of necessity be used. Therefore to use these in the name, fear, and cause of God, requires us to be under the direction of the Spirit of God, lest our own spirits appear; it being an immutable truth, that the wrath of man, worketh not the righteousness of God. Our apostle was divinely inspired, therefore what he wrote was divinely directed, and also designed to answer some very important purpose. It doth so in the following way; it informs us what transgression is—That to commit sin is to transgress—That whosoever committeth sin, is a transgressor; be he who he may: he tramples on God's holy commandment: he violates it: he transgresseth the law: he treats it as not worth regarding. *Whosoever committeth sin trans-*

gresseth also the law: just as all other sinners do, who live in the open violation of the same. This leads me

2. To consider what sin is in its consequences: even in any, in the least act of it: yea, in any act of it: *Sin is the transgression of the law*. It is therefore most carefully to be avoided.

It may, therefore, be considered as one reason why the apostle wrote thus—To give even us, and all the saints, to know the nature and demerit of sin—Not to tamper with it: there being more evil in the commission of sin, than we can ever conceive, or express. The true apprehension of which, is, through the grace of God, sufficient to deter us from the same. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*. As the law is holy, just, and good, and sin is the transgression of it, there must be that evil in the act of sin, which can only be known, and estimated by God himself. He only who knows all the good contained in his most holy law, only knows the evil contained in every transgression against the same. Here we can be no judges. Sin in its nature and quality, matter and manner, may seemingly to us, be more or less sinful; yet it is one and the same as to the essence of it. Herein it is we are ourselves so often deceived and overcome by it. If we can dish up the sin we are in our own persons most inclined to, so as to have the gross parts of it, so refined, as to render it palatable, and that it may go down glibly, we are then able to act the same; yet as the nature of sin cannot be changed, so it is not the less pernicious, because we have so contrived as to swallow it most easily. It is in many instances so much the more poisonous. Sin is like a poisonous plant. The root, the leaves, the every part is full of it. Be it weaker or stronger in any part of it; yet it diffuses itself, in, and throughout the whole. There is the nature of sin in every act of it: and this more than we can, or ever shall be able to comprehend. Sin in every act of it, is the transgression of the law. When *David* was visited by *Nathan*, and charged with his transgression, he is condemned for his having despised the commandment of the Lord, and doing evil in his sight, and with giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. One sin is big with innumerable ones. The commission of one sin makes way for more: the consequences are sad: they are tremendous. *Sin is the transgression of the law*, which when broken, so it must remain to all eternity. We can never repair the dreadful break: we can never undo what we have done amiss: yea, as it respects the guilt and pollution contracted by thought in our own minds, we can never cleanse ourselves from the same. No; not for ever. It becomes us who are under a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his everlasting gospel, to attend carefully to all this—To avoid the commission of sin—To watch our hearts—To be careful of our thoughts: all sin in us, originates in them: hence the wise man saith, *Keep thine heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*. It is by closely attending to our thoughts, we may know what our hearts are. If we love and delight in thinking on what is sinful, we are most exactly what we are in our thoughts. As we delight to think, such we delight to be. There is more sin in thought than any one of us can imagine. But I am not going to enter into this subject any further; it being but the first part of my text, and as introductory to what is to follow. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*. This is sufficient

of itself, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to keep real saints from transgressing it. The expressions, *committeth sin*, I conceive it will be necessary to notify them, as they seem to me to be big with important meaning; such as is not always before us; yet, I will not touch them now: still I here notify them, to signify, as we shall have words in the next verse near of kin to them, and the very same as here, in verse 8, so it is there I shall aim to throw all the light I can upon them, as I shrewdly guess they are expressive of the devil's sin: or, sinning against the Holy Ghost, that sin, which our apostle styles the sin unto death: it is so, because there is no forgiveness for it, neither in this world, nor in the world to come: which sin was committed in the apostle's day; but it is not now. Why it was then capable of being committed, and why it cannot now, you will have reasons deduced from the scriptures given. Only suspend your thoughts on the same until we come to the 7th, and 8th verses: in the mean season, look on the item dropt, as what will be taken up again in the next Sermon, which will be as an introduction to the 39th Sermon, in which the whole will be explicated. The apostle had said to these saints, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law: and adds, And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* Here is a most suited contrast—Sin—Christ—The transgression of the law by sin—The taking it away by Christ. Sin is the transgression of the law. Christ by his obedience hath magnified it, and made it everlastingly honourable. What, therefore, now lies before me to discourse of, as the remainder to my present text, is this—To speak of Christ, the best of all subjects—Of what the saints knew of Him. This, according to my before mentioned proposal, is to be set before you, under these two following heads. 1st. To observe the antidote these saints had, which was all-sufficient to bear up their minds, and lift up their hearts with holy confidence, above, and beyond the law, sin, and its curse. And 2dly. the perfection of this: both as it may be attributed to Christ; and to his Church. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* In my arrangement of these particulars, they were the 3rd and 4th particulars: as such I must here conduct them, by introducing them in this order. I come therefore in the

3rd. Particular of this present Sermon, to observe the antidote these saints had, which was all-sufficient to bear up their minds, and lift up their hearts with holy confidence, above, and beyond the law, sin, and its curse. The whole of which is set forth in these words, *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

He who was manifested to take away our sins is Christ. His manifestation was by his open Incarnation. He took away our sins, by the substitution of his Person, in the room and stead of his people. Our sins being laid on Him, He took them away by the offering up of Himself: hereby he hath removed sin from us: and from his church also: in the which the whole of our salvation, and purification from sin is completed. And in the true, scriptural, and spiritual knowledge of this, there is an all-sufficiency to bear up the mind, to lift up the heart with holy confidence in God, above, and beyond the law, sin, and its curse. This is to be drawn forth into its distinct parts, and branches in this present head. To be transgressors of the law, is dangerous: to be guilty of the least sin, is to be transgressors of it; to be lawless, or to depart from

that uprightness which the law requires, is to transgress it. Christ was manifested in the flesh, to deliver us from the guilt and power of sin, therefore give yourselves not up to the practice of it: this is the substance of both the verses, which I will here recite, that you may see the truth hereof. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* Whilst not any thing which hath already been suggested before, concerning what is to follow in the subsequent sermons, is to be dropped; yet here I am only to pursue my given order and plan. Therefore, whilst the present affords me abundant matter, and requires very great and correct order also, or much of the peculiarity and beauty of it will be lost; yet the whole of the same, must be introduced as the apostle doth, and with his words. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* It is very much like the apostle to the *Corinthians*, who says to them, *For ye know 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.* It is bringing the whole weight and authority of this great and most important subject on their minds. You saints, says *John*, to whom I write, understand all these things. He of whom I write, and the things concerning Him, of whom I write, have a most blessed residence in your mind. You know all I write of Him, in your own minds, from the word, and by the light and revelation of the Holy Ghost, even before it hath dropped from me, and I have inserted it with pen, ink, and paper, and by that medium conveyed the same unto you; it is very satisfactory to me, it is thus with you: I therefore appeal to you, as those who have inwardly in your own souls the knowledge of Christ, and of what he hath done and completed in the days of his flesh. Ye have an intuitive knowledge of Christ in your minds: it is exactly for the subject and substance of it, with what is recorded in the gospel: and ye know that our Lord Jesus Christ was *manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* I will, this being a most important subject, and also a most precious and delightful one, enter on it: after which I will aim to shew what there is in it, to lift up the mind of real believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, with holy confidence in the Lord, above all contained in the law, sin, and the curse, and beyond all they are the subjects of, to an holy confidence in God. These are the effects, but the subject which is first to be set before you, is the cause of producing these: therefore let us give up ourselves, most chiefly to the clear and right apprehensions of the cause. The Person of Christ, the Incarnation of Christ, the Sacrifice of Christ, his putting or taking away our sins, these are the subjects mentioned here. It is recorded in this part of my text. And they are of inestimable worth and value. There is no subject in heaven beyond what is here expressed; nor any blessing in heaven which can exceed this mentioned—To be in Christ—For him to prove the truth of this, that such and such were one with Him, by his becoming incarnate to become their Surety, and to bear their sins, and put them away out of the sight of law and justice: so as that they should not be condemned for them; by the Sacrifice of Himself. Why my friends, you who are best qualified for it, I call on you, to search the rolls of Eternity, the Book of life, the acts and transactions of the Three in Jehovah; and say, if you can find greater displays of grace than

these! *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. When we were without strength, Christ died for us. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* And whilst you are on this subject, pray do not you hurry over it. Let these subjects be viewed and reviewed over and over by you: and when your hearts are warmed through and through with them, then say, if there be any but the elect of Adam's posterity are interested in this grace, as thus displayed, in the Person, and through the most glorious mediation of our most precious Lord Jesus Christ? If there is no subject, no, not in heaven, in which the riches of free, sovereign grace, are more gloriously displayed, than in Christ, and Salvation by Him, then the gospel which is the open revelation of it, is the mystery by the which it is revealed unto us. And in it the unsearchable riches of Christ are contained: by the which the whole is set before us, and made known unto us: the whole of which is our present subject, which the apostle thus sweetly introduces: *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* The elect of God, of Adam's posterity, were in their own persons, in their creation state, without all sin. By their fall in Adam they became sinners. As the elect of God, and one with Christ, and in Him, they were the beloved of God, and loved in Him with an everlasting love. In the everlasting covenant, which obtained between the Three in Jehovah, on their behalf, they were considered to be what they would be, in their own natures, sins, and transgressions, by the fall, and their own actual transgressions. To raise them up above, and beyond all they were viewed and considered to be, under this consideration of them, the Trinity in Unity were pleased most graciously to will to express their mutual loves to them. This gave birth to an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: in consequence of which Christ was foreordained to be the Lamb to be slain for sin. On the footing of this, He was immediately proclaimed on the fall, and entrance of sin into our world. The sacrifices shewed what his work was to consist in. The Prophets declared his wonderful Person: they also expressed his astonishing acts and miracles: and one for all the rest, made known, that He was to be Incarnate, and live to bring in everlasting righteousness, and die to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation, to make his soul an offering for sin, and make peace with the blood of his cross. To carry all this into act, He became incarnate: this wonderful grace as proceeding from the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, is thus expressed. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 3, 4. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person in the Self-Existing Essence, who was set up as God-Man, the Head and Mediator of His church and people, before all time, and who was prophesied of by all the prophets which have been since the world began, was manifested in the flesh, in the fulness of time: and this for the express purpose of taking away our sins. This says the apostle ye know. If he was manifested to take away our sins, then how he hath done this, is very desirable for us to know. Now in the present subject the following important

particulars are worthy of our consideration—Who hath taken away sins—Whose sins are taken away—How they are taken away. It is our sins are taken away. It is Christ hath taken them away. And it is by the sacrifice of Himself, he hath removed them from us. All this is most assuredly included in these words, *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* Christ, God-Man, was the representative and substitute of his people. The Father laid their sins on Him. He bore them in his own body, and was nailed with them to the tree. He was made all the sin and sinfulness of all his people by imputation. He sustained the whole curse of the law, which was the true and proper desert and demerit of them. He sustained the whole until it had wholly expended itself on Him: then he cried with a loud voice, *It is finished.* It was our sins he bore: the sins of his members. He became incarnate for this very purpose, with this very end and design in view; *He was manifested to take away our sins.* The expression, *to take away our sins*, seems to be borrowed from *John the baptist*, who, pointing to our Lord, said, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* He could not have taken away our sins, if they had not been on Him. They could not have been on him, if they had not been laid on him. How and by whom they were laid on him, is expressed in the following scripture. “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isa. liii. 6. Of Him, Jehovah the Father spake to *Joshua* the high priest and said, “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” Zech. iii. 8, 9. This hath been so completely accomplished, that the *Psalmist* says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Ps. ciii. 12. This is most truly glorious and divine. This is Salvation indeed. Our sins are removed from us. He who hath removed them from us, is the Lord Jesus Christ. They are removed from us, as far as the east is from the west: we stand before the Lord without them. Great as all this is, yet if it be possible it is exceeded by what is expressed in the New Testament: the apostle saith, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Cor. v. 21. Again, “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Heb. ix. 26. 28. These are salvation-scriptures. They have salvation in them. They all prove our Lord Jesus Christ to be the true Paschal Lamb of God. The antitypical Scape-Goat, who hath carried all the sins of his people, into a land not inhabited, and abolished them all out of the sight, and from before the Lord. The true gospel-knowledge of this, is the pillar and ground of faith. What is contained in it, is all-sufficient to lift up the mind of real believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, with holy confidence in the Lord, above all contained in the law, sin, and the curse: yes, and beyond all they are the subjects of: and this to an holy confidence in God. These blessed effects of a complete and finished salvation, I am now to speak of. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.* A most precious, glorious, and everlastingly comfortable

truth, on which we may with the utmost safety rest our All. There is everlasting purity in the blood of Christ. We have eternal perfection in the Sacrifice of Christ. We have freedom from all condemnation in the Death of Christ: with his stripes we are healed. Here we may safely rest. In this we may be confident. We have herein all-sufficiency, to satisfy all which law and justice could possibly require over and over of us. The righteousness of Christ exceeds all the law could ever have demanded of us. The Death of Christ contains a greater good than there is evil to be found in sin. We have more in Christ than we have lost in Adam. We have more to lift us up in Christ, than we have to be cast down for in ourselves: so that as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to open the subject to our view, we see in every sense, that in Christ, which lifts us out of ourselves, and off ourselves, and raises us above ourselves, and beyond all our sins and miseries, so as that we may triumph over ourselves, in the Lord, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How can it be otherwise? If we know that Christ was manifested to take away our sins, then we must be without all sin before the Lord. If all our sins have been laid by Jehovah the Father on Christ, and He hath borne them in his own body on the tree, and removed them out of the sight of law and justice by the sacrifice of Himself, then we cannot but be as free from the imputation of them to our persons as Christ now is. It is herein consists our whole Salvation. We are in Christ what He is. He hath borne our sins, and carried our sorrows. We have the benefit thereof. We are now and evermore saved in Him, with an everlasting salvation. The knowledge of this to us, is life everlasting. We receive the knowledge of this into our minds from the word of the gospel, and believe the truth of it in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost: this is manifestative salvation. In our living this, in the real and spiritual exercises of our minds, on the Lord Jesus Christ, we have full, clear, and undeniable evidence of our personal interest in Christ, and all the blessings and benefits of his great salvation. This leads us going on from strength to strength, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It would be of real and unspeakable advantage to us, were we to view salvation, abstracted from all the benefits which result from it. We should look at it as it is: yea, we cannot see the glory, worth, perfection, and excellency of it, unless we behold it in Christ; and Christ as the whole of it, and the whole perfection of it. We should look wholly at the Person, righteousness, and Death of Christ, and see salvation here: then we should receive hereby such apprehensions of the subject as would lead us off our own centre, and fix us on Christ as our one immediate object and subject. He would then be our All. It is not how often we hear Christ preached is a matter of moment, nor what we hear of Him: it is what we receive into our minds concerning Him. We must first see Him in his complete and finished work, or we shall never believe on Him for life everlasting. It is a question of eternal importance, as it respects the well being of our souls in this present time state, proposed by *Mr. Romaine* in his Preface to his "Walk of Faith:" "Dost thou see the infinite glory of the Saviour's work, when he made peace by the blood of his cross? and does this silence guilt in thy conscience?" It is the true knowledge of Christ, as revealed in the everlasting gospel, which alone can remove the guilt of sin: it is this alone can silence the clamours of conscience; produce peace in it. Therefore, this very point well deserves close application of thought: it is more

clearly stated in the word, than we are apprehensive of. We err, in having to do with faith, or experience, or any fruits of grace of any kind, before we have actually received the knowledge of Christ into our mind, and are settled and established in Him. The blood of Christ is our present, and will be our everlasting purification from all sin, in the sight of God for ever and ever : and if He beholds us, everlastingly without all sin in Christ, surely we may well believe ourselves to be so : especially as we have his word for it : and he declaring therein to us, that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. The faith of the saints unto whom the apostle here addresseth himself, was founded on knowledge. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.* And the apostle includes himself as one with them, in the same knowledge and faith. This brings me to my last particular, which is

4. To shew the perfection of this, both as it may be attributed to Christ, and his Church also. *And in him is no sin. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin.*

There never was any sin in Christ : there never could be : there never can be. He is, and ever was, and ever will be, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Yet Christ once had all the sins of all the whole election of grace on Him by imputation, with all the various guilts, filths, and demerit contained in them : and he became the one everlastingly efficacious Sacrifice for them : He made his soul an offering for sin : the perfection of which was such, that the whole were removed for ever, from the persons of the Elect, from his own Person, and from before the Lord. Then there can be no sin on Him now, any more than there is sin in Him : this there never was. It may be, the apostle expresseth himself thus, to give an hint of the final abolition of all the sins of the elect before the Lord, by the Sacrifice and Death of the Lord Jesus Christ : as also of the complete purity of the church, in the Person, righteousness, and blood of the Holy and Immaculate Lamb : and this being the immutable perfection of the Church, it was very properly introduced after it had been declared, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law : for sin is the transgression of the law.* No words could come in better, than these : *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin.* This was a cordial to real saints : nothing could be more reviving unto them : yea, this last clause of the words, *and in him is no sin*, as they might be attributed to Christ, and to his church also : and so a double satisfaction might be derived from them. Our Lord hath purged away our sins by the Sacrifice of Himself : this he hath proved ; because when he had so done he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He had not entered into heaven, if he had not been as truly without all sin imputatively, as he was without all sin inherently. He was as truly without all sin in Him on the cross, as He is without all sin before the Throne. Yet He was not within sin on Him, when He was in the garden, and on the tree. It was there he made an end of it, and washed his whole church in his own blood, and made her clean from all sin. Yea, his own blood cleansed Him from all the sins which had been imputed unto him. He is said to be brought back from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant : and in a sense, it may with safety be said, Christ himself was purified in his own blood : and if it was his acquittance, it must be the church's also. And the church being in Christ, when he was

made her sin, and he being clothed with her transgressions when he made the atonement for her; as he put away her sins by his one offering, he must also have obtained His own discharge from them thereby. So that he being now without all imputation of sin, the church must be so too: and this on the footing of that sacrifice of his which perfects for ever the putting away of all their sin. In Christ is no sin. He is the Head of his body the church. He is the representative of his Church. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 25—27. According to this, the church is so incorporated into Christ, that she in him, is without all spot before him: and what she is in his sight, must be her glory and perfection. It is what he sees her to be, must be what she really is. He says to her, "Thou art all fair, my love: there is no spot in thee." S. Song iv. 7. The apostle sets forth the same important truth, to the saints at *Colosse* in these words, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." Col. i. 21, 22. The whole, as it respects the perfection of Christ's work, and the perfection of the church in Him, are subjects for faith to be engaged in, and expressed, and exercised on: it should be considered thus, in all our discourses about it, and conversations respecting it: we should thereby avoid multitudes of mistakes concerning these most sublime and important subjects. It is not a carnal apprehension of the same, will be of the least use to us: nor shall we inwardly be the better for these subjects, but as the Holy Ghost is himself pleased, to create proper ideas of them, in our renewed minds, from the Sacred word, which, when he doth, this is his taking of the things of Christ, and shewing the same unto us: and hereby it is, we are established in the mysteries of grace, and are built up in Christ, and rooted and grounded in Him. The work of Christ is perfect: nothing can be added to the same. The church in Christ is perfection itself: nothing can be added to make her more so in Him. Christ is delighted to behold her in his righteousness and salvation. She is delighted in beholding Him, Jehovah her righteousness, and Perfection, and to view herself complete in Him. It is these views give the Spouse of Christ, true contentment; nothing short of this doth. In Christ there is no sin: nor in the church of Christ, as viewed and considered in Him; for if Christ hath removed all her sins from her, and washed her from them in his blood, where are her sins to be seen? If she is clothed with his righteousness, and she shines in his everlastingly glorious, and resplendent righteousness, where is there any deformity to be seen in her? The church was once under an eclipse, so was Christ. She appeared all deformity; but out of this darkness, unto her, light arose, even when she was in this very case. The Sun of Righteousness shone forth upon her: so that it is day with her. She may therefore now well say, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." It is well when we make proper distinctions concerning what the church is in Christ, and what she is in her nature-self. Be she what she may, as considered in her fallen nature, this makes no alteration in the least in her, as considered in Christ. It too often runs it into a natural subject to have so much to do with the

church, abstracted from her relation to Christ. The Lord God never views her, but as one with Christ: surely we should not either. Let us not overlook how *John* treats this subject in this Epistle: he draws a line of distinction between saints and others: he aims to feed the flock of God: in so doing he fills up his office well. The prophet *Isaiah* personating the church of Christ, expresseth himself, as the mouth of the church with this exuberancy of joy thus. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." chap. lxi. 10. The same prophet expressing his zeal for the church, says, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." chap. lxii. 1. All this makes way for saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." chap. lx. 1, 2. May the Lord the Holy Spirit, lead us on, and into an increasing light and increasing knowledge of all revealed truth: so as that we may see Christ's glory shine out in the same, according to what of Him, is revealed therein: by the which I mean, agreeable to what such and such passages reveal, and contain in them of Him: for I do not conceive they all reflect the same light and shine. I should for myself, like to receive into my own mind, clearly and precisely, the particular light conveyed, by the identical revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, contained in each, and exactly according to that very passage of Scripture through the which I view him. May the Lord shine, if it please him, on what hath been set before you, so as that you may receive some light and profit from the same: for that is the design and end of it. Which if it does not promote, why my friends, then the whole falls to the ground. The Truth does not by that means fall. No; it is only the attempts of a labourer in the Lord's vineyard. Truth is mighty and must prevail. Yea, Truth is almighty, and it is immutable; yet the usefulness of an individual Servant of Christ, may, or may not be profitable, whilst the truths of the everlasting gospel are by no means in the least affected thereby. This should be more particularly considered than it commonly is; creatures are but creatures: such as are new creatures in Christ, and some of them are called to be ministers of Christ, and are useful in their place, yet they should not be overrated: neither should they arrogate any thing to themselves: neither should they think too much of themselves: nor want others to think of them, more than is to be found in them. *Paul* did not. I have nothing to do with any one. If I have or may, through the grace of the Spirit, cast any light on the Scriptures, in my poor and weak attempt to explain them, in and throughout this *Exposition*, I would bless the Lord for the same; whilst I would aim at this, being well persuaded nothing depends of life and salvation on my poor performance; I would have the Reader know and remember this also. I leave all to his serious consideration, and the Lord's blessing. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.—1 JOHN iii. 6.

THE apostle lays down this as the evidence of our loving God—our keeping his commandments ; which consists in this, in a very special way and manner—In an abstaining from, and in an invincible hatred against all sin. This ; he makes use of the following motives to work upon them to attend unto—Because sin is a transgression of the pure and undefiled law of God : this was contained in the past Sermon : next, he useth these arguments against it—Sin is the devil's work ; therefore it is abominable. Christ came into our world to destroy it : therefore, it must be incompatible with being the children of God, to commit it. The commission of sin, maketh men, and demonstrates them, to be the children of the devil. Surely then, the children of God will not be found the committers of it. Surely then, such an one as is united to Christ, a believer in Him, who is alive to Him by the power of the Holy Ghost, and is persevering in the good ways of God sinneth not. It must, therefore, be concluded, that let the person be who, or what he may, as to profession, whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. This is the apostle's conclusion on this subject : and this is the general outline of these words before us. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* In the which we have the following particulars.

1. The blessedness of abiding in Christ. It is a preventative to sinning : so says the apostle. He pronounceth this in general terms, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.* Under this head I shall take up the term *sinneth*, and aim to cast some light upon the phrase. We have *sin*, and *sinned* before : but *sinneth* is a word we had not before we came to the 4th verse of this chapter. Therefore I shall be for making some remarks on it.

2. A declaration concerning whosoever he, or they be that sinneth or sin. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Christ, neither known him. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

I will endeavour to explain the whole of this, as it respects the substance of the same. And then give you the general outline of the next sermon, that the general connection may thereby appear, and you may be in part prepared to receive what is then to be set before you. May the Lord bless the design, that it may be both instructive and profitable. Amen. Even so may it be, O Lord Jesus Christ. I am

1. To set forth the blessedness of abiding in Christ ; it is a preventative to sinning : this is the apostle's doctrine. He pronounceth this in the words before us, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.*

He received this from Christ himself ; who said, " Abide in me, and I in you.—If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." John, v. 4. 6. We have had our apostle, in the former chapter, speak of what such an one as saith he abideth in Christ, ought

himself to do—It becomes him to walk even as Christ walked. The apostle would, that what the saints had heard from the beginning of the gospel, concerning the doctrine of the Holy Trinity should abide, and remain in them. He would have them to abide in Christ, and in the truths and doctrines of his grace. He exhorts them to abide in Him. But in my text he makes a solemn declaration concerning such as abide in him: and the outward evidence they give of the same, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*. He had just before, in just such general terms said, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*. Now, closely connected with all this, he says, in the same general words, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*. It is most undoubtedly decisive of, who are in Christ, and who are not—Who, have not only the profession of Christ; but it is to distinguish such as are, and are not, under the influence of Christ. It must follow, the apostle must have had his reason for thus writing. And it cannot be questioned, but there is to be found the same necessity for discrimination now, as there then was: therefore, it cannot be amiss for us, to take him for a guide in these matters. As it regards abiding in Christ, as here hinted at, it respects a continuance in an holy profession of his Name, Person, righteousness, sacrifice, salvation, and gospel. This is very evident from these words. “*But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*.” chap. ii. 27, 28. This abiding in Christ is real blessedness. As the Person of Christ, yea, the very doctrine concerning his Person, and the revelation made of Him, to the renewed mind thereby, must render him transcendently glorious; which cannot be the case, where the professor does not abide in the doctrine thereof; so the abiding in the true faith of Christ, as expressed in every truth and doctrine of the everlasting gospel, hath its blessedness: and such persons as abide thus in Christ, enjoy real blessings and blessedness. And this is one blessing—It saves from sin. It is a preventive to sinning. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*. There is a blessed unction and fragrancy shed on the mind of one in Christ, whilst he is thinking on, walking with, and holding communion with his Lord. So that the Lord Jesus Christ is his glory. The Name of Christ is perfuming. The righteousness of Christ comforts the mind. It guards and defends from all fainting fits. The work of Christ is very animating. The real possessor of Christ, who lives by the faith of the Son of God, is saved from the love, the guilt, the power, and dominion of sin, as he lives, and walks by the faith of the Son of God. So that the person who walks in Christ, is saved from the practice of sin: from falling into sin: it prevents his sinning. He cannot sin so long as he is kept abiding in the faith of Jesus, alive to the grace of Jesus, dependant on the arm of Jesus, and living in real communion with the Lord Jesus. This is the general and positive declaration which the apostle utters, and expresseth in the words of the text. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*. Whosoever is one with Christ; united to

Him, has a spiritual, experimental knowledge of Him, and acquaintance with Him, and real fellowship and communion with Him, in his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and priesthood and life in glory: such an one sinneth not. Yet we must not suppose such an one without sin. No; nor must we conceive such an one incapable of sinning: nor must we conceive the apostle is here contradicting himself, who said in the 1st chapter of this Epistle, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." v. 8—10. Most assuredly we must not consider the apostle here to contradict himself; yet it must be allowed he speaks most positively in both places: and here in very universal terms, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.* As there is no man liveth and sinneth not; and it is here asserted whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not, I think we must be at some pains to clear this up. For most certain it is, the saints of the Most High God fall into sin: yea, into their old besetting sin: neither is there any promise in all the Bible which assures them they shall not. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary we should understand the apostle here, lest we sink under the weight and guilt of our constitutional sin, into the which real saints fall: and, it may be, much oftener than they conceive. There is no evil in the apprehension of a real believer in Christ, like unto sin: his own sin in particular: the inbeing of it in him, is hell: his being at any time carried away with it, is to him a present and perfect hell. He does not sink into desperation under it; yet this is because he knows Christ was manifested to take away the sins of his church, and that in him is no sin; and that he is always, in the full virtue of his most precious blood and righteousness before the throne on his behalf. Yet this is not the subject the holy apostle is here upon. No; it really is not. He had treated on this in the second chapter, in the first and second verses of the same. He is here speaking of a course of sinning: and such is the general interpretation of this scripture. Whilst this cannot be denied, yet I cannot say this satisfies me to be the full meaning of the words. I am, therefore, disposed to take up the words here, and, in a very particular manner, this peculiar term the apostle makes use of, *sinneth*, hoping hereby to find out more precisely and expressly, what he means hereby. He says, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.* The *him* is Christ. Whosoever abideth in Him, must be a believer, or believers. The abiding here spoken of, must be a continuation in the profession of his Truth and ordinances: and the apostle says, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.* Now I would observe the word here used, is very singular; and not used by him in this Epistle but once before, and that in verse 4th: it is the word *sinneth*. Our Lord Jesus Christ says in the 8th chapter of *John's Gospel*, to certain Jews which believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's children, or seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth

sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the son abideth ever. If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." v. 31—36. I conceive the apostle spake the words in my text from his Master ; and had in view what our Lord had also in that very chapter. He seems to me to be just as deliberate, to bring it out, as our Lord was. I gave an hint when this *word* was touched upon in the preceding Sermon, that I conceived it seemed to me, to have respect to the unpardonable sin, that I should take it up again, and more fully express myself upon it, when I came to Sermon 39, which will succeed this which I am now upon. I shall here only make some general remarks on it : such as these—The word *sinneth* implies a continuation in it. It is not a mere act of sin, which may never be repeated : but such an act of sinning as can never be exceeded ; and which leaves no room nor place of repentance. Again, when the apostle mentions the devil's sinning he doth it by the very same word, *He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* v. 8. And our apostle speaks of a 'sin unto death. chap. v. ver. 16. Now these expressions sway with me, and by them I am led to conceive, these expressions, *Whosoever committeth sin—Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*, must have some very peculiar meaning in them, which is not obvious to every reader : and I conceive will be confirmed when we come to open the 8th verse. I would also suggest ; if it be not so, why does the apostle make mention of the sin unto death, if he no where gives an account of the same, either directly, or indirectly ? This is my question to you ? Surely he wrote not one sentence in it, but is of vast importance, it being given from the infallible Spirit of God. I will therefore inform you, having made a provision for the same, by these short observations on the word *sinneth* in the past, and in this present discourse, that, if the Lord please to spare me to the next Lecture morning, I intend to give you an account of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which, as I conceive, is the very same, with what our apostle designs by the term which he useth, when he says, *There is a sin unto death : I do not say that he shall pray for it* : that is, could it be certain any had fallen into it, they were not to be prayed for. I would have you suspend your thoughts on this subject : wait and hear what may be delivered on the same. I will endeavour to give you my views of it from the word : I will not read any commentary, or commentator on it. And when you shall have heard what I may have to say on the subject, even then, I shall be very far from aiming to sway your judgments. It will be then with you to receive or reject the same, as you yourselves think fit. Having gone over the first part of my text, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*, and shewn you the blessedness of abiding in Christ, with the blessed effects thereof—That it is a preventative to sinning : and having also taken up the word *sinneth*, and made some observation on the same, I proceed to my next general division of this present Sermon which is this.

2. To set forth this declaration of the apostle in the words of my text, concerning whosoever he be, or they be that sinneth or sin : *whosoever sinneth, hath not seen Christ, neither known him* : this is a very solemn and positive assertion. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

When we read such declarations as these, it becomes us, to set our hearts and souls most seriously to ponder on them. They are not as so

many scare-crows to frighten us : but they are as so many marks to direct us : so as that we may avoid falling on those rocks and quicksands, on which many have foundered. For whilst there can be no falling from the grace of God : nor from the grace of the doctrine of God our Saviour ; yet there may be a falling from the doctrine of grace and salvation, notwithstanding our profession of it. Yea, there may be a falling into damnable sins, and errors, such as may be to the destruction both of body and soul. It is to prevent this, so many scriptures are engaged, and employed, as cautions, warnings, exhortations, and examples. It is not as if the elect could finally miscarry : but it is that none under a profession may deceive themselves : as if a bare, empty, noisy profession of Christ and Truth, were undeniable evidences of interest in Christ : as if this was all the fruits that union to the Person of Christ, salvation in Christ, and communion with Christ produced. The apostle who was as full of these most important subjects as one man could possibly be, is very greatly concerned, that all who were favoured with the true knowledge of Christ, should express and exemplify, the efficacy, and effects of the same, in their lives and conversations. They lived in a day, in the which errors abounded. They were kept from the same. They knew every thing opposite to Christ and his Truth, was a lie. They therefore avoided it. They knew the holiness of his example, gospel, ordinances, and precepts, forbade all acts and sorts of sins, and sinnings. Yet on either hand of them they were surrounded with persons, who were disposed, notwithstanding they professed the same gospel, to live and who lived in sin : were swallowed up in a worldly spirit : some of these were immersed in errors ; even such as were in their nature damnable. Now seeing this was the case in *John's* time, it made way for him to write as he here doth ; so as to make a clear and proper difference between one who feared God, and one who feared him not. And as all the churches had chaff, as well as wheat in them, hence it is, he comes down individually in his discrimination—to *whosoever* : including personally, and comprehensively, each and every one. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* This is close work. Sin is the object of God's invincible hatred. It is the transgression of his law. It is an opposition to his most holy will. It is contrary to his nature. It is the work of the devil. It was what Christ came into our world to destroy. Therefore, whosoever liveth in the practice of sin ; he never had a spiritual sight of Christ. Such an one never knew Christ. If he had, he could not act as he doth. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* Beloved, this is most truly apostolical. It came from the pen of *John*, the disciple whom Jesus loved. It may be relied on as the truth : yea, it is the very effect which the knowledge of the Truth produces. No one who knows Christ can live in sin. No one who hath communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, can connive at sin. Such an one cannot make a life and business out of sin. Sin is not the element in which he lives : nor can he enjoy himself, in the practice thereof. He is out of the kingdom in the which sin rules and reigns, and carries all before it. He may be overcome by it ; but he cannot be conquered. It is impossible. The promise is, " Sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14. This is *John's* doctrine, as it was *Paul's*. Therefore, whilst he never saw any one who was without

sin, except his Lord, yet he is fully persuaded, all who are made acquainted with the Lord Jesus, and brought under the mighty power and influence of his grace, are not under the reigning power and influence of sin. Neither can they be. It is this makes an essential distinction between them and others. There may be no distinction in other respects. They may, for the form of profession, be the same as others; and others as to the form of words, say the same with themselves; yet what makes such a difference as will finally separate each other in the invisible state is this—the one are saved from the guilt, love, and power of sin, the other are not: they have their bye ways of sinning: howsoever they may outwardly appear; even to the churches to which they belong. It deserves here to be mentioned, that as there are two sorts of professors in the church of Christ, so such of them as live in secret sin, and indulge and connive at the same, are thus spoken of by the prophet. “As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.” Psa. cxxv. 5. There is no making a profession of Christ, and not being so noticed, as for the Lord himself to make a full discovery of who, and what such and such are. This is discovered in the following way—It pleases the Lord, to leave us to our own wills, and affections: when we are under temptations what we are inherently is discovered: if the power of sin was never broken in our souls, by the omnipotency of divine grace, it will most certainly lift up its head, in such seasons. And as he who contemneth little things will fall by little and little; so tampering with constitutional sin, makes way for falling by it, and falling under it: and in the case of many, they are so brought under the same, as to be slaves hereunto; and the Lord in his righteous providence makes way for the discovery of it: so that it, at times, brings about excommunication, and an extermination out of the churches. In the apostle’s day, there were, as I conceive, some who sinned against the Holy Ghost: of these it must most assuredly be said, they had not seen Christ, neither known him. Yet leaving them aside for the present, I should like to take some notice of these expressions here before us—That such and such had not seen him, neither known him. I will recite the whole of the text, that what I may further say of it, may the more clearly appear. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* To see Christ, I should suppose, does not here refer to a corporeal sight of Christ: but a spiritual sight and apprehension of him. Agreeable to which the apostle *Peter* says to those whom he wrote unto, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” 1 Epis. i. 8. There is a knowledge of Christ, and a sight of Christ, which real saints are favoured with, which hath such a reality in it, as cannot be put down, or exceeded, except it be by a vision of Christ within the veil. When all this is said, it is without the least enthusiasm. We read of seeing Jesus—of looking unto Jesus—of beholding Jesus: and all this believers in Jesus are favoured with; which must wholly come from the Holy Spirit’s making a revelation of the Person of Christ to the mind. This must be from the everlasting gospel. It must consist in the Holy Spirit’s taking of the things of Christ, and shewing the same unto us. Now we cannot believe and trust in an unseen Jesus: if we cannot, then we must have the knowledge of Christ let in upon our minds. This can

be from none but the Holy Spirit. He cannot do so, but by a medium suited to convey the knowledge of the Person and knowledge of Christ, and his salvation to our minds. Now what medium can this be, but the everlasting gospel, in which the whole of Christ is contained ; in which his full glories shine forth ? surely it must be therefrom : and we may be confident it is from hence : because the apostle says, “ we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is hereby we are enlightened into the true knowledge of Christ, and herefrom may be said, to know him : so from the same, it may be most truly said, we have seen the Lord. We have had spiritual apprehensions formed in our spiritual minds, of his worth, glory, excellencies, and perfections ; so as to be drawn after Him ; to have our minds engaged with Him, and fixed on Him, for life and salvation, and eternal glory. This is alone peculiar to saints : yet as they cannot but speak out in Church assemblies concerning such sights and apprehensions of the Lord and Saviour ; others may take up their words, and make use of the same as their own : yet, says the apostle, there is not one who really knows Christ, that lives in sin—No one who has seen Christ, is a slave to his own lusts. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* A true knowledge of Christ, gives a death blow to sin. There can be no communion between Christ and us, carried on in us, by the Holy Spirit's taking of the things of Christ, and giving us the true, spiritual knowledge of the same, and we living over the same in our minds ; and we living in the commission of sin : it is impossible. And I am exceedingly pleased with the apostle's expression. We are too apt to lay all our emphasis on inherent grace. It is sometimes suggested, as if the knowledge of Christ, and the gospel, were subjects which took us off our guard, and made us careless. Yea, some will almost say, such know too much of Christ, and the gospel, to be afraid of sin, or to be real practical christians. This is to express a great deal of ignorance. The truth of the matter is this. The devil is well pleased if he can keep, by any means, saints as well as sinners, from Christ. And he does this as effectually as he would wish to do, when he can legalize the mind, so as to engage it on any subject but Christ, grace, and salvation. I am therefore very much pleased with the very expressions, of knowing, and seeing Christ : as they convey to the mind, that which is of such vast importance : and also as they shew that it is for want of spiritual knowledge, views, and supernatural perception of Christ, that so many things are amiss in such and such, as are under the profession of Christ, and his gospel. Living on Christ, is the only way to live down sin. This is the way to all practical godliness. To live in sights of Christ, is the very preservative from inward and outward corruptions. To be truly engaged in spiritually beholding the glories and perfections of the most blessed Immanuel, is the only means to preserve us, pure in heart, undefiled in life, and unspotted from the world. It is an eternal truth, and may we receive it as such, that, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* What is this but saying, that the true knowledge, and real sights of Christ, are the greatest blessings we can enjoy in this world, and during our continuation therein—That nothing can be a greater curse, than to be a Christless professor : none knows what he may fall into : nor when and where he may stop ; a bare pro-

fession will not keep him long. He will, he cannot but, if left to himself, become a prey to those lusts and corruptions which are most natural to him: which will all serve to prove he knows not the Lord Jesus Christ: nor ever had the least spiritual idea of him. I fear the present day, and churches in the present time, swarm with such. We have a great deal of natural religion, and very little of supernatural. As to want of the true knowledge of Christ, and spirituality, we cannot but be sensible of the very little of this that is to be found amongst us, and throughout our land at present. If the true knowledge of Christ, is the only preventive of sin, and sinning, then let us make a proper use of this. Let this be the bar with us, to distinguish between one and another—Such an one knows Christ—Such an one does not. How is this to be known? By what he is, and acts. If he being in Christ, acts as a new creature, and lives down the world and sin, by looking to, and living on Christ, this is good, clear, and outward evidence for Him. If he lives in sights of Christ he will be a spiritual man: this he will outwardly evidence, by speaking spiritually of Christ, and as one who really and inwardly knows him. To see Christ, to know Christ, there is a vast importance in this. All the gospel, as it respects what we are made the partakers of is herein contained: for in the knowledge of Christ, we have the Father's love, and the Spirit's grace: and when we have communion with Christ, we enjoy the Father's love, and the consolations of the Holy Ghost. But once more to glance on the last part of my text. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* Let this be noticed—The apostle is not here speaking of such temptations as are common to man. All the saints are liable to sin: it is the Lord alone who can preserve them from falling. And when they are fallen; it is the Lord who alone can raise them up. I have already suggested my thoughts concerning this word *sinneth*, and I have yet more to say; but this is to be omitted here; only having finished my two general heads of this discourse, I will now give you the general outline of the next Sermon, that the general connection may thereby appear, and you may be in some sort prepared to receive what is then to be set before you. The words of the text will be the two next succeeding verses. The words are these, *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinueth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" It appears to me, this scripture, in the opening and explaining of it, will give a very suitable and proper opportunity of shewing how the devil became a sinner: what he fell from: the consequences of his fall: what is related in the scriptures concerning the same. Then how he overcame us, *i. e.* all mankind in our nature head. Then the nature of the difference between his fall, sin, and sinfulness, and ours. This will lead on to the consideration of his continual sin and sinfulness, and that he never ceaseth to commit sin. You may perceive it will be a long sermon. I hope not an unprofitable one. When the subject of all now suggested is gone through, then I shall give you some account of the state of the church in, and after Christ's ascension, in the days of the apostle—What dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the church was then under—That then in some instances the sin against the Holy Ghost was committed; yet I shall pronounce, it cannot be, now: reasons will be given for this; so that you

need not be afraid of any thing which will be delivered, as though it were going to be pronounced you are the subjects who have committed it. I do love to understand what I read : and I most assuredly should be most truly glad to have a more enlightened, and enlarged mind into the whole word of God, that I might be the more useful in my ministrations of the word of Truth. I conceive, that in going through an Epistle, like this before us, there is an opportunity of more enlargement of mind, than when one single text is only preached upon ; because the strain and substance of the whole scope of the Epistle being kept in the mind, the thoughts must be the more particularly exercised : and what is styled practical, experimental divinity, standing in its due place, it appears in its full and proper glory and excellency : no doubt being to be made, of the greatest propriety and regularity, in the placing all these in the Sacred page, seeing the Holy Ghost himself most graciously directed in the arrangement of all these, as He also did to the subjects themselves. And He being the glorifier of Jesus, and his rule to glorify Him by, being the revelation made and given of Him in the everlasting gospel, surely he would not act contrary to this great end, by permitting any one subject, expressed in the scriptures of Truth to frustrate such great and most invaluable end. Indeed, in what is styled the practical and experimental part, Christ is most truly glorified ; yet in a different way, than in what may be styled the revelation part of Him : in the which he shines forth in the fullest blaze of his Mediatorial Majesty, greatness and excellency. As the revelation of Him in the heart, and to the mind, and the eternal Spirit realizing the same, and making it effectual, it is hereby, and from hence, Christ being known, received, and fed and feasted on in the heart, that the life, tempers, and walk, are rendered in some glorious manner, and measure conformable unto Him : which is a glorifying Him, with our bodies and spirits which are His. I consider this Epistle, in very many parts of it, an exemplification of Christ in his Church : so that it may be looked on as a glorious correct model of a saint ; the whole of which, as set forth here, is the fruit of real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father in Him, through the Spirit. We want to be enlightened into this great subject, and to be under the power and authority of it continually ; this would influence us in all things. There is no love to sin, nor relish for sinful pleasures, when we are engaged in heart-warming-meditations on Christ, and the Father's love in Him : this is the very foundation of what is before us. The apostle began his subject, with calling on us to behold the love of God our heavenly Father, in the grace of adoption : in his giving us the title, and bestowing on us the privilege of calling us, and making us his children. He would have the mind fixed on this great and inestimable grace. *Beloved*, says he, *now are we the sons of God*. Surely nothing can go beyond this : many glories will issue out of it : but the grace of sonship exceeds them all : they being the fruits of it. The cause must ever exceed the effect : if it must here, then all spiritual blessings proceeding from the love of God, should be by us esteemed, from the greatness of that love wherewith the Father hath loved us, out of which they all flow. It is well for us to view them in their great original. The Father having loved us in Christ, and loved us with the love wherewith he loves Christ, hath bestowed on us, all spiritual blessings in Him. We are now in the actual possession and enjoyment of them, in our measure and degree, by the indwelling of the Holy

Ghost. We are waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. In the prospect of which, and agreeable with our hopes in Him, we purify ourselves, even as he is pure. We cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God : all which is the blessed fruit and effect of *Looking unto Jesus*, and living in close and intimate communion with Him : this keeps us from sin, and sinning. Our whole hopes for everlasting discharge from all sin, yea, from the very inbeing of it, in the Lord's time, and way, are founded on the sacrifice of Christ. We know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. And when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This is our hope : and from hence we are going on from strength to strength, and from conquering unto conquer. It is from these considerations, the apostle writes as he does : to keep up the true and proper distinction between the true Christian, and nominal one : between him who walketh according to the gospel, and ordereth his conversation aright, and him who doth not. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law : for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* Having as well as I could, thus given you the general account of what is contained in the words before us, I leave the whole with you, and for the Lord to bless, as it may seem good in his sight. And would just touch on the outline of our next Sermon, and add to what hath already been said on the subject in this, that when the nature of the sin is opened, and some examples and instances given from scripture of such as have been guilty of the same, I hope the minds of all truly serious persons will be relieved from all fears concerning their having any thing to do with it, or fear from it. I most certainly should not have fallen on it, had it not thus come before me. I shall treat on it as clearly, and scripturally as the Lord may be pleased to assist. I shall lay down my statement of it with the greatest simplicity : and this wholly from the scriptures, and in close agreement with them. This also will be the case, when I may come on to express the guilt of it, and tremendous curse annexed to it. It will I suppose be a long Sermon. It is therefore, I have said so much about what may be conceived by you, in this outline of it, that you may have in your own minds, beforehand, what you are to expect. My friends, the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Christ and his church are one. They cannot be separated. Against neither can the gates of hell prevail. No child of God, can ever commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, which our Lord speaks of as unpardonable : otherwise, the Holy Ghost being God, equal with the Father and the Son, every sin we commit is against him, as truly as it is against them. There is a continual need for all the saints of the Most High God, to be looking off themselves, and all their sins, and sinfulness, and from the whole body of sin, to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Him, they have their complete discharge. It is in Him they are justified from all things, and freely forgiven all trespasses. We should study the everlasting efficacy of Christ's most precious blood. We should labour to apprehend, how we are everlastingly clean in the sight of God, from all sin, by the one offering of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the true knowledge of this, which alone can purify our consciences from guilt, stain, and condemnation. It is because

we know so little of this, we at any time give way to doubts and fears. It hath pleased the Lord, to set before us in the everlasting gospel, his own views of Christ, and his salvation, with his own testimony concerning Him, that we receiving the same into our minds, should therewith receive and enjoy everlasting content. May the Lord the Spirit grant us, to receive the Truth, and the whole Truth concerning this, so fully into our minds, that we may enjoy the peace of God in our consciences, so as to come before Him, with holy boldness and delight. I would request your prayers, that I may be conducted and carried on, in what I have proposed, and given you the hint, and outline of, as a workman which needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth; so as neither to say too much, or too little; but quite sufficient for the subject, not in the least omitting any thing which may be absolutely necessary to the same. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—1 JOHN iii. 7, 8.

THE present discourse stands in connection with the former, and is introduced by the apostle in a very loving manner. It may be, because it contains as awful a subject as is to be found in the whole Scriptures of Truth. Therefore that real saints might not be too much affected with it, as if they were interested therein, and be carried away thereby, as if they were liable to fall away, so as to commit the same sin with the devil, and so be guilty of the sin unto death eternal, he thus most affectionately addresses them. It is not the first time he does it. In all his former ones it is, *My little children; Brethren; Little children; Fathers; Young men; Little children; Beloved*; and here it is, *Little children* again; it is very expressive of the love and affection of the holy apostle towards them, as the Lord's people. I conceive the best manner of my setting forth what is contained in the words before us, so as for you to have a clear and comprehensive view of the same, will be by giving you the following division of them.

1. I will take notice of the address, together with what is connected with it. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* This is a caution. Then follows an infallible evidence of such as belong to Christ—*He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* The *he* is Christ. The *us* must be a righteousness of conformity. It cannot be of equality. I put all this under one head: that when this is dispatched, there may be the more, and larger, and longer scope for the other.

2. I will consider this most awful assertion. *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* Here the word *committeth*, will be further noticed: as also what is here said of him—That *he sinneth from the beginning.* An enquiry into this, with the fall of the rest of the rebel angels with him, will be made; and a scriptural account will be given. This will make way for speaking regarding what our Lord hath said concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists—Then of the state of the church at, and after the day of *Pentecost* to the close of the apostolic hour. I shall also observe, this tremendous sin was committed during that period: and give scripture proofs of the same. After which, and speaking of the tremendous effects of the same, I shall positively affirm, it cannot be committed by any now: nor will it evermore. So that this may compose the mind, and set us at rest, and relieve us from all fears on this account. This will be established on the scripture: yet it will be all, with the statement which will be given, left with you, to receive it, or neglect it, as may seem good unto you. I thought putting all this under the 2nd head of discourse, would have its advantages, as you may refer unto it. Then as all this will be regularly treated of, one particular after the other, you will have the advantage of looking it over, and referring to it at your leisure. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Then

3. The purpose, end, and design for which *the Son of God was manifested.* It was, *that he might destroy the works of the devil.* May the Lord lead me through all this, to your satisfaction, and benefit, and to his praise, and glory. Amen. So be it, O Lord. I am thus to proceed by

1. Taking notice of the address, in the first part of the words of my text. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* As, all connected with the address is proposed to be taken up, I have therefore recited the whole of the verse, that it may be retained in memory, and as it may be kept in view, throughout the whole of going through the first head of discourse. And the various particulars expressed, will, by the good hand of my God upon me, be taken notice of, and closely attended unto: so as each of the particulars in each of the heads, will be most completely filled up.

The words of the address, *Little children*, contain much love, affection, and respect in them. Our apostle was full of love to Christ, to saints, to the whole visible and universal church of Christ. One cannot but conceive, he must stand in the relation of a spiritual father, and Pastor unto these, he more immediately, and expressly here writes unto; because he uses these terms so frequently. As an apostle, he must, according to his apostolical office, have stood in this general relation unto them all. He seems to have derived this term, as we are sure he did his love for all the holy brethren, from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who used this term and expression to his eleven apostles, when he addressed himself unto them, on the Tuesday evening of his Passion week, in the house of *Simon the leper*, at *Bethany*. His discourse which he had there with them, is recorded in the 13th and 14th chapters of *John's* gospel, and the term, *Little children*, you have chap. xiii. v. 33. Our *John* was very fond of his dear Lord's words. As he uses them here, they are not only very expressive of his love, affection, and regard for those whom he here expresses his good will unto, by giving a caution to them, but it is

doubtless to make way for their attention, and reception of the same. Nothing makes way for our receiving advice one from another, more, than by our profession of love and respect, for, and to each other. This is the apostle's method. The advice, or caution he gives is this. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* Let him be who he may, a preacher or professor—If he makes light of sin—If he would not have you to avoid it—If he would not have you abhor the very appearance of evil; have you nothing to do with him. This is contrary to that gracious faculty the Lord hath wrought in your souls. It is quite different to those teachings and instructions the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to favour you with. It is contrary to all which cometh from him. It is wholly and entirely opposite to the Lord Jesus Christ—To his gospel—To the knowledge of Him—To the profession of Him—To communion with Him. Pay, therefore, no attention, no not for a moment unto any such. *Little children, let no man deceive you,* in any such matters as these. It is into such licentiousness of life, all the antichrists in this present age, and all the effects of what they teach, and propose for to be attended unto, by their hearers, tend. These, I *John* the apostle of Jesus Christ, caution you against. Whosoever liveth in sin is in his sins. Whosoever committeth sin, is a bond-slave to sin. He who will venture to hear, or converse with erroneous persons, shews what he is, and is very fully inclined to be. I, therefore, give you this solemn caution; it is at your peril to reject it: yea, it will be at your loss, if you overlook it. I would fain set it on upon your minds, in the very spirit of love and gentleness: and this out of love to Christ, and out of love to you for his sake. *Little children, let no man deceive you* in this particular—This is a very clear and absolute truth: it may be resisted: there may be those who deny it: yet it is as truth, immutable. And it will be so for evermore, and throughout all generations. The gates of hell may withstand it: they may oppose it: yet it will ever be, that individuals, as well as whole churches of saints, who profess themselves to be righteous in Christ; that they are justified in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; that *God made Christ sin for them, who knew no sin; that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him*; each of these, and every one of these, individually, are in their own persons, lives, and conversation, aiming, to prove the good, blessed, and wholesome effects this most precious doctrine hath upon them, and within them. And this, I myself who am in Christ, a partaker of Christ, who know myself to be made righteous in Christ, by the gratuitous act of Jehovah the Father, stand forth, and for myself, and in the true knowledge of being made the righteousness of God, in Christ, am bold to declare, this is the only outward manifestation thereof. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

Such as are led by the word and Spirit, to right gospel apprehensions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in a way of believing, receive the true knowledge of the same into their minds, and believe in the same for righteousness, are righteous in the sight of God, even as Christ is righteous. This is wholly and altogether out of themselves, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He being by the Divine Father, constituted the Surety and Representative of his whole church, who was to act for them, and suffer for them; so his doings and sufferings were to be imputed to them: by virtue of which, they are in the sight of their heavenly Father,

in the righteousness of Christ. He is their Lord their Righteousness: in Him they are everlastingly righteous. The Father beholds them in Christ as righteous as the righteousness of Christ can make them. This is as he beholds them in Christ, and hath made over the righteousness of Christ unto them by his gracious act of imputation. The virtue and efficacy of this is let in upon the mind, as it receives a spiritual perception of the same. The apostle is here speaking of the effects which the true knowledge of this produces. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous.* He hereby makes it manifest, outwardly, and openly, that he is a righteous person. His doing righteousness, must imply, he acts righteously. He neither can, nor does he attempt by any means to keep the law of God. This he needs not: and it is wholly out of his power. Christ hath done this for him, and is the end of the law for righteousness unto him. It is in Him he stands justified from all things. He does not act righteously to make himself righteous before the Lord. He is perfectly and everlastingly righteous in the sight of God, in the Person, and obedience of his coequal Son; who is the one alone Righteousness of his church and people; whose righteousness is unto all, and upon all them that believe. The believer, cannot, under believing views of being righteous in Christ, but express his sense of such inestimable grace by walking humbly with his God, and before him unto all well-pleasing. This is what the apostle here saith, *he that doeth righteousness*, who walks in the paths of righteousness, and is in his life and conversation a righteous man, gives full proof hereby, that he is a righteous man: he is interested in a better righteousness than his own: it is an outward evidence for him, that he is one with Christ: that he hath Christ for his righteousness in the sight of God; and is admitted to have, and hold fellowship with Him. This makes him so exemplary in his walk and conversation; so that such as take the most complete and exact notice of him, cannot but conclude that he hath been with Jesus. He so walks, that *he is righteous, even as he is righteous.* Christ is he who is here spoken of under the term *he*. The *as* must be a righteousness of conformity: it cannot be of equality; that is everlastingly impossible. There are who will apply the whole text, to the righteousness of Christ, and to what believers are in him: but this most certainly and assuredly is not designed by what is here expressed: it is here spoken by way of discrimination, which fully appears from the very next words, which are these, *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Both these verses when contrasted with each other, so serve to open each other, as to prove this assertion, that being righteous as Christ is righteous, belongs to the practice of outward righteousness, in walk and conversation. *He that doeth righteousness*, here, is the believer. The man in Christ. The doing righteousness, must have respect to his walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In so doing, the believer looks to Christ as his Pattern and example—To his word as the rule and directory for his conduct—To his Spirit as his guide, to teach and influence him. He aims to act, as he may be most divinely assisted by the word, and Spirit, as near as possible to Christ, according to his preceptive and declarative will; as in conformity to Christ; not that there can be found an equality in the most righteous man on earth, who lives most like Christ, and the life of Christ;

No; neither is this the apostle's meaning. He is only speaking of the real effects which the true knowledge of Christ, and fellowship with Him in real spiritual apprehensions of Him, produce in the renewed mind: so that they influence the walk: and hereby there is full proof given outwardly, of the reality thereof. He cautions against all preachers and doctrines which may contradict this. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* The doctrines of the gospel, which ye have received, are according to godliness. Be not therefore led off from them by any man, be he who, or what he may. This is a truth which cannot be overthrown. It may be resisted and contradicted, by false disciples, teachers, and preachers: yet it is as true as truth itself. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* You cannot have, or give, better proof to each other, of your being fully persuaded in you own souls, that you are righteous in the sight of God, in the glorious robe of Christ's righteousness, and that you are led by the Holy Spirit to consider yourselves as justified in Christ, and appearing in Him righteous even as he is righteous, in the view, and before the majesty of your heavenly Father, than by walking as becometh all this profession, as having Christ in his life, tempers, and conversation for your Pattern and Example. Thus you will hold forth the word of life, and shine as the sons of God, in this dark world, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation and generation. Thus I have explicated the text, and gone through my first head of discourse; and am brought to the next words, and thereby to my next particular which is this.

2. To open these words, *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* These words I have divided into two separate heads. It is the first of these, I am now to enter on; in which I am to consider this most awful assertion, *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* Also, as the word *committeth* here occurs, to take particular notice of it, as hath been before hinted: as also, of what is here said of him, that is of the devil: it is this, *he sinneth from the beginning.* Then make an enquiry into this subject: together with the fall of the rebel angels with him, and give a scriptural account of the same. This is designed to make way, for giving an account of what our Lord hath said concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists. To clear this more from all ambiguity, I will give a general outline of the state of the Church, at, and after the day of Pentecost, to the close of the Apostolic hour. After all this hath been treated of, I shall observe, this tremendous sin, was committed during that period, and give proofs from the Scripture of the same. After this, I shall positively assert, that it cannot be committed by any now: nor will it evermore. This may compose the mind, and relieve it, and set us at rest, from all fears on this account; which will be all established on the Scripture. The whole of this, with the full and particular statement thereof, will be left with you, to receive, or neglect the same, as may seem good unto you. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* This is set in immediate opposition to the former verse. As the one is descriptive of saints, so this is of sinners. The former are proved to be what they are, by their doing *righteousness*: the latter, by committing sin. This made an essential difference in the apostle's time, and he wanted it should be kept up, and

so remembered, as that saints might know the vast difference betwixt them and others; so as that they might not be deceived by a bare profession. As also, that they might be fully persuaded every tree was known by its fruits—that “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: And an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” It was so in our Lord’s day. It was so in the apostle’s day. It is so in our day. It will be so to the end of time. It cannot be otherwise. But to begin what is here before us. I am

First, To begin with this most awful assertion. *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* This is affirmed by the apostle: and it is a most tremendous sentence: designed by the apostle to deter from sin. There most certainly is enough in it, were it properly considered, to put us all, on dreading to commit sin: it being the devil’s work: we having communion with him thereby. Yea, it is a justifying him, in his sin and revolt from the Lord. Who then, would, who names the name of Christ, venture to commit sin, even on this very consideration? The devil was the first who sinned against God. He found out the cursed art of sinning. He was the introducer of it. From him it entirely sprang. It was from him it came. It originated from him. He conveyed it to some of the angels of God’s presence, and they became apostates. He introduced it into our world, and the first man fell by it. From him it affected and corrupted the whole nature of man; so that the whole of Adam’s posterity, all sinned in him. This is the truth of this matter, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. And by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified.” The devil is the father of sin, as he is the father of lies: never a sin committed by saint, or sinner, but he hath his hand in it, *He that committeth sin is of the devil.*

Secondly, As the word *committeth*, is repeated and in the present tense, I would take particular notice of it. We have had it in the former verses. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* I have quoted all these verses, merely for the connection of them; otherwise, it is but the one word, *sinneth* which I have mine eye upon: on which I would offer the following remarks; it is in the present tense; it includes a continuation in the act of sinning; it is made use of to express the devil’s sinfulness. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Surely some peculiar sinfulness is included in the word, as here used by the apostle; and that such, as the children of God, are saved from: or, he had never said, *He that committeth sin is of the devil*: seeing, “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” This word *committeth* in the former verses, seems to be designed to run into this verse, now under consideration, that here its full meaning might appear; I conceive it, to be expressive of the sin unto death. The word *committeth*, carries with it in

my view, a continual course, and exercise of sin, without the least cessation. It is, therefore, said, *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Why is he that sinneth, said to be of the devil, if it be not to compare the one with the other, for a continuance in the same? As the word *committeth* is a present word, and used here to express the sinfulness of those who are of the devil, and his sinfulness also, I think the observations made on the same, will be found to be most awfully just: also, that as the word occurs as is used here, it is expressive of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which as nearly resembles the devil's sin, and comes the nearest to it in guilt and demerit, of any which can possibly be committed by any sinner of the fallen race of men. It is here said of him that committeth sin, *He is of the devil.* Surely it implies he is so, in a very particular and extraordinary manner. He is singularly and personally so.

Thirdly, I would notice what is here said of the devil: it is this, *he sinneth from the beginning. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* He whom the scriptures call *devil*, was once a pure angelic spirit: pure as the light; bright as the sun: there was no impurity in him: he was created in, and together with the heavens: it may be on the first day of the creation. We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Gen. i. 1. As the earth was created as an habitation for man, and then he was created and brought into it: so it seems to have been, that the heavens were created, and angels together with them, to inhabit them. Their number was according to the good pleasure of God's will. They were all pure and holy: of vast intellectual wisdom: and he, who is now a devil was one of them. It is here said of him, *he sinneth from the beginning*: not from the beginning of his creation; for he was created pure and holy: nothing unholy ever came out of the forming hands of God. He was as holy, pure, and upright by creation, as the elect angels were: but he fell from that state of purity in which he was placed in his creation state. This is a subject which we may receive some light into from the sacred Scriptures: therefore I will make some enquiry into this subject: together with the fall of the rebel angels with him, and give some scriptural account thereof. Only give me leave to present you with a general account of these, before their fall—How they came to fall—What the devil's first sin was; by the which he became irrecoverably sinful—What the scripture says expressly concerning the fall of the non-elect angels: and then set before you, what our Lord says expressly, concerning the devil and hell. I apprehend by setting before you first, the general account of all this, the other will be the more clearly understood and apprehended by you. The Lord God created the angels, and he created man, in the course of the first six days of the creation: the one in the heavens; the other in this world. Man was created in the image of God. This was agreeable to what had been expressed by the Eternal Three. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: that is, after the Proto-Type, drawn in the infinite mind of the Three in Jehovah, of the God-Man. This being done, and the first man *Adam*, a figure of Christ, being formed, and soon after *Eve* as an help-meet for him, it is very probable, the Lord God made it known to all the angels of his presence, that it was his pleasure, God-Man should be the Head of the whole creation, the Head of all principalities and powers—That they all

should be under Him—He should be their one universal Head. This was what the mind of one of these bright intellectual ones could not brook: to submit to one in the nature of man, to be Lord Paramount over the whole creation of God: over all the angels, whose nature is beyond that of man; this he cannot submit unto. He hears this made known to be the will of Jehovah, and he immediately sins against this Person: and by one sudden motion of thought, influences the minds of an innumerable number of angels, with his own thought: their minds receive the impression: they, together with him, rebel and oppose this will of God in Christ, concerning them, and they fall with him into an act of open rebellion against the sovereign will and pleasure of the Most High. They will not submit that the God-Man, shall be Lord over them: thus they all united with one head, and they all fell by one head: and his name being devil, they receive their names from him, and are called *devils*, throughout the sacred scriptures, both of the Old, and New Testament. Our Lord says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Luke x. 18. *Peter* says, “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” 2 Epis. ii. 4. *Jude* says, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” v. 6. Being cast out of their heaven, in the which they were created, *Satan*, their chief, attempted his craft and skill on man: and by the serpent, he entering into it, he overcame the woman, and by her the man: and thus he overcame man; and is from hence called the devil—The old serpent—*Satan*—The deceiver of the whole world. It was hereby he obtained his design upon the whole human race; in all which he manifested his utter contempt of Christ, God-Man; and the whole human race. Now as this was from the beginning, very soon after the beginning of the creation of God, so what is said of him in the words before us, is this, *he sinneth from the beginning*: from his fall to the present moment; it is one continual act of sinning in him. His whole will is sin. He is continually sinning. He sinneth. There is not the least cessation. He is wholly intellectual. He needs no sleep. He is all activity: it is his very element to sin, with all the faculties of his mind against God. And hating man, next to God, for the object and subject, and having completely corrupted the nature of man, by the fall, he does all he can, and all his angels with him, fallen under the same eternal curse of God with him, to stir up, and continually to draw out all that depth of sin and sinfulness which is in the nature of fallen man, into act and exercise. It is conceived by our greatest divines, such as *Dr. Goodwin*, and others of a like depth of judgment, that the devil's original sin and fall are hinted at, and expressed by our Lord, in what is recorded in his discourses with the Jews, in the 8th chapter of *John's* gospel. He had been speaking of his divine mission, and of God's being his Father: this they most obstinately resisted. He then, as he proceeds on in his discourse with them, tells them who their father was; “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” v. 44. In the which words, our Lord pronounces the devil a liar, and the father of lies. He

styles him *a murderer from the beginning*: of being destitute of all truth: of his *not continuing in the truth*. And this opens up to us the originality of the devil's sin. He was by creation in a state of truth and purity: he abode not therein: his fall was of, and from himself alone. He did not sin immediately against Godhead: it was against a Person in the Godhead, set up from everlasting agreeable with the will of each of the Persons in the Godhead, to be God-Man, in one Person. He would not, he would rather perish for ever, than be under, and submit to the Person, rule, government, and kingly authority of Christ, God-Man. He would rather prefer damnation to all eternity than be subjected to the God-Man. His pride contained in this crime, of all crimes the greatest, seems to be referred to by the apostle, when directing *Timothy* concerning church officers, he says, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Tim. iii. 6; which implies, pride was the devil's sin: as it has been opened, it is plain it was so. He was full of hatred against God, so far as he could express it, for his will concerning his appointment of the union of our nature to the Person of his coequal, coessential, and coeternal Son. As our Lord here charges these Jews, with being the children of the devil, and being guilty of the same sin he was, in their measure and degree, and this in their rejection of Him, and his Messiahship; so it is to be observed, the passage is a very suitable one, to give light into the devil's sin. The devil hath no bodily lusts; he is wholly incorporeal: our Lord, therefore, saying to these, *Ye are not of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*; and the sin of these men, whom Christ was then addressing, consisted in their entire rejection of the same most adorable Person, God-Man, who came down from heaven, who declared that God was his Father, and himself the glorious and promised Messiah—In this they expressed themselves to be of the same spirit with the devil. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him*. The truth which he abode not in, was what concerned the Person of Christ: which he hath set himself against in all ages, to oppose, and blaspheme, by various ways, and means. He corrupted the minds of those persons, whom our Lord was then conversing with, so as that they hated him, and denied his eternal Power and Godhead. The devil's original sin, was his rejection of Christ, God-Man, to be a Head to him; this was very soon after his creation: it was from this sin his fall commenced. And he became a murderer, *He was a murderer from the beginning*; this was by his corrupting all mankind, by the fall of Adam in Paradise. I hope I have thus far cleared up the subjects which have been proposed. And as all this was designed, for giving an account of what our Lord hath said, concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists. To clear this the more I will 1, Recite what Christ himself says of it. Then 2. To free this the more from all ambiguity, I will give a general outline of the state of the visible church of Christ, at, and after the day of *Pentecost*, to the close of the apostolical hour. Then 3. After all this hath been treated of, I shall observe this tremendous sin was committed during that period, and give proofs from the scripture of the same. What is to follow, shall be mentioned, when I have filled up these particulars, which may the Lord enable me to do, that his great name may be glorified thereby. I am

First, To recite what our Lord Jesus Christ hath uttered concern-

ing the sin against the Holy Ghost, which he hath pronounced to be unpardonable: with the occasion thereof. I will first mention our Lord's words, and afterwards mention on what account they came to be uttered, and I conceive this will be the only way rightly to understand the same. The words are these, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Thus they stand in the 12th chapter of *Matthew's Gospel*, v. 31, 32. In *Mark's Gospel*, they are expressed thus; chap. iii. v. 28, 29. "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Our Lord adds; or, it may be, it is the Evangelist gives this, as the reason, why our Lord expressed himself at this time thus. "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." v. 30. The season and occasion on which our Lord spake thus, was as follows; one was brought unto him, who was possessed with a devil, who was blind and dumb: our Lord healed him: he was not only freed from the possession, but he also spake and saw. At this all the people present were amazed, and they cried out, *Is not this the son of David?* by whom, they meant the Messiah: this so drew out the minds of the Pharisees present, who heard it, that they immediately blasphemed, saying, *This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* Our Lord who knew their thoughts, as well as heard their words, discourses on what they had thus uttered: and at the close of the same, expresses in the words before quoted, the most extreme danger of their case and sin. Read the 12th chapter of *Matthew*, from verse 22nd to the close of the 32nd, and you will see the truth of all this: read also the 3rd chapter of *Mark*, from verse 22nd to the close of the 29th, and you will conclude both accounts are one and the same; as for the occasion and substance of them. Let this be closely attended unto, and it will most clearly appear, what the sin committed by these persons was, and wherein its tremendous guilt lay. Here was our Lord Jesus Christ, exercising the power, and giving full and true evidence before the people, of his Messiahship. His inveterate enemies with such malice against him, as could only be injected into their minds from the devil himself, and in direct opposition to the conviction of their own consciences, profanely ascribe these very miraculous acts of Christ, which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, to the devil. This was a most horrible crime. It was to blaspheme the Spirit of God indeed—To impute Christ's miracles to the devil—To pronounce he was in compact with *Beelzebub* the prince, or chief of the devils—To attribute the great acts performed by Jesus of Nazareth, under the anointings of the Holy Ghost, to our Lord's being possessed of the devil—This was the sin these wretches were at this time guilty of. It is from hence our Lord took occasion to utter these words, in the which he sets forth the horrible guilt, and tremendous sinfulness contained in this sin: and that there is no forgiveness of it, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

I would add to all the former, this—Our Lord in his Incarnate state,

we know so little of this, we at any time give way to doubts and fears. It hath pleased the Lord, to set before us in the everlasting gospel, his own views of Christ, and his salvation, with his own testimony concerning Him, that we receiving the same into our minds, should therewith receive and enjoy everlasting content. May the Lord the Spirit grant us, to receive the Truth, and the whole Truth concerning this, so fully into our minds, that we may enjoy the peace of God in our consciences, so as to come before Him, with holy boldness and delight. I would request your prayers, that I may be conducted and carried on, in what I have proposed, and given you the hint, and outline of, as a workman which needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth; so as neither to say too much, or too little; but quite sufficient for the subject, not in the least omitting any thing which may be absolutely necessary to the same. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—I JOHN iii. 7, 8.

THE present discourse stands in connection with the former, and is introduced by the apostle in a very loving manner. It may be, because it contains as awful a subject as is to be found in the whole Scriptures of Truth. Therefore that real saints might not be too much affected with it, as if they were interested therein, and be carried away thereby, as if they were liable to fall away, so as to commit the same sin with the devil, and so be guilty of the sin unto death eternal, he thus most affectionately addresses them. It is not the first time he does it. In all his former ones it is, *My little children; Brethren; Little children; Fathers; Young men; Little children; Beloved*; and here it is, *Little children* again; it is very expressive of the love and affection of the holy apostle towards them, as the Lord's people. I conceive the best manner of my setting forth what is contained in the words before us, so as for you to have a clear and comprehensive view of the same, will be by giving you the following division of them.

1. I will take notice of the address, together with what is connected with it. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* This is a caution. Then follows an infallible evidence of such as belong to Christ—*He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* The *he* is Christ. The *us* must be a righteousness of conformity. It cannot be of equality. I put all this under one head: that when this is dispatched, there may be the more, and larger, and longer scope for the other.

2. I will consider this most awful assertion. *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* Here the word *committeth*, will be further noticed: as also what is here said of him—That *he sinneth from the beginning.* An enquiry into this, with the fall of the rest of the rebel angels with him, will be made; and a scriptural account will be given. This will make way for speaking regarding what our Lord hath said concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists—Then of the state of the church at, and after the day of *Pentecost* to the close of the apostolic hour. I shall also observe, this tremendous sin was committed during that period: and give scripture proofs of the same. After which, and speaking of the tremendous effects of the same, I shall positively affirm, it cannot be committed by any now: nor will it evermore. So that this may compose the mind, and set us at rest, and relieve us from all fears on this account. This will be established on the scripture: yet it will be all, with the statement which will be given, left with you, to receive it, or neglect it, as may seem good unto you. I thought putting all this under the 2nd head of discourse, would have its advantages, as you may refer unto it. Then as all this will be regularly treated of, one particular after the other, you will have the advantage of looking it over, and referring to it at your leisure. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Then

3. The purpose, end, and design for which *the Son of God was manifested.* It was, *that he might destroy the works of the devil.* May the Lord lead me through all this, to your satisfaction, and benefit, and to his praise, and glory. Amen. So be it, O Lord. I am thus to proceed by

1. Taking notice of the address, in the first part of the words of my text. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* As, all connected with the address is proposed to be taken up, I have therefore recited the whole of the verse, that it may be retained in memory, and as it may be kept in view, throughout the whole of going through the first head of discourse. And the various particulars expressed, will, by the good hand of my God upon me, be taken notice of, and closely attended unto: so as each of the particulars in each of the heads, will be most completely filled up.

The words of the address, *Little children*, contain much love, affection, and respect in them. Our apostle was full of love to Christ, to saints, to the whole visible and universal church of Christ. One cannot but conceive, he must stand in the relation of a spiritual father, and Pastor unto these, he more immediately, and expressly here writes unto; because he uses these terms so frequently. As an apostle, he must, according to his apostolical office, have stood in this general relation unto them all. He seems to have derived this term, as we are sure he did his love for all the holy brethren, from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who used this term and expression to his eleven apostles, when he addressed himself unto them, on the Tuesday evening of his Passion week, in the house of *Simon the leper*, at *Bethany*. His discourse which he had there with them, is recorded in the 13th and 14th chapters of *John's* gospel, and the term, *Little children*, you have chap. xiii. v. 33. Our *John* was very fond of his dear Lord's words. As he uses them here, they are not only very expressive of his love, affection, and regard for those whom he here expresses his good will unto, by giving a caution to them, but it is

peculiarly to their office. They could strike dead. They could raise the dead. They could eject devils. They could deliver over offenders to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. They had all the ordinances of Christ which he himself ever made use of, such as anointing with oil such as were sick, in token of their recovery. And the holy kiss: all which seem to have lasted throughout the Apostolic Period: then, ceased. Yet throughout all this period, many were admitted into the churches, who were not the Lord's: but these were externally enlightened. They enjoyed all sorts of spiritual privileges; yet this did not make them spiritual: so that as this age went on, and drew to its close, all sorts of evils and errors abounded. And as this dispensation of the Spirit was the means, of spreading the gospel over the whole Roman empire, one great design of which, was to prove our Lord Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, so towards the close of this age, or state, the sin against the Holy Ghost: or, sinning against the Person, and testimony of the Holy Ghost prevailed and was most awfully the case with many. So that I am brought

Thirdly, To observe, and give proof from scripture, that this tremendous sin was committed during that period: which can very easily be done.

The glorious gospel of the blessed God, had been most divinely dispensed for a long season. A glorious harvest of souls had been gathered in to Christ. At the close of this was the Autumn: then many who were but mere professors began to fall off. Some fell into one damnable error, and others into another, and some into vile sins. The *Romans*, and the *Jews* who continued in their unbelief, began to rage and storm, at the Christians. This made way for the real saints to be in very dangerous circumstances. They had never been free from persecution for Christ's sake: but now in a more vehement way and manner it came on them. *Jerusalem* was soon to be destroyed: the Temple also. The people of the Jews to be carried captive into all nations. This our Lord had foretold. This the apostles gave warning to the churches of. This the professors of Christ's gospel in the land of Judea, were in very particular danger from. Hence it is, there is so much said concerning falling away from the same. As persecution always serves to prove who are on the Lord's side, and who are not: so it was here. The church of Christ, according to his own most holy institution began at Jerusalem: it had been blessed with the ministry of all the gospel. It continued 30 years with them. As the ruin of the city drew nigh, many who professed Christ, began to be very cold and lukewarm in their profession: they fell off; so as to absent themselves from church assemblies, some of these became apostates. They denied Christ. They renounced Him totally. They joined in the same cry with the apostate Jews, saying, He was no other than an impostor. Now this was to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost; which sin consisted in a total rejection of Christ, as the Messiah, the sent One of God: and that all his miracles were wholly owing to the devil, who possessed Him. Nothing could exceed the most horrible sinfulness contained in this: it was the sin of the *Pharisees*, who have been noticed before: it was the sin of some after the day of *Pentecost*; which, in some senses, was more aggravated than it was before seeing the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, his ascension, session, and coronation in

heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, and the wonders they had wrought in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth; this must of necessity have been an aggravation of this most tremendous crime. I am to give evidence, and that from the Scriptures, that this tremendous sin was committed in the apostolic period, and before the final close thereof. I will quote the scriptures, and then explain them; they will be out of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. The first, in the 6th chap. v. 4—6: the other, from the 10th chap. v. 26—31. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.—For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” These are the most alarming scriptures in all the Book of God. They concern those who had committed the sin unto death. They shew what that sin consists in: and express the vengeance and wrath of God against it: and they concern none but such apostates: and such were found at Jerusalem. To prevent them, if possible from being such desperate sinners, the apostle writes as he doth. They were enlightened, and had a clear theory of the doctrine of grace. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, in his external operations, and gifts. They had tasted of the heavenly gift, so as to be filled with inward ravishments at the thoughts of Christ, that he should be given to be salvation. They had tasted of the good word of God. They could speak of it. They professed it; and it may be, preached it; yet it was only so far as nature elevated with all this, could go. They tasted of the powers of the world to come. Had like *Balaam*, some elevation of spirit, at what will befall the church of Christ in the last day: yet all this never went further than to work on their natural minds. It was possible for them to fall from all this. There was no Holy Ghost in them. He only wrought externally upon them. They were not born again. Therefore they fell from all this. They became apostates. They fell back again to Judaism. It was impossible to renew them again unto repentance. They fully proved their inveteracy against Christ by their open rejection of Him; “Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” If I may throw more light on this, I would add, the persons here spoken of, having professed Christ, been baptized in his Name, been at his Table, and been thus and thus gifted, as expressed, wholly abjured Christ, and would have it, he was an impostor. Of these same, the apostle speaks, when he says, “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth

no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." These were such wretches, as denied our Jesus, to be Christ, the Son of God. They rejected his Sacrifice. They contemned it, so as to account the blood of Christ to be of no worth. They looked on him as a false Messiah; and counted his blood and sacrifice to be an unholy thing. They did despite to the Spirit of grace: and all this after they had been so wrought externally on, and been professors of Christ, and his gospel. Surely if ever any committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, these did. No marvel, therefore, the apostle expresses the most awful curses which could possibly fall upon them, out of hell, or in it: saying, "there is a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." It appears from both these quotations, the sin against the Person of the Holy Ghost, which *John* styles the sin unto death, is fully explained in the case of these apostates. And that they were guilty of it, and it consisted in, their rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost, concerning Christ, and his mediation wholly: and this under the clearest evidence which could be given of it: so that their damnation was inevitable. He might, therefore, well add, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And thus I drop this part of this most awful and solemn subject; and shall now proceed to assert positively, that this sin cannot be committed now; nor will it evermore: this may compose the mind, relieve and set it at rest, from all fears on this account. This will be established on the scripture.

We read not of this sin under the Old Testament dispensation; yet we read of the Israelites, that "they tempted and provoked the most high God." Ps. lxxviii. 56: that "they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Isa. lxiii. 10. It could not be committed then because our Lord Jesus Christ was not in his incarnate state; when He was, it was committed solely and entirely by attributing his stupendous acts and miracles, which were wrought by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, to the devil. This was the very essence of this sin: by which the Holy Ghost was blasphemed. When our Lord had finished his work, and was gone into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, He sent down the Holy Ghost to testify of Him. Under that special dispensation of the Holy Ghost, which commenced at *Pentecost*, the effects of which in a very special manner, more or less, lasted until the expiration of the Apostolic Age, this sin could be, and instances have been given, that it was committed. And it consisted in a total renunciation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah, and despising his Mediation wholly and altogether. And this in immediate opposition to all the evidence given of the same, by the open witness and testimony thereof—given by the Personal descent of the Holy Ghost, on the apostles, and by his testimony of Christ's Person, Messiahship, and Mediation, given

in their ministry, and by the wonderful signs and wonders, wrought by the Spirit of God, in confirmation of the same. Now to sin wilfully and maliciously against all this evidence and testimony given by the Holy Ghost, against this truth, that Christ was the Son of God, and the true Messiah, and this too, after these persons had made a confession of Him, and been baptized in his most holy Name, been at his holy Table, and made an open profession of Him, this was to commit the sin unto death: which cannot now, nor evermore be committed for the following reasons; which I look upon to be scriptural, and established on the scriptures— Because we are not under the same Dispensation. We have neither apostles, nor miracles: so that we are in this respect, just what the Old Testament Church was, before the coming of Christ. They had the writings of the Prophets to direct them to Christ. We have the scriptures, both theirs, and the New Testament, to give us the true knowledge of Christ. There was none under that dispensation charged with this unpardonable sin: neither was it committed until Christ was actually in his incarnate state: then, it was, by some. So it cannot be committed *now*, because we have not the testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ, as was given by the Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*; and by Him, in the ministry of, and by the apostles, concerning Christ, his mission, life, death, burial, and resurrection, as was by these testified of. We have the substance of all they delivered, and the same Holy Ghost bearing witness to the same Jesus, and to all recorded of Him in the word, but not in the same way. It was then, by outward ocular demonstration. It is now, by spiritual regeneration, revelation, and an inward apprehension of the whole, from the word of grace. From these views, I positively assert, this sin cannot be committed now: because we have not the same ministry, neither have we the same outward evidences and miracles. So that whilst all sin is against the Holy Ghost, as truly as it is against the Father, and the Son; yet this particular sin, spoken of by the apostle, is not comprehended in our sins, and sinnings. It cannot be committed now: nor will it evermore: and this I conceive may be established from scripture; as in all the epistles, when, and where, there is mention made of this sin, it is either confined to the season our Lord was on the earth: or, to those who lived in the apostles' times, and before the destruction of Jerusalem: or, just about the close of the last hour, as our apostle doth. And here I drop this subject; leaving this full and particular statement of it, with you, to receive it, or reject it, as may seem good unto you. I proceed

3. To take notice of the purpose, end, and design for which the Son of God was manifested. It was, *that he might destroy the works of the devil. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

Sin is the devil's work. The sin unto death is the devil's sin. None of the elect fall by it: they are all preserved from it. And no sin beside; either before, or after conversion, take the whole bulk of election in Adam's posterity, but some or other of them fall into: Yet here is a most blessed relief and cordial for us; *The son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* If the Son of God was

manifested, he must have been before his manifestation. Neither was he the Son of God by his manifestation. He was so, Personally, and Essentially: as One in the incomprehensibly glorious Essence, coequal with the Father, and the Spirit. He was manifested by his open and visible Incarnation, by the which he became true and very man: made in all things like unto his brethren: the express purpose of which was, *that he might destroy the works of the devil*. This great enemy of God and Man, hateth Christ with an invincible and never-ceasing hatred. He is deciphered and set forth in all his titles thus: *The great dragon, the old serpent, the Devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world*. Rev. xii. 9. This great enemy, whose sinfulness can never be conceived, nor described; The Son of God became the Seed of the woman, to crush him finally: to dissolve his works: to undermine his kingdom: to deliver the elect out of his hands, and deliver them from the power of darkness. This was the accomplishment of this most blessed sentence: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it, or he, shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15: our Lord in his own body on the tree, bore the sins of many; made intercession for the transgressors; and poured out his soul unto death. Thus he pursued and completed the great end and design of his manifestation in the flesh. The apostle speaking on this subject expresseth himself thus. "Forasmuch 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 him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. ii. 14. Our Lord Jesus Christ, hath trodden upon the head of the old serpent, called the devil, and given a death-blow to his kingdom and power. This he did when crucified in weakness, when he hung on the cross. The apostle gives us the following beautiful account of it. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, or, on it." See Col. ii. 15. If the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil; and all sin is his work; then most assuredly, such as are made know to be the Lord's, *cannot live in it*. And if we survey the whole of our text, we shall find this to be the very true genuine doctrine thereof. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*. Our Lord hath destroyed the power, guilt, and dominion of sin, in the souls of all his called people. He on the cross destroyed the damning guilt of sin; and also the damning Power of sin. And to his most efficacious Sacrifice we are to look for the complete mortification of the whole body of sin: and for our entire and everlasting discharge from the same. His Death is our everlasting security from all condemnation. His life is our everlasting Perfection. In Him we have justification unto life. We shall reign in life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. It is truly good for us to view the triumphs, victories, and conquests of our Lord, and bless him for all his strength, which he hath put forth over all the power of the enemy. Let us never fear the devil. He is conquered by our Omnipotent Jesus. Let us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, renounce and avoid all sin: it being the work of the devil. To commit sin, is the devil's element—The very means

whereby he hath fellowship with sinners, and they with him, in every act of it. Let us not therefore please the enemy of our souls, by any cursed compliances with Him. May the Lord grant, that the purpose, end, and design of the manifestation of the Son of God, which was to destroy the works of the devil, may be more and more evidenced in us, in all the fruits and effects thereof. May the Lord bless what hath been laid before you. May he render it efficacious to your minds; so as that it may answer the end which is wished for—The instruction of your souls—The comfort of your hearts—The removing of discouraging fears from you—the peace and comfort of your minds, and his own glory—That you seeing your deliverance in him, and his victory over the devil for you, may rejoice as your brethren before you have done, “Saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Rev. xii. 10. And pray remember how they overcame him. It was “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.” v. xi. xii. The Lord bless what hath been delivered, so far as seemeth good in his sight. Amen.

SERMON XL.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.—1 JOHN iii. 9.

WE have here an important declaration: it comes from the pen of an infallible apostle; and contains an everlasting truth; which all the saints of the Most High God, have in their own souls the real experience of; which they also give more or less evidence of in their lives, walk, and conversation. The apostle in the former part of this chapter had been speaking to the same effect: he now is going to divide what he had said, and what he hath further to say, into two large particulars: such as may include and comprehend all which may be expressed in real holy hatred against sin; and also in the grace contained and expressed, and exercised in loving the brethren. As our being the Lord's is proved outwardly by keeping God's commandments, so there are two ways whereby this is done, which are both of them here hinted at by our beloved *John*: the one is by an abstinence from all evil: the other is by loving the Lord's beloved one's. The love of God hath a beauty and sweetness in it, which so far as we are led into a spiritual knowledge and apprehension of the same, most sweetly and efficaciously operates on our mind: it influences us both inwardly and outwardly. Sin is an object of God's immutable hatred. We are saved from the guilt of it—From the power of it—From the love of it. The Lord the Holy Spirit increaseth our hatred of it, from such considerations as these—It is a transgression of God's most

holy law—It is a filthy act—It is a work of the devil—It is in its own nature abominable—It fully demonstrates such as live, and act, and are under the full power and influence of it, to be the children of the devil—This is the essential difference between one born of God, and one who is not. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Sin interrupts communion with God: it is that which Christ came into the world to destroy. Our love to the brethren, must have its true and proper extension: it must extend to all the holy brethren; even to all who profess faith in, and love to, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not to be verbal, and hypocritical. No; it must be in deed and truth. These reasons are to be considered by us, as motives to draw it forth in us, and that we may be excited to the acts and exercises of the same. The Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded it, He himself hath exemplified it unto us. It is both an evidence and outward proof of our adoption—That we are the sons of God—That we have the true knowledge of God; and that we love God. Keep these things in view, and you will find in the same a general outline of this chapter, and of what in it is yet to come before us. Our present text naturally divides itself thus. Here is

1. An assertion. *Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin.*

2. Here is the ground and foundation on which this assertion is made. It is this. *For his seed remaineth in him.*

3. This is confirmed thus. *He cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

There are various interpretations given by learned and truly excellent men, on these words. Most assuredly none ought by any means to be admitted of, which at all abate, or weaken the energy and importance of them. It would be far better that any of us should confess we cannot comprehend the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them, than go about to darken counsel, with words without knowledge. May the Lord ever give you and me, the most profound reverence for every part, sentence, and truth contained in the holy and inspired volume. I would ever desire to retain in memory, what Wisdom Mediator, by whom I understand our Lord Jesus Christ himself, says in the 8th chapter of the *Proverbs*, v. 8, 9. "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." I am according to my plan

1. To consider and explain this assertion, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.*

These words have been very distressing to some real saints; who finding themselves the subjects of sin, and that there are, and have been times since they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, in which they have been guilty of sin, have looked on this positive assertion before us, as cutting them up by the roots; and proving to demonstration they positively have no part nor lot in the matter—that they were never right yet: if they had, they would never have sinned after they were partakers of grace. Although the apostle proves it is not so with any of the saints; yet this does not always satisfy a real child of God: but, if he has fallen by his besetting sin, it is very common for him to bring forward this passage to condemn himself, and weaken his confidence of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To prevent which, many blessed men in their inter-

pretation of it, have shewed, that such as are born of God, do not sin as wicked men do, who are not born of God—That the regenerate man does not allow himself in sin—If he falls into it, this is more by accident, and surprize: not out of purpose and resolution—That his constant and the settled bent of his will is not to sin. It is also said, when the regenerate sins, it is not with his will—He does not yield full consent to it—When he does it, it is not *sō*, but he would most gladly avoid it—What he does, is in a sort against his inclination—He does not delight in it—He is most sorely grieved for it—He complains of it—He mourns for it—He repents of it—He does not continue in it—He turns from it. There is a truth in all this: it seems to be founded on what the apostle *Paul* says of himself in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*. He says as follows, on the subject of indwelling sin, and concerning himself as the subject of the same. “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.—I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” As there cannot be more bitter exclamations, and lamentations made by any regenerate person, under the sad and awful experience of indwelling sin, and the prevailing of corruption, than are here expressed, so it is generally concluded from hence, no regenerate person, ever sins with the consent of his will. So that this may be concluded to be in part the apostle’s meaning in these words, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. The emphasis of the text is most certainly laid on being *born of God*. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. So that this is generally given as the full interpretation of these words—That the regenerate person never sins with the full bent of his will—That the regenerate part does not sin: as there is no sin in the new creature, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, the new Adam nature created and produced in us by the Holy Ghost, so we may in this sense be said not to sin. Not as being free from a body of sin, or from falls into it: but we so differ from what we were in our unregenerate state, and the bias of the mind is so effectually changed, and so altered, that we do not commit the same acts, nor fall by the same besetting sins, we did heretofore. Whilst this may have afforded some relief to some of the Lord’s people, when their minds have been distressed in consequence of their falls into sin, and by reason of their being overtaken by their own inherent corruptions, yet this, has not been found an all-sufficient remedy for the assuaging the grief of mind many of the Lord’s people have been the subjects of. Therefore, it has been conceived, this scripture must contain something of a deeper nature than all this amounts unto. Some of the most laborious and faithful of the Lord’s ministering servants, have declared upon the most diligent search into the scriptures, they have not found any one scripture, or promise, which secures the Lord’s people from falling into sin—Into their particular and besetting

sin—Into any sort of sin, except one; which they say is the sin unto death; or what we commonly stile the sin against the Holy Ghost; which they say the elect are preserved from. And some of them say, this is what *John* is here in this place speaking of; which he affirms they do not commit, when he says, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* It most assuredly is the same with all the people of God, in some of these following respects. They have all sin in them: the old man is never altered: his dominion is taken away; yet the life of it remains: the same natural affections, and sinful infirmities remain. These lift up their head; these break out into such discoveries of the same, as to give full proof that there are seasons, when they are too strong for the inherency of grace to prevent us from being led captive by them. As to what is generally said concerning not falling by the same sin after conversion as we did before, some of us have found, and do find, this is not really the fact. It is not so with us; it is quite different with us; let others say of themselves what they may. This is what must be acknowledged; we are in a regenerate state, out of the state we were in before: we are not now in a state of sin: we are not under the dominion of sin; nor can it have dominion over us. We are in the kingdom of God's dear Son: we are in the state of grace, of life, and liberty. We have the same sin in us we ever had: it is alive in us: it is sometimes very active: we are sometimes overtaken by it: we are overcome with it: yea, in a way we never expected: it rages; it storms; it overpasses all bounds: we fall into such sins as we never expected. I rather think some of us are more overcome mentally, and others more openly. I would fain maintain, that I really think, the Lord's people, are in general, kept from outward, and open, public transgression; so as that it is not a common case for them to bring an open scandal, on the cause of God, and Truth. And the Lord be praised for this: it being wholly owing to grace. We may conceive, with *Dr. Goodwin* that the Lord's people in general, are kept by him in such bounds as are altogether agreeable to the rules of his most holy word, and as equal to his most holy promises. I do conceive this should be contended for; it should be expected by us. So far as this goes, we most certainly have great reason to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. It most assuredly becomes us to look to the Lord Jesus Christ continually for his life-giving Spirit to influence us—For his life-giving word to quicken us—For his promise to encourage us—For his arm to defend us—For his grace to be all sufficient for us—For his strength to be made perfect in our weakness—For him to preserve an invincible hatred in our souls, at all times, and in all places against all sin—For him to keep us in the hour of temptation; and from entering into temptation. Surely all this is the real evidence of the new-birth in us. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* It is not his trade and business. It is not his life and element. If he falls by sin, he is out of his own proper element. His heart is not wholly swallowed up in it. He may be led captive by it; yet he is not conquered: so far from it, that his very fall, let it be into what it may, serves to increase his hatred, even against that very sin which he falls by. I do think I have done the subject justice, without saying too much, or too little. I do not conceive I have expressed any thing to weaken the importance of what is before us, as if to sin were a light matter: or, as if sin had not its cursed influence,

him, and upon real believers; nor have I, in my own conception, said anything to set aside this most solemn assertion of the apostle, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the word, we are begotten, or born again. Regeneration is the reigning governing principle in the soul born of God. Such as are born again, they are enlightened into a knowledge of God, and Christ: they are under the teaching and government of the Spirit: in them, sin is subdued and mortified. The regenerated cannot evermore come under sin absolutely under the power and dominion of sin. Such may fall into acts of sin; but such can never cease to be regenerate persons. They may fall into, and they may have many sinful cases of their own to lament, and bewail, but they can never fall into a sinful state. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. It hath been already suggested, that by these words, understand the sin against the Holy Ghost is intended, which the elect of God are preserved from; so as that they are wholly exempted from it. And it must be granted, there is this to lead to such an apprehension—This sin was the subject of the former verse; *that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*. Now the words of my text having no loose connection with the former, it may be concluded the one does not certainly serve to open and explain the other. Such as are born of God, cannot commit the devil's sin: this is impossible, it being wholly out of the power of such, as are born from above. Then this should yield comfort and satisfaction to the called ones of God. This being asserted in this place by the apostle, it should be looked on, and received into our minds, with all that reverence, as if we had heard it pronounced by the apostle himself; this is the way for it to work effectually in us, and to believe. We being in Christ, are perfectly preserved from this most heinous guilt—From this most deadly sin. We need not therefore at any time, case, or season, be cast down in our own minds, as if we had committed it. Most assuredly it was for this very purpose, the apostle asserted these words here: and the whole contained in the verse seems to confirm it. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*. Take these words as they have been explained, there is nothing more suited, to revive the hearts of the Lord's people, under their various sins, and failings, and various sinful cases. Satan will be sure to distress our minds, so often as they fall into sin: it will be chiefly about the guilt of it. He will aim to bring them, if possible, to conclude they have committed the devil's sin. Therefore the words before furnish an argument for our minds, to prevent us from falling under such a charge, and accusation; for surely, that sin which it is wholly impossible I should ever commit, I need not give myself such a concern about, as if I had committed it. But as the authority of a great saint, who give weight to what hath been delivered, I would say, that man of renown, *Mr. Joseph Hussey*, is of this opinion, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin here intended. And it, he conceives, the only sin God has engaged to keep his people from: all others they fall into: none before their conversion; some after conversion: but into this they do not. And indeed, according to what was delivered in the former sermon, it is impossible they should; seeing they can never be so left by

the Lord, as to renounce the Lord Jesus Christ, and renounce Him, as their everlasting Saviour. But I hasten to my next particular.

2. To observe, here is the ground and foundation, on which this assertion is made. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.* This is the reason assigned. And here it will be necessary to observe in opening the full scope of the text, what this seed is, which remaineth in the believer: and also what we are to apprehend by its remaining in him. This is the subject to be examined into, in this our present particular. I have recited, and will again recite, the former part of the verse, that we may be no losers by its omission, and that the strength of the words may be the better preserved, and maintained. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.*

The words are general. They are extensive. They concern all the saints: not one of them more than another: this the word *whosoever* testifies. It is the new-born they concern; we had mention of the new-birth before, in these words, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* chap. ii. 29. And here it is, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.* Our new-birth is that which makes an essential difference in us, yea within us; between us, and all beside. It is most certainly made use of by our apostle, in this very place, as also in the former for this identical purpose. It is an internal and an abiding evidence, between us, and all sorts of professors beside. They may have clear apprehensions of Truth, yet they have not a spiritual apprehension and perception of it, so as inwardly to receive, enjoy, and digest it: the apostle says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. Such only have a spiritual discernment, as have a spiritual faculty: and it is those only who are born again of the Holy Spirit, who have a spiritual faculty, who have minds suited to receive, to feed on, and are nourished with divine truth. As the new-birth is the essential distinguishing difference between one and another, so our apostle makes his use of it, to express hereby that this is an inward evidence of the reality of what the Lord hath done for us, beyond what he hath done for others: and also to shew it is from hence we are distinguished, by the fruits and effects which flow herefrom, to be what we are really—the children of God: it is the life, the root, the foundation, the spring of all grace within us. Our love to God, hatred of sin, are contained in regeneration as its root. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* He does not live in the practice of it; neither is it his constant settled purpose and resolution. He is grieved for it, he complains of it, he turns again and again from it. He does not sin the sin unto death. All these are so many fruits of his being born of God: they are the very effects thereof: what *Job* calls the root of the matter, is in him. He hath the new and divine nature, the principle, or habit of grace and holiness wrought in his soul, and the Holy Ghost indwelling in him to uphold the same, so as that it cannot decay. This I conceive to be a fair outline of the words before us, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* This part, *for his seed remaineth in him,* is the ground and foundation, on which the former words, which contain this assertion, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,*

is founded; *for his seed remaineth in him*. He is endued with such a faculty, or principle, or nature, as will not suffer him so to do. I have suggested, to understand the full scope of these words before us, it will be necessary to enquire what is to be understood by this seed which remaineth in the regenerate, and also what we are to apprehend by its remaining in the regenerate. I will cast this into a twofold division. 1. What this seed is. 2. How it remaineth in the regenerate. It seems to me to be obvious, that it is to be distinguished from the grace of regeneration itself: the subject being expressed thus, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. The whole of regeneration is here comprehended. It admits of no increase, nor decrease: when it is wrought, it is once for all. The discovery and drawing it forth is successive; but there will never be any addition to it: no, not in heaven to all eternity. The apostle is not here speaking of the work of regeneration, but of the upholding it in the soul. As there can be no sin in this divine birth, so it cannot in any one instance yield to sin. The person who is the subject of it may: but this new-birth, principle, faculty, call it by what scriptural term you please, cannot. Now the ground and sole foundation of this assertion is this, *For his seed remaineth in him*. Our Lord when he spoke on the subject of regeneration, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5. When the apostle *James* speaks of it: he says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." chap. i. 17, 18. And *Peter* speaking on the same subject, says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Epis. i. 23. To be born again of water and of the Spirit—To be begotten with the word of truth—To be born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; I should consider we may conceive the following particulars implied. By being born of water and of the Spirit, I apprehend, the word and Spirit may be meant. By being begotten by the word of truth, I should conceive the gospel is designed: agreeable to which, *Peter* says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 3: and the word of God is the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, which liveth, and remaineth, and abideth in us. Yet it must be confessed, our Lord Jesus Christ himself is styled by *Peter* in those words of his here referred unto, by these titles, *Incorruptible seed, The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. Let us look at them, and see if it be not so. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. The quotation from the prophet confirms all this. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever,—And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*. 1 Pet. i. 25. Here is the Essential Word, and the Gospel in which he is revealed, and by the which he is revealed and made known, distinguished one from the other. I therefore should conceive herefrom, if we make use of this to reflect light on our text, we might gather this from it. That the knowledge of Christ formed in

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The words are general. They are extensive. They concern all the saints: not one of them more than another: this the word *whosoever* testifies. It is the new-born they concern; we had mention of the new-birth before, in these words, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* chap. ii. 29. And here it is, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.* Our new-birth is that which makes an essential difference in us, yea within us; between us, and all beside. It is most certainly made use of by our apostle, in this very place, as also in the former for this identical purpose. It is an internal and an abiding evidence, between us, and all sorts of professors beside. They may have clear apprehensions of Truth, yet they have not a spiritual apprehension and perception of it, so as inwardly to receive, enjoy, and digest it: the apostle says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. Such only have a spiritual discernment, as have a spiritual faculty: and it is those only who are born again of the Holy Spirit, who have a spiritual faculty, who have minds suited to receive, to feed on, and are nourished with divine truth. As the new-birth is the essential distinguishing difference between one and another, so our apostle makes his use of it, to express hereby that this is an inward evidence of the reality of what the Lord hath done for us, beyond what he hath done for others: and also to shew it is from hence we are distinguished, by the fruits and effects which flow herefrom, to be what we are really—the children of God: it is the life, the root, the foundation, the spring of all grace within us. Our love to God, hatred of sin, are contained in regeneration as its root. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* He does not live in the practice of it; neither is it his constant settled purpose and resolution. He is grieved for it, he complains of it, he turns again and again from it. He does not sin the sin unto death. All these are so many fruits of his being born of God: they are the very effects thereof: what *Job* calls the root of the matter, is in him. He hath the new and divine nature, the principle, or habit of grace and holiness wrought in his soul, and the Holy Ghost indwelling in him to uphold the same, so as that it cannot decay. This I conceive to be a fair outline of the words before us, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* This part, *for his seed remaineth in him,* is the ground and foundation, on which the former words, which contain this assertion, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,*

is founded; *for his seed remaineth in him*. He is endued with such a faculty, or principle, or nature, as will not suffer him so to do. I have suggested, to understand the full scope of these words before us, it will be necessary to enquire what is to be understood by this seed which remaineth in the regenerate, and also what we are to apprehend by its remaining in the regenerate. I will cast this into a twofold division. 1. What this seed is. 2. How it remaineth in the regenerate. It seems to me to be obvious, that it is to be distinguished from the grace of regeneration itself: the subject being expressed thus, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. The whole of regeneration is here comprehended. It admits of no increase, nor decrease: when it is wrought, it is once for all. The discovery and drawing it forth is successive; but there will never be any addition to it: no, not in heaven to all eternity. The apostle is not here speaking of the work of regeneration, but of the upholding it in the soul. As there can be no sin in this divine birth, so it cannot in any one instance yield to sin. The person who is the subject of it may: but this new-birth, principle, faculty, call it by what scriptural term you please, cannot. Now the ground and sole foundation of this assertion is this, *For his seed remaineth in him*. Our Lord when he spoke on the subject of regeneration, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5. When the apostle *James* speaks of it: he says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." chap. i. 17, 18. And *Peter* speaking on the same subject, says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Epis. i. 23. To be born again of water and of the Spirit—To be begotten with the word of truth—To be born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; I should consider we may conceive the following particulars implied. By being born of water and of the Spirit, I apprehend, the word and Spirit may be meant. By being begotten by the word of truth, I should conceive the gospel is designed: agreeable to which, *Peter* says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 3: and the word of God is the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, which liveth, and remaineth, and abideth in us. Yet it must be confessed, our Lord Jesus Christ himself is styled by *Peter* in those words of his here referred unto, by these titles, *Incorruptible seed, The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. Let us look at them, and see if it be not so. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. The quotation from the prophet confirms all this. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever,—And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*. 1 Pet. i. 25. Here is the Essential Word, and the Gospel in which he is revealed, and by the which he is revealed and made known, distinguished one from the other. I therefore should conceive herefrom, if we make use of this to reflect light on our text, we might gather this from it. That the knowledge of Christ formed in

our minds, from the word of the gospel, through the Spirit, is regeneration : and Christ's dwelling in us, which is the fruit thereof, is the seed which remaineth in us. If I mistake not, *Dr. Gill*, understands the Holy Spirit who dwelleth in the believer, to be intended by the seed ; which seems to be agreeable with our Lord's words. " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John iv. 14. To this it may be added, the word of God is most certainly the seed of eternal life : this at all times is in the souls of the regenerate : it is by it, as the means, that they are nourished up in words of faith and sound doctrine : it contains the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the seed which is incorruptible. He indwells and abides in all the regenerate. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him.* If by the seed, therefore, spoken of, we understand the word of God, or Christ the essential Word, or the Holy Ghost, who is the very life of it, who imparts life and light unto us, both from the gospel which is the revelation of Christ, or from Christ who is the life, light, and glory of the same, we may in a measure apprehend the apostle's meaning, concerning what we are to understand by the word *seed* here. And 2. what we are also to understand by this seed remaining in us. Where Christ is, there he will remain and abide : otherwise all spiritual life must be extinct : then it could not be everlasting ; whereas our Lord says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* The Holy Spirit dwells in the person, whom he has formed for his praise, in regeneration. Every act of spiritual life, grace, and holiness, drawn forth in the regenerate, is by his divine power : not by external, but by internal influence. He works inwardly ; invisibly, and imperceptibly unto us ; so that our graces are excited, and brought into act and exercise, imperceptibly. We feel the good and blessed effects of the same ; yet in the drawing forth thereof, we are altogether passive. Now our spiritual seed, the word of God, which is by the Holy Spirit, so concocted in our minds, as to be in us seminally the ground and foundation of all inherent grace and holiness, this always, and at all times remaineth in us : The Author of all these, who has formed the same in our renewed minds, he ever remaineth in us. It is because he doth, that we cannot sin. This is what our text declares. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him.* He of whom he was born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, is in Him, dwelleth in him. He ever remaineth in him ; to fulfil that great promise, which belongs to all the called people of God. " And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii. 40. So that the apostle's assertion is well founded. And having to the utmost of my very slender ability, shewn you the ground and foundation of the assertion, I will again recite the whole text ; that you may judge for yourselves, of what is contained in the same : as also of what hath been delivered, and what will be proposed to be farther delivered thereon ; *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* It is easy to be observed, all in the words belongs to each and every individual who is born of God : by

the which they are manifested to be the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. God in the person of the Father, is here spoken of as their Father: how, otherwise, are they here said to be born of Him? The words are, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* The whole blessedness of preserving these from committing sin, is here attributed to their being begotten: and to the seed of which, or of whom they were begotten: this is generally ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He preserves what he hath begotten in them. The seed of God, the word of the kingdom, the Spirit who created them anew in Christ Jesus, remaineth in them, so as that they cannot sin, as they did in their days of unregeneracy. They may fall into sin; yet they cannot fall into their past state of unregeneracy: neither can they commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. This therefore brings me to my last particular.

3. The assertion in the text is thus confirmed. *He cannot sin because he is born of God. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

This is one of the most inestimable blessings of regeneration. It cannot be overvalued; nor the Lord sufficiently praised for the same. The death of Christ is our complete discharge from all sin in the sight of the Lord. The blood of Jesus Christ is our everlasting purity in the sight, and before the Majesty, of our heavenly Father. In the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ unto death, even the death of the cross, we have complete salvation. In regeneration we are formed by the Holy Ghost, so as to have minds and faculties, to receive the knowledge of all this, and enjoy the same, so as to have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in every distinct and particular branch of this most glorious display of grace: now in this present time state; and anon in the state of everlasting glory. To be born of God is to be meet for all the vision of his manifestative Glory in the face of Jesus Christ, by open vision, and sense within the veil; and cannot but gladden the heart. It is also very suited to the genius of a new born soul, to apprehend what blessings are his, and are contained in regeneration, and that he shall be infallibly preserved, notwithstanding all the assaults of earth and hell. It is, doubtless, here brought forth, as an universal comfort and matter of consolation to the whole family of the Most High God, to sustain their minds, under all they were exercised with, under the sights they had of sin, and human frailty; they had that already wrought in their souls, by God himself, and this by the energy of his most holy and blessed Spirit, as that they could never cease from hating sin with an invincible hatred; nor should they ever cease from having that principle in their souls, which would never yield to sin, whilst they themselves, might be overcome with partial falls, and backslidings into it. The assertion in the text, most assuredly must serve to keep up, and maintain their hope; it could not but be so: and his as farther confirmed, must have had its weight upon their minds. It could not but have done their souls good. *For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* It must afford satisfaction to the mind of all born of God; they had that inherent in them which would never yield to sin. Though, Gad, a troop should overcome him, yet he should overcome at the last. None of the saints are without their personal, and particular conflicts with sin; nor are

there any of these, but what arise from within themselves: so that to deny themselves, is their one continual exercise: in the which their personal, and peculiar conflict consists: in the course of which warfare, sometimes the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that the real saint cannot do the things which he would. It must to such, as properly received into their minds, and rightly received into their hearts, be a very blessed support; the very words, and expressions contained in the text before us. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* They are suited to the spiritual mind in this twofold point of view. In the 1st place, as they are evidentially expressive of this—That there is nothing in the everlasting gospel, in the whole scheme of salvation, in the whole revelation of grace, in all the oracles of God, in the fullest knowledge of what is contained, maintained, believed, and professed of them, which does not in its own nature and design, discountenance sin—which subdues it, lifts above the love, power, practice, and influence of the same: and promotes an eternal hatred of it in the real and spiritual mind. All this is very acceptable to the knowledge of a regenerated person. In the 2nd place, they fully suggest this most important and desirable truth, that there is in the believer in Jesus, a real faculty, or principle in the regenerate mind, of hatred of sin, which all hell cannot overcome; whilst they may overcome the person, who is the subject of all this, over and over again. All believers are not alike saved from their constitutional and besetting corruptions. It is not to be doubted but some fall by them, over, and over again; even to old age: let their communion with God, be what it may. No doubt but they are at times swallowed up with grief, at this being their case. It may be, the whole of their views, as also their griefs, sorrows, and exercises may be so concealed, that it is only known to God and themselves. We may imagine, and it will not exceed the truth, should we apprehend these to conceive their sinfulness and cases to be such, as that Satan may find a suitable opportunity of suggesting to their minds; you will before you die, be finally prevailed with, and entirely overcome with such and such a corruption: indeed, your having been so often overcome already, and the easiness with which you slide into the evil, render it very suspicious whether you will ever get above it; for it is impossible for you to deny this. You have had your intermissions, yet you have had your relapses: nor is it age, or ordinances, nor even communion with God, which preserves you in the hour of temptation: if this be not the sin against the Holy Ghost, the unpardonable sin, for which there is no forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, pray what can it be? I say, when Satan may suggest so and so, and, it may be, almost operates upon the mind, to make such conclusions, how very refreshing must what is contained in the words of the text before us be, as brought home to the minds of the people of God, who may be exercised, as hath been freely expressed. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Such an one, can neither fear his falling into the sin against the Holy Ghost, nor of his being wholly, and finally swallowed up by his own personal sin, so as to be finally conquered by it: for it is here declared by an apostle, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him:*

and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. He hath that principle of grace in him, wrought and maintained in him by the Spirit of God, which neither inherent sin, nor the strength of it, with all its cursed workings and propensities, nor the malice, rage, and power of the devil, nor, nor of the world which lieth in wickedness, will ever be able finally to overcome. *For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* There is that in grace, as implanted in the mind, which cannot be overcome; nor will it ever yield to sin; whilst the person who is the subject of all this may. I hope I have made this very clear and easy to your spiritual apprehension. I cannot but conclude it must be so, as it respects your experience. All the children of the Most High having the same, one as the other, in their spiritual birth, must for the substance of it, have the very same inward trials and conflicts. And to be assured from the word of the Lord, and the servant of the Lord, that what he hath wrought in our souls shall continue for ever, even throughout the ages of eternity, must yield us unspeakable consolation. Here we feel our inward sinful maladies. Now we have those sights and real apprehensions of our inward depravity, as, it may be, I may say of the same, and that without any one of the saints' contradiction thereof, as none can fully express. We are well assured it will all soon cease. Death will discharge us from our warfare; it will deliver us from the whole body of sin and death for ever: but this will not fit us for eternal, personal, and uninterrupted fellowship with God. No; we being admitted into the immediate presence of Christ, and having in our souls, faculties, senses, and graces, wrought in our souls, suited to the enjoyment of Him; the Holy Spirit operating on the same, and He dwelling in us, and drawing these out into free and full exercise on Him, and the Father's everlasting love to our persons in Him, it is herein our fitness for communion with God and the Lamb will for ever consist. There will nothing be drawn out of our minds in Glory, which is not in them. This is a very comfortable thought: nor will this by any means take us off from centering wholly and alone in Christ, even when our whole souls shall be fully, and immediately exercised in personal communion with Him in his glory. And this may be given as the reason of it—Because we shall never have any consideration there of our own acts, and the exercises of our own minds. It is Christ, and the vision of Him, will swallow up our whole minds, so as that our own exercises on Him will be lost entirely in our real views of Him. The Lord be praised, that all we feel and find of sin within us, believers, cannot undo the work of the Holy Ghost in our souls. We cannot at present conceive what it will be, to be wholly delivered from a body of sin, and death: much less can we conceive what it will be to be all life, all light—To be all act and exercise in the full vigour of all our spiritual faculties, on the Person of Christ, God-Man, and on all the eternal acts of the Divine Persons in Him, towards the whole election of grace, and to have no evil existing in us, but be as free from all sin as Christ is Himself,—this is a state which is altogether congenial to the new-born soul: and which he is prepared and fitted for by his spiritual birth: and which he will immediately enter upon, on his departure from the body. Then he will be delivered in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye from all sin; so as it will never be in him any more: nor will he be capable of sinning any more; no, not throughout the ages of eternity. If the words before us, therefore, *Wha-*

soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, are spoken by way of discrimination, and all calculated to afford us comfort and encouragement in this our state of warfare; then most assuredly, we may much more comfort ourselves with the prospect before us, of our complete deliverance and discharge from all sin at death. We shall enter into glory sinless: we are now in the sight of our heavenly Father, as he beholds us in Christ, without all sin: we shall then be so inherently: and enter heaven without the least spot of sin, imputed to us, or inherent in us. A very blessed subject this for our meditation; and which if rightly improved cannot but make us long to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. Whilst in the body we shall never cease from being the subjects of sin; nor shall we cease more or less from some acts of sin; nor shall we ever be safe, from its being a possible case, of falling into any sort of evil, if left to the deceit of our own hearts, and the strength and influence of temptation. It is only the sin unto death we are secured from: what that sin is, and wherein the malignity of it consists, was freely and fully opened in the former sermon; I, therefore, say nothing of it here. Only would remark by putting the two former verses and this together, the true connection may most evidently appear. I will, therefore, here do it for you. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* If read thus in connection, it seems fully to prove, it is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which, whosoever is born of God doth not commit. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered, if he pleases. Amen.

SERMON XLI.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—I JOHN iii. 10.

OUR apostle is here, as he had been several times before, drawing a line of distinction, between the children of God, and the children of the devil. All sin being the devil's work, let it be in what act, or form it may, is of the devil: most certainly then, the children of God, will be manifest, by their abstaining from it: and the devil's children will be manifest by their commission of it. To walk as becometh the gospel, is an evidence of our adoption: so is, also, our love to the brethren. The ground of our love to the brethren, must be the love of God: and this must extend itself to all who profess Christ: it must neither be verbal, nor hypocritical: it must be real, and sincere. The very reasons

why it must be so, are, because our Lord hath commanded it; and because it is an outward evidence of our knowledge of God—of our love to God—of the truth of our conversion. It proves the happiness of our state in Christ—That we have passed from death to life: and in, and by the practice of the same, we have a blessed assurance, before the Lord, that we are possessed in our own souls, of this grace of the Spirit, the loving the sons and children of God, for Christ's sake, and according to his commandment. In the remainder of this chapter, these things are spoken of, and made particular subjects; which are for the engagement of such minds, as are renewed by the Spirit of God, and are as so many internal and external evidences of the grace of God to such and such. There are some who are, in this our world children of God: there are others who are the children of the devil: the one are manifested by their righteous acts: the other by their unrighteous ones. This is very distinguishable by the one loving for Christ's sake the brethren, the other for hating them: it is hereby manifested whose children we are. He who lives an holy righteous life, is a child of God: he who lives an unholy and an unrighteous life, is a child of the devil. This is the real language, and true interpretation of our text. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* I would cast the text into the following division.

1. There are two sorts of persons, or people in our world: one are the children of God, the other are the children of the devil.

2. These are particularly manifest, by their actions. The one by doing good, and acting righteously: the other by their evil doings, and acting unrighteously. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.*

3. A very singular and complete manifestation of the devil's children. Such love not the real children of God. No; not even if they are professors, and should even be in the same church state with them. *Neither he that loveth not his brother;* which must imply brotherhood by way of church relationship; for the children of God, and the children of the devil, never all of them, could have the same father. No; not even in the very same state of nature, this neither was, nor could be the case; it can therefore be only interpreted on the footing of outward profession, which sometimes issues in church relationship. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* I am in proceeding with the subjects before me,

1. To shew, that there are two sorts of persons, or people, in our world: one are the children of God, the other are the children of the devil. The original terms of distinction were, *the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.* "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15.

Adam is called the son of God. Luke iii. 38. It is said of Seth, he had a son born unto him, whom he called Enos. It is added, *then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.* In the margin it is, or, *to call themselves by the name of the LORD.* Gen. iv. 26. And in the 6th chapter of Genesis, those who were professors of Christ are

distinguished from the serpent's seed, by this title, *the sons of God*. And by their intermarriages with the *Cainites*, brought on that universal corruption of men, and the worship of God, as brought the deluge of waters upon the world of the ungodly. When that catastrophe was finished, and the earth renovated, there was the same distinction of the two distinct seeds found upon earth. They were so distinguished, the one from the other, they could not be blended; there was no uniting so as to become one; it was wholly impossible; they were distinguishable even by their actions, and by the motives from whence they acted; as also the end to which their actions tended. This is the subject on the which the apostle is now treating. He viewed it to be of importance, then; it must be of the same importance, now. The title of the children of God, is of vast importance: it is delightful; it is refreshing; it is encouraging; it is strengthening and serves to be very invigorating to the mind. He began this chapter by calling upon the saints, to admire the grace of the divine Father towards them, in Adoption; he had affirmed them to be the sons of God. He had declared when Christ should appear, they also should appear with Him in Glory. He expressed the fruit and effect this would produce inwardly and effectually in, and upon the new-born. He had also shewn a manifest and clear distinction between one professor of Christ and another. He had expressed what the devil's sin consisted in, and that the Son of God was manifested to destroy his works—That such as were born of God did not commit sin: and, now, in the text before us, he distinguishes between God's children, and the devil's children—that there is an essential difference, the one can by no means be swallowed up in the other; nor easily taken the one for the other; for though the children of God may sin, do sin, yet they never sin the devil's sin: this they cannot; this they are preserved from: nor are the called of God in Christ Jesus, in a state of sin; nor bond slaves to sin and satan; nor are they akin to the devil's children. They are the objects of God's everlasting love: the sons and children of God, by the grace of eternal adoption. They were one with Christ from eternity; before ever sin had defiled their nature. They were redeemed from all iniquity by their Almighty Surety, in the fulness of time. These persons here spoken of, had been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and were born again, and had been made by him new creatures in Christ Jesus; so that they were distinguished from their former selves, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which had been shed on them abundantly, through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ their Saviour. These were the persons who were the children of God in *John's* time; on such he bestows this high epithet; and of these he further says, that they are manifest, by doing righteousness. The others he speaks of, he styles the children of the devil; then he must be their father; they must be united in heart and affection with him; he must be their master: they must be his obedient and willing slaves: it must be their delight to serve him; sin must be their element: they must be under the power and dominion of it. All this must be the case of such as are under the power and dominion of sin, and the devil; yet I should think the apostle must be conceived here, in a very particular manner, as speaking of such as were so notoriously wicked, as to carry the mark of reprobation in their forehead, and to give full evidences by their notorious ways of sinning, they were eternally rejected of God. Or, that he hath his eye

on some apostates, and false teachers, who had defiled the temple of God, his church, with damnable errors and heresies. My reason for this is, because so long as the elect are amongst the rubbish of the fall, they cannot be distinguished, by us: and are found, many of them, in their sinful, unregenerate state, to commit for the outward acts, as great crimes as the non-elect: as he is therefore speaking of outward manifestation, saying, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil*, I conceive he must have had, some atrocious sinners in his eye: so that it is not all sinners he here calls the children of the devil: for all sinners are not. All sin is of the devil: and the whole human race are sinners; this is the case even with the elect of God: they also fall into sin, both in their unregenerate state, and also when in their state of regeneracy: yet these were never the children of the devil; though they have, it may be, performed as sinful acts as the other; yet as election put an everlasting distinction, between the elect and non-elect: and immediately upon the fall the difference was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; so the apostle never lost sight of this. Therefore, I conceive, for the reasons aforesaid, he does not involve and include all sinners in what he saith concerning those whom he gives the title of the devil's children unto: but unto some who were so superlatively wicked, as that they were full of him, and so inwardly filled by him, as most fully to evidence themselves to be his children, they bearing his own most exact and true image. It deserves an observation, that here in this present world, in which we now are; there are two sorts of persons, the one the children of God, the other the children of the devil: and they are both very clearly discernable: they are easily known one from the other. It is our mercy to know them also: as hereby we cannot but delight in the one, and by all means avoid the other; this seems to be the end the apostle has in view for mentioning them here. It is a solemn thought! there are amongst the number of those we daily see and converse with; some who will be for ever most completely blessed; and some who will be eternally miserable, and under the curse: and it cannot be otherwise. All the devil's children, by their every act of sin, and their continuance in the same, justify the devil in his first act of rebellion against the Lord God Almighty. Therefore it is most equitable they should be confined with him in the same prison, and be tormented with him with the same expressions of divine wrath. This is to be the case; this sentence being to be executed on them; *Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Sin is a cursed work: it is this renders the sinner cursed. For the curse of God to seize the sinner, who lives and dies in his sins, this is just and righteous: nor will this ever be called into question by the damned in hell; no, not to all eternity. As some of the children of God, are most blessed, sealed up by the Holy Spirit unto the day of eternal redemption, and have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; so there are some reprobates who have a sense of damnation let in upon their minds, so as to have awful and most solemn presages of the same. But we will not dwell upon these subjects. To distinguish and separate between the children of God, and the children of the devil, was all the apostle here meant. Therefore to keep to this is all which is necessary for us. They are distinct: they belong to two distinct heads: they are of two distinct families: they have two distinct interests: they belong to two distinct

kingdoms: the one are, what the others are not: they have two distinct ways of manifesting to whom they belong. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.* The evidence is very easily to be perceived. It may be observed, it must have been common in the apostle's time, to have called such and such the children of God: and to say of such and such, they were the children of the devil. And whilst the nature of sin, of every one sin, will be never changed—there will be always the same evil in all, and every kind of sin there ever was: so such as commit all uncleanness, and delight in the same, and in the workers of iniquity, will be as truly the children of the devil, as they were in the apostle's time: and may as justly be termed the children of the devil now, as they were then. I proceed

2. To observe, that these, viz, the children of God, and the children of the devil, are very particularly manifested by their actions—The one by doing good, and acting righteously: The other by their evil doings, and acting unrighteously. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.*

The children of God, and the children of the devil, are outwardly noticed, and manifestly distinguished. This the apostle had before, in a variety of particulars evidenced; not indeed, but with this distinction, that hitherto, he had only been speaking of professors of Christ, and his gospel: to these he had not given this title, *the children of the devil*: I therefore conceive those here spoken of, were such as differed from those formerly touched on. However this might be, we will omit it for the present, and go on to observe the manifest difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. The children of God are manifest. They do *righteousness*. *Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.* By righteousness we must here understand, all comprehended in the observance and practice of all enjoined, to be by us attended unto, in the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ. This term *righteousness*, must not be here confined, but it must be as extensive as the object and subject, in this place requires. We cannot make ourselves holy; neither can we make ourselves righteous: we cannot walk, so as we may be beloved and accepted of God: we cannot purify our hearts; nor live Christ by any act of our own: yet the scriptures of the New Testament, speak forth in precepts and exhortations many of these, so as to give us to know, what a walk as becometh the gospel of Christ consists in; and also how we are to walk and to please God. And in the right apprehension of these, with a walk influenced, and regulated by these, the true grace of the gospel is manifested and discovered. There can be no spiritual acts, without spiritual life: neither can there be spiritual life, without spiritual acts: the one cannot but produce the other. We cannot be the children of God, but it must be manifested we are so. This must be outwardly, so as that it may be seen and known; not for our own benefit; nor to be an evidence to ourselves; or that we may make any use of it, in our accesses to the Lord; it is all for outward ends and purposes—That the Lord may be glorified—His saints comforted—His enemies silenced—That others seeing our good works may glorify our Father which is in heaven. What is here spoken of—if the true genuine spirit and design of what throughout the whole of this Epistle, respecting internal and external marks and evidences of christianity and grace, were rightly understood, there would be more glory put upon both the outside

and inside of it, than is generally apprehended, than is most generally comprehended in either; and also greater worth and emphasis stamped on both. What our text is speaking of, is not an outward evidence, without an inward evidence of grace. No; it is what arises from, and is the very fruit of internal grace; yet it is wholly, as here it is set before us, an outward evidence of inward grace: and it is this wholly and altogether. If I have understood my own meaning, which I most certainly have aimed most clearly to express, over and over again, relative to the inward and outward expressions, of inward and outward evidences of our personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, these are not the means whereby we are assured of our personal interest in Him: these most certainly flow from, and accompany our knowledge of Him, and are increased and promoted by our increasing knowledge of our full persuasion of our personal apprehension of Him, and communion with Him: but no part of our knowledge of and communion with Christ, is known and maintained in our souls hereby. It is here, in the which the whole contention of real christians consists—some of them contending thus—you cannot know Christ, neither can you know you are interested in Christ, neither can you have any foundation for asserting you are in Christ, nor can you stand forth as a witness for Christ, if you have not both these internal and external evidences of interest of being in Him, which the apostle *John* sets forth in his Epistle. Other real christians go thus—we are led to apprehend thus and thus of Christ, we have received the same as we have expressed them, into our minds, they have thus and thus operated on our hearts; they produce thus and thus in our lives and conversations; but they are but the natural effects of the true knowledge of Christ, and the Truth as it is in Him. The first will reply, but you cannot know, you could not know you were in Christ; but by your walking as the children of God. Here the others answer, we could not walk as the children of the Most High God, were we not fully persuaded we were so: our persuasion does not arise from our walking with the Lord, and before the Lord, that we are his children, or that we shall be his children in consequence thereof; but we have been led to know Jesus, to believe in Him, and also in his free and full redemption; and it is hereby we know our interest in the everlasting love of the Father, and in the Person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ: and it is from hence, we are stimulated to walk with the Lord, to walk before the Lord, and to walk as may be for the glory and praise of the Lord, in all we say and do. There are many contentions between the Lord's professing people, which would soon be put an end unto, were it they rightly understood the ground on which they express what they have to declare. Grace and Salvation, are the foundation on which they all of them, called by the Holy Ghost, into the state of life and conversion to the Lord, profess to be founded. The reality of this is not now going to be questioned: but in the explanation of this, it will be found, one part of those we call the Lord's people have all their hopes of being the Lord's, altogether built, on what they inwardly feel, and enjoy of the Lord in their own souls: and the other, have all their faith and hope founded on the revelation of Christ, set before them in the written word: and the real apprehension the Holy Ghost hath made to their minds of the same in the written word. It would be a real benefit to the professing people of God, if this statement of the subject was clearly understood, and

and acknowledged; it would carry this evidence with it—That one party of Christians were not more for real godliness, in all its parts, and in all its bearings, in all its branches, fruits, and effects, than the other; yet they variously express themselves on these same points—The one fearing lest there is a believing on Christ, without being concerned with the fruits and consequents faith should produce, as they express it. And the other is apprehensive, so much attention, so much insisting on these inward and outward effects, as inward and outward evidences of grace, is very likely to swallow up our minds, so as for Christ and grace to be wholly forgotten: and so we be left to look wholly at, and ponder on our internal, and external evidences, to prove that we are the children of God. No part of scripture hath more to do with the real evidences of *Christianity*, than this Epistle: the words before us, contain an outward evidence of it; *In this the children of God are manifest*. The apostle is not exhorting to this; neither is he shewing the expedience of the same. He is here declaring what is the case with all the children of God—They are all of them righteous persons—They all of them act righteously—They are all of them distinguished hereby; it is their habitual walk: they cannot act otherwise. He is not speaking of what they are in Christ as righteous persons: they being in Him, and clothed with Him, the Lord their Righteousness. He is speaking of what they are, outwardly and openly in the view of others; it must, therefore, be in their walk and conduct. *In this the children of God are manifest*. I ask, in doing what? I reply, in acting, in walking in every respect worthy of God; agreeable with his revealed will: it is hereby they manifest themselves to be the children of God; then, this is not an evidence to themselves; this is not that which they look at, so as to build any part of their confidence in the Lord upon it. It is their knowledge of God, and Christ, set before them in the everlasting gospel, and made known to them by the revelation and teaching of the Holy Ghost, which is the foundation of their hope and confidence in the Lord: their souls' satisfaction ariseth from the apprehensions they are favoured with, of the Father's everlasting love to them, in the Person of Christ, and their personal interest in Him, as their Saviour; it is as their minds are possessed with the true knowledge of God in Christ, they are lifted up above, and beyond all doubting. As the apostle here distinguishes between the children of God, and the children of the devil, so he shews the outward manifestation between these, consists in this—The one performs righteous acts—The other evil ones. *In this the children of God are manifest; and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God*: consequently whosoever doeth righteousness, is of God: the expression is universal. Let the profession of Christ, the Truth, and Gospel, be what it may, if there is not the practice of righteousness, as the natural and necessary concomitant of the same, there is no reality in the profession: therefore such are not of God: they are not born again: they are not the sons of God: they are but what all persons out of Christ are—in their sins, and in their blood. You may, says our apostle, know the children of the devil; you need not be deceived in them; they declare themselves to whom they belong; they do no righteous acts; they act sinfully. The apostle does not here enumerate their evil; nor point out any one particular instance of their wickedness; it was sufficient to call them the children of the devil: nothing worse could be said of them; all was in-

cluded in the very title: no good could possibly be found in them; therefore the title given them was altogether sufficient: their temper, conduct, words, and works, were so many continual evidences to whom they belonged: as the children of God, by their walking righteously, gave continual proof and evidence to whom they belonged. Whilst the children of God, and the children of the devil, are here mentioned together, yet they are not mixed together: they are kept distinct and apart from each other: they are also distinguished, so as that they may be properly known. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* As the line of distinction is very clear and evident, so I cannot doubt of its being designed to distinguish between professor and professor. If not, why should he make mention of a brother, and as not loving a brother, to be a fruit and evidence of such an one's belonging to the devil? For so the words naturally lead the mind to conceive of the same: most assuredly none of the devil's children, who are wholly in their sins, who have nothing to do with any profession of christianity, have any claim, neither can they have the least appearance, for calling any of the saints, *a brother*, in the sense the apostle is here treating the subject. If therefore, some of those he here speaks of, and entitles the devil's children, had not been mixed with the professors of the times, in the which the apostle lived, and wrote, I am at a loss how he could write as he did. It must most certainly be so that they were; and the several following verses, concerning brotherly love, and what is said of those who were not possessors of this love, and the comparing them to *Cain*, and calling such murderers, is to me sufficient proof of the same. I conceive our present verse, is introductory to all which follows, to the end of verse 21: what follows after, seems to me to be a distinct subject. There is such a connection in the ensuing verses, as may serve for a confirmation of this. There are two sorts of people in the world; so there are in the church. These are both in the world, and in the church distinguished; one by acting righteously; the other by their unrighteous acts. And in the church, this is a very distinguished proof and manifestation, who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil—their loving, or not loving the brethren. So I come to my last particular, which is this,

3. To speak of a very singular, and complete manifestation of the devil's children: it is this—Such love not the real children of God. No; not even if they are professors, and should even be in the same church state with them; this is implied in these words; *Neither he that loveth not his brother.* Surely this is expressive of brotherhood by way of church relation; for the children of God, and the children of the devil, never, all of them, could have the same father. No; not even in the very same state of nature; this neither was, nor could be the case; it can therefore, be only interpreted on the footing of outward profession, which sometimes issues in church relationship. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

The saints in the churches of Christ, on, and after the day of *Pentecost*, were remarkable for their love to Christ, and to each other, for his sake. Towards the close of that period there was a vast abatement of this; hence it is our apostle says so much on this subject: here he makes

it out as a clear proof, that such an one as did not love his brother, was positively a child of the devil; his words are these, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* Most undoubtedly it is one great proof of our love to Christ, to love for his sake: to love where, and whom he loves: to love those on whom he hath stamped his image in regeneration: to love the children of God, who are manifest, by their doing righteousness. It is an evidence against such, who are in a church state, yet love not the members of the same community; yet they are united to one and the same body, by the same bonds of the gospel. Our apostle here speaks of this, under the views he had of it, in the day in which he lived, as such an evil, that he knew no lower terms for it, than hatred, murder, and that such were of the devil. He sets it down here as a full proof and manifestation of being a child of the devil. If you ask him, who is a child of the devil? his reply is, *whosoever doeth not righteousness—he that loveth not his brother.* Without all doubt, saints as saints cannot be conceived of as coming under the charges our apostle expresseth in these words, and in this Epistle. It appears to me, rightly to conceive of the same, it seems as though in the apostle's time, some crept into the churches, with a design to corrupt the true doctrine, and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and also to be very plagues to real saints, so as when there was a suited opportunity, to betray them to their persecuting enemies. There was not merely a want of loving affection unto them; but there was also hatred and rancour: so as these were evidentially the children of the devil, let them be as they might, numbered amongst them. It cannot be, that every little disrespect shewn by one professor of Christ to another, can amount so high, and be so grievous in the sight of God, and the church, as to prove such and such, children of the devil; yet I would by no means aim to weaken the force of the apostle's words, by attempting the least alteration in them; God forbid. They are of importance in the place where they are; nor were they pronounced by the apostle in any warmth of temper; it was by the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost he wrote them: and they are to remain where they are, for to give light to the church, down to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It may be they are for solemn use and caution: to prevent saints themselves, from being cold and indifferent in their love and affection to each other, for Christ's sake; just as those most tremendous words of the apostle *Paul*, are, as I conceive, to be understood: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Such a tremendous expression, seems to be designed, to alarm the minds of real saints, and keep them very jealous over their hearts, affections, frames and conversations, lest the same should in any one instance, bear the least evidence of their abatement in love to their unseen, and most precious Lord: so here, it may be considered under the same view; and serve not only to point out, who they are who love not the brethren of Christ, and also the great evil contained in the same: but it may also serve to be a preventative from our being remiss in real brotherly love to all the saints and thereby give evidence of our being cold in our love and affection to our most precious Lord Jesus Christ himself. Our love to Him, and and to his saints should go hand in hand together: for sometimes they

can be evidenced openly, no otherwise. I cannot but in my own mind conceive, the apostle must here, and in the following verses, have some respect to such as might have fallen into the sin against the Holy Ghost : whose hatred to the brotherhood broke out very awfully : otherwise I cannot conceive how hatred of the brethren, and such as in his estimation was no otherwise than murder in the sight of God, and even a declaration that such had not eternal life abiding in them, should be declared of, and concerning them. It is true, the first christians were most truly remarkable for their love to Christ, and to each other for his sake : we are too much to be remarked for very little love to our most adorable Lord Jesus, and to each other for his sake ; yet I should hope in no case, let us be ever so cold, and indifferent at times as we may to fellow Christians, does it by any many means, amount to hatred and contempt of each other. We may be allowed to love one above what we do another. One saint, his views of truth, and his experience of the power and grace of it, may be allowed to suit some of us to an hair's breadth, and others of the saints less, and yet we by no means despise any other saints because they are not suited in a particular manner to any of us, personally, and individually. I should hope this does by no means amount to murder, hatred, and a proof we have not eternal life abiding in us : yet I would by all this, retain all the apostle's expressions : neither would I abate the force and energy of them : only seek out for the real genuine meaning and interpretation of the same. Let me therefore observe, he is here speaking on this subject to a quite different purpose than that which he had in his view, in the 2nd chapter of this epistle : it is therefore it issues in a different stream. I would recite some of the former verses and so come to this before us, as thinking it will contribute some light and evidence into the propriety of the observations which have been suggested. I will begin at verse 4 : *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law : for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Let all this be read in its right order ; then say, if at least it does not carry the appearance of being concerned with, and a spawn of that sin, which may be truly called the devil's sin, mentioned verse 8 : if so, then the terms used by the holy apostle, concerning those persons who did not love the brethren, will not appear too strong : nor shall we find any thing implied in them, which will be too severe for the subject. Surely it is incompatible with real grace in any mind, to hate the brethren. Surely the want of the exercise of brotherly love, in a vigorous way, and fervent expressions of the same, cannot draw forth an holy apostle, to say simply on this, such are the children of the devil : which is what is declared in my text ; *In this the children of**

God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Such as had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, it may be, were not presently known: it is not unlikely their hatred and malice against the Lord's saints, secretly appeared, before it more openly broke forth; so that being for a season members in the various churches to which they belonged, their ill will against the saints openly manifested itself: and the apostle gives them to understand, that in his view and apprehension, it could be derived from no other root and fountain, but that of apostacy; and it could end in nothing but final rejection of Christ: his gospel, and church, totally, and altogether, and for ever. I have, beloved, suggested this to you; whilst I must say, to me it seems to cast clear light on the present subject; and it really does so to me; yet I by no means want to force your minds, but would freely leave you to judge in this matter for yourselves. It is not what your salvation is concerned in; yet it is most truly pleasant and desirable, to have such an interpretation as may cast such light on any passage of scripture, as may be easy and congenial to the spiritual mind; so as to free it from all uneasiness and ambiguity. As the whole of these Scriptures quoted, are used by the apostle by way of discrimination, so this should be improved in the reading, and explanation of them; which I conclude would serve to fix the idea I have freely suggested. May the Lord the Spirit, give us his own light into the whole, so far as will be for our benefit, and for his glory. We cannot mistake this—It gives us to know wherein consists the difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. To know ourselves to be the Lord's, will be for our consolation; it will encourage our hearts, and hopes in God; it will enable us to fight the Lord's battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil: it will enable us to stand fast in the evil day: it will naturally draw out our hearts to the saints of the Most High, to love them for the Lord's sake. Our walking in fellowship with God, as our heavenly Father, by faith in Christ Jesus, through the grace of the Eternal Spirit, is our best evidence of our being children of God. It is by this means we shall be kept alive, in our love and affection to the real brotherhood: and be distinguished to be who, and what we are. May the truths of the everlasting gospel, at all times prevail in us, and over us, so as that we may act, walk, think, and speak, as the beloved of the Lord: loving God as our Father; Christ as our Saviour; the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier; the saints and children of God, as the excellent of the earth: and have a clear discernment of such, as do not belong to the family of God, so as to avoid them; most especially such, whose company and conversation, carry evident proofs with the same, that they are of the family of hell; and such, as with all their profession, do not love a brother in Christ. Let us ever remember these words, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* May it be given us to love where God loves, and to hate where God hates: and to walk in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. The Lord grant this for his Name's sake. Amen.

SERMON XLII.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.—1 JOHN iii. 11, 12.

THE subject of brotherly love, or love of the brethren, is here quite different, I conceive, from what the apostle is upon in the former chapter, and carried on with a different design. There, it seems to be directed to the observation of saints and professors, to discover to them how the want of the due and proper exercise of it, shewed how far below the command and example of the Lord Jesus Christ they lived, and acted. Here, it seems to be spoken of, to shew that the real want of not only its proper exercise, but when it amounted to no love at all, and to hatred of a brother, this argued there could indeed be no love in such a heart: it was in the sight of God, equal to being a murderer: such an one had not eternal life abiding in him. To hate a brother is to wear the badge of the children of the devil. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* The reason for which is given; *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* In the which words, we have the following subjects.

1. The message, doctrine, or command which they heard from the beginning of their hearing the gospel: it concerned their loving one another; *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

2. Here is a recital of *Cain's* murder of his brother *Abel*. As also who *Cain* was of: with the reason why he slew his brother. It was out of hatred and ill will: it was out of envy. It was because *Cain* was of that wicked one—The devil. It was also, *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

May the Lord so guide me through the explanation of it, as may reflect light on the whole context, so that it may most clearly appear, the apostle is not treating of mere indifference to the brethren; nor of simply expressing our love with some kind of indifferency; but of such, as in the nature and kind of it, proves such and such to be of the devil. It deserves to be remarked by us, in our own minds, the holy apostle is for speaking the truth, and calling persons, and things by their proper names, and terms—Such and such an one is a liar—Such an one walketh in darkness—Such an one knoweth not whither he goeth—Such an one, darkness hath blinded his eyes—He that committeth sin transgresseth also the law—He that committeth sin is of the devil. Here are no compliments: no equivocation, or mental reservation. It is all plain, positive assertions: such as became an apostle of Christ to express. So in his

declaration who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil, it is equally decisive. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* It cannot be; he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. It cannot be, because the message, or commandment we received from the beginning, was that we should love another; which love is not to be with such dissimulation as Cain, the first reprobate of the human race, exercised towards Abel, whom he slew. *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Thus we have the words in part opened and explained. In going through them, I am thus to proceed.

1. To take notice of the message, doctrine, or command, which they whom the apostle here addresses, had received from the beginning, concerning loving one another.

He had been on this subject in the former chapter. He used the word *message* in the first chapter, saying, *This then is the message which we have heard from the beginning, or of him, that is of Christ, which was from the beginning.* This was, *That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* The apostle, speaking of the doctrine delivered by Christ, from the beginning unto them, says in Chapter 2, "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." v. 7, 8. And here upon the same subject, the apostle says, *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* From their very first hearing of Christ, so soon as they were brought under his most heavenly ministry, it pleased him to instil this heavenly principle and truth on their minds, that they should love one another as he had loved them. This was a commandment which he gave them. They heard him pronounce it. This precept was received into their minds. It was inscribed on their hearts. They could not cease to remember it. He spoke it out with such grace and majesty they could by no means forget the same. He had said, a very little while before his Passion, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 34, 35. This therefore the apostle again and again inculcates: he being himself most remarkably filled with this grace; and very singular in the display and exercise of the same; insomuch as it is said by some, he lived so long, that when in his extreme old age, when he came into church assemblies, all he could say, or did, was only this, *Little children, love one another.* I confess I cannot think, our Lord Jesus Christ would keep such a saint as John out of heaven, to be of no more use to the church, than merely to pronounce this. It is the message of Christ, delivered by this apostle from him, to the church, that we should love one the other: the apostle lays a mighty emphasis on it; he does so, because it was from the very first delivery of the gospel unto them. All the apostles had heard and received it: so had all the primitive believers, who heard Christ from the beginning; neither was it a doctrine which might be dropped. It was a commandment which was to be received,

and universally practised. It was that which made it evident who were the children of God. All under a profession of the gospel, who were destitute of it, were children of the devil. To love one another, and to manifest the same, in, and by all sort, and kind of ways, was their bounden duty and service: so says the holy apostle in the words before us. *Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* None of us, no, not one of the true disciples of Christ, is excluded from this. It is equally obligatory on each, and all of them alike. It is a spiritual act and affection of the mind, wrought in the renewed by the Spirit of God. It is the real fruit of love to Christ himself. It originates and springs from it. The command of Christ which enforces it, is the very means of exciting, and increasing it. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

2. What this love should be, is suggested to them, whom the apostle is addressing, from what it should not be; and the distinction between the children of God, and the children of the devil, further kept up, and explained. Love to the saints, and the love of saints towards each other, is not to be like *Cain's* love to his brother *Abel*. No; the wretch is expressly declared to be of the devil—one of his children. He manifested this. He slew his brother, who was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason why *Cain* slew *Abel* was so exceeding clear and plain, that a question is asked concerning it; to the intent it might be so noticed as never to be forgotten: No, not by the godly, in all ages, and throughout all generations. *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

We are not to love him we style brother in Christ, and church relationship, as *Cain* did his brother, which is here expressed by a negation. *Not as Cain.* The verse here before us is a very solemn one; it being the introduction to the following ones, in which he that hateth his brother is called a murderer, and it is declared of him, that he hath not eternal life abiding in him. I could therefore wish for very clear light into the real meaning of all this; so as that no part of these assertions might be invalidated, nor any unjustifiable censure laid upon the truly godly. As it cannot be conceived every degree of coldness and indifference one to another, as brothers in Christ, can prove we have not eternal life abiding in us; I do think, the true interpretation of this verse, will be a most complete clue, to open, and guide clearly into the reality of what the apostle means; which may serve to ease our minds, and may save us from very many perplexities. If our faith, in its actings on Christ, is not perfect, nor any other of our graces in their actings are; then surely our love to the brethren for our Lord's sake, is not; nor are we to expect it to be so, in any one instance, or act of it, whilst we remain in a time state. Therefore it cannot be, the simple deficiency of the same which the apostle is here treating on; he would never instance in a son of reprobation, if this was his subject. Whilst no one is more free to speak out what should be expressed, and give proper terms to the same, as hath been before noticed, than our *John*, yet he is here very particular in expressing himself on this subject, now before him. *Cain's* hatred to his brother, is here, not positively, it is

negatively expressed. "*Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*" He who loveth not his brother, cannot act righteously, because he must be a transgressor of a positive precept. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love another.* And this is binding upon all; it should be so extensive, to all the holy brethren; it should not be cramped; it should consist in acts and expressions of positive love; it should not be like *Cain's*. It was wholly and altogether of a negative kind: he had no positive love in his mind towards his brother *Abel*; so far from it, his mind was towards him for evil, and not for good. He was of that wicked one. The devil was his father. He was one of the children of the devil: and as he was a murderer from the beginning, so it might be said of this his son. Such in our world, also, as belong to *Cain*, are of the same murderous disposition with him. The apostle here gives an account of, and makes a recital of him: it is a most melancholy one. He was the first man who was born into our world. He was a non-elect. He had a name given him by his mother, which signified *Possession*. She said, *I have gotten a man from the LORD.* Or, *I have gotten the man, the very Jehovah*: expressing her faith in the promised seed, who was to bruise the serpent's head: she was a real saint: a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; but she was mistaken here: yet I confess, I incline to conceive, she did not so much refer to the child born, as to her having, by being permitted to be a mother, a full proof of the continuance of the world, and of a succession of men on the earth: which was full evidence to her faith, that in the fulness of time, Messiah would be incarnate. At the same birth it is conceived, she also bore *Abel*. Which name signifies *Vanity*. We have the following account of this. Gen. iv. 1, 2. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel." Together with these, it is generally apprehended were daughters born; which when grown up were wives to *Cain* and *Abel*: as most assuredly it must have been the case, they must have had their own sisters. The employment of these two men is expressed. The one was a keeper of sheep; the other was a tiller of the ground: thus they had different employments. *Abel* was a type and figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great Shepherd of the flock of God. He hath them all in his eye: on his heart. He encircles them all in his arms of everlasting mercy. He values them at a very high rate. He loves them with an infinite degree of affection. He hath washed them clean from all sin in his own blood. He heals all their wounds with his own stripes. He warms them with his own love. He clothes them in his own robe of righteousness. He is their Feeder: and he nourishes them with his own body and blood: with his own word and the doctrine of free and sovereign grace.

Abel was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; one of the first: he was instructed into the nature of instituted worship: he was led into an acquaintance with what was represented and expressed in the symbol and figure of the Cherubim: he was well acquainted with it as representative of the Great Ones—That it most clearly expressed both the material, and immaterial Trinity; both in nature and grace—Fire, Light, and Air, the three great agents in nature: and Father, Son, and Spirit, the Three in the One Incomprehensible Jehovah, who had willed the salvation of an

innumerable company of sinners, of Adam's posterity in the covenant of grace. The flaming sword, or fire, revolving in upon itself, was a solemn evidence, that the wrath and curse due to the sins of the elect would be executed *upon the man of God's right hand, on the son of man whom he had made strong for himself.* This was afterwards more fully testified of in these words, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd." Zech. xiii. 7. That *Abel* was a believer, we have the apostle *Paul's* testimony unto. He refers to what is recorded of him, in the 4th chapter of *Genesis*, where we read as follows. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." v. 3, 4, 5. This is the comment given on it. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh;" or "is yet spoken of." Heb. xi. 4. As the record of the covenant of the Eternal Three, was in the Sacred Figure of the Great Ones expressed; so how it was to be executed, was set forth in the sacrifices, ordained by the Lord immediately upon the fall. The nature, use, end, and design, *Abel* well knew: this he must have received from his father *Adam*. He came with a lamb, a type of Christ, the Lamb of God: he offered it before the Lord, in the full belief of the future oblation of the Lamb of God: he did this before the faces of the Cherubic Figure, which was the seat of divine worship. Jehovah had "placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Gen. iii. 24. Or rather, the flaming sword, turned every way to point to Christ the tree of life. *Abel* presented his offering. The Lord gave an outward evidence of his acceptance of it. It is probable this was by sending fire to consume it: this being the way in which the divine majesty was pleased in after times to express his acceptance of sacrificial services; as at the consecration of *Aaron* and his sons; Lev. ix. 24: and at the dedication of the temple; 2 Chron. vii. 1. The token God had given of his having accepted *Abel's* sacrifice being visible, and his rejection of *Cain's* oblation being equally as evident, *Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.* He was under the covenant of works: he became sullen because the Lord had preferred his brother unto him. The Lord interrogated him upon the subject; yet the doctrine of divine sovereignty he could not, it may be added he would not admit of, No; not he: he talks with his brother, when he had a suited opportunity. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother." v. 8. The learned tell us there is here a remarkable pause in the Hebrew text, which the Jews are disposed to supply: suggesting how *Cain* says to this effect; there is no judgment to come, &c. &c.: which *Abel* insists on there is, &c. &c.: which drew out the malice and envy of his brother, and so filled him with rage, that he murdered his brother, and was the first murderer in our world of the human race: this is supposed to have been in the year of the world from the creation 128. This will lead me further to observe what is said of this murderer in my text: *Cain was of that wicked one.* This the apostle declares, without the least hesitation. The title he gives

the devil here, is, *that wicked one*. He had before called him *the wicked one*. chap. ii. 13. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." He calls him by the same term in the next verse. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The next title he gives him is *devil*; which is the same with *Apollyon*; and signifies a *destroyer*. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is all wickedness. He is emphatically *the wicked one*. He is the devil, who sinneth continually; unceasingly; without the least abatement, or intermission. *Cain* was of this wicked one. Nothing worse could be said of him. *He was of that wicked one*. In whom all sin and wickedness hath its fullest existence: who was the first sinner; who is the chiefest of all sinners; who acts with energy in all the children of disobedience; who hates Christ and all his beloved with an invincible hatred; who stirred up *Cain* to kill *Abel*; who is the fomentor of strife as much as in him lieth, amongst real saints. How awful to say of any one, what is here said of *Cain*, he was, or he is of that wicked one! As it comes from the apostle, it is designed for our instruction. It not only declares the state and wickedness of *Cain*, but it expresses what all the children of the devil are. Whilst they are not all alike and equal in every act of sin, yet they all hate Christ, and they all hate the real disciples of Christ. It is to give us to know this, the instance of *Cain's* killing his brother *Abel*, is here mentioned. To set clear what the apostle had further to say on the subject of the hatred and contempt cast on the children of God, this was expressed. It seems as if the apostle had in immediate view and remembrance, what he records of Christ, in the 8th chapter of his gospel; when he said to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh it of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." v. 44. *Cain* was of the wicked one, and slew his brother. All the children of the devil, who are *Cain's* brethren, are of the same spirit with him. They would do the same; they do the same, so far as it is in their power. *He was of that wicked one*; this is the proof of it: *He slew his brother*. The ties of nature, the relation he stood in to him according to the flesh, did not prevent him from this most desperate act. He must have known the law of God; yet he was not restrained thereby. No one of the human race had ever perpetrated such a crime before; yet he leaps above all bounds, and deprives *Abel* of his life. His blood cries for vengeance on him; yet his heart is most desperately hardened: he only cries out in the language of despair. "My punishment is greater than I can bear." or "mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven." Gen. iv. 14. It was in the cause of religion, *Abel* was the first martyr for Christ. It was almost as soon as there could be any public profession made of Christ, except by *Adam* and his wife: it was shed in the cause of Christ, and Truth. Our Lord calls it on this account, righteous blood. And says to the Jews, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous *Abel* unto the blood of *Zacharias* son of *Barachias*, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." Matt. xxiii. 35, 36.

There is a question proposed in my text : it is this, *wherefore slew he him ?* The reply is this, *Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* This answers the account given before of him ; for he being a child of the devil, he being of the wicked one, he could not but be destitute of all righteousness : he could not but be filled with all evil : he could not but hate the very appearance of righteousness : he could not but oppose and seek the destruction of the same, where he saw the reality thereof. Let us read over again the whole of our present text. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother : And wherefore slew he him ? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Thus you have the very cause assigned, why *Cain* murdered his brother *Abel*. He perceived his own sacrifice displeased God ; he was persuaded the Lord accepted his brother's person, and sacrifice ; this he could by no means bear : there is therefore no alternative ; he must be slain ; his life must be taken from the earth. Thus the wicked one worked effectually in this wicked man, and he killed his brother for this reason, *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* And the apostle would have the saints know, it must be expected the same wicked one, the devil, would work equally as maliciously, towards real saints by false brethren, on all occasions. This seems the reason why he introduces this account here : which as it gives the very first account of the manifest distinction there is, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent ; so it shews the latter is irreconcilable to the former : it is such an enmity as cannot be subdued : it chiefly breaks out in matters of worship, and in that which concerns it ; therefore it is saints as saints are so often opposed, and that by such as are incorporated together with them in church fellowship. It may be this may be more designed here, than we may easily comprehend ; these two, *Cain* and *Abel* may be considered as in one and the same outward church state : they had the same external revelation of the divine will : the same mode of worship : the same seat of worship ; yet they were in two distinct states ; and possessed of two very distinct spirits : they both acted accordingly ; and this was the reason why the one slew the other. *Cain* was a natural man ; he was under the covenant of works ; he did not want to be without professing to believe, and worship the Lord ; he likes to do this in his own way, and make his acknowledgements in that which will suit him best ; he does not like his brother's peculiarities ; as if a lamb was more suited to the Divine Majesty, than the fruit of the ground. It is just so with all under a profession, who are but natural men ; they cannot conceive, if the heart as they phrase it be sincere, it cannot be of any moment what their creed is. *Abel* was a child of God ; a regenerate man ; he was enlightened into the true knowledge of God, in his Nature, Persons, Perfections, Love and Grace in Christ, the glorious Mediator. He was led into an acquaintance with the Person, and Salvation, into the word, and worship of the glorious Mediator ; therefore he would by no means presume to approach the Divine Majesty, but in the order, and ordinance of access which had been prescribed. The Lord meeting him, blessing him, and giving him full evidence of this, it could not but gladden his heart. An outward and full evidence being given of the same, it fills the mind of *Cain* with discontent. Why am I not accepted as well as he ? What can

there be in him, more than there is in me? it proves God hath respect to persons: this comes up to what I always thought: my brother is in his own conceit above me: he is no brother of mine: if we worship together, he is determined to act as if we were not of the same religion, and did not worship one and the self same God: I hope I shall be accepted as well as he. Why should I not; yet I am mortified; that I am; and touched to the very quick. How so? why by looking before me, I see the smoke of the altar; the fire of the Lord hath most assuredly descended, and consumed his offering; whilst mine remains where it was: no marks of divine favor are on it: this will not do for me: I cannot bear this: I will away with him: his life shall go for it. So here began the quarrel between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The one is contrary to the other. The apostle sets it forth here before us, in this instance and example of *Cain* and *Abel*. Our Lord himself, his apostles, and beloved saints, have all along taught, and inculcated this doctrine upon us—To love one another—To promote one another's real advantage—Not in any instance to imitate *Cain*. He was the first-born of our apostate parents; he was a notorious child of the devil, who under his infernal influence, murdered his brother *Abel*, for no other reason, but on account of knowledge, faith, and worship. *Abel's* works were better in themselves, and more respected by God, than his own abominable conduct. Let this be considered as a picture to represent what is the real case of such as are earthly minded professors, and such as are heavenly: we shall find some striking resemblance. Nothing makes more real and manifest divisions among the sons of men, than the true profession of the Lord Jesus Christ, doth. No enmity is comparable with that which is expressed by one professor of Christ to another. Whilst the apostle is here speaking on this subject, I cannot go so far about, as to confine it to persons in their sins and in their blood. I must include such, as by some measure or other, or for some motives or other, made a profession of the gospel, which the people of the world, merely considered as such, do not. He has also been pursuing a subject for a long season, on antichristian errors, and preachers—How these persons had been in the true churches of Christ—They were gone out of them: and the Lord had preserved the saints from falling by them. These he had again and again exhorted to stand fast in the faith, truth, worship, and purity of the gospel. He had expressed many motives, and delivered many most important truths to them, to obtain, and serve that end: and in an inimitable manner, fully expressed himself on this part of the subject, respecting hope of eternal Glory, and communion with Christ, that it most infallibly promoted holiness in the mind, and real hatred of all sin. This led him to shew how love to saints, is a real evidence of saintship. It was this which produced the subject now before us: therefore I cannot but conclude he is, in speaking of *Cain*, expressing what may be found correspondent to the same, which might even at the time he wrote, be found similar therewith. If you read some of the ensuing verses, I think you will see there is some propriety in the remark: I also conceive you will receive some additional light on them. He is not introducing *Cain* as an example for imitation: it is as a child of the devil; and his behaviour to a saint of the Most High, as an instance of what might be expected by the children of God, from the devil's children. The present

subject, in its very beginning proves this: which I mention again, not for the sake of so many repetitions, as that you may have the connection of the whole fixed in your minds, and understand for your own selves what you read. Pardon me therefore in this: it may be peculiar to myself, and it may also be, I fail as much as any one in the same, yet so it is; I labour to understand the meaning of scripture, and the connection of scripture, as conceiving it the only right vehicle rightly of understanding the same. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Now what can be deduced from the whole of this, but that there are in the churches of Christ, persons who resemble *Cain*: who are not of the family of heaven: who are unregenerate; who neither love Christ, the Truth, nor brethren, in their hearts: from whom hatred is to be expected: unto whom there can never be any spiritual union: and whose disunion, hatred, and persecution, will most certainly arise from, and be expressed on account of what we express by the term *Religion*. It is the true religion of Jesus, and the false religion of antichrist, which make the whole contest between the children of God, and the children of the devil. It is the Truth of the one, with the close attachment of saints thereto: and the selfishness of the other, and its want of a foundation, with the zeal of its professed votaries to it, and struggle for it, are the cause of all the strife and opposition found in the professing world. As there is a church within a church, so sometimes there is abundance of corrupt opinions, which spring up, and are to be found in a church of Christ. Not that there is any error belongs to a church of Christ, yet are there many errors and erroneous persons found in Christ's church. I might here say, it would be well, if the distinct churches of Christ were not so solicitous to increase their numbers: it is in many instances but an increase of misery. The holiness, light, and knowledge of the members of a gospel church, are of far greater honour to it, than the number of its members. There cannot be numbers but there must be mixtures; nor can it always be, but disorders must appear and break forth: there is no avoiding the same. It is here, the church of Christ is so awfully corrupted in this present day. We have *Abel*—we have *Cain*, both in one church, and they will never agree long together: the one cannot love the other: nor can any means be found out for so doing. You will ask me how these may be found out, and distinguished amongst ourselves? I will most readily express myself, as clearly as I can. You will be pleased to observe, and I have already intimated so much, that *Cain* and *Abel* are to be looked for in the church of Christ, as in the history of the same as recorded by *Moses* in the book of Genesis. I do not mean the *Cainites* are members of Christ. No; that cannot be; but they are many of them members of churches: yea, of such as are sound and regular, so as thereby to be numbered with some real saints, who are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Now that which is the very thing which gives uneasiness is the doctrine, in its purity; together with the true worship which is most closely connected with it. Such saints and churches, as are most clearly enlightened into the clear apprehension of Truth, find so far as it pre-

vails in them, it produces its true and proper effects; which sublimates their minds, and render them very jealous, with a godly jealousy, of the truths, worship, ordinances, and all connected with the manifestation of the declarative glory of the Essential and Incomprehensible Three in the Incomprehensible Jehovah. For a season those who are of a different spirit are not discovered: when they are, they generally by little and little discover they are not so much taken with the Truth as the others are—That it seems to them, a life and conversation outwardly regular, with an attendance on the ordinances, ought to satisfy the minds of all—That the principal stress should be laid here. Which is to such as know Truth as Truth a sad evidence that those which have been numbered with them, are not by any means what they looked on them to be: this is a means of some discourse on the prime points of divinity: such as contain the essence and spring from whence all spiritual life, holiness, salvation, and blessedness originate: which as it is brought to its point, and surveyed in all its causes, effects, in all its connections and with all its bearing, is the very means of producing the same effects in each as it did in *Cain* and *Abel*, when God accepted the sacrifice of the one, and rejected that of the other; so that there is an irreconcilable difference between the one, and the other. There is such an inward disgust in the one mind against the other, that no brotherly love exists: no love for Christ's sake; nor for his Truth's sake. This is so fully discovered, that at times it breaks forth, from those who are, with all their profession, unacquainted with the true Christ of God, so that it knows no bounds: it exceeds all limits: it is spent in expressions of hatred, of malice and ill will: which is here cautioned against, in these words before us: it being wholly, and altogether contrary to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. *For this is the message which we had from the beginning, that we should love one another: or, this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* If what hath been delivered is rightly understood, I think it will amount to this—That the antichrists in *John's* time, brought into the churches, many corrupt mixtures, both of persons, and doctrines: which gave the apostle to make such discriminations between one professor and another, as he doth throughout the whole of this Epistle—That the sin of *Cain*, and such in the churches as sinned as he did, sinned in a measure the sin unto death: it was a spice of that sin. No real believer could so sin, as to hate a fellow saint: therefore none of the Lord's people need to give themselves any concern about it; for as it is impossible they should be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost; so it is as impossible they should at any time be in such a state of mind, as to hate saints as saints; and be destitute of having eternal life abiding in them. But as more will be said of this in the two succeeding sermons, I will say no more at this time; but leave it, short as it is, for your consideration. It is the light it may convey, not any thing else, is to be attended to. If it enlightens the three following verses, so as for us to receive the apostle's meaning in them, this cannot but be of advantage: and this is one benefit we expect from comments—To give us a more particular apprehension of particular passages than we should otherwise have. May this be the case here, and the Lord shall be praised. Amen.

SERMON XLIII.

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.—1 JOHN iii. 13, 14.

In the former verses the apostle shewed how the doctrines of the grace of God, by the which we receive the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ into our minds, by the supernatural light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, operate on the minds of saints. They are by them preserved from the commission of sin. They are by them excited to love the holy brethren. They are kept from the sin unto death: so as they cannot fall by it, nor into it. He had expressed how the children of God, and the children of the devil were manifest; the one by doing righteousness, the other by not doing it, as also by not loving his brother. He then gives an instance as a proof of the truth of what he had asserted, in the examples of *Cain* and *Abel*: the former of whom killed the latter; for this very reason, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. He then expresses and sets before those he wrote to, and us in them, wherein the truth of our conversion to God, and the happiness of our state thereby consists—we are out of the state of death, in the which we were, so long as we remained unregenerate: and the state in which we are—being born again. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* The whole of these words contain in them the following particulars, which I will endeavour to cast into the following order.

1. The introduction into the subject contained in them, which is thus expressed. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

2. The knowledge the apostle, and these persons had concerning their state in Christ. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.*

3. The outward proof and reality of this, evidenced, so as to be confirmed hereby. *Because we love the brethren.*

4. A proof and outward evidence of a contrary state to this. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* He is an unregenerate man. He is wholly in a state of nature, let his profession be as it may. These are the particulars which are to be opened, that thereby we may attain the true knowledge of the subject matter contained in the words before us.

I cannot but conceive, the apostle is here treating on the subject of loving the brethren, in a different manner, and for a different end and purpose, than what he has in view in the second chapter of this Epistle. It seems to me, he is here making it an essential criterion of such belonging to the Lord, as of those who did not, of positively belonging to the devil. I also conceive as he here treats the subject, he speaks of what is the real state of such minds as had sinned the devil's sin, the sin unto death: and therefore it is he instances the sin of *Cain*, who was of the devil, and murdered his brother. My reasons are as follows. He having

spoken of the devil's sinning from the beginning, and that the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, immediately subjoins these words, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him ? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Now as these verses are read in their connection, it appears to me, it is easily discernable, the subject is all of a piece with what is the case of such as are the Lord's, and those who had sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost : and like as *Cain* was of the devil, and this was fully manifested by his killing righteous *Abel* ; so such were in the like state and case with him, who did that which was evil ; who loved not the brethren, as *Cain* did not. He was one who had no name, part, or interest in Christ : he was a child of the devil ; a murderer ; he was in the state of death : he was unregenerate ; he was a murderer, even the first of the human race. Let all this be considered, it will then follow, those whom the apostle compares with him, must be in the very same state he was in when he killed his brother. As he was a murderer, so are they : as he had not eternal life in him, so neither have they. Thus I conceive we have the true outline of the whole of these verses to the very close of the fifteenth. The words of my present text, come in on the back of these ; *For this is the message, or commandment, that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him ? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* He then says in the words before us, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

My first particular is the words of introduction with which our subject is commenced. They are these, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

In these words are several things to be observed. He would not have the children of God, marvel, or wonder they were hated by the world. It could not be expected it should be otherwise. By the world here, it seems to appear to me, we are not only to conceive and apprehend such as are wholly without any acknowledgment of God, and Christ, but such also as make some acknowledgments of the Lord, externally, and professedly of Him. It can never be a marvel, or wonder, such as are wholly without the pale of the church, should hate the saints of the Most High ; yet it cannot but be marvellous, such as profess to be in, and to belong to the church should hate the brethren. It is by no means improbable, the false teachers, and antichrists of that age, are some of those here glanced at, and intended : they might be looked at, and spoken of as the world, they being in their sins, and as they were followed by such, and embraced by earthly minded, and worldly professors. This may receive some confirmation from many things said of them in the next chapter. The persons here addressed are the true brethren : the children of God : they were the apostle's brethren in Christ. He, and they were

the objects of the world's hatred : even of such as professed Christ ; yet in word and doctrine denied him : as also of those who had nothing to do with him, by making any confession of him. It was no marvel these latter should hate the brethren ; nor need it be wondered at if such as were under some form of profession also did ; because they being *Cain's* brood, how could it be otherwise but they would imitate him ? If he loved not righteous *Abel*, how could it be these should ever love those who were the Lord's ? This could not be in the nature of things. It was not therefore to be marvelled at, should this hatred break forth into act, and the most awful proofs be given of the same. The apostle's putting himself in the number of the brethren whom the world hated, and would continue to hate with an invincible hatred, shews his very great attachment unto them. His calling them *my brethren* shews his love for them : his relationship unto them in Christ, and in the profession of the same faith in the same gospel, truths and ordinances. It is a knitting together all contained in the former verses, which concerned the distinction made betwixt them and others, affirming them to be the children of God, believers in Christ, and saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. The hatred of such as were under a profession of the same truths, in very many particulars, was not to be wondered at : much less was the hatred of such, as were departed from the faith, and turned aside to error and heresies, which dishonoured the Person, and Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ : this was not to be marvelled at. No ; neither the hatred of the world who lay in the arms of the wicked one : it was what they must have had full and ample proof of. Yet that they might not be shaken in their minds in what might further arise, and they might again and again be exercised withal, he uses this sentence by way of prevention. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* The apostle when he spoke in his 2nd chapter on the subject of loving, and not loving, used the word *hateth* his brother ; used it twice : here he most certainly useth it, at least as I conceive, in a stronger sense than he does there. Here we have *hate* and *hateth* ; and such an one is a murderer : this is a most awful charge : it seems, to prepare for it he gives this affectionate address ; that when he comes to pronounce it, they may know it does not belong to them, and thereby be relieved in their minds, and not charge themselves with what they were not. This was most admirably done by his most affectionate address, in which he includes them with himself. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* That he puts in himself with them, most fully appears by what follows, and which we are next to consider.

2. The knowledge which the apostle, and these persons had, concerning their state in Christ. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.*

It is of vast importance to know Christ—To know that we are in Christ—To know our state in Christ : as it saves from many perplexities of mind ; it emboldens us in our walk with God ; it renders us happy and cheerful ; it lifts us up above the trials and miseries of this present time-state ; it keeps us stedfast in our faith and profession of the gospel : it makes us valiant for the Truth ; it increases our love one to another for Christ's sake ; it knits our hearts to each other, and to the Lord ; it hath a most blessed and gracious effect upon us, to mortify our inward corruptions ; to keep down the body of sin ; to excite and draw forth our

graces ; it is as an armour of proof in the day of our spiritual battle ; so that we are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The apostle knew Christ : so did these he here addresses. He knew he was in Christ : so did they also. He knew hereby Christ's interest in him, and he from hence knew his interest in Christ : so did these saints whom he is here speaking unto. He knew his state in Christ, so did they also. He speaks to them as being equal in all these blessed and substantial realities with himself. His words are, *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* I cannot hesitate a moment, but must assuredly conceive, the apostle's knowledge of all which hath been expressed, must have been more full and enlarged than any of their's ; but it was not more true. Yet as he received it immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and many of these persons had received it from the apostle, and others, who had been the means of conveying it to them, which had been brought home to their minds by the Holy Ghost, it may be with safety inferred, their own knowledge in a certain sense and degree, was not equal to the apostle's : yet in all things necessary to their enjoyment of everlasting life, they were here one and the same. We know Christ. We know our state in Christ. We know the blessedness of our state in Him. We know the fixedness and permanency thereof. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* To know this is to be truly blessed, happy, holy. It is a great misery which befalls many, whom we call the people of God, they have no clear and scriptural ideas, of what the knowledge of Christ consists in—How we receive the knowledge of Him into our minds—How we clearly apprehend our interest in Him—How this is kept up, and maintained in our minds by the Holy Ghost. Nor, in general, have the Lord's people that scriptural knowledge of their state in Christ, which would make them most truly blessed, happy, and holy. It is universally acknowledged by all under a profession of Christ, we cannot know these important things but by the Spirit : we generally rest in this acknowledgment, without ever considering in what way, and by what means it pleases Him to make these things known to the mind : we commonly pray, the mind may be affected with divine truth, but we seldom pray the mind may be enlightened into the knowledge and right gospel apprehension of the same. Hence it is so very few are found to live out, and off themselves, on Christ as revealed in the word of truth—On the Father's love as set forth therein—On his record and testimony concerning his Son ; and on what our state in Christ is, before the Lord. Now at this time, we most assuredly have a very proper opportunity to touch on some of these subjects, and especially on our state in Christ, the text of itself leading thereunto : *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life.* Here is the state we were in expressed.—The state we are now in, declared : our passing from the one to the other is over ; and we know what our present state is. We were in our nature-head, by his fall and ours in him, in a state of death. We, as one with Christ in eternal election, He being our Head of Grace, we had in Him life before the world began. He became our Surety, hereby we were preserved from the imputation of sin : yet we were not preserved from the total and final corruption of our nature, by Adam's fall, and transgression ; but were conceived and born in sins, and were transgressors from the womb. We have had full proof of this ; having lived in an unregenerate state : this we have lived in :

which state for evil, cannot be exceeded but by the state of wrath and damnation. Out of this state we have been brought, by the Omnipotent power of God the Spirit: we are therefore passed from one state to another: from a state of death, to a state of life. The means by which we passed was regeneration: we are now out of our former state; nor can we ever be in it again. We are in a state now which will never cease to be our state in Christ: we are in a state of life: of grace: of free and perfect acceptation: of justification: of pardon: of salvation: of everlasting life: and by this means we are prepared to be removed into the state of Glorification: where we shall be absent from the body and present with the Lord. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* I have thrown these subjects as fully as I could together, that you having a general scheme of them, might be the better prepared for to receive some important proofs from the scriptures, of the reality of all this. The apostle *Paul* writing to the church in Christ, at *Colosse*, addresses them thus, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." chap. i. 12, 13. These persons were made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light: they were also translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son: the one is expressive of their regeneration, the other of the state into which they, as regenerated ones, were introduced: which is very agreeable with our Lord's own declaration; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3: and with what the apostle declares of the accomplishment of this in his own soul, and the souls of others, and the knowledge he, and they had of the same, *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* Some say, our meetness for heaven and glory is in Christ. No; it is not; it is in us; intuitively and inherently; it consists in the work of the Holy Ghost: our souls are the subjects of it: and hereby we have supernatural faculties, senses, graces, life and light, which will exist in us for ever. It is by our being enlightened into the knowledge of Christ, that our being born again is discovered unto us. We are at regeneration brought into a state suitable thereunto—even into Christ's world: or, to keep to the apostle's words, into the kingdom of God's dear Son: in the which Christ shines forth. He is in it the Light of everlasting Life—The Sun of everlasting righteousness—The Tree of Life—The fountain of Life—The Lord our Righteousness—Our feast—Our All. This kingdom of God consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: we are hereby brought into the true knowledge of Christ—To have communion with Him—To know our state in Him; which is that of acceptation in his Person; of the free, full, and irrevocable pardon of all our sins. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: Justification unto life: a right and title, openly and manifestatively, to all spiritual blessings: all which is made known to us, by the shedding abroad the love of the Divine Father in our hearts; and by the Holy Ghost's sealing us up unto the day of eternal redemption. In this state we have freedom from all condemnation: our Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John v. 24. Now the

apostle knew that himself, and those brethren to whom he writes, were in this state of regeneration. He also knew the blessings they were hereby instated in. He says with confidence, *We know that we have passed from death unto life*. The state of death is that of unregeneracy. The state of life is that of grace—of being in it. These states are distinct ones : we cannot be in both at one and the same time. When we are out of the state of unregeneracy and are regenerated, we are out of it for ever : we can never be in it again : no ; not to eternity : when we are in the state of life and salvation, we are in it for ever. This is thus expressed in our text, *We know that we have passed from death unto life*. *Have passed*. The act of regeneration where it hath taken place, is a past act : it is once for all : it cannot be repeated : it makes an entire change in our state. We are not in a state of condemnation : we are in a state of free, full, and complete pardon, and justification : we are openly declared to be in Christ—To be clothed in his righteousness—To be washed in his blood—To be heirs of eternal life—To be those very persons whose names are enrolled in heaven : so that it would be of great benefit to us, if we distinguished between the grace of regeneration, and the state we are in before God, in consequence of our regeneration. We are the subjects of regeneration : this is wrought within us : our state by means of it, is that of life and salvation ; which if we had more clear and spiritual apprehensions of, would be an excitement unto us, to live up unto our high rank, and dignity, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. We know ourselves to be in Christ by the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, who bears witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God. As he brings us to live on Christ, and enables us to bring Christ into all our actions, and look and rest on Him continually, we have in our own souls the clearest evidence we can have of all this : so that we hereby know as truly, as it is here declared, *we have passed from death unto life*. The apostle does not speak of this knowledge as personally his own : he speaks in the plural number ; it is *we*. So the saints with him, were one and the same, in the real knowledge of this : and so are we also : we who are born of God are as truly possessed with the grace, fruits, and evidences of the new birth, as those were to whom the apostle wrote. I do not say we may have so clear a perception of the same, they had. He spake of them, as not committing sin ; as having the seed of God remaining in them ; of acting righteously ; as not being like *Cain* who slew his brother *Abel* ; of not hating, but loving the brethren. These were so many inward, and outward evidences and fruits of their new-birth : so they are of ours. Yet I would here add, we are not to look into ourselves for them : for though they spring from inward and inherent principles and dispositions wrought in our new nature, produced in us, by the operation of the Spirit of God, yet these are drawn out into act and exercise openly and visibly, so as to be seen and manifested unto others. Neither are we, as hath been again and again expressed, in opening these subjects, in going through the preceding Sermons, to conceive ourselves without sin, or without the acts of sin : we cannot commit the sin against the Holy Ghost : we cannot become unregenerate persons : we cannot hate the brethren : we cannot be without eternal life in our souls ; we need not therefore be distressed in our minds, by any expressions which are adopted, or may follow. *We have*, once for all, in regeneration, *passed from death unto life*. We both

know it, and enjoy it. And all we would be looking out for, is to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now beloved, seeing the world, and carnal professors of the gospel, are as fully possessed with the same spirit against Christ, his Truth, and people, as *Cain* was; we need not marvel if the world hate us: we are not of the world: we are chosen out of it: we know that we are chosen out of it; *we have passed from death unto life*. This is one open evidence of it—*we love the brethren*. The world and earthly minded professors do not love the brethren: so far from it, they hate us. Thus having gone through as well as I could, the 2nd particular of my sermon, I proceed to the next: which is this,

3. To shew the outward proof and reality of the new-birth, as evidenced, so as to be confirmed hereby. *We love the brethren*. I will here recite the whole of my text. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*. This last clause is to come into consideration, not now, but in the closing head of this discourse.

Love to the brethren, is the fruit and effect of a new and supernatural birth, wrought in our souls, by the Holy Ghost, as the blessed evidence of our having been chosen in Christ, by the Divine Father, before the world was. To love Christ, and His, and our brethren in Him, is congenial to that divine nature he hath made us the partakers of by his Holy Spirit: it is neither a cause, nor any part of our salvation; yet it is a fruit and effect of our salvation, as we partake of it, in our new and spiritual life, as it springs therefrom. Our spiritual life proceeds from Christ, the Essential Word of the Father, and it is manifested to be in us, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And this is an outward demonstration of it: we have a new and heavenly nature in us: we are in a new state: we have new faculties—new objects—new joys—new sorrows—new relations—new friends—new enemies—we love where Christ loves—we love those whom he loves—we love them out of love to Him—we love them because they are beloved of Him—we know them, because they all speak the same things, in their measure, and degree, of, and concerning Him. In the day the apostle lived, love to Christ, and to the brethren, had been drawn out, and exercised to a very great degree. At the time of his writing this Epistle it was, by means of the erroneous persons who were amongst the churches, and by the means of the heresies taught by them, very greatly abated. There was therefore so much necessity of speaking on this subject: and the apostle hereupon makes it a distinguishing evidence of their being actually to be known by it, as the children of God; and the want of it to be an evidence that such were the children of the devil. He has been on this in the foregoing verses; as he is here in this, shewing it to be the mark and evidence of the new-birth. He is not leading us by these things to Christ: but he is shewing these things flow from those fixed and settled habits, graces, and that holy disposition the Holy Ghost hath wrought in us; and which are concreated in our new and heavenly birth: which the Divine Spirit produced in us, when it pleased him to call us out of darkness, into his marvellous light. It is what we are in Christ, the world hates us for: not that the world, or any unregenerate professor can possibly know what we are in Christ—what our blessedness is in Him—what our

state before the Lord in Christ is—what our comforts in communion with Him are. They may hear us speak on these most divine and important subjects. There may be some general and external influences of the Holy Ghost, reflected on their natural minds, when they are hearing of these things. They may with *Balaam* cry out, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his:” yet it cannot be they should ever see spiritual and heavenly things in their true glory and excellency; so as inwardly to relish and delight themselves in them. There must be seasons, when their inward hatred and dislike of the children of God, will break forth: then it will appear, they belong to two different heads: that they are two distinct seeds, as *Cain* and *Abel* were. The one cannot but love each other, and that for the Lord’s sake; the other cannot but hate them, seeing they are opposite to them: they are not of their clan: their profession is opposite to all the seed of the serpent delight in: so that the holy apostle might well say to the children of the Most High God, in the age and time in which he lived; and we may well consider it, as spoken by him at this time, to us, who are the Lord’s, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* It would be to be wondered at if they did not. From the very beginning of the gospel, we received this message and command from our dearest Lord, that we should love one another: this we are to attend closely to—to pursue and practise. We are not to love as *Cain* the first son of reprobation did: he was of the wicked one, a child of the devil: he slew his brother, because he was a righteous man in Christ, having his righteousness imputed unto him: he slew him for this very reason, because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. The same spirit still exists in the minds of all false teachers—In heretics of every description: it exists in a greater, or less degree, in all professors of the gospel, who have not the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the case with us: *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* Our love to the brethren in Christ, is an evidence of our love to Him, and we hereby give an outward evidence we belong to Him: this is an outward, stated evidence of our state and condition—of what we really are before the Lord: we are born of God: we are converted unto Him: Christ is our centre: we are fixed on Him. Regeneration goes before conversion: the former is the act of God within us; the latter is our act towards God: it is the fruit of the former. The truth of our regeneration and conversion, with the blessedness of our state before the Lord, in Christ, with the safety and happiness of our condition, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, our having passed from a state of death into a state of life, are declaratively and openly manifested, so far as we are under the true belief thereof, by our loving the brethren. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:* which love of the brethren must be a peculiar love, such as none but the regenerate are the subjects of, and which none but they can exercise, or the apostle would not have so particularly mentioned it: it is such, as those who have it not, are in a state of unregeneracy; so it follows. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* This is much the same with what the apostle said in the former chapter, on the same subject: he had there said on the same subject, “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none

occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." chap. ii. 9—11. He then dropped the subject, and took up others: he resumed this subject at the tenth verse of this chapter now before us, and pursues it in this, and the following verses; and that in stronger terms, as appears in the following sentence. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*: which brings me

4. To shew, that it is an outward proof, of a contrary state to that of regeneration and conversion to God, not to love the brethren; but to hate them. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*: that is, in a state of unregeneracy: this will fully appear to be the true and genuine scope of the words, by reciting the whole verse, *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*: which must be a state and condition contrary to that which had been spoken of, under the term *life*: into the which *John* and those with him, included in the word *we*, were entered. Which, it being clear, was a state of regeneration, justification, pardon, salvation, and free access to God, this contrary state, must therefore be, an unregenerate one. The apostle enters tenderly on this subject: though, when he pursues it, he speaks very strongly concerning the sin and guilt contracted by the persons in it. He had said, when he began this subject at the 10th verse of this chapter, and expressed himself thus, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Here in our text it is the same: only the state of such an one is declared to be death; yet we shall find him in the pursuit of his subject to affirm such an one to be declared by the apostle, to be a *murderer*: still as all along, he is speaking out the distinction there is, between the children of God, and the children of the devil; and goes on from such not loving the brethren, and then to say they are murderers, and have not eternal life abiding in them, I here again confess, what I have before hinted, the apostle is treating of this subject, as a species of the sin against the Holy Ghost: and it is for this reason, he places these professors on the list with *Cain*, who murdered his brother *Abel*. I would leave this with the reader and hearer to judge of the propriety or impropriety of, as may seem right, agreeable to the whole of this subject: yet it will be a little more touched on, when we shall be on the next words; and that because of the strong expressions in them. I have now only to shew, a proof and an outward evidence of being in an unregenerate state, is fully set forth, in not loving the brethren. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*. As such as have, and are passed from death unto life, love the brethren: so such under a profession of the gospel, as love not the brethren, are in a state of death. They are, therefore, what they ever have been, abstracted from their having been professors of Christ, and his gospel, viz. unregenerated persons. A most awful state to be found in—Christ being near in their mouths, and far from their reins: this was the case with many in the apostolical churches. It is doubtless the case with all the churches now: if not, such a passage as this before us, would be altogether needless: therefore, we must not conceive, but in a certain sense, and to a certain degree, the churches of Christ in all ages, and even down to the end of time, will have such found

in them, as will in some degree answer to such as are here spoken of: sin is sin: want of love to the brethren, and that let it be in what sense and degree it may, which amounts unto, and is in its nature, and by its consequences, hatred of, or an hating the brethren, must in the sight of the Lord our God be what it was in the apostle's days. If such were in a state of death then, the very same, and such like persons, who sin in the same, and such like manner, must be as truly abiding in death, in a state of unregeneracy now. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* We may see from hence, a man under a very high profession of Christ, may be a very great sinner: and that mentally: in his heart, and without outward act: here is nothing said, or in what is to follow, of any thing but what is negative and positive in the mind only: not of any act committed: yet it is put in the scale, and reckoned with the act of *Cain*, who killed his brother. We should learn, that even not to love the brethren is a sin: yea, even of the same nature and kind with that of *Cain*. It is from this negative the positive originates: even of hatred and ill will towards a brother: which will so far prove such in whom it dwells, that they are the devil's children, the brood of *Cain*: not only in a state of unregeneracy, but even under the sentence of eternal death, and destitute of eternal life abiding in them: there must therefore be such guilt in this, of not loving the brethren, as is not easily describable. I therefore confess, I think as the apostle sets it forth, and according to what he hath of it in view, it can be no other, than what follows in the lives and tempers of such, as have been guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost. And he is here setting forth such in distinction from all other professors; and especially from such as were true professors of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. The hatred of these persons, might be more inveterate and malicious, and break out into greater acts of hatred, even in the church of Christ, and towards it, than even the malice of the world, and those of it who made no sort of profession. Hence the caution is suited to such a sense and apprehension of the words; *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* The word *hateth* denoteth the fixed abiding state and temper of the mind; as the expression of *abiding in death*, doth the state of the person: it is not to be merely out of temper with a brother, but it implies a fixed, rooted, settled, implacable spirit, which harbours that sentiment of a brother, which by no means is to be overcome. I aim to set it forth as clearly, and fully as I can; because I most certainly hope, and sincerely too, none of us are by any means chargeable with it; neither do I think all who are in the very state of unregeneracy are. Not all who are persecutors of the Lord's people are chargeable with this sin of hating the brethren, in the sense the apostle here expresseth it: they hate the saints: that they do: they hate them because they are such: that it is also a truth: but they do not hate them, as having been numbered amongst them, as those who were professors of the same faith in Christ with them. No; it wholly belongs to those who are, or have been in a church state: whose spirits are malignant against such as are in every appearance, most truly one with Christ; yet by such a spirit breaking out from them, and exercised on, and towards the real children of God, prove themselves

hereby to be in the state of death. The Lord save us from such a spirit, and state, for his great Name's sake. Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him: 1 JOHN III. 15.

THE apostle in the pursuit of his present subject, which contains this solemn and awful assertion, that *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*, adds what must eventually follow upon it, as being the real character of each individual who was in this case, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*. The word *Whosoever* is a word which takes in all who are under a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ: yet it belongs but to some of them; and these to whom it belongs are unregenerate; for they are those of whom it was said in the last clause of the former verse, *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*. It begins there with a negative: it is here a positive: it is expressed in the singular—*He*: not, they. Here, though the word *Whosoever* is comprehending, yet it is brought down, as extending itself personally and individually; so that it is expressive of this. The person spoken of is most certainly a professor, or how could it be said he hateth a brother? It must be one who professeth in some sense and measure, the same faith with him whom he calls his brother; yet at the same time he is so far from being of the same mind and will with him that he hates him in his heart. To open and explain this, will be the elucidation of what is contained in the text, which I will attempt under the following particulars: and divide them thus.

1. By considering what is to be understood by *hating a brother*, and what such an one is. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*.

2. An appeal to the saints both of the state and case of such an one as hateth his brother. *And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*. I hope under both these heads to compress and contain all which may serve to cast light, on the substance of what is contained in the passage. May the Lord himself shine, and reflect his own light on the same: that the Truth may be maintained, and all error concerning what is before us, entirely secluded: this is the desire and prayer of my heart. The Lord grant it for his great Name's sake, to the praise of the glory of his grace. I am now entering on it.

1. By considering what is to be understood by *hating a brother*: and what such an one is; *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*. This will be best entered on in a very gradual manner; so that this head may be divided, and subdivided into a variety of particulars; contained for the substance of them, in the general division; so as to explain the

whole contained therein by giving an account of the word, *Whosoever*—Then of those who are expressed under the term brother—Then why and wherefore such and such hateth his brother: and in what sense they are murderers. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* The word *Whosoever*, includes all persons implied and contained in the subject that is here expressed: so that let those be who or what they might, in name, in dignity, in profession, in office, in the visible church of Christ; or let him be who, or what he may, whosoever, or whatsoever, let it be general, or personal, who hateth his brother, is a murderer. The word *hateth* is expressive of what is very positive in its nature and degree. It is not a mere want of love, so as not to have that respect to the brother which may, as properly considered, be due unto him; but it suggests bearing a positive ill will unto him, even such as amounts to hatred. To hate is to bear an ill will to one who is the object of our hatred. It not only implies, not to love; but *hatred*, is a deep-rooted ill will at one, disposing us to vex, injure, or destroy him who is the object of our hatred: and this is accounted murder before God. Whosoever he be, under the profession of the gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a member of a visible church of Christ, or be he only one, who without this tie and obligation on him, hateth his brother; or, who instead of cultivating a truly christian temper towards his brother, indulges wrath, malice, envy, and revenge, is in the sight, and reckoning of the Lord God, a murderer: and is by real saints to be esteemed, as represented by the word of God, as having no spiritual life abiding in him: nor any title to, or meetness for eternal glory. This is most solemn, and awful: yet even this is not fully expressive of what is contained in the text. The person hated is a brother: the person who hateth is a brother too. This must be understood, by profession: as professing the same faith, and church order. And it is on account of what the one values, and the other does not, the hatred of the one, is excited and drawn forth against the other. It is on this account what was instanced in, respecting *Cain* and *Abel* was brought forth, as a proper parallel to express it by. Hence I conceive, it ought to be noticed, that to hate a brother in Christ, is not a general and universal case: nor is every slight shewn to saints, or by saints themselves, at several times to each other, here intended or referred unto. It would be very sad with us if it were so. It must, and will be found—we who love Christ with a supreme love, look to him for life and salvation, have the same blessed views and apprehensions thereof, and trust in Him for everlasting life, and love each other in Him, and for his sake; yet we all have our partialities. We love all the saints as saints; but we do not love all saints alike; we do not; nor are we chargeable by means of this, with hating any one of them: we may in very many instances be charged with a partiality in our love towards each other; with a want of that love and fervour of affection, which is most justly due to each other, as members of Christ, and of each other in Him; yet this cannot amount so high as for the holy apostle, to charge us with hating a brother, with being individually, a murderer; with not having eternal life in us. But this is charged upon, and declared to be the case of, whosoever hateth his brother. He is a murderer. He hath not eternal life in him. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Sure where eternal life is not, the person must be in every sense Christless; yet here we must make this exception

—That such an one as is here spoken of, hath made a profession of Christ, or he could not hate his brother who is truly in Christ : and it is as such, and because he is such, he hates him ; which is implied in the term *brother* : as also that the external profession is one and the same. This is very clear from the words themselves, which are these, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* I most assuredly do not think ; how suitably soever the aforesaid observations may be to some parts of our text ; that they by any means are fully explanatory of it. Whilst what is written in this Epistle, will concern the church of Christ down to the very end of time, yet I am equally persuaded some things in it, could only concern, and be most peculiarly suited to the apostle's days. And, such in a measure, I consider these words, and its foregoing connection to be : for whilst the children of God, and the children of the devil, can never be more completely distinguished than they are by this servant of the Lord ; yet as the sin unto death was peculiar to the apostolic age, and I conceive this hatred of the brethren to be a fruit thereof ; so I look on what is here said of such an one as loveth not his brother, to belong, at least in its first and primary meaning, to the professors of that day : who having greater gifts, by which I mean spiritual gifts bestowed on them, than are now bestowed, so they sinned, who were left to fall into sin, in a more desperate way, and to a greater degree than any now can. The spiritual gifts bestowed on them, did not make them spiritually minded : this should be considered by us. It is possible to have large portions of the gifts of the Spirit, and be destitute of the indwelling and grace of the Holy Ghost in us. The ministers of Christ, who may excel in gifts and ability others, should be careful to distinguish between growing in gifts, and in grace. They may grow in the one, at the same time that they do not in the other. It is well with them when they grow in both, and that in an equal proportion : without it, they may by their gifts edify the church, but they cannot grow into Christ. The church in *John's* time began, towards the close of his days, to be more and more openly manifested as it respected the materials it was composed of. Many real and eminent saints were found in it : and many antichrists and false brethren also. As some of these had left the communion of saints, and were scattering themselves hither and thither, to spread their cursed and pernicious doctrine : so some in whom their doctrine had been imbibed, still remained with the saints : yet not being in heart and soul united with them in the unity of faith, and bond of the Spirit, they on all occasions shewed how opposite they were in heart and soul. It might be they abode with the saints on purpose to do them an injury, so oft as opportunity served—A most devilish and satanic spirit, which could originally spring from none but the devil himself. These might well be considered as *Cain's* descendents, and to be of their father the devil. They had in their minds an irreconcilable hatred, contempt of, and ill will to the saints as saints, and that on account of their being essentially different in their faith and spirit from themselves ; yet this was so concealed, that it went on in the outward appearance as if they were all brethren : hence it is expressed thus, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* To hate a brother is very unnatural. To hate is the utmost expression of ill will. This hatred of a brother, must have been carried to the very uttermost ; or the person would not have been charged with being a murderer. It

stands in its immediate and proper connection with the murder *Cain* was guilty of, thus, *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* You see he that hateth his brother, and is declared to be a murderer, is compared unto *Cain*, and set in compare with him: so that the crime, hereby, might be set forth in its utmost degree of sinfulness. No doubt but with a two-fold view—To guard real saints from every thing, which in their conduct and behaviour towards each other, might express even in the least appearance a want of loving each other for the Lord's sake, as brethren in the best of ties, and relationship, in Him: and also that such as were much to be suspected of want of that christian love to each other, which Christ had commanded, and real saints were the examples of, might be led to know, how great a sin it was, to have the least ill will, or even coldness of affection, one brother in Christ towards another. Yet the ultimate design of the apostle seems to me, to suggest there were such amongst them, in, and throughout the churches, who had an habitual hatred in their hearts, to some of the saints: which, it may be, did not break out so as to be discoverable; and if it did not, the devil might deceive them thus—you do such an one no actual injury: you are not, therefore, cognizable for it: you may indulge yourself in thinking of him just as you please: thoughts are free: you may inwardly think and conceive agreeable to your hatred of a brother, just as you think fit; and yet sit at the Lord's Supper with him. The apostle would have such know, that all this was before the Lord, and in his sight, the effects of real hatred to a brother—That such, be they who they might, were murderers. He therefore delivers his thoughts in very general and universal terms; such as might comprehend all those, whom he suspects as not loving a brother in Christ, and for his sake: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* The word *hateth* is in the present tense. It should be taken particular notice of: it being descriptive of the state of the mind of the person here spoken of, and who is by the apostle here called *murderer* to his face. The person is one, whose mind is continually possessed with ill will: he is glad on every occasion to give vent to it: to express and exercise the same, in every way, and in all sorts of instances: especially and as far as it can be against the most sublime mysteries of grace: the peculiar worship of God: and also towards such as worship him in spirit and in truth. A continual frame, temper, and bent of the mind, most assuredly is the true criterion of the man: therefore, a continual and habitual disposition, which governs and rules the whole man, to hate his brother, must be that which is descriptive of the person of whom the apostle is here speaking, and whom he declares to be a murderer: as truly so, as *Cain* was. It is not to be doubted, our apostle had in remembrance at this time, what the Lord said in his Sermon on the mount, when he thus expressed himself, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his

brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Matt. v. 21, 22. Our apostle seems to elucidate our Lord's meaning, in what he here asserts, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*. I hope I have given an explanation of the text thus far, as may afford light and satisfaction; and also in such a way, as to give those who are real saints, no cause for uneasiness: which cannot be, if I have rightly described the person who hateth his brother. If the word *hateth* be descriptive of the fixed state of his mind, in the which there always is ill will, rancour, enmity, wrath and malice lodged, against a brother in Christ; as this is wholly incompatible with grace, then none of the Lord's people need take that to themselves, which they are not chargeable with. There may be mistakes amongst the holy brethren: yea, there may be contentions, divisions, ill will, and evil thoughts arise in our hearts one against another; we have cause to bewail the same; yet all this does not amount to what the apostle is here speaking of. It cannot be said of us, on these accounts, that we are murderers, and that we have not eternal life abiding in us. Not but all these things are greatly to be bewailed. It shews how unlike we are to Christ, and how little the weight and authority of his word remains in us, and abideth in us: yet I would say, the text hath a particular respect to what was the case with some, who were, or who had been professors, in the apostle's day: and should be kept I conceive, in its proper place and order. And the use we should make of it should be this—To view the nature, guilt, and demerit of the sin of hatred: of hating the Lord's people: of being under such a frame and temper, as to be chargeable with being with him, be he who he may, that hateth his brother: ever remembering such an one is declared to be a murderer—To be what *Cain* the apostate was—To bear an exact resemblance unto him. So far as we make use of what is here expressed, to avoid every thing which in, and of itself, might give the least suspicion, of our not loving as brethren, with a pure heart fervently, so far we make a right improvement of the same: and so far it becomes us: no further is it of any immediate use to us. I go on and proceed to my next particular, which is this,

2. An appeal made by the apostle, to the saints, both of the state and case of such an one as hateth his brother. *And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

The first murder, recorded in scripture, is that committed by *Cain* who killed *Abel*; and *Cain* slew him: consequently he was the first murderer. The ties of consanguinity did not restrain him. He is held up to view as a child of the devil. His act is recorded and will be to the very end of time, to be detested, and had in horror: so that to be guilty of such an act as he was, seems of itself to be sufficient to shudder and sink one at the very thought. He had and carried about with him the sentence of his own condemnation. He went from the presence of the Lord, the east of the garden of *Eden*, where the primary Cherub had been set up by the Lord God, and which was the true and proper seat of worship, and dwelt in the land of *Nod*, on the east of *Eden*. Gen. iv. 16. The word *Nod* signifies *shaking*. It was very expressive of the state of his own mind. Depend on it, he never enjoyed a comfortable day afterwards; nor will any who follow his example. *Jude*, he speaking of some

in his day, and he was contemporary with our apostle, says, *Woe unto them!* Together with him he names others, who had been tremendous sinners, in their way, and day in the which they lived. *Balaam* the soothsayer, and *Core*, or *Korah*, who rose up against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and withstood them as the Lord's ministers and leaders of his people Israel, out of Egypt, and were with them as their guides in the wilderness of *Arabia*. The apostle having spoken of the false prophets, or, as our *John* styles them, antichrists in his day, says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." v. 11. The worst of sinners, and their names, and crimes too, are mentioned in the Book of God, that we might tremble at the very idea of being compared unto them, by falling into crimes like theirs. Thus the infamy of the apostate *Judas*, is held, we may almost say, in universal abhorrence, by all who read and hear of the same. Murder is a crime human nature shudders at. God in a very peculiar manner, hath punished, doth, and will punish for it. He says, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Gen. ix. 6. He says, "Thou shalt do no murder. "Thou shalt not kill." Exod. xx. 13. He also said, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." Exod. xxi. 14. Murder in every sense, be it killing with sword, in duels, or slaying an individual in cold blood, or self-murder, it is an abomination in the sight of God. Never any age for these crimes, like unto the present. If the cause was enquired into, and rightly examined, it would be found to originate from the Deism and infidelity of the present day. The wounding the person, good name, and defaming the character of any one, is a certain murder in the sight of God. To despise any man, and wish his damnation, is to be in danger of hell fire. Such as are left to murder others, or themselves, are most awfully left of God. We may have had instances of some, who have been for a season great professors who have through violent temptation, been so overcome, as to have been self-murderers. Whilst I would be silent in such cases, and leave what their state is with the Lord: yet I must confess the instances recorded concerning self-murder, in the case of *Ahithophel*, and *Judas Iscariot*; the one the type of the other; make one tremble: so as to have left off, to have any thing to say, about what, or how the Lord may deal with any of his professing ones, who may be so left, as to be their own executioners. The instance of *Samson* which hath been sometimes brought, and that of the Jailor, who drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, are by no means pertinent. The one died as Christ did upon the cross, a conqueror over the Lord's enemies, and His people's: the other would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been fled, but was prevented, by the calling out to him, *Do thyself no harm; for we are all here*. The appeal of the apostle to the saints in the words before us, is most solemnly striking; *ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*. It is very expressive of what their judgment was on this point. It is true he does not here treat of the act of killing, or murdering the body: that is granted; yet what is the foundation of his saying this, and bringing it in here, is the murdering the body of *Abel*, whom *Cain* slew. So that a presumptive proof might be raised herefrom, that all, and every sort and kind of murder, may be

included in the appeal here made. It may be said, the apostle is here addressing saints, and these very holy and blessed ones, of whom he had before spoken most highly, therefore it would have been below him, and his subject, to have conceived any thing like this, of, or concerning them. Yet this is to be attended unto, he is here, not addressing them, he is appealing unto them, respecting their knowledge of this matter: he says, *and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Thus he makes his appeal unto them, of what they themselves knew of this. He makes their judgment of the same equal with his own; *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* This they knew as he did also. Yet it is well, and absolutely necessary to confine ourselves to the subject the apostle is upon, which is that of hating a brother. *David* who was a child of God, was guilty of slaying *Uriah the Hittite*, with the sword of the children of *Ammon*. Yet, horrible as the sin was, which hath so stained the annals of his history, together with the cause, and circumstances connected with it, so as one can never read it, but it must excite in our minds indignation against him, yet we cannot deny but he had eternal life in his soul, even at the very time he thus fell. He was for the act, guilty of murder, yet it was a transient act: never after reiterated. The murderer spoken of in the text, hath always one and the same disposition: it is a permanent and an abiding disposition inherent in him. *David* murdered, or caused *Uriah*, who might be a child of God, to be slain. The person spoken of in our text, is one who hateth his brother, because he is the Lord's; which as a sin, must vastly exceed in guilt and demerit, the simple breach of the sixth commandment of the Lord's most holy law. Like as the sin against the Holy Ghost exceeds all other transgressions. So that such an one as hath an habitual hatred to a brother in Christ, he that hateth his brother, he, let his profession be what it may, abideth in his natural unconverted state. He is a *murderer*. He hath not eternal life abiding in him. This the apostle affirms. This the saints were well persuaded of. This they knew in their own minds. They could not but set their seals unto it. He therefore makes his appeal unto them: *ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Then he must have in him eternal death.

But what are we here to understand by having eternal life in us? most undoubtedly, Christ. He is Eternal Life. The fountain of it. The very spring by the which the streams and blessings of it, are conveyed into the souls of his believing and called people. He lives in them. He abideth in them. He makes his most blessed abode with them. He bears this title—*Eternal Life*, in the 1st chap. of this Epistle, verse 2: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." So again in the 2nd chap. v. 25. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." The Lord Jesus Christ is the life of all his people. Their knowledge of Him, is eternal life. Now it cannot be, such an one as hateth his brother, should have eternal life abiding in him: such an one cannot have the true knowledge of Christ: nor any communion with Christ: nor any spiritual apprehensions of Him: nor any high prizings of Him: nor any hungerings and thirstings after Him: nor any reverence for Him: nor yield any practical submission to Him. This is most certainly the case with him, let

his profession be what it may, who hateth his brother. His state is this; he is without Christ. He is Christless: which is altogether the most tremendous: because to call Him Lord, and to sin most grievously against his Majesty, in hating such as he loves; surely no evil can exceed this. The case of such an one is awful: both as considered negatively and positively. He not only is without love to the brethren, but he is in the habitual exercise of positive hatred in his mind towards them. May we learn to profit by the account the apostle hath given us, concerning such as are the children of God, and such as are the children of the devil. May he save us from all want of love to the holy brethren: and may we have right apprehensions of the exceeding misery of such as have not eternal life abiding in them: and never forget how the apostle makes his appeal to real saints concerning this: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* And now I would close with a short account of the inward blessedness of real saints, who have eternal life abiding in them. Some conceive *eternal life* in this place, respects that principle of spiritual life which is communicated to the souls of the regenerated people of God, when the Holy Ghost is pleased to become the Lord and giver of spiritual life unto them. His whole work within them, and upon them is expressed by the term quickening: *you hath he quickened.* Eph. ii. 1. Nor am I by any means against this to be understood as a part of the meaning of the expressions here. It is by a supernatural life conveyed unto us, in regeneration, we are made alive to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is from Christ our Head, we are made the partakers of it. He saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John vi. 47. As we could not live in this world, until we were brought into it by birth, at which time we were introduced into it, and there was in it, every thing most completely provided for clothing, food, and for all we should ever need; I speak of what the Lord, in preparing the world for us, had done: so when we were born again, and thereby brought into Christ's world, we had all provided for us, and when the Holy Ghost was pleased to open the eyes of our spiritual minds, He set before us Christ Jesus: and we found in Him, in his Person, righteousness and salvation, fulness and riches, every thing we shall ever want to eternity. As the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal Christ in us, so he dwells in us. He is our All. We see our All is in Him. We live on Him for all. We receive Him as he is set before us in the everlasting gospel, as all our salvation and all our desire. So that we have hereby Christ in us. He is our eternal life. He puts forth his life in us. We are partakers of the blessings and benefits of the same. He lives in us. We live in Him: on Him: in a continued dependance on Him, and in real communion with Him. Thus the life we live in the flesh, is a life of faith on the Son of God: in this consists our real inward blessedness. It flows into our minds, we have the actual enjoyment of it in our own souls, as our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to dwell in our hearts by faith. Now herein consists the real blessedness of saints, which is lasting. It abideth in us. It will be so with us for ever. This is the lot and portion of all saints. All the saints have not the like knowledge, sense, enjoyment, and experience of this: yet they are equally, and all alike interested herein, and have equal right and title to this blessedness. It is in proportion to their faith, or in other words, it is in proportion to the knowledge they are, by

the Lord the Spirit, favoured with, of Christ being their eternal life, they have the enjoyment of Him, and of what He is to them. If saints have eternal life abiding in them, then they are blessed in themselves beyond all they can possibly conceive, or express. What will then their blessedness be when admitted into the state of glory? It will be such as they will never be able fully to comprehend. We may have some apprehensions of it now, but we shall never be able to comprehend it, when we have the fullest enjoyment of it in glory everlasting. Christ is now our eternal Life. He will then be our eternal Glory. He dwells in us now. He shines upon our spiritual and intellectual minds. It is hereby we are made most truly blessed in Him. He will dwell in our souls, and possess all our faculties in Heaven, so as to fill us with all the fulness of Godhead. Our spiritual blessedness on earth, and in glory, is, and will be found to be, wholly incorporeal and intellectual. I have said, and delivered myself, very weakly on these very interesting subjects. May the Lord the Spirit give you his own view of them.

I leave them for your consideration. May his blessed teaching, influence, and blessing follow the same. Amen.

SERMON XLV.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—1 JOHN III. 16.

OUR apostle had carried on the subject of loving, and not loving the brethren, the members of Christ's mystic body in the former verse, as very expressive of what the state of those persons was, who did, and did not love for Christ's sake. He shewed the extent of real love to others, that it must extend to all who professed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord had commanded it. And hereby a proof was given of our true knowledge of Him: as also it was an evidence of our conversion to God, and the fruit and effect of our regeneration. It was hereby to be seen, and we ourselves could by no means overlook it, that we were passed from death unto life: we were not in a state of unregeneracy, but in the state of life and salvation. Our love to the members of Christ was a most convincing proof of this. On the contrary, such as were professors of the same truths of the everlasting gospel, yet loved not the brethren for Christ's sake, it proved such were in a state of death. They were, let their profession be what it might, wholly in a state of death and unregeneracy. It was manifest they were the devil's children. The apostle affirms, whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and he appeals to them as knowing, which knowledge must be from the Scriptures of Truth, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him: then this is the conclusion regarding such, that they are under eternal death. They are void of all spiritual life. He then shews how love to the brethren should be so far extended, as to lay down our lives for each other: that is, if

the case calls for and requires it, which, it may be, was the case in the age in which this Epistle was written. The apostle *Paul* seems to speak of what was like unto this, when he says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks." Rom. xvi. 3, 4. This was a singular expression of the strength of the love they had to Christ; and bore, and were disposed to express and exercise towards each other for his sake. The words of our present text are very expressive of the love of God to us, and what ought as the natural consequence to flow from it; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* We have in the words before us, one of the greatest and deepest expressions of the love of God to us, which are to be found in all the scriptures: *God laid down his life for us.* I will endeavour to cast the subject before us into the following order.

1. These saints together with *John*, had a perception of *the love of God.* This they had inwardly and spiritually: *Hereby we perceive, or, Hereby perceive we the love of God.*

2. How and by what means they had the perception of it: *Because he laid down his life for us.*

3. An enquiry into the meaning of this expression, *because he, (that is, God,) laid down his life for us.*

4. What obligation we are hereby laid under: *'And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'*

May the Lord help me to open each of these particulars so as to convey light and understanding to your minds: as it is His glory, and your spiritual profit I would wholly seek after and aim to obtain.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. So says that disciple whom Jesus loved. I am

1. To notice, how these saints, together with the apostle, had a perception of the love of God. This they could not have had, if there had not been a knowledge of this communicated: nor could they then, if they had not had spiritual senses and faculties suited to the same: and it must have been hereby, they so perceived the love of God to them, as to be impressed and inflamed therewith. *Hereby perceive we the love of God.*

This is very expressive of the clear knowledge and apprehension the apostle and these saints had of the love of the Divine Majesty in all His Persons towards them. To have an understanding of the love of God, to us in Christ, is the blessedness of all the saints. Some have greater perceptions of it, others less, yet they all perceive it more or less. They have inward conceptions of it, so as to admire it: to adore the Lord God for it, and give Him glorious praise for the same. The Holy Ghost sets forth, and before us, the whole mystery of everlasting love, in the Person of Christ: in whom God hath shone forth in the very uttermost display of it, and hath also reflected the glorious splendour of it, on the renewed minds of his saints, so as that they have thereby, an inward, spiritual, and divine apprehension thereof. All our spirituality consists in spiritual perception. And our spirituality consists inwardly. It is in our minds we have Christ formed: and what the Holy Ghost hath there revealed of Him to us, is that which renders Him glorious in our personal view and apprehension. Whilst it is wholly owing to the indwelling of the Holy

Ghost in the saints, that they have spiritual perceptions of Christ, and his amazing love, and of the Father's love to their persons in Him, yet in their spiritual mind, and faculties, these perceptions are formed of the same. It is in a way of intuition, we perceive the love of God. We not only know it, but we perceive it, so as to be inwardly impressed with the same, and so as to go out in heart and affection in consequence of it, towards the Lord. What the apostle is here expressing, for himself, and others, in saying, *Hereby perceive we the love of God*, most undoubtedly constituted, his, and their principal experience. It was the foundation of all which moved and so influenced their souls, as to carry them out, and off themselves, and fix them on God in Christ, as their centre, and their all. It would be well for us to know, and also to acknowledge, it is spiritual apprehensions of Christ Jesus, which can only fix our hearts on Him, and make Him precious to our souls: and this is faith. Such as have no perceptions of Christ, have no faith. Such as have spiritual apprehensions of Christ, they are believers on Him: they receive Him: they live in contemplations on Him. We esteem quick perceptions to arise from great sensibility, and life in its proper animation. It is most assuredly so, as it respects spiritual perceptions: it is the effect of spiritual life: which as exercised on the Lord Jesus Christ, conveys such spiritual views and conceptions of him, as produce effects in the mind correspondent with the same. The mind is most divinely taken with Him. The heart loves Him. The affections are fixed on Him. There is an inward communion with Him. The soul is most truly and sensibly ravished and delighted with Him. All this is through the medium of faith, which as it consists in a scriptural and spiritual conception of Christ formed of Him in the mind, so it is hereby he dwells and abides in us, and we have fellowship with Him. This proves we have an inward spirituality which is suited to Christ and wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, that we knowing Jesus and his love, might be greatly delighted and refreshed in real intercourse and communion with Him. The apostle, and saints in his time, had an inward, spiritual perception of Christ, in their own minds. This is the very substance of the text: *Hereby perceive we the love of God*. It was the case with the apostle: he had an inward, spiritual, realizing apprehension of the love of Christ: so had these saints also: they exercised their minds accordingly: which consisted in ruminating on the love where-with God loved them; and had, from everlasting in his beloved Son; which contained in the same, such evidences, as satisfied their minds most fully of the truth thereof; and made way for their increasing perceptions of it; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. The love of God here, must very principally refer, to our Lord Jesus Christ. The word *God* is not in the text: it is, with the word *of*, a supplement: yet I dare not drop it. No; not for millions of worlds. That it here belongs to Christ, may be most truly inferred from the 2nd verse of this chapter, and all the preceding verses: in them the apostle treats on loving, and not loving the brethren. It was the brethren of Christ, the saints were distinguished for loving, as other professors were distinguished from them, for not loving. So that with the greatest confidence, we most assuredly assert, it is Christ who is here spoken of, and it is his love the apostle, and these saints to whom he speaks, were so delighted with, in consequence of those clear and most

blessed perceptions they had of Him. This is full evidence of it, because the apostle makes mention of this most astonishing instance of our Lord's love, his laying down his life for us: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*: to which he adds, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*. This is sufficient proof, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Person who is here spoken of, and magnified: with a true and proper confession of his Godhead, as also of his exceeding great grace, which he hath shewed towards his church. He not only loved his people, and gave himself for them: He not only became the Representative and Surety, Mediator and Saviour of his church: He not only became incarnate, and performed all righteousness on her behalf, but he died the death due to sin. He made his soul an offering for sin. He loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood: nor was this all: but he laid down his life for us: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. This I conceive to be the greatest expression of his love, as it respects the phraseology of it, which is to be found in all the Book of God: which I intend to take up, and explicate, when we come to it, in the third head of this Discourse, where an enquiry is to be made into the meaning of this: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he (that is, God,) laid down his life for us*. I now proceed unto, and enter on my next particular; which is this,

2. To shew how, and by what means, the apostle, and these saints, had perceptions of the love of God: it was because he laid down his life for them: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*.

The love of God is a most wonderful subject. It is revealed, set forth, and recorded in the word of God. The love of the Three in Jehovah, Father, Word, and Spirit, had all shone forth in that very age, in which, our apostles, and these saints lived. Yea, it had so shone forth, as it never will again: nor had ever so before. There had been an eclipse of the moon before *John's* time. There was an eclipse of the sun in his time. Both of these were total. The first was very soon after the creation. The second was in the year of the world, according to *Dr. Ferguson*, 4040. It was on a friday, the third day of April, in the year of the Julian period, 4746. By the first, the church of Christ was so darkened, as to lose all her creation beauty and perfection, so as that she will never shine forth in it any more. By the total eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness, our Lord underwent such an infliction of the Father's wrath and curse due to sin, that his Sacrifice is the cause of her everlasting light and splendour. When this eclipse on the Person of Christ, God-Man, body and soul was over, he said, *It is finished*. He then shone forth with all his meridian glory on his Church. Now *John* and the saints whom he here addresseth, had experienced the blessedness of this. At our Lord's incarnation, and also in his own Life, and Passion, the brightest beams of everlasting love were reflected on the church, the elect of God, in their utmost glory and perfection. The glory and grace of this were so brightly reflected on, and into the minds of the apostle, and these saints, as we can scarcely conceive of. The Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate in *John's* days. He had lived and died, He had been buried, and rose again from the grave, all of which our apostle had been a real witness

of. Our Lord ascended Personally into the highest heavens, and shed the Holy Ghost as the fruit and evidence of it, on his church and apostles on the day of Pentecost, all which was still in remembrance. So that he, and these very saints whom he includes with himself, saying, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*, were more deeply, and profoundly filled with the knowledge of the subject before us, than it may be we can possibly conceive. They, many of them, having it is probable seen Christ in Person : it may be, they had eaten and drank with him, after his resurrection from the dead ; which must have had its peculiar effect and influence on their minds. Now this having been transacted within a few years of the present times, in the which they now lived, it must have been in their minds, to their very great advantage ; which it cannot have on ours. We are impressed with the revelation given us in the Sacred Volume concerning these eternal, immutable, and important realities. We receive our knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ, mentally, and by intuition. These received it and them both by this means, and had also outward testimonials, suited to their senses and feelings, to confirm their faith which we have not ; nor do we need them. As these could not, but in their views and reviews of the transactions of the Holy Trinity, which had been displayed in the compass of a few years past, in realizing their vast designs of grace, in the gift, mission and commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, witness the demonstrations of that grace, so in and by the same, they had spiritual perceptions of the love of God. More especially this was received into their minds, as they pondered on the love of the Trinity in Unity, as it was so gloriously reflected on them, in the death of Christ. Their minds were filled with the love expressed herein : their mouths with the praises of it : they were never tired of the subject. That Christ should die for them, this was such an effect, proceeding from the Father's love ; of the everlasting good will he had borne in his infinite mind, towards them, in distinction from all others, that they could have it no better expressed for them, than the apostle himself had here done ; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. It is as we contemplate the same love, we are led to the same glorious apprehensions, and admirations of it. We all find, when we apprehend all the love of God, set before us in Christ, manifested to us in Christ, and that the death of Christ is a most stupendous instance of his love to us, we have such perceptions of everlasting love, as leave us without all doubts and suspicions of the same. The little word *us* must not be omitted ; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. Whilst we shall ever have cause, so long as we are in this present world to renounce ourselves, and all looking at, and dependence on ourselves : yet this cannot be better increased and promoted, than by looking at ourselves in Christ, as one of the *us* for whom he laid down his life. As this will endear him to us, so it will increase our confidence in Him : and the more confidence we have in Him, so much the less we shall have in ourselves : as the more fully we are satisfied with the Lord Jesus Christ, so much the less we shall seek to be satisfied with ourselves. Christ's laying down his life for us, is such an evidence of his own heart toward us, his own delight in us, of his own mindfulness of us, of his interest in us, and of our complete salvation and perfection in Him, that we may well say for ourselves, as truly as

the apostle here doth, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* This brings me to my next particular : which is this,

3. To make an enquiry into the meaning of this expression : *Because he laid down his life for us.* I will here recite the former part of the text, that thereby no part may be lost upon us. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.*

It is we who perceive the love of God. The revelation made concerning it, is the mean by which we know it. Our spiritual faculties are the medium by the which we have spiritual, and inward perceptions thereof in our minds. What we are taken with is this vast expression of everlasting love, *God laid down his life for us.* Our present subject is an enquiry into the meaning of this expression. It hath in the former head been stated and expressed, that it is our Lord Jesus Christ is the Person here spoken of. We confess him to be God—The true God—The living God—The everlasting God : and that He who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen, died for us. All this is right : each particular which hath been expressed is founded on the express testimony of scripture, yet this expression here before us, is peculiar : so as that it needs explanation. Christ is God essentially. He is the Son of the living God, considered Personally or one in the Essence, or Godhead, with the Father and the Holy Ghost. His name is Jehovah : "I, even I, am the LORD," is his own declaration, Isa. xliii. 11 : yet Christ did not lay aside his Essential Glory. He did not lay down his life as God. He could no more act thus, than he could cease to be : so that I could wish this to be closely attended unto : that whilst it is here declared, *God laid down his life for us* : it is not the life of God as God : this is altogether impossible. Christ as one in the Godhead, as the incomprehensible Jehovah could neither become Incarnate, nor obey, and die. You will it may be, say, is not Christ the incomprehensible Jehovah ? Is he not God ? Is not his life called the righteousness of God ? Is not his blood styled the blood of God ? Is it not here said in the very words before us, *God laid down his life for us* ? would you have us leave all this aside ? I answer, and reply to each, and every one of these questions, the Lord God forbid. Yet with all these questions, and all this allowance, the Lord Jesus Christ neither laid aside the Essential Glories of his Godhead, nor did he die as God. Neither is that, it cannot, it is impossible it should be, the meaning of these words before us, *God laid down his life for us.* He neither died as the only begotten Son of God, as Essentially and Personally considered : neither did He lay aside his Essential Glory : neither did he obey and suffer merely considered as God. You will it may be, ask, who, what was Christ ? I read he had a glory with the Father before the world was—That he was the image of the invisible God—That he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God—That he made himself of no reputation—That he took on him the form of a servant. What ? would you have us to set aside all this ? would you by any means reject, or have us to reject the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ ? I answer, with my whole soul, God forbid. And I express myself on the great and most important subject as I have done, that the same may, if the Lord please, be the more clearly stated. It is too frequently the case, in stating the Godhead of Christ, the Person of Christ is swallowed up, and it is so, that at times

it is wholly lost. When the subject is the Person of Christ, then what he is as the Second in the Essence must be expressed, that what he is as God-Man, may be rightly conceived of and declared. Now Christ as God-Man, is not simply what he is, as a Person in the Godhead: whilst what he is as a Person in the Godhead, is the foundation of his being God-Man. He is in the form of God, the image of the Invisible God, and the Fellow of the Lord of hosts, as God-Man. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, as God-Man. He laid aside this, when he became incarnate. It was then he took upon himself the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. And being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. This brings our subject to its right latitude. It was that Person in the Godhead, who was set up from everlasting to be God-Man, and had the glory due to his Person, as being One with the only begotten Son of God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, or Personally, who is here spoken of in the words before us: of whom it is here declared, *God laid down his life for us*. But what life did he lay down, that by any means can come up to such an expression as this before us? *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. I reply, his life as God-Man, will bear an equality with what is contained in this expression. He lived a life of incomprehensible blessedness and Glory before all time. In the fullest enjoyment and communion of all contained in the love of the Holy Trinity. He was exalted into Personal union with the only begotten Son of God. For the God-Man, the brightness of glory, to descend into the virgin's womb; to tabernacle in flesh; to lay down his life as God-Man for us, contains all expressed in the declaration, *God laid down his life for us*. The life he lived in heaven from everlasting, a life of more worth and value than of all created intellectual beings, either in earth or heaven can ever amount unto, was the life Christ laid down for us. The very life which he had lived in heaven from everlasting. I ask, is not this sufficient? will not this answer and come up to the expression before us? *God laid down his life for us*. So then it is not the Essential Life of Godhead; nor is it the Essential Life of the Son of God, but it is the Life of God-Man, who was set up from everlasting: who laid aside his Personal Glory: who lived in our world and nature, God-Man, the Head and Saviour; who was perfect God and perfect man in one Person. He gave infinite virtue and efficacy to all his actions and doings; He being all which hath been declared of Him. His blood in the word is styled the blood of God. His righteousness the righteousness of God. His life the life of God. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. x. 3, 4. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. We are made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. v. 21. I hope I have given an account, sufficient to any enquiry which may be made, regarding the meaning of this expression in the text, concerning God's laying down his life for us. It was Christ, God-Man, who laid aside his glory, took on him the form of a servant, and laid down his life, which was peculiarly his own, which was a life which he had with the

Father before the world was. This life was laid down for us, and our salvation : and this was the very uttermost expression of his love. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, towards us, because he laid down his life for us.* Who can estimate the life of Christ, God and Man ? who can say what is contained in this vast expression of his love, his laying down his life for us ? I esteem this expression of his love, as containing that which is unspeakable. May we think on it with astonishment. May we go over it in our hearts, and from it be continually receiving into our minds, fresh scriptural perceptions of the same, so as that we may be wholly swallowed up therein. May we so survey it as to be lost in this boundless ocean of love : and seeing what most complete satisfaction our Lord Jesus Christ, hath made to the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father. All his glorious Perfections are most evidently displayed. His law and justice honoured and magnified. The utmost evil and demerit of sin atoned for. And a revenue of glory rises to Godhead therefrom. So that sin is that which cannot be done away, by any, or all the acts of finite creatures. Here is one, in the nature of his people, who is too strong for the imputation of sin, and all contained in the curse due unto it. He is not inherently defiled by the one. He cannot sink with the other. He being the man Jehovah's Fellow. Doth sin in the nature of it strike at the Being of God ? Here is one equal with God, who lays down his life to compensate for the dishonour, and evil, contained in this very part of that evil which is thus contained in the essence and nature of sin. Hath sin, to use our expressions concerning it, drawn a veil over the manifestation of the Perfections of Deity ? Here is one who is both Essentially, Personally, and manifestatively the Image of God, who veils his glory, empties, and lays down his life. Surely this is all-sufficient to atone for all the evil contained in the sin and apostacy of the whole election of grace. I would add, was our Lord Jesus Christ as one in the Godhead inferior to the Father, he could not have been equal to the work and office of Mediatorship, and work of taking sin away by the Sacrifice of *Himself*. And if he had not been God-Man, he could neither have obeyed the law, nor could He have borne the sins of many in his own body on the tree ; without which He could not have put away sin by the Sacrifice of *Himself*. He is in the Old Testament expressly declared, to be *Jehovah* the righteousness of his church. He declares himself to be *Jehovah* the Physician of his people. And in the very lowest state of his humiliation, when sin, and the curse, meet on Him, he is declared by the Father to be his equal, or fellow : "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. xiii. 7. It is one of the peculiar glories, that Christ in his Person is God-Man ; whose glory as such is above the earth and heaven : who came into our world by his open incarnation : and manifested his loving heart, and love to us, by laying down his life for us : *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* O amazing, and transcendent grace ! This brings me to my last particular ; which is this ;

4. To notice the obligation we are hereby laid under, to love each other for his sake : *And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

It is the very fruit and effect of the love of Christ, to love those

whom he loves : and as our love originates from the perceptions of his love to them ; so we cannot but love saints in agreement thereunto. As we have gospel perceptions of Christ's love to us, so we love Him in return, and his beloved for his sake. In the primitive age of the gospel, by which I mean the apostolic day, the saints were very remarkable for a burning, flaming love and affection to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to each other for his sake : so that the words before us are expressive, of the love of saints, in some instances, being drawn out to such degrees and lengths, as even to lay down their lives for each other. To us who live in our times, it seems to be stretching the subject beyond all bound to talk at this rate. We scarce think it could ever be so, that saints should love to such a degree. We rather think the very apostle speaks of what ought to be, not of what ever was ; yet I conceive this is the fruit of our little knowledge of the love of Christ, and what blessed obligations real saints were under unto Him, for the great love wherewith he had loved them : and for that vast expression of, his laying down his life for them. It is beyond the conception of all the minds of all the host of elect angels in heaven, to conceive the depth of love in the heart of Christ, God-Man, to the elect of Adam's posterity—That He in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, should empty himself of his Personal Glory, and become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, this is such a mystery of grace, that let us be favoured as we may, in the real enjoyment of the blessedness thereof, it is beyond what all the election of of grace collected together in one, can ever have the least adequate idea of. It lays under an everlasting obligation to love Christ with our most supreme affection and esteem—To love all his beloved ones—To love them out of love to Him—To love them for his sake—To love them as the elect of God—As the beloved of God—As those whom Christ loved and delighted in from everlasting, and will love and delight in to everlasting—To love them so, as not to think our own lives too much to be parted with for their sakes. This most assuredly is not going beyond what is contained in the words before us : *We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* These were very manifest, who they were, and what they were in the apostle's day. He had been distinguishing between those that were brethren by mere profession, and those who were really so by grace. He had in the former verse, called such an one, be he who he might, a murderer, who loved not his brother, and declared he had not eternal life abiding in him. Here he expresses who those were, who were the true lovers of the brethren. They were those who had perceptions of the love of God, so as to feel and enjoy the love of God in their own minds : and loved the children of God, and the brethren of Christ, out of the true knowledge and apprehension, that our Lord Jesus Christ had laid down his life for them. It should ever be kept in view when we treat of, and hear these subjects, that it is not merely a natural love, which the scripture is treating of : it is as truly a supernatural love, as ours to Christ is : it is a branch of the same : it is a fruit of the spiritual affection we bear unto our Lord Jesus Christ. And we cannot love Him but with our whole hearts, and by giving up our whole persons, bodies and souls to his service, to be the Lord's ; so we cannot love the saints as saints, without giving up ourselves to their service, so far as their good, and the honour and glory of Christ may call for, and require : *Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us : and*

we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. The apostle does not say, it would be well in us, to love to such a degree of affection. But he puts an obligation on us, to love thus; his words are, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* May the Lord the Spirit, if it please him, shine on what hath been delivered. And whilst none of us may come up unto, or feel in our hearts such love to the brethren, as comes up to such a measure and degree, as to be willing and ready, were we called to it, to lay down our lives for them; yet let us read in the words before us what ought to be the case, and remember also this hath been exemplified in some of the saints who are gone before us to glory. May we see how, as our love to Christ is not for the strength and degree what theirs was, that is the cause of our not loving each other, as saints, as they did. The Lord bestow his blessing on us. Amen.

SERMON XLVI.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?—1 JOHN III. 17.

To love each other as the brethren of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as brethren to each other in Him, is a subject our apostle hath been in this very Epistle dwelling largely upon. In the former chapter he began it: he then dropt it, and went forth to other subjects. He resumes it in this chapter, and treats on it more particularly. He carried it to the uttermost extent and expression in which it can possibly be exercised in these words in the former verse: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Beyond this, it cannot possibly be extended; for though we shall love one the other in Christ, in heaven, and glory for evermore, yet we cannot express it there but in a mental way and manner. No: nor can we express our love to Christ himself, in any other way. Here on earth, love to Christ may be, and by many of his saints has been expressed, by not loving their lives unto the death. For many of them have laid down their lives, with all the love of their hearts to Him, in the flames of the most fervent affection to Him, for his Name's sake: and where He is loved to such a degree, we should love his people, next to Him, with such a degree of love, as to lay down our lives for them if called thereunto. No love can go farther than this: our love ought to go so far. This is the apostle's doctrine: *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* I most certainly should look on all this, as in a very special manner to be considered, as confined to the apostolic age: and consider these words of the apostle *Paul*, as quoted to give some clear light into it: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or

nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Rom. viii. 35—37. I think we may conceive from it, what the suffering state of the saints must have been at that time: so that it made way for the exercise of their love towards each other, and to be ready and willing to lay down their lives for each other. Our apostle having said, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*, adds to this by way of question, the words of our text; *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* The words are very expressive of the impropriety of that conduct, which is contained in our profession of love to Christ, and to a brother for his sake, when we know such an one to be in a case and state of distress, and it is in our power to remedy the distress, by a communication of worldly good to him, out of the abundance the Lord hath bestowed upon any of us: but to shut up our bowels of compassion from such an one: this is strange conduct in one saint to another. The apostle could give no account of it: he attempts no excuse for it: he only asks this question—*How dwelleth the love of God in him?* this is a question which the apostle proposes: let those answer it who may. It is the will of God, some who are saints, believers, and professors of our Lord Jesus Christ shall have and possess this world's good: that is, they shall be rich; very rich, and have a great abundance of the same. It is the will of God some of his beloved ones, shall neither be rich nor poor; but be in such circumstances as to have a sufficiency; so as neither to abound, nor suffer need. And it is the good pleasure of the Lord that some of his saints shall be in very confined circumstances, so as to have a variety of wants, and be thereby constrained to look for succour and supply from such as have temporal riches in a great abundance. It is the Lord who maketh poor, and maketh rich, he bringeth low, and lifteth up. In the vast and infinite mind of Godhead it was from everlasting settled in the case of every individual person of the election of grace, what their circumstances and conditions in this mortal life should be: who should be poor, and who of them should be rich: and this all in such connection and conformity with election decrees, as the free grace of God, and his supreme will, and divine sovereignty might be displayed and glorified thereby. The apostle *James* says, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" chap. ii. 5. Our Lord saith, "Ye have the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good." Mark xiv. 1. And *Paul* recites a sentence which dropt from the mouth of our most precious Lord Jesus Christ on this subject, which none but himself takes notice of; which is this: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts xx. 35. It is the will of Christ to appoint the poor in all his churches; that the rich may communicate out of their abundance to the relief of their necessities. It is not the Lord's will, all his beloved ones, should be in equal circumstances; nor is there any reason to complain. In the house of God, the church of Christ, officers and offices are appointed, and that by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, that the poor of the flock may be attended unto. The offices of Deacons, and Deaconesses (the latter is dropt

now, yet it was by the same appointment with the other, in the primitive church) are for this very purpose—That such members of each individual church, as are in circumstances to need help, may have from the churches they belong unto, a suited portion of relief: so as thereby the church be neither burdened, nor these wholly neglected. Deacons ought to be of a pitiful disposition: they should be faithful men: they being entrusted with the affairs of the church. Their office requires some peculiar gifts, which the Holy Ghost only can bestow on them: these are mentioned in the 1st Epistle of *Paul* to *Timothy*, chap. iii. 8—13. They are to provide for the Lord's Table; the minister's table; and the table of the poor. Not by maintaining them wholly: for in many cases this cannot be done; but by communicating to the necessities of the saints, in proportion to the ability of the church, and no farther. The apostle tells us, "If any would not work, neither should he eat"—A full proof the church of Christ is not to be burdened with such. When the deacons of churches distribute the bounty of the churches, to such of the members thereof as are properly entitled to the same, they are to do it with a cheerful spirit: not bestowing it as an alms; but as the bounty of Christ himself; who hath appointed it as a provision for the poor members of his family. It is therefore to be administered with impartiality: not out of favour and affection; but according to the necessities of the saints. It should be attended unto, when any are for joining churches, what their outward circumstances are; lest the church be oppressed by a number of poor members which they will find themselves incapable of relieving; and this, it may be, will be a means of producing a murmuring amongst them. Neither should there be at any time, a liberality shewn, so as to weaken the good of any particular church. It should in an especial manner, be the study of the officers of each, and every individual church of Christ, to seek, study and lay themselves out for the very special good of that particular body of Christ to which they belong. I thought it good to say all this, by way of introduction to the words before us. *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* For I am not going to preach about alms-giving; nor are we going to have a collection sermon: nor am I about to stir you up to shew you affection to the poor of Christ. I am no friend to these matters. I cannot see any need at present for this. No, indeed I do not. The public mind respecting free and generous collections, for all sorts of charities, as soon as proposed, is beyond what was ever known heretofore. Nor are the circumstances of the poor of God's flock, as I conceive, so very pinching as they may have been in times past: and were it otherwise, this is neither the time, or place, for me to say any thing, or bring it forward. It is true the text is very suitable, and might be made use of with advantage as subservient for such a purpose: but you know it is now before me, in the course of my discourses on this epistle; therefore I shall omit all in and of it, which may concern giving and receiving, to use *Paul's* words, and make use of it as the ground and foundation of setting before you the following subjects.

1. I will give you some general views and observations on the collections made for the poor saints in *Paul's* time, with the reasons therefore, and thereof.

2. I will set before you a method, by the which if the Lord is pleased to dispose your minds to the practice of it, you may shew, and express the uttermost of your love and affection, to saints as saints, and this without any outward affectation; and no ostentation can accompany it: and all the good contained in these words of my text, be maintained and preserved: *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him.*

3. I will recommend this unto you, in the name of the Lord. Being fully persuaded that it cannot but redound to your own advantage, as it will also to the people of God, towards whom you may be particularly disposed, and have a particular affection. May the Lord bless us, in our attention to these subjects. I am

1. To give you some general views and observations, on what we read in the New Testament, on the collections, made for the poor saints in the apostolic age: with the reasons thereof. I conceive this will be a means of casting light upon divers passages of the word; which I conceive must be always attended with some real advantage to an enlightened spiritual mind.

I will begin this part of the subject, with what took place, at, and after the day of *Pentecost*, and give you the ground, and reason that the saints acted as they did. Then the observations which may be raised will appear the more clear and natural unto you: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." Acts ii. 44, 45. What was the reason of all this? I reply; by what had been delivered in *Peter's* sermon by his quotations from the prophecy of *Joel*, it was understood, *Jerusalem* and the Temple would be burnt, and wrath would come on the nation of the Jews to the uttermost. The Holy Ghost gave such clear ideas of this, and set it home so immediately impressive on the minds of the converts who were brought to the knowledge of Christ, as being the true and promised Messiah, that they being received into communion with the first New Testament church, were immediately concerned that the following things should be attended to—That the church should have temporal support—That they should make one joint and common concern of it. As this could not be done without a church stock, the members of the same, therefore, that there might be a foundation to proceed upon, such as had possessions in *Jerusalem* and *Judea*, sold their possessions and goods, and this was betruſted with the apostles, as the first and chief officers of the church: and out of the same a proper provision was distributed to every member of the church according to their need. Let it be observed, it was in consequence of their being fully persuaded of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the land of *Judea*, they were influenced by the Holy Ghost to act thus. We therefore cannot look on it as an example we are to imitate. After this, the members of the church being very greatly multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the *Grecians*; who were Jews, who had been born in *Greece*, and therefore called *Grecians*, and these murmured against the *Hebrews*, that is, those Jews who were born in and had never been out of the land of *Judea*. The one murmured against the other, as though there was a partiality in the daily ministration of the bounty of the church. Let me here observe, it is of no real use to any church of Christ, to be too much filled and

crowded with members. It is only the means of uneasiness : neither does it answer the design of church institution as appointed by Christ. The first church needed to be large : it was so, otherwise it would not have had the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, to have ministered in it ; which they all did for a season : and this was but for a season. On the first murmuring in this great church, the twelve apostles called the church together, and informed them, it was not reasonable they should leave the great and important work of preaching the word of God, and attend to offices of a lower order. They therefore gave this direction, that the church should look out among them seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, whom the apostles, might, with the suffrage of the church, appoint over this business. This was accordingly done ; and Deacons were appointed. I refer you to the 7th chapter of the Acts, verses 1—6. On the death of *Stephen* the church being greatly persecuted, the preachers were scattered. Hence the gospel spread abroad. It was carried into various parts of Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth, as our Lord said it should be. Acts i. 8. Now it was out of the bank of church stock, these ministers were supplied, and went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles, as our apostle says, in his 3rd Epistle, verse 7. I would here observe, all the churches we read of, and to which many of the Epistles were written and sent, were all distinct churches. Though some of these were but 2 miles distant one from the other : as the churches of *Corinth* and *Cenchrea* are said to be : and the churches of *Colosse*, *Laodicea*, and *Hierapolis* may be conceived not to have been far distant one from the other. We read also of the church which was in the house of *Nymphas*, Col. iv. 15, which seems to have been at *Laodicea*. The apostle speaks of *Philemon* as having a church in his house : also of *Priscilla* and *Aquila* of having a church in their house. Rom. xvi. 5. In all these, were all the officers, such as a pastor, and deacon, or deacons, which were in the number of each of them. Some of these could not have a multitude of members, yet these must have been such a number as all the offices, and ordinances of Christ's appointment might be regularly attended unto, observed, and exercised towards, and amongst them. To close what belongs to having all things common in the church, excepting every thing which belongs to the church of God ; this I apprehend of it—That this was only for a season—That the foundation of it hath been given—That it was appropriated for the maintenance of the whole church, with all her officers, and also for sending the everlasting gospel hither and thither ; not only throughout the land of *Judea* and *Samaria*, but the Roman empire, and provinces thereof. I will therefore take notice of the collections, made for the poor saints in *Paul's* time, with some observations on the same. The first we read of, the cause and occasion of it, were as follows. A brother in Christ, who was possessed with a Spirit of prophecy, *Agabus* by name, who seems to be engaged in travelling up and down, amongst the churches, he being at *Antioch* in *Syria*, stood up in the church assembly : and he uttered a prophecy by the sacred influence of the Holy Ghost : it was this ; “That there should be great dearth throughout all the world.” This came to pass in the days of *Claudian Cæsar*. Some say this prophecy was delivered about 3 years before it was fulfilled. This the church of Christ at *Antioch* took into immediate consideration ; and determined, every man according to his ability to

make a collection, and send it immediately to the church at *Jerusalem*. This they did "by the hands of Barnabus and Saul." See Acts xi. 27—30. This was well done: the occasion was extraordinary. *Barnabus* and *Saul* returning from *Jerusalem* to *Antioch*, the Holy Ghost commanded the church of Christ there, to separate these two men for the work whereunto he had called them. This was done by fasting, and prayer, and imposition of hands, and sending them forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: all this was the act of the church. These apostles went from *Antioch* to *Seleucia*; next to *Cyprus* an island in the Mediterranean: to *Salamis* and *Paphos*, two principal places in it: from thence to *Perga* in *Pamphylia*: from thence to *Antioch* in *Pisidia*: from thence to *Iconium*, and *Lystra*: and passing through many other places, they returned back to *Antioch* in *Syria*; where they gave an account of what the Lord hath done by them amongst the Gentiles. Thus it was evident God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. At this place they continued a long season: until a dispute arising in the church, it was agreed they should go up to *Jerusalem*, as the mother church, to have the case decided. They did so; and the subject being settled at a church-meeting, they returned back to *Antioch* from whence they came. *Saul*, whose name was now changed to *Paul*, after awhile pays a second visit to the churches of Christ amongst the Gentiles, and it seems this made way for the introduction of suggesting to them, the equity of their making a collection for the poor saints at *Jerusalem*. He says in his Epistle to the *Galatians* when he, and *Barnabas* were together at *Jerusalem*, and those three great apostles, *James*, *Cephas*, and *John*, gave them both the right hand of fellowship, they suggested they would have them remember the poor; that is, that they would make a collection for them amongst the churches of the Gentiles; which the apostle was of himself very forward to do. This then being set on foot, the churches being informed of it, is what is referred unto, in the Epistles to the *Corinthians*, in such words as these; "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." 1 Cor. xvi. 1—4. It is this which is referred unto, and saints are stirred up to make a liberal contribution towards, in the 8th and 9th chapters of the 2nd Epistle to the *Corinthians*; and the churches of *Macedonia*, and their great liberality are mentioned, by way of excitement, to draw out the heart to this good work. It is the same subject the apostle hath in his eye, when he says to the saints at *Rome*, "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of *Macedonia* and *Achaia* to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I

come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Rom. xv. 24—33. I conceive I have given a clear scriptural statement, of the collections made in *Paul's* time. I would observe, there was an absolute necessity for them: nor was it without its obligation. The Gentile churches were first debtors to the church in Judea, which were in Christ; or this collection had not been made. I will

2. Set before you a method, by the which, if the Lord is pleased to dispose your minds to the practice of it, you may shew, and express the uttermost of your love and affection, to saints as saints, and this without any outward affectation; and no ostentation can accompany it, and all the good contained in my text, be maintained and preserved: *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

It is not that I mean to set aside, what may be inferred from the words before us, which may belong to the contribution to the outward necessities of the saints. No; but I am not called to this subject now. I am, as before hinted, not to be on this subject, yet I would improve my text; and that, if I may so say, to far more glorious and important purposes. I have set my plan before you. I will therefore now set myself to fill it up for you. Which is to set a method before you, in the practice of which you may shew, and express, your uttermost affection to saints as saints. Beloved, to know saints, and to love them as saints, this is wholly and altogether supernatural. We must be one with Christ, and be brought to know Him, and ourselves one with Him, before we can love each other for his sake. As it is by the Spirit alone, we can be led rightly to know Christ, and our union unto, and interest in Him: so it is by the same Spirit we can only know who the Lord's beloved ones are. They can only be so to us, as they partake of the same Holy Spirit: as they are born from above: are the subjects of the same joys: the same sorrows: the same enemies: the same temptations: the same griefs. It is not necessary for you and me to be personally acquainted together, that we may express our real love to each other, to fill up, and execute the plan I am about to set before you. No, it is not: if you are believers in Christ, you cannot be without having fellowship with saints: and that too at the throne of grace: and this is the very best place to have and hold fellowship with them: because here you can speak for them, and speak of and concerning them, without being under the least restraint, or doing them the least injury, or giving them the least uneasiness. No one can put on bowels of mercy, neither can any saint exercise his love to another saint for Christ's sake, more, than by praying for him: using his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ on his behalf, intreating the Lord to be unto him, just as he would have him to be, were his case just as the case of that brother is at that very particular time. Now, the bowels of grace and compassion, are drawn forth. All

the Lord's people are the subjects of one and the same bodies of sin and death. They have one and the same common enemy. They are the subjects of the same assaults. They are equally as liable to fall, one as the other. They are before the Lord, and in his sight, the objects and subjects of his everlasting love, favour, and delight. He views them in Christ. They are in Him accepted, and always acceptable: yet in themselves, and in their own persons, cases, frames, and feelings, they have such exercises, as none but they themselves can form any idea of. Sometimes they are on the mount of communion with God: then they are brought low through manifold temptations. Some, it may be, to the commission of actual sin: some by most horrid blasphemous thoughts: so that they cannot but tremble on account of them. It is with them at times, as if the inbeing of sin had wholly swallowed them up, and their besetting sin, had wholly its power and dominion over them. I only mention these, to give an outline of the general exercises of the mind of such as are saints indeed; yet they are not excused, neither are they exempted from such experiences as these: and it is esteemed by them as their greatest miseries in this mortal state. This being the case, I shall now take up the words of my text, and improve it for all those ends and purposes, so as to shew saints as saints, to express and exercise their bowels of compassion, one towards another. I do not mean it is expressly the meaning of the text: I only accommodate it to this use and purpose; *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* Some of us have not this world's good. If we see a brother in need, we cannot do any great service to him, or conveniently part with much to relieve him: yet we do not shut up our bowels of compassion towards him. So far as the love of God dwelleth in us, we can be in a measure serviceable to him, and each other, if it be given us to follow the method I am going to mention; which is this—To make the spiritual concern of all the saints our own; and interest ourselves on their behalf for their real spiritual good at the throne of grace. We know by our own cases, what the frame, feeling, sorrow and complaints, other saints must be the subjects of. We know by our own wounds, how others must at times be wounded. We know by the gracious visits we have from our Lord Jesus Christ, and the sensible impressions made on our spiritual minds and frames thereby, how delightful the same gracious visits must be, and how other saints cannot but esteem the same. Let us therefore at the throne, remember all the holy brethren; for such they are, let our thoughts of them be as they may. Some of them are, it may be, fallen into sin; yet they are the Lord's people, and they are our brethren in Christ: even though it may be so and so with them. Let us therefore carry them and their cases to Him. He is concerned for them: let us be also. He exercises bowels of mercy towards them; it may be they have not the least perception of the same. Let us exercise our bowels of spiritual compassion, in entreating our Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf; this is a method in the practice of which, we may be very beneficial to many of the saints; to some of those we know and converse with; and to some whom we know not. And this will always be attended to ourselves with this advantage—We shall hereby enter so into the subject of our own request we put up to our Lord Jesus Christ, as to understand in a very great measure, what the

frames and feelings, the dejections and sorrows of such a mind must be, for whom we are concerned. It will teach us also to consider, our friends in Christ, are the objects of the devil's invincible and inveterate hatred—That he is continually casting his fiery darts at them; to inflame their lusts; to wound their consciences; to take off their minds from Christ; to lead them, if possible, to act so as to wound the cause of God, to cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and to offend and set their brethren in Christ against them. The true knowledge of this, with a spiritual improvement of the same, will be of real advantage to saints as such. It would be well, for saints as saints, to hold fellowship with each other in prayer, in this way, considering that the communion of saints, and fellowship with each other, and praying for each other, and this without the knowledge of each other, and being with each other, is the way in which we express our love and affection for their persons in Christ: and our real love to them, and for them, by intreating their Lord, and our Lord, to remember them with everlasting kindness. All this, in the nature of it, is to express our love to the saints, our esteem for the saints, our affection and bowels of mercy in Christ, towards them, to the uttermost of the good wishes of our hearts and souls on their behalf. This is also done, without ostentation, or the least affectation. This making supplication for all saints, may be done vocally; it may be mentally; and it may be done continually. The apostle *Paul* was a great man for prayer. In a sense it may be said he prayed continually. He prayed for himself. He prayed for his friends. He prayed for the whole church of Christ upon earth. He prayed for particular churches. He prayed for persons by name; so that he prayed for particular persons. Surely his prayers, let them be ever so comprehensive, could not be long. Some of them must have been no other than a present out-going of the mind to the Lord Jesus Christ, requesting him to have respect to such an one—To consider his present state and case; and deal with him accordingly, out of his own royal bounty. This way of expressing our love to all saints, will endear them to us: as we praying for them as the beloved of God, will increase our love and esteem for them as such. We shall carry about with us, in our hearts, a sense and apprehension of this; which will keep up in our minds a true spiritual affection for them. Another benefit we shall reap in following the method proposed: it will lead us, into a spiritual, experimental, and practical knowledge of what is contained in the Intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ: it concerns the whole church of God, and every individual of the same; it is a personal one: it hath respect to every case, wound, want, sin, and misery of the Lord's people: it is from hence, we receive all the blessings of Christ's righteousness and atonement: so that to have a clear and true idea in our minds of this, is of great advantage to us. And this is very impressive on us, as we become intercessors for others, and carry on our intercession, as depending wholly on our Lord's most gracious and prevalent intercession on our behalf: in his own presentation of us, and advocacy and intercession before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. I have according to my own apprehensions, done none of you present, any injury, in suggesting this method, by the which, if the Lord is pleased to dispose your minds to the practice of it, you may shew, and express the uttermost of your love to saints as saints: and no outward affectation, nor ostentation can accompany this. Nor will this

hinder any of you, who have this world's good, if you see a brother in need, from communicating to the relief of his necessities. It will most naturally draw out the heart, and open the hand, to the relief of necessitous saints. Having filled up the subject included in this particular, I come

3. To recommend the method which hath been proposed : and this I shall do in the name of the Lord : being fully persuaded that it cannot but redound to your own advantage, as it will also to that of the people of God, towards whom you may be particularly disposed, and have a particular affection for.

If the method which hath been expressed under the preceding head, is agreeable with the Scriptures of Truth, congenial with gospel simplicity, and spiritual love to saints as saints, then it may be very safely put into use and practice. So far as you see agreeable to that love and christian affection for each other, as one with Christ, as members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, I cannot but recommend the same unto you ; yea, I would do this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Head of saints. He is their Father, Brother, Friend, Shepherd, Saviour, and Advocate. He delights in having communion with his saints ; and they cannot but love to have and hold communion with Him. He has communion with them, at all times, and seasons. There is a necessity they should hold communion with him, let their cases be what they may. This is to them difficult. He therefore so deals with them, that they are not all in one and the same case, at one and the same time. This is of great advantage unto them. Such therefore as are kept near the Lord, and alive unto Him, are well suited, and at times impelled by the secret influence and operation of the Holy Ghost within them, to pray for such and such, as belong to the Lord, whose cases may be so and so. This is very beneficial to the petitioner, and to the person prayed for. I would therefore recommend it to the observance of the Lord's people, to attend to the holy motions and breathings of the Spirit, and his suggestions to their minds in prayer. Let what is suggested concerning a brother in this way, be followed. You may be sure it ought not to be concealed : it should be a part of your prayer. Therefore be sure you attend unto it. I beseech you, who are the Lord's, in the name of the Lord, to take your brethren in Christ, to Christ, and mention their names to him. Recite before Him that which you know of their cases, temporal and spiritual. Let it be done that you may have an opportunity before the Lord, to express your love and esteem for them. It will most assuredly redound to your own real advantage : it will to theirs also for whom you pray. Let nothing prevail with you to drop this : it will make saints and saints, one in heart and soul, more than we can conceive, or express. I pray for you, and you pray for me : this will set a watch before the door of our mouths. We cannot speak disrespectfully of each other : Why ? Because we have recommended each other, in our secret accesses to Christ. We cannot therefore break in upon this : why this is very advantageous. We cannot but love those whom we pray for. I think it ties a secret, as well as a sacred knot between such, as nothing, no, not even death itself can dissolve. In such a way as this, we may love one another as Christ hath loved us : not to the same degree and extent ; but in a comparative sense, and in a comparative degree. It

is from our Lord's intercession, he reflects all the love of his heart, now upon us. It is by our intercession to him, on the behalf of those we love for his sake, we express the whole love of our hearts before Him, as it respects those individuals. Our Lord is pleased we should love one another for his sake. Many of us have it not in our power to shew it any other way. The poorest saints as well as the richest, may be of great use and service to other saints in their praying for them. May what hath been delivered, be an excitement to us, to pray one for another; and that in the Spirit, and with the right understanding of our own, and each others particular cases. Let us never keep our eye on each others maladies; but look on each other in Christ, as the objects and subjects of his love: as being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Let us shew our esteem for saints as saints, by bearing them upon our hearts before the Lord. Surely this will be to fulfil the royal law of love. None of us but need the prayers of fellow saints. It is a real blessing, when this is persevered in, to the exclusion of formality and legality. It is often whilst we are engaged at the throne of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ opens his heart unto us. He communicates his secrets to us. He bestows his spirit on us: admits us to very great nearness of access to him. He causes our face to shine: sends us from his throne rejoicing; and bestows upon us the very petition we have been asking him for. I have no more to say on this subject: all which remains is to put the same into use, and act on it; for I am fully persuaded the Lord never said to the seed of *Jacob*, seek ye me in vain; and hath declared to his saints, that when they call he will answer, saying, Here I am; so he will do in us, and for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. Thus we shall most assuredly find and prove the truth of it in our own souls. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.—1 JOHN iii. 18, 19.

THE apostle in order to win the affection of the saints, and improve their minds to the real and constant practice of that brotherly love he had treated so much of; is disposed to go over the subject in the various particulars thereof, that they may the more fully and clearly apprehend him, in what he is here setting before them. To gain them to the practice of it, he said, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren: to which he adds, by way of question, But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? He does not*

attempt to account for this himself: so far from it, he suggests if they can, he cannot. So that he hereby signifies it cannot be accounted for, unless it be positively pronounced, such have not the love of God abiding in them, any more than he that is a murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. It is one and the same with respect to these effects. He now very plainly addresses them, as drawing near in this chapter to the conclusion of his subject, declaring unto them, what their love ought to be. Here he expresseth the nature and quality of our love to each other: it must not be merely verbal: neither must it be hypocritical: it must be real and sincere. If it be, then we shall be ready to impart of our worldly good, to relieve the wants of our necessitous brethren; and also to suffer for them. This love to one another for Christ's sake, is both an inward, and also an outward evidence of our knowledge of God, and love to Him. The consideration of which should be an excitement to us to abound in the exercise of the same. We are not to boast of loving one the other with our mouths, but to prove it by effects—To shew compassion on such of the Lord's flock, as need any assistance and compassion, either for body, or soul—Not to shut up our bowels of compassion, but exercise and express it, where the case calls for and requires the same. We are by no means to be hard or merciless to any who are the objects and subjects of misery, want, and distress. Can it be said of him, who is under a profession of Christ, the love of God possesseth his heart, who is without a sensible feeling of the affliction of one, whom he calls his brother in Christ? It cannot be: for the love of God, and the children of God, go hand in hand together. It is because they ought to accompany each other, the apostle says in the words of our present text, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*. In explaining the same, I will aim to take notice of the following particulars.

1. The address. *My little children*.

2. What their love must not be. It must not be only verbal. It must not be hypocritical. It must not be negatively. This is dehorted from. *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue*.

3. It must be real and sincere. It must be *in deed and in truth*. This comprehends the first part of our present subject. Then it follows; *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. Hereby we have peace in our minds, and an assurance of our own salvation. What we are to understand by this, I shall aim to set before you in these two particulars. 1. Enquire what this peace is, and that it is founded on our loving one the other *in deed and in truth*. 2. What this assurance of salvation is. Or what it is which the apostle designs by these words, *and shall assure our hearts before him*. And if the Lord please to enable us rightly to search into the context, I doubt not but we shall thereby gain right and scriptural knowledge of the same. I will now recite the whole of our text: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. Our knowledge of the truth, and assuring our hearts before the Lord Jesus Christ, is, as it stands here connected with the former words, founded on our loving the brethren in deed and in truth. But this I shall speak more fully unto, when I come to that part of the subject: only I could wish this general outline and account

of it, might be kept in remembrance, and be recorded in the memory, so as to be as a clue to guide us to the right apprehension of the same. I now proceed to enter on the Sermon. I will

1. Take notice of the address. *My little children.*

It is very expressive of that love the apostle had in his own heart towards them. It was well suited to introduce what he had now to deliver unto them. He had at the 11th verse of this very chapter, been reminding them of the message, or commandment, which they had heard from the beginning of Christ's ministry, concerning loving one another, as he had loved them. This the apostle tells them is not to be like Cain's love to his brother, who having hatred in his heart towards *Abel*, slew him. Neither would the apostle have the true saints, marvel at the world's hatred of them. He would have them make a proper use of it, by exercising their minds concerning it, and also concerning what the Lord had done for them, and given them the knowledge of. They were passed from death unto life. They had the evidence and fruit of this in their own souls. Their love of the brethren was the fruit hereof. As on the contrary, *He*, let it be an individual, or many, it was all one, such as one as loveth not his brother in Christ, abideth in death. As such he was a murderer: such an one hath not eternal life abiding in him. On the other side of the subject, such of these who had spiritual perceptions of the love of God, and that He, as God-Man, laid down his life for them, were under an obligation, if called unto it, to lay down their lives for the brethren. Such then as had this world's good, and were not willing to impart to their poor brethren, were suspicious persons: such as the apostle could give no account of. He puts this question for others to resolve if they could, he could not—*How dwelleth the love of God in him?* Then he comes to an application of this subject. This is contained in the present words now before us; *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. Let the whole context be surveyed by us, in all our readings of this part of the chapter, and we shall, without breaking either in upon the gospel, or looking for that in our fallen nature which is not to be found in it, have a very comfortable and satisfactory explanation of the meaning of the Holy Ghost in the same. As the address is the same, we have met with before in other parts of this Epistle, so I think it needless to say any thing of it here, but this—That it is very expressive of the apostle's heart towards them. I will therefore consider these words: *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*: which I divide thus: *First*, (my 2nd head :) Consider what our love to the brethren must not be. It must not be negatively, and verbally. This is not to love. *Secondly*, (part of my third head :) It must be real and sincere. It must be *in deed and in truth*. The apostle is here exhorting to the practice of this, saying, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue.* I shall here accordingly, as my

2nd head, Consider what our love must not be. It must not be merely verbal. It must not be hypocritical. It must not be merely and only negative. *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue.*

Words pronounced by the tongue, should be fully expressive of the truth of our minds; when they are not, we lie before the Lord, who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men. Our

apostle was an enemy to all sorts of falsifications. He would admit of none in religious matters whatsoever. It would not do to pronounce a great deal of love, and affection with the lips, and not realize the truth thereof by act and deed. That which is only verbal will not do with him. It were to no purpose to speak kindly and affectionately, whilst the whole consisted in this : and no evidence of the reality of all of it, was given. This being just like what the apostle *James* speaks of. He puts this by way of question to those he wrote unto : "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" chap. ii. 14—16. This is equal with our apostle here, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue*. Let it not be merely a negative love : which only consists in good words and kind expressions, to which no meaning is affixed. Let us not love verbally only : we speak before the Lord : let us consider this; and not dissimulate. Let us not express a verbal kindness, and never give proof of it by actions, which speak louder than words. Let us not love in word only, and in tongue. There is a dissimulation in this, which it becomes us, as the children, and saints of the Most High God, to renounce, and abhor.

Let us, *Secondly* (part of my 3rd head) Be real and sincere in our love. *Let it be in deed and in truth*. Let us be affirmatively in our acts, what we are in our words. Let us express and realize this, in every kind office and service, whereby we may express our love for the Lord's sake, to any of his, and our brethren: to any, or to the whole household and family of faith—In relieving their wants—In assuaging their griefs—In comforting them which are in any trouble, with the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God—To suffer with them—To suffer for them: yea, even, where we are called to it, to lay, and be willing to lay down our lives for them. This is the best way of proving the sincerity of our love to each other, for the Lord's sake. It is not, beloved, that any of us, shall ever be called, to give such a proof of our love to each other, as to lay down our lives, for, or on the behalf of each other; yet there is what is almost equivalent to this, which we are at times called unto. It is not unusual to the brotherhood to be persecuted for righteousness sake—For the particular and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel: many a saint at times, is scorned by others, because he professes the peculiar doctrines of grace; the rich scorn him, merely on this very account. It may be he falls into some outward evil: it is then flung at him, that he used to say, he was in Christ—That he was the subject of God's everlasting love—That he was born again—That he was an heir of glory and blessedness. Now, say his, and the enemies of Christ and his glorious gospel, you see what a deceiver and hypocrite this person is, and hath been? thus they triumph over, and insult such an one: and too, too often, it is the case, for some amongst the brethren, and who are numbered with them, to join in such insults also. It should be considered this is to prove, we never cordially loved for Christ's sake: if we had, the case of a poor despised brother, would not cause us to act thus. No; if we love in deed and in truth, a brother in Christ, as one with Christ and on account of his belonging to

Christ, we should love him at all times, and in every case he could be in. The case might give us cause of distress, yet it would not take off our heart, nor abate our affections from him: we should stand by him: plead his cause: and where we could not, we should lament it before the Lord. We should not be amongst those who say, *Report, and we will report it*: which is too often the case with some: we should be willing to conceal the defects we ourselves perceived in a brother. Nay, if we loved not in word only, and in tongue; but in deed and in truth; we should not willingly let our very thoughts work on the weaknesses of any of the brethren. When any call into question the purity and holiness of the Truths and Doctrines of God our Saviour, because certain amongst us, may have fallen into sin, it is extremely wrong in us; or to charge the person with having sinned against the doctrines of grace, and to be ashamed of the same on account of a brother having been deceived and overcome by the deceit of his own heart and the snare of the devil. We should seek to recover him out of the snare of the devil: not to implicate him more and more into the same snare of the hellish fowler. This would be to shew our love to a brother, to be genuine, and to operate as it ought. It becomes us all, to pay attention to our text: not to love in word and in tongue only; but in deed and in truth. Our love to the brethren must be real and sincere: it must be, *in deed and in truth*. It is hereby we know that we are of the truth, *and shall assure our hearts before him*. What we are to understand by the latter parts of the words before us, I am to enquire into, and set before you. The words of my text, which I am now to open and explain are these. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. Which words before I enter on them, I would by way of general observation make one general remark on. It is very difficult to enter freely and fully into such a subject as this before us, and not to break in upon it either by saying too much, or too little: or dropping it wholly and altogether. Yet most assuredly, there is no one subject in all the Book of God, but ought to have a place therein: more especially so, when it concerns that which is for, and increases the good and benefit of his people, which most assuredly what is here before us doth — To love one the other with truth and in sincerity. But whilst all this cannot but be most freely acknowledged, yet here comes in, what is not easily apprehended. The apostle says, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*.

I shall, *First*, (as proposed in 3rd head) Enquire what this peace is which we have in our minds, in consequence of our loving in sincerity and godly simplicity: As also what that assurance of our salvation is, which our present text speaks of. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. The Truth spoken of in the text is Christ. *We know that we are of the truth*, because in obedience to his royal command of loving one another, we do love the brethren. Our hearts are assured before Him of the truth and reality of our love to them. We are confident we are not dissemblers in this matter: neither one to another, nor before Him; to whom, and before whom, are the very secrets of our minds opened. As an inward and outward evidence of our being born of God, this is a very striking proof of the truth and reality of the same: it is so to ourselves: it is so to our

fellow saints: it may be also to others. Our dear Lord having said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 35. Surely nothing can be more agreeable to this, than what the apostle here says, *My little children, let us not love in word only, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth*—That we are of Christ: of his real family: that we partake of his Spirit. Herein is the clear evidence of it; because in agreement with his divine and most affectionate command, we love each other for his sake. It is also with our whole hearts: *and shall assure our hearts before him*. This therefore is an evidence of our being in Him, and of our being saved in Him with an everlasting salvation: yet whilst I cannot, neither dare I detract from this: nor would I wish to alter one word with which I have expressed myself on this subject, yet one important remark and observation must be raised; which is this—The apostle is not speaking how Christ was revealed unto them—How it was they became believers on him—How they were brought to know their own personal and particular interest in Him. Therefore this not being the subject, what he treats of, he speaks as being clear and manifest to themselves, and each other, inwardly in their own minds, and outwardly in their lives and conversations in the way he is speaking of. We cannot build our everlasting hopes before the Lord, upon what the apostle is here treating of; yet as sure as Christ is our hope, we shall have more, or less of this sincere love to such as we consider as one with Christ, and Christ as one with them, he is here expressing. It is the sole prerogative of the Holy Ghost, to reveal Christ—To give and create the true scriptural knowledge of Christ in the mind—To give us clear and undoubted evidence of our union to his Person, and interest in his salvation. Let this be remembered by us, and the subject the apostle is upon be kept in view, and we shall never be legalized by reading, or entering, or unfolding any part of this most sacred Epistle; which, as hath been often observed, is, for the subject matter of it, that of communion with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit. What, therefore, must naturally follow this? most assuredly the blessed fruits hereof. And as love for Christ's sake, is one principal fruit of the Spirit, so the apostle not only treats very largely and particularly of the same, but also of those blessed fruits and effects produced inwardly and spiritually in the mind, and outwardly in the temper, life, and conversation of believers in Christ, one towards another. Read the text in this view of it, and the whole will then most clearly appear unto you; *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. On our sincere love of the brethren in Christ, and for his sake, we have peace in our minds: we have an assurance in our own hearts of the truth of this. It proves to a demonstration our knowledge of the truth: of our being under the power, authority, influence, and efficacy of the same. It serves to confirm our assurance of our own salvation. It increases our esteem of the most blessed and precious Lord Jesus, It serves to recommend him to others. They by this outward and inward affection and attachment of the holy brethren, one to the other, cannot but confess, the words and commands of our Lord Jesus Christ, must be considered to be of great importance; seeing they

abide fast in their minds, and are so manifestatively influential in their hearts, lives, and conversations, one towards another. As I have given an account, of what this peace is which we have in our minds, in consequence of our loving the brethren in Christ, in sincerity and godly simplicity; so I go on,

Secondly, (in conclusion of 3rd head) To enquire what this assurance is, which arises from the same: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

It must most assuredly be of the same nature with the peace of mind, which is the fruit of brotherly love. We cannot find at any time, anything in ourselves, to trust in before the Lord. We are without all hope in ourselves. We do not need any: for we have an all-sufficient ground and foundation for hope and confidence in the Lord our God, in the Person, work, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is altogether without us: our inward graces have nothing to do with it: nor our sins and corruptions. It is a salvation wholly of grace. The foundation of our faith in it, is as truly without us, as our salvation is. Faith hath for its object Christ. It hath for its alone foundation the word of God: and the whole confidence of faith is built upon the revelation made of Christ, in the Scriptures of Truth. Our assurance in Christ is in exact proportion to what we really know of Him, from the word, and by the teachings of the Lord the Spirit. From the knowledge we have of Christ's being mighty to save, we trust in Him entirely for salvation: as we trust in Him for it, so we trust in Him for all the blessings of it: we therefore go to Him for his bestowing these on us. Hereby we get more and more confirmed in Him, that He is our Saviour and our God: and our assurance in Him is strengthened, so as from hence the peace of God flows into our consciences, and the love of God into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Still this is not the subject before us: yet it is an immutable truth, such as have not this assurance, cannot possibly be the partakers of the assurance spoken of in the words in hand. It is very necessary to observe the expressions before us: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* The connection of these words with the former has been observed. The assurance here is neither God's assuring us of his everlasting favour, and good will towards us, in Christ Jesus: nor is it our enjoyment of the same: neither is it our own assurance of his heart being set upon, and our confidence that he will remember us with everlasting kindness. The assurance spoken of in the text, is an assurance of our own hearts: it is our own act. Read the words again, and most undoubtedly you will see it is so: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* You will be ready to say, this makes the matter still more difficult for us to conceive what you will bring out of these words, *and shall assure our hearts before him*: would you have us to be fully persuaded of our interest in Christ, from what we are in ourselves? My friends, No; I would not. I should account this, self-flattery and deceit. Be pleased to stick to the subject before us, and be content with it: and let us bring nothing into it; but clear it, and then proceed. The subject concerns loving one another in Christ, and as the brethren of Christ: and that in deed and in truth, without partiality and without hypocrisy; which if we do, then have we that peace in our minds,

which this produces: and shall have that assurance before the Lord Jesus Christ, that we love such and such, for his sake, as fills us with holy confidence respecting this before him, and maketh not ashamed. Christ is the Truth here spoken of. He it is who hath given us a commandment to love one another. This love is out of a knowledge of the love, wherewith he hath loved, and ever will love, his whole church and people. We loving each other for his sake, is in obedience to his royal command. We doing this in sincerity, is the means of assuring our hearts, in his sight and before him, that we are concerned so to do, and also to continue in the same, to the honor and glory of his most holy name.

This then is my explanation of this assurance—We assure our hearts, before our Lord Jesus Christ, that we love the brethren: so that when we entreat Him to do so and so for them, and bestow such and such gifts, graces, blessings, and consolations upon them, we have in our own hearts the fullest assurance of our being most truly sincere in our requests to his Divine Majesty, in our petitions to him for what we have been requesting him to bestow on them. I hope what is delivered will be found satisfactory. I confess when I have finished this, and got over the two next following verses, I shall conceive I have got over the greatest difficulties in this whole Epistle. When I say so, I do not not mean to convey this idea to the mind, as if there were any difficulties in it. No; there may be many in my view; but this must be owing to my darkness; not to the subjects treated of, and set forth in the same. I neither think, neither do I by any means profess to have a clear, and universal knowledge, of every part of sacred writ: God forbid I should. Yet this I say, whatsoever darkness may at any time accompany my unfolding the scriptures, it is not any want of light in them, but it is my want of light to understand and comprehend them.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him: this is founded on our loving not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. Therefore the peace, and assurance spoken of, as the fruit of this, must be what it hath been declared to be. A serenity of mind, and a confidence in our own hearts, such as bear us up before Christ, at the throne of grace, that we love such for his Name's sake. It is therefore we so often recommend them to his grace, and royal protection. I would now go over the other generals contained in the latter part of these words of my text: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* The apostle put himself in by using the word *we*, as being one and the same with them in every respect, considered as a brother in Christ. The same inward and outward evidences, which were evidences and testimonials of their being the objects and subjects of divine grace, were equally evidential of his being interested in the same blessings and benefits of Christ's salvation. This might be improved by us, and we may from hence conclude, that as it regards all necessary respecting grace and salvation, belongs to the whole family of faith. The *we* expressed by *John*, is a proof of this. Surely the holy apostle was in knowledge, in utterance, in gifts, graces, consolations, and in real intercourse and personal fellowship with the Lord, more highly advanced than any of us. Yet the way in which he received divine Truth

into his mind, was by the same medium, and by the same agency we do. There is no receiving any spiritual birth, light, gift, and grace, except it be given us from heaven. It is the Holy Ghost working on the same, it can only appear and be made manifest. As he operates on those truths the renewed mind hath received, they influence the regenerated people of God. And it is hereby they are very gloriously transcribed in their hearts, lives, and conversations. Our knowledge that we are of the Truth, is evidenced by our living and acting according to the Lord's most holy word, in the commands and precepts thereof. This is exactly what is here expressed. Love of the children of God, the members of Christ, his children and friends, is one blessed fruit and effect produced, by the Holy Ghost in such as have been brought by Him to the knowledge of Christ. Such being of the same mind and will with Christ Jesus herein, are hereby assured they know Him, because they are conformed to his mind and will in this his command of loving for his sake, and in their expressing their mutual love to others, out of real and spiritual obedience to his will. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth.* Christ is the Truth here spoken of. The saints had evidence, or rather they had given evidence to each other, that they were of the Truth, that they belonged unto Christ, by the love and affection they bore to each other, and manifested to each other. They were so glued in heart and affection to each other for their dear Lord's sake, that it was to them an ordinance of increasing the same—To meet together—To speak to each other—To pray for and with each other—To declare their views of Christ—To express to each other their apprehensions of Christ—To unite in giving Him glorious praise. Whilst with grief it must be confessed, this must in the glory, essence, and perfection of it, be applied to the saints in the first ages of christianity, yet we must not leave it wholly and only there. It is very true, and is matter of lamentation, the love of saints to Christ, and to each other for his sake, is very low, and faint in our day, to what it hath been heretofore: yet, the Lord be praised, he hath not, he doth not, leave himself without witness. I conclude in my own mind, our Lord hath, even now, in the united kingdom, a goodly company of saints. Who love him in the secrets of their minds, as truly, and as fervently as he ever was beloved in this our world. I freely confess, I know not who, nor where they are: neither do I want to know; yet the love of Christ being what it ever was, and it making the same impressions on spiritual minds, when, and on whom it is reflected and manifested, it ever did, it cannot therefore but be the case, that there must be, in this our nation, at this present time, some, whose hearts burn with fervent love and affection to him. It should be remembered, love to Christ is inherent in the souls of all the regenerate. It is with the Holy Ghost to draw it out into act: this he does in a variety of acts, and also in various particular expressions of the same: it is a secret between Christ and the believer. Our Lord knows his own love to each of us individually: and he knows our love to Him, and in what way it is expressed by us, in our individual acts of love towards him. It is a pure affection of a spiritual mind towards him. It is most chiefly expressed, in high prizings of Him—In spiritual estimations of Him—In our delight in conversing with Him—In deep and most profound admiration of His glorious Person, his transcendent love, his most glorious righteousness, bloodshedding, death, victories, triumphs, coronation, and glory which he now wears in heaven.

We may from what we perceive, say of such an one, he is a lover of Christ. We cannot but say to all, and of and respecting all who love the Lord, what the apostle *Paul* doth in the following words, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.* Such as love Christ will never cease to express their love to him, and others for his sake, and to say *Amen* to this. It is in so doing, their most true, spiritual, and hearty attachment to the blessed Jesus, is discovered: it is at times hereby strengthened, improved, and drawn forth to magnify the Lord, so as that our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. We love the saints in proportion as we love the Head of saints. As we love him with increasing love, so we by the same, increase in our affection to one the other for his sake. As we love the Truth, so we cannot but love such as are led into gospel and right apprehensions of the same. We have hereby fellowship with them. It is hereby we perceive they belong to the Lord—That they are of the same family with ourselves—That they have tasted that the Lord is gracious—That they are in the same state of grace, and kingdom of God's dear Son with ourselves. It seems therefore to me, that this is the genuine sense and meaning of our text: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth:* because we are brought to the true and right knowledge of the very same Jesus. We profess the same faith concerning Him. We rest wholly and simply in Him, and on Him for our whole salvation: from hence, we loving one the another, not in word only, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth, it is by this, it is clear and plainly evidenced to our spiritual senses, that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, of the sincerity of our love, in Him, and for Him, towards each other. May the Lord the Spirit shine upon what hath been set before us, and delivered with a design to open, and give a clear view into this passage which hath been descanted on. I have done my best, so far as my present light and spiritual attainments reach: and beyond it I dare not go: the Lord forbid. I must therefore leave the whole to your attention and present and future consideration, praying the Lord to follow it with his own teaching and blessing. The right understanding of what hath been attempted, will most assuredly serve to reflect light on the two next verses, which read thus; *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* May the Lord give us clear views of the meaning of this; so as that we may have fresh cause to bless and praise his most holy name. It will not be amiss for you all to consider, we have been, and still are, and shall be on practical Divinity, until we close this present chapter. It is more easy to express ourselves, on the subject of doctrinal, than it is on the practice of the same. Our apostle having his own peculiar way of expressing himself, on these subjects, this makes it still the more difficult. It is the good pleasure of the Spirit of God, hereby to exercise and draw out our spiritual minds, so as they may be exercised in a variety of cases to explain, and expound that which requires much time and pains, in so doing. There is much profit obtained thereby: especially by such as are preachers; as hereby the scriptures become the more familiar. The mind is the more opened unto them: their connection more closely and particularly investigated; and several false interpretations of various passages cast aside, and wholly discarded. The scripture is hereby found to be its own best interpreter. And the

Holy Ghost, who inspired holy men to write it, should ever be looked up unto, for his light and blessing, in our reading and searching into every part of it. I am no enemy to Expositors, Commentators, and learned men, whilst I am not, nor ever shall be numbered with them; neither did I ever desire it; yet many of them, have, as I conceive, been of great use and service to the real church of God. My performances are all low and mean. May the Lord forgive every imperfection in them. May he out of weakness perfect strength, and thereby gain to himself a glorious name of praise. May the Lord the Holy Spirit enlighten your minds, and the minds of all his people, in their reading the scriptures of Truth, that they might read them to their own increasing profit, and be instructed and edified thereby. Grant it, O Lord Jesus Christ, for thy great Name's sake. Amen.

SERMON XLVIII.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.—1 JOHN III. 20, 21.

THESE words are the continuation and conclusion of the former subject; therefore some reference must be had unto it: not for the sake of repetition, but because there is a necessity for the same: without it the coherency and connection must be lost: by that means the grand design of the whole ceases to be beneficial. The very end and design of all lectures on any of the books of Scripture, or comments of any one of the Epistles, being to unfold every particular verse in the same, it is therefore of necessity there must be a strict attention paid, to the dependance one verse hath upon the other. The subject the apostle hath been upon, which he began at the 11th verse, and which he pursues down to the present verses, which are now before us, concerns brotherly love. He sets forth love to the brethren, as a distinguishing mark of saintship. He then describes this love by its actings—It must be sincere—There must be no dissimulation in it—It must be operative, in offices and services of substantial friendship, according to our professions, situations, and circumstances in life. This is to ourselves, and also to others, a sure evidence of our regeneration: by which we are brought to know, believe, and live agreeable to the true doctrine of the everlasting gospel of God our Saviour. This emboldens us to appeal even to him for our integrity, whatever censures the world may pass upon us: yea, and such as may be cast upon us by professors also. Our minds, or consciences are the candle of the Lord: they are as God's vicegerent: they are true and faithful monitors. If therefore they witness against us, if they accuse and condemn us, of hypocrisy in our professions of love, to this and the other person, whom we call brothers and sisters in Christ;

surely God who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things, he cannot be deceived. We must act such a part before him, as he cannot but condemn in us, and us for ! If we are hypocritical in our profession of the truths of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, our consciences must be privy to our own self-deceiving ; what can we then expect from God, but condemnation. He is infinitely greater, most perfectly just, and better acquainted with our whole conduct than we ourselves are : what is then, and therefore to be expected in the issue, but shame and confusion of face ? As on the contrary, If our own consciences upon the strictest examination, under the light, and as in the sight and presence of the Holy Ghost, according to the truth of the gospel, acquit us from all charges of reigning sin, of allowed guile, of being hypocrites in any part of our religious professions, either to God, or the brethren, then have we confidence towards God. We can then appeal to him with holy boldness, courage, and liberty of soul, when we are censured and condemned by others ; yea, supposing any unjust suspicions should arise in the minds of any of the saints, and they should thereby, bring any false charges against us. He then concludes this chapter, with the three next verses ; in the which he says, believers having respect to all Christ's commandments, and doing that which is well-pleasing in his sight, is a blessed evidence for them, that they have interest in his favour. As such they have free access to him : and shall receive of Him whatsoever they ask, so far as agreeable to his most holy will. He informs them the great doctrine of the gospel, which may be styled the commandment of God our heavenly Father, is this which concerns our believing on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and loving one another. Such as are thus influenced, dwell in Christ, and He dwelleth in them : all which is most clearly evidenced by the indwelling and abiding of the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them. Thus I have given you a brief outline of our text, and also of the remainder of this chapter. I will now recite the present text, and then give you my plan which I shall aim to pursue, in opening the several particulars contained in it. May the Lord accompany the same with his Spirit, light, and blessing. Amen.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. In opening these words, I will

1. Set before you, what we are here to understand by our hearts condemning us : as also the danger we are in, if this is the case with us ; *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

2. What our case is, if our hearts do not condemn us. *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

As the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and known only to God himself ; and as he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool ; who is there amongst all the sons of men, who is there amongst all the saints of the Most High God, who can stand before the Holy Lord God upon the footing of anything he is, or ever will be in himself ? Why did you take these words ? are you going to drive us in unto ourselves, to find anything, in the which we may have confidence that the Lord will accept us ? Beloved ; no : not so. I would observe, no one of all the human race can stand before God, out of Christ, but must perish everlastingly. No saint, let his saintship be what it may,

can be accepted on such footing: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. God's love to the persons of the Elect, is fixed on them in Christ. It is in Him they are accepted. It is in Him they are saved. It is in his righteousness they are justified. It is in his blood they are everlastingly washed, cleansed, purified, sanctified, and brought nigh to God. Yea, it is only as the Holy Ghost reveals Christ to our minds, by taking of his things as recorded and set before us in the record and testimony of the Divine Father concerning Him, in the scriptures of Truth, that we can have a foundation to hope in God. We can only have peace with God in our consciences, and love to God in our hearts, and confidence in Him, as we are led by the word and Spirit, into a spiritual and supernatural knowledge and apprehension of the Person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ: this I most freely acknowledge: and this is the very foundation of the whole of this Epistle. There could be no communion with God, and the elect, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not taken away their sin, by the sacrifice of Himself. There can be no grace in any heart, where Christ is unknown. Whatsoever semblance there may be of it, there can be no reality in it. No one can love the brethren of Christ who is not a partaker of Christ. There is no salvation in our text. Yet it most certainly contains an evidence of it—That such an one, having received Christ, as the free gift of God, for salvation, is influenced by the same Holy Spirit who gave him the true knowledge of Christ, to love for his sake all the holy brethren. But I want to open my text: not that I am going to preach Christ from it, but to explain the same agreeable to the end and design of the Holy Ghost, in causing it to be here recorded. I am therefore

1. To set before you, what we are to understand here, by our heart's condemning us, and also the danger we are in, if this is the case with us. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

Whilst I have in the former Sermon, given light into this, and also in the introduction, as I conceive, given a general and clear outline of the whole contained and expressed in the same; yet as it is to be sermonized, I cannot but request you to attend to the former verse: or rather I would wish to begin with the 18th verse; *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure, or, persuade, our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* By attending to the connection and order of these verses, they regularly open and clearly unfold themselves; so as to leave no ambiguity in them, and so as to convey their own genuine light to our minds. We are to love the brethren in reality and with the utmost sincerity: this is the doctrine laid down before us. It is to be in deed and in truth; which if it be, it proves we are of the Truth: we are the children of the Truth. This being the case, we shall assure, or persuade our hearts before the Lord, that we act towards our Lord's friends, in a manner, measure, and to a certain degree, so as to be fully assured of the reality and affection of our minds towards the holy brethren, in an agreement with his divine command that we should do: if on the contrary, our heart which we cannot but know more or less of, accuse us, of not loving the brethren for the Lord's

sake, notwithstanding all our profession thereof, we then are self-condemned. If our hearts do not accuse us, but we can appeal to God himself, for the truth of this, that we love them for his sake, and next unto himself, then in this very particular, we have confidence toward God. This seems to be the sum total of the words. Still I will more fully open them, according to the plan which hath been given: what we are here to understand by our hearts condemning us, must be opened, in connection with the subject in the preceding verses; which all belong unto, and are concerned with the subject of brotherly love. It is not an universal love to all men; it is not love to all mankind is the subject, or any part of the subject. I might here say, there is a natural and there is a spiritual love. I do not want to speak of either of them, but as they may serve to distinguish the subject. When true, genuine natural love and affection, in parents, children, relations, friends and neighbours is not carried too far, there is a real excellency, and blessing in the exercise of the same: and its greatest excellency consists in the reality and sincerity thereof. With respect to spiritual love and affection one towards another, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, this grows not in nature's garden: it is wholly from heaven: where it is, this is full proof of being new-born. It is natural to the new-born to love those who love Christ, and they cannot but love them; it is congenial to the new nature the Holy Ghost hath imparted, and implanted in them. When we hear any, let us know them, or be they unknown to us, who speak savourily of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are presently taken with them. If they have seen him whom our souls cannot but love, we cannot but love them; nor can there be, next to Christ himself, a greater tie of heart and affection, than there is between the persons who love each other in Christ—who love for his sake—who love in Him, whose love and affection, is the very fruit of Christ's love, warming their hearts, and which produces it. Now it is not impossible, but the vigour of this love may be abated: this cannot but be, whilst in the body we have many changes in our persons, frames, and circumstances: we all find, it is our sin and shame it should be so; yet so it is, our love to our most precious Lord Jesus Christ, is not always burning, flaming, vehement love. It does not always go forth into such expressions and desires, one time, as it doth another; yet the habit of love is strengthened and increased: so that I should judge old saints, love and prize our Lord Jesus Christ, more than younger saints do: but the latter express it with warmer affections and zeal, while the former exceed them in the fulness of their words and the weight and strength of their expressions. If it be admitted, that our very great heat of love and fervour of affection towards our Lord Jesus Christ, hath in us its ebblings and flowings, surely it must follow, the love of saints to each other, must have some alterations and changes also: yet there is nothing in all this, which need bring condemnation into our hearts. I cannot think the apostle glances at this, when he here says, *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Nor can I doubt, there may be a real abundance of love for Christ's sake, and such a tie of heart and affection, as that two friends in Christ, may be for a season so greatly beloved by each other, as *Jonathan* loved *David*, who loved him as his own soul, but all this may be so far broken in upon, as for such to have no mutual intercourse about the things of God, for years together; yet I do not think there is any thing in this to bring con-

demnation into the heart. I observe in the course of God's most holy providence, such as may appear to us, most and best suited to live together, and be folded in one church and under the same pastor, are not. This is of the Lord. He places his beloved people, where, and as he would have them to be. The case, as I conceive, before us, hath to do with professors of Christ's gospel, who though it may be, they are full of love and affection to the brethren, yet it is only in word and tongue: they never prove by any act or deed, they have any real love for, or affection unto them: so far from this, they shut up their bowels of compassion from them. Now the positive part of the subject before us, consists in an exhortation, not to love in a negative, but in a positive manner: by the which we should give proof, that we belonged to Christ, and should hereby assure, or persuade our hearts before him, of our real love to his beloved ones, by relieving their wants; praying for them; praying with them; and doing any, and every kind office it lays in our power to do for them. This would bear up our minds under many evil and envious speeches, which the venomous tongues of others might be disposed to express and say of, and concerning us—To be able to approach the throne of the heavenly grace—To appeal to the Lord respecting the sincerity and uprightness of our conduct in such and such instances—To have the testimony of our own consciences, that we acted upon such views and principles—That our hearts by no means condemn us: this is what is here meant. If we know we have certain inveterate prejudices in our minds against such and such; that whilst we call them, or such and such of them, brethren in Christ, yet we love them not, neither are we willing to shew the least kindness, or good will to them: but we conceal all this: we dissemble and cloak it, and that under the mask of friendship: this is to condemn ourselves, our hearts cannot but reproach us for the same; How can we pray to the Lord for such, as we know in our own minds we hate. This is to be in a dangerous state; our hearts cannot but reprove us for the same, on account of the insincerity thereof. And if our hearts condemn us, for acting thus, it would be well for us to consider, *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Which consideration, is solemn, awful, and striking. Most assuredly as these words stand here, they should be made use of by us in the following way—we should consider, we are altogether open to the view of God. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the sons of men. He can neither deceive nor be deceived: what we are in his sight that we only are. It is not what we are in and by profession, is all, before the Lord. If we do not love the brethren; if we are not disposed to relieve the wants of the brethren; if we do not love them for their spirituality and heavenly mindedness; this is all before the Lord. He is greater than our heart. He is the judge of it. He knows the whole in it: every spring, motion, and act of the will. He knows where, and how we deceive ourselves: in how many ways we slight the brethren—How many times we please ourselves, in secretly distressing them. Yea, He knows how our own hearts, secretly, again and again reprove us, for being so and so, secretly disposed to act towards such, as we cannot but believe and acknowledge to be the children of God. Now, says the apostle, If God who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things, knoweth all this by us, how shall he not more severely condemn us, than our own hearts do? Thus he argues from the minor to the major part of the subject. From the

less to the greater. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* This therefore should put us upon laying aside all dissimulation : it should excite us to every act of spiritual and temporal kindness one towards each other : we should love as brethren : we should be pitiful and courteous. It appears to me to be the great misery of the present day, our love to saints is too much contracted. We generally confine and express it, to such as receive the doctrine of Christ, and the ordinances of Christ, irrespective of their receiving and being the real partakers of the grace of Christ. The doctrines of the everlasting gospel are the foundation and bulwarks of the church : yet many do not distinguish between them, and the grace part of them. Some there are in the school of Christ who cannot so apprehend them, as to give a clear account of them, who are the real subjects of the grace and good contained in them : and we are very safe in loving these as brethren in Christ, and for his sake. We in this our day, are too apt to be offended one with another—To conceive prejudices in our minds one against another ; yea, this is sometimes the case, where we have not the least personal knowledge of the person, or persons whom we thus dislike : would it not be well, therefore, if we were to make use of our text, as a preventive to this ? *If our heart condemn us, for this, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* He knoweth the ground of our ill will to such and such. What sort of spirit is it, to carry this with us, even to the Lord's Table ? Surely it is not the Spirit of Christ ! It is not. Would we wish to die in such a spirit ? I think not. I was once in company, when one present spoke very warm about one absent, who was a professor of Christ, and was by one then also present thus reproved. " You never loved that person. You have now an opportunity of expressing your own bad spirit towards him. You are therefore giving vent to the same." I heard this, and have never forgotten it. I think it may be profitable for such as are of a censorious spirit, to hear, and remember it. So that here it well comes in, and light is cast on the whole text. For if our hearts condemn us, for want of love to the brethren, for the Lord's sake, *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Let it be remembered, the apostle is not speaking of our state in Christ, nor of what God knows of us in Him, or sees us to be in Him. He is speaking of what the state of our mind ought to be, towards a brother in Christ, and of what, it may be, it is not. This brings me to my next particular.

2. What our case is, if our hearts do not condemn us, of want of love to a brother in Christ, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

Some saints are more particularly distinguished for one grace, and some for another. Our apostle seems to be beyond all his brethren, for love. Therefore he was well qualified to write on the subject, and excite thereby unto the practice of it. He did so. First, in removing all impediments. Secondly, in using proper motives and arguments to draw out the minds of real saints to the exercise of this. He uses the word *Beloved*, to this very purpose ; they were *the beloved of God* ; they had spiritual perceptions of the love of God, in his laying down his life for them. This was motive all-sufficient for their loving each other in Christ ; even to such a degree as to lay down their lives for each other : he therefore says unto them, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then*

have we confidence toward God. This confidence towards God here, hath no concern with our salvation : it is not a confidence in God, it is a confidence toward God ; which confidence is the effect of our hearts not condemning us ; and that of our not wanting the love and affection, to the brethren in Christ, and those we call brethren in him, agreeable to the state and relation in which they stand unto us, and we profess ourselves to stand in unto them. This gives us boldness in our accesses unto the Lord for them. We can freely pour out our hearts for them ; seeing we are fully persuaded in our own souls, of our sincere love and unfeigned respect unto them. This word, *Beloved*, therefore, comes in here most properly and altogether suited to the subject ; it being a very endearing word. These persons were beloved of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. They were on these accounts, beloved by the apostle : and they cannot but love one another, as they have proper views of their mutual interest in the love, grace, good will, and covenant love of the Holy Trinity unto them, and that they are heirs in Christ of eternal glory. Now as on the subject of our not loving the brethren, our hearts cannot but condemn us : and God who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things, cannot but view our hypocrisy, and deal with us as such in this particular : because we pray him to bestow such and such blessings, on such and such whom we style brethren, whilst we in our own hearts love them not as such : so on the contrary, if our hearts condemn us not for the want of love to the brethren in Christ, then we have confidence towards God, that we love them for the Lord's sake, and pray and intreat his blessings to be bestowed on them, out of the real love we have, and feel, and bear unto them, from true love to Christ himself : we esteeming them as his beloved ones. Beloved, I conceive, I have given you the true and proper explanation of the words of the text now before us : if so, there is no legality in it ; neither anything to distress us. It is, with the context, cautionary. It concerns the love of the brethren. It is discriminating the case, and opening clearly to view, what our hearts cannot but condemn us for, if so be, we are not sincere in our love for the Lord's sake ; yet we at the very same time, dissemble before the Lord, whilst we profess to pray for such and such as the brethren, at the same time we know in our own minds, we hate them. On the other hand, if our own hearts bear us witness in the Holy Ghost, that we most truly, heartily, sincerely and affectionately love our brethren in Christ, then have we confidence towards God : that our hearts and our tongues go together : that we love in deed and in truth. It is an evidence unto us that we are of the Truth. We hereby persuade, or assure our hearts before the Lord, on these subjects. This is of great advantage unto us : for as it is to our disadvantage, if our hearts condemn us, seeing God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things ; so it is to our advantage if our heart condemn us not : seeing then we have confidence towards God. I think it will clearly be apprehended by you, I have not forced the text, but in agreement with the whole context, given you the simple and genuine meaning of the same. Let me now therefore observe, it is of great service to us, to know and rightly apprehend and receive, what is set before us in the Scriptures of Truth. With respect to our confidence in the Lord, and before Him, respecting our eternal state, our own personal interest in Christ, and our salvation. This must by no means be founded on any thing in us : or wrought by the Divine Spirit within us : it must

be founded alone on God's free grace, in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must look for the whole foundation of our faith and hope in Christ, to the word of grace, in which is contained the revelation, and testimony which God hath made, and given of his beloved Son, with his record concerning Him. This is the sole and only warrant we have given unto us, that we should believe in, rest upon, and centre alone in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life. It is the Holy Ghost alone, who can reveal Christ unto us, and in us. It is he only who can testify of Christ to our minds, and form Christ in our hearts. It is He alone who can bear witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God. There is nothing in, and throughout this whole epistle contrary to this: so far from it, the whole grace part of this epistle is founded thereon. Therefore such are mistaken, who conceive, that the inward and outward evidences spoken of throughout it, are to lead off our minds from our Lord Jesus Christ, to look for any part, or evidence of our salvation in ourselves, or in anything wrought in us. The whole of our salvation is without us: it is wholly in the finished Righteousness and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ: this is the fruit of an everlasting transaction between God and the Lamb from everlasting; which is revealed and set forth in the everlasting gospel of the blessed God: which we receive the knowledge of from the written word, and by the divine light, and effectual teaching of the Holy Ghost into our hearts. This is that by the means of which the knowledge of Christ is produced in our souls: and real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ hereby realized in our hearts, produces the true, genuine, and proper effects of the same, in us, in our minds, lives and conversations. It is hereby we believe in the heart unto righteousness, and the mouth is opened to make confession of the same unto salvation. To give outward proof to the satisfaction of others, that Christ is in us, that he possesseth our hearts, that he dwelleth in our minds, and that we are influenced by his grace and truth, we have expressed, and cannot but express, and exercise ourselves before God, and man: loving the brethren for the Lord Redeemer's sake; and this with all sincerity and godly simplicity, that hereby the Lord may be glorified in us, and by us. If you have understood, and properly understand the subject thus, we shall not be led off Christ, into ourselves, by reading, preaching, or hearing any part of this epistle. The peace of our consciences towards God, is founded on the most precious blood of Christ. The testimony of our consciences that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the word, and more abundantly towards the brethren and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the fruit, of the former. We manifest the truth of the former by the latter; and the manifestation is nothing more or less, than full proof of the power and efficacy of divine Truth, the true knowledge of the Father's love, and Christ's free grace salvation have upon our hearts. Our apostle manages what he hath to say upon this subject, in quite a different way and manner than the apostle *Paul* doth. The one treats it as the fruit of communion with Christ: the other as the fruits and effects of believing: the substance however, is one and the same. All wrought in us, and produced by the Holy Ghost in our walk and conversation, is the fruit of our personal union unto Christ: nor does internal grace and sanctification take us off looking unto Jesus, and living out of, and off ourselves, on the Lord Jesus Christ, if the same

be rightly stated, and clearly, scripturally, and properly understood. But it is high time for me, to think of drawing to a close; as very long sermons are not the best, and most useful, any more than long prayers are. It is best to be very comprehensive, whilst at the same time, we should aim to be very concise; yet this must be according to the gift the Lord hath given us. Many a saint is prolix, not so much out of a desire to be so, as for want of a faculty to speak a great deal in a little: as such as speak much in a few words, are not to be conceived as aiming to set forth what they may have to deliver, so as that they may be admired for the same. No; this would be proud self, and nature indeed. It is to be ascribed to a particular gift bestowed by the Lord on one, which is not on another. It is in various gifts and graces, the Lord is pleased to express his divine Sovereignty, in his bestowment of such ministerial abilities on his true ministers, and real saints as seemeth good in his sight. I sometimes conceive—take a view of the variety of gifts and graces, bestowed on the saints, both public and private, and we have the whole of Christ so set forth before us, as that viewing the church of Christ altogether individually, and collectively, and Christ's church is a paradise of delights, a field which the Lord hath blessed: into which the Lord descends: and which he most graciously delights to visit, so as to revive and refresh his beloved ones, with his life-giving presence. Beloved, none of us can live comfortably in our own minds, without the most gracious communications of Christ unto us; and it is as he is pleased to hold fellowship with us, he imparts the graces of his Holy Spirit to our hearts. Every saint hath his particular grace: one shines forth most chiefly in one, and another in one equally as excellent, yet it is distinct, and very distinguishable from another. Thus the Lord is glorified. Some in the higher, and in the highest classes of the school of Christ, may be styled, as some are by *Dr. Goodwin*, "Saints of all graces:" as the whole and fullest assemblage of graces shine out in them, and that in such act and exercise as to be in the church of Christ, in this our world, like stars of the first magnitude, reflecting thereby the glory of Christ upon others, in thus holding forth the word of life. Hereby the truth and glory, the power and influence of gospel doctrine, are reflected on, and manifested to others: and this is the desire of all who are born of the Spirit, so to act and exercise themselves, as that they may out of a good conscience, shew forth their works with meekness of wisdom. May the Lord quicken all his called people, to attend to the whole and every part of God's revealed will, in the written word. May they all call upon the Lord with one consent. And walk before the Lord, in all things as it is agreeable with his glorious gospel; which contains nothing in it, but free and sovereign grace. May they be careful to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things: as it respects giving inward and outward evidence to others, of the reality of our being born again, of our love to Christ, and one another for his sake, in every way, and by every act, the Lord hath commanded us. I think there can be no legality in this, unless walking in the fear of the Lord, and serving the Lord with our whole hearts, and with our whole souls can deserve such a term: which it cannot, for it is our highest honor and privilege in this our present state in which we are—That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of

our lives. Sirs, it becomes us to value every part of God's most holy word, and to value it alike: it all being of real importance, and stamped with the Divine signature. We should give up our minds to the authority and guidance of it—Delight in yielding true, and implicit obedience to the same. We should consider the glory of Christ as connected herewith, and concerned herein. A true walking in the fellowship and order of the gospel, is to bring glory to Christ: so by a real orderly walk and conversation before men, in true and close agreement with gospel commands, precepts, and exhortation, this is to let our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. And this is most truly agreeable with the doctrine of the holy apostles. *Peter* as one of them, says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." 1 Epis. ii. 11, 12. I commit what hath been delivered to the Lord, to bless the same to the profit of your minds, as seemeth good in his sight. The wise man says, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Eccles. xi. 6. Yet we know the word of God is immutable: and the Truth contained it, abideth for ever. The Lord be with your Spirit; may he guide and lead you into all necessary Truth; and make you, true experimental and practical christians, and help you to abound in love one toward another according to Christ Jesus. Amen.

SERMON XLIX.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.—

I JOHN iii. 22.

It may be considered by us as an undoubted truth, that every subject in the word of God, is placed where it ought to be: so as that there is nothing out of its proper order. The words now before us, seem to have some connection and dependence on the former verses; so that I conceive there is a necessity of viewing the same, to the end we may give the true and genuine interpretation of them. I shall therefore attempt this, though it will be but an attempt: be it so; yet even that will be far better than the total omission. I will recite from the 18th verse to the present, as thereby you will see the order and harmony of the whole subject: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart*

condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. Thus you may easily perceive there is a connection. The word *And* proves it. We having confidence toward God, that we are of the truth in this very particular, that we love his brethren, and our brethren in him, in obedience to his commandment, and for his Name's sake; we having confidence towards God in this particular, it follows, whatsoever we ask in prayer, on their behalf, we receive from our heavenly Father—our hearts going with our prayers: *and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

I will give you the general outline of the contents of my text, and then divide and cast it into its proper heads and divisions. Whatsoever we ask, in faith, with submission to the will of God, to a good end, with an eye, and aim to the Lord's glory, in the Name of Christ, perseveringly, we shall most assuredly receive. So far as it will make for our good, and that of others, we may be as certain of this, as though we had it already. This is founded on the following scriptures: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John xiv. 13. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James v. 16. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. vii. 7. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." James i. 5—7. "Is any man sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." chap. v. 14, 15. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John xvi. 23. In these are contained 1. faith; then 2. a good end; 3. submission to the will of God; 4. perseveringly; 5. in the name of Christ; 6. for our good; 7. this will be bestowed in the Lord's time; 8. this we may be as confident of, as if we were in the possession already of the good things requested. All which can be contained in prayer, in all its parts, and throughout all its branches, is most certainly included and implied in these terms, which have been expressed in the words specified; so that I shall leave them; not to open the same, but for your most serious consideration: and proceed to open and explain the words of my text; and that in the following way and manner.

1. By entering on, and speaking of the blessing expressed in this sentence of it; contained in these words of the same; *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.*

2. The reason assigned for this: it is, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

3. Shew how acting thus, is acceptable before, and unto him, and give the reason for it.

4. How hereby we have an assurance before we pray of the acceptance of our prayers, and of their being heard, and answered. May the Lord so lead me through these particulars, as that you may see the truth and propriety of all this. I am in agreement therewith, to enter on my subject, by

1. Observing the blessing expressed, contained in these words, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.*

The words are addressed to those who were believers on the Lord Jesus Christ: this is implied and included in the word *we*: which being plural, implies all of them are here comprehended: as they also are in the term *us*, so frequently made use of by our apostle in this his most Sacred Epistle: which contains a whole body of divinity, and a most true expressive delineation of a real Christian, and of what real Christianity consists in; which is a conformity to Christ: which the Holy Ghost produces in the minds, affections, life, temper, conduct and walk of such as are born again. The Lord the Spirit himself cannot produce it in such, as are not born again. It is such only as hate all sin: it is they only who do in truth and reality abstain from the commission of the same, from gospel motives, and out of zeal to the honour and glory of Christ: it is they only, who have right apprehensions of the pure and undefiled law of God. They know sin to be a filthy act; it is the work of the devil: it is therefore in every instance abominable: the course and practice of it, demonstrate such to be the children of the devil. Sin is that which Christ came into our world to destroy. Real saints delight in the good ways of the Lord: this our apostle has been exciting unto: it being an evidence of our love to God—of the truth of our conversion—of the blessedness of our state in Christ—of our being out of the state of sin, and the death in it, and of our being in the state of grace, life, and salvation: the knowledge of which worketh peace of conscience, and gives us evident assurance of our salvation. All these matters have been treated of, in the former Sermons; yet I could not but give a hint of these, because they all of them issue in the words before us, and bring us to our text: *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* It was before declared what we should be; viz. such as were without dissimulation: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him. Thus you have the full connection of these words; by the which we are the most likely to have the fullest and clearest apprehension of them. It cannot but appear this must in part be the meaning of the same—That we loving each other for Christ's sake, and loving the brethren in Christ, when we pray unto Him on their behalf, in his Name, and agreeable with his holy word of promise, and according to his holy covenant, set before us in the word of his grace, we are sure of it, and have the full confidence of hope and expectation, that we shall be heard and answered. This is very encouraging: the throne of grace is always accessible: Christ is upon it to hear and receive our petitions. He hath said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will

give it you." John xvi. 23. Yea, he adds, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." v. 24. So that our apostle spake after Christ himself, and no more than he had complete warrant from him for, when he says in my text, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* It is God our heavenly Father is the Person spoken of. It is believers in Christ who are included in the *we*. It is whatsoever we ask, we receive: which must be confined, so as to be understood of that which is agreeable to the good pleasure of his will to bestow on us. How is the good pleasure of his will to be known by us? How are we to pray unto him? The reply to this is, The good pleasure of his will concerning us, in Christ Jesus, is made known to us, by the exceeding great and precious promises he hath given us: in these all our needs for body and soul are expressed; with an all-sufficiency of grace and mercy, suited to every wound and want, case and circumstance, sin, misery, and temptation we can at any time be the subjects of: our wants, sins, and miseries are inherent in us. We are led by the Holy Spirit, into a true knowledge and apprehension of the same. He opens to us, how expressive the promises are, of the all-sufficiency of grace, which is in the fulness of Christ, to supply all our need. This makes way for us, to apprehend the promises, as the ground-work of all our prayers—That we are to plead them with the Lord—To seek to him to fulfil them unto us. As we can never ask aright, but as we keep them in view, and pray in agreement with them: and as we cannot ask for any good beyond what is contained in the Lord's most holy word of promise, so whatsoever we ask, agreeable to the same, we are sure to receive. As the whole good pleasure of God's will in Christ Jesus, concerning us, is set before us, in the Scriptures of Truth, and what he will bestow on us, in our walking with him, and before him, unto all well-pleasing, as we live, act, and persevere in living a life of faith on the Son of God, so as we approach the Father in the Name and Person of the glorious Mediator, and pray agreeable with his holy promises, we are sure of receiving answers to our prayers: this is the confidence of faith, which all the saints of the Most High, may express, to the glory of the Lord. And let it be private prayer, or family prayer, or social prayer in the which they may express themselves before the Lord on their own behalf, or on the behalf of their brethren in Christ Jesus it shall not be in vain. Let it be for whom, or for what it may, if it be what they have encouragement for from God's promise, they may be confident of receiving the same. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* This is very blessed: it is a favour altogether of free grace: it is the prayer of faith, in the which all the holy brethren have their interest—The fathers, the young men, and the babes in Christ. It belongs to all the called of God in Christ Jesus—To those who have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Who walk in the light as he is in the light: those whom the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth from all sin. It belongs to such as love for Christ's sake the brethren, who have confidence in God, and before him, concerning their real love, and hearty attachment to the holy brotherhood, for the Lord's sake. And this brings me to my next particular; which is as follows.

2. To speak of the reason assigned for what the apostle has been declaring in these words, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* The reason for this, as given by the apostle is this: *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

This reason cannot be grounded upon works performed by the saints: it must be founded on the order established by the Lord, which must be agreeable to the holiness, purity and perfection of his Nature, and in perfect agreement with his most holy promises. The Lord God cannot will any thing contrary to his holiness, nor to the dishonour of his Son Jesus Christ: nor contrary to the order of his eternal purposes and decrees in Christ Jesus towards all flesh. His commands are no parts of our salvation, yet they are to be, and ought to be attended unto. To walk in the practice and observance of them, is to do those things which are pleasing in his sight; which here in a very special manner regards loving the brethren: not but the commandments of God, must be as extensive as the whole of his revealed will, in all its requirements of precepts and duty. In the exercise of our wills in submission and obedience to the same, we express our love to the Lord our God, and to the saints, and fellow men for his sake, who is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil. That in this place keeping the commandments, must have special regard to loving the brethren, may appear from the whole context: this hath been the very special subject which the apostle hath been upon, in the preliminary verses, which for a proof of its being so, I will here recite: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* As you have the whole context thus before you, it must be very clear I conceive to your minds, brotherly love, or loving the brethren for Christ's sake, must in a very special manner, be one of the commandments very specially here referred unto; the observance of which cannot but be very acceptable in the sight of God, it having been so often enjoined by our Lord Jesus Christ his well beloved Son. Who almost with his dying breath, said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12. Now agreeable to the order and decrees of God; and as agreeable with the nature, end and design of Christ's death; and as agreeable to the holy gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and as agreeable with the revealed will of God in the Scriptures of Truth, this is a reason, and a very substantial one, that *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* To be what the Lord would have us to be, agreeable to his will of command, cannot but be pleasing to Him. He is well pleased with the persons of his people, and he loved them in Christ with an everlasting love, before the foundation of the world. He gave Christ to be their eternal Head. He has given Christ to be their complete and everlasting Saviour. He gave Christ for them, and he hath given Christ unto them. And by his Holy Spirit which he bestows upon them, he forms them as a people for his own praise and glory. This is begun in regeneration; which is manifested in

conversion; and further displayed and discovered in producing in the minds of these, individually, all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God: so that every good work and labour of love, is ever in the sight of God. He is pleased with it: He accepts of it: He expresses his satisfaction in it: this rightly understood and explained serves to open and explain the whole of the passage before us. True prayer is that which makes way for practice: hence that old saying, "that prayer will make a man leave sinning: or sinning will soon make a man give over praying." Whosoever belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, is one with Him, and is quickened with Him; and by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, shall not, he cannot call upon the Lord in vain. As the Father heareth Christ always, so he heareth the cry of all that call upon Him in his Son's Name. All styled good works in the Scriptures, must be done in obedience to the will of God, from a principle of love to Him, they must be performed in the name of Christ, and to the glory of God by Him. And it is God that worketh in them to will, and to do of his good pleasure. To walk with God in Christ, in the free and full belief of His having accepted us in the Beloved, and of his being at perfect peace with us; of his seeing, beholding, and resting well pleased with us, in the Person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, under the believing apprehension of the same, to act holily, and perform good works, to the praise and glory of the grace of Father, Son, and Spirit, this is acceptable to the Divine Majesty. The reason why so it is, that whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, is, because we keep his commandments. This is done under the free Spirit of adoption, and with a free Spirit: not that we may obtain any thing of God thereby, but that we may fully prove that we delight in Him, and all his appointments, and commandments. And as grace is glory in the bud, and that which the Lord will crown in the issue with glory everlasting, so the same God is most graciously pleased to bless his people, in their calling on his holy name, in his hearing and answering their prayers, and that so evidently, that they cannot but be fully persuaded of the same. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* It is also very expressive of the influence and effect, which true prayer, by the which I mean, real out-goings of the soul, have on such as worship God in spirit and in truth. As it brings down answers from the Lord, and those very particular blessings invocated, so it constrains us to attend to what the Lord hath commanded in his holy word: and the one is so connected with the other, that the one doth not, cannot consist, as here placed by the apostle, without the other. The reason assigned is founded on the order established by God, and on the holiness and purity of his Nature: He cannot approve of sin, neither can he of the omission of duty: which brings me

3. To shew how acting thus, that is, by doing his commandments, and doing those things that are pleasing in his sight, this is acceptable before him, and unto him: and I am to give the reason for it, why it is so: *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself saith, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John xv. 7, 8: which words serve to open and

explain what lies before us, in this part of our text. It is declarative of our love to Christ, and the Father in Him—Of our faith in Christ, this being the fruit of the same: of our doing that which is well pleasing to our heavenly Father: of our zeal to advance the honor and glory of God, and Christ in a manifestative way. It is if I may so say, the end of our faith. And this is the very reason why it is acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God, because hereby we seek to advance his glory, and increase his praise. A man in Christ, such as are real believers in the Son of God, are zealous of good works, that the glory of the Lord may be advanced. It is their meat and drink to do those things which are acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God our heavenly Father, who is the Person here most immediately expressed and designed: this may be confirmed by looking back to verse 20: *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* Nothing which the Lord hath commanded, but is agreeable with the holiness of his Nature, the immutability of his will, and must of necessity be acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight—Loving the brethren for the Lord's sake—Avoiding all sort of evil—Renouncing all evil in act and practice—Holding communion with the Father and the Son—Abiding in the truths of the everlasting gospel: all this is most truly pleasing and acceptable unto God. Let it be here observed, our being acceptable in the sight of God in the Person of Christ: and our acting in such a way and manner, as for us to be acceptable in so doing before the Lord, are different and distinct subjects. They should not be confounded nor swallowed up in one the other. It should be the real study of spiritual persons, to have right apprehensions of both these subjects, and keep them distinct. In the present day, we are not fond of so doing: hence to treat on such subjects as these now before us, is very commonly treated with contempt: it being too generally looked on, as having nothing in it but legality: yet there can be nothing which takes off the heart, from believing in the Person, Righteousness, and Sacrifice of the ever-blessed Immanuel, in our walking with his Father and our Father in Him, in the true knowledge and faith of what he hath done for us; and hereby to aim at his glory, and to please him by doing that which is acceptable in his sight. It cannot but be the sure way for our ready access unto him at all times: in its place, it must be a means of our expecting to have our prayers heard, and answered; the reason for which is because we keep his commandments, by walking continually in them. Hereby full proof is given that we have communion with God: so that this outward evidence for us, that we belong to him, is accompanied with this most kind and special proof of his most gracious notice and regard of us; that *whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* And this is given in the words before us, as the reason of God's granting us those things we ask of him in prayer. It must be observed, the apostle is here, as all throughout this Epistle, discriminating between professors and professors, shewing which of them are right, and which are not: therefore if this be taken into the account, we shall find, he is not driving them into themselves, for evidences to prove they are accept-

able in the Lord and before him. This is no part of the subject; he is speaking of what could not but come before them, and be the subject of spiritual sense and discernment, so as to be evident to others, by their outward life, conversation, walk, and conduct. It is of an equal nature to the apostle *Paul's* exhortation to the saints at *Thessalonica*, which runs thus; "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." 1. Epis. chap. iv. 1. Let but these things be properly considered, and we shall be well pleased with the apostle *John*, for what he is here delivering. We shall also see a perfect unity of spirit and sentiment in both these apostles: the one exhorts saints to this, the other shews the blessed fruits which follow upon the same. This therefore brings me to the last clause of my text; which I am now to enter upon, and is this.

4. To shew, how hereby we have an assurance before we pray, of the acceptance of our prayers, and of their being heard, and answered. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

As prayer is the act of the new creature, under the influence and breathing of the Holy Spirit, so our first and grand assurance our prayers will be heard, and answered, is founded on God's free promise, and the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as we have communion with saints in our accesses with them, at the same throne of grace, in the Name of Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father, so we have an assurance of the acceptance of our prayers, and of their being heard, and answered, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* Not because of this, but as this gives outward evidence that such are the Lord's, and is an external evidence to them, so far as it goes, that they are the Lord's; so it gives them confidence in the Lord, that he will not reject their prayers, which being many, and various, and containing in them, the very things promised to the whole household of faith, so it cannot but be, but the substance of what is contained in them, must, it cannot be otherwise, be heard and answered. I conceive this to be as right an interpretation of the words before us, as can either be given, or desired: and I conceive it to be a blessed one: what can be more desirable to a real saint, but to do that which is truly acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of God? How can he know what this consists in, but by attending to his revealed will? In the which, what is styled his commandments, are given: it is by an attention unto them, and in the practice of them, we shew our love and reverence of God, by our careful practice of the same. And we find the Lord in our walking with him, and before him, unto all well-pleasing, is pleased to give evident marks of his approbation thereof. This He sometimes does in a very remarkable manner, in the notice he takes of our spiritual breathings and desires: by the which we are again and again confirmed in this divine declaration, that the desire of the righteous shall be granted. Now the words of our text fall in with all this. Such of the Lord's people, who walk in faith before him, and in obedience to his revealed will, have this assurance in themselves, founded on the free grace of God, displayed towards, and upon them, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, before they approach the throne of the heavenly Majesty, that whatsoever they ask, they shall receive of him: and that, *because they keep his command-*

ments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. The which is very comprehensively expressed in these words. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* To open these words will be the subject of the following Sermon : therefore I shall say nothing of it here ; only as it is wholly evangelical, so there is nothing in keeping the commandments to take us off from Christ : but every thing in so doing calculated to keep our eye on him : like as under the Old Testament, the Lord was pleased to express his approbation of the prayers of his people, and of the walk of his people, sometimes by visible tokens and evidences of his favour : such as to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices : as also by answering the request of their lips, and granting their petitions ; and sometimes by express and positive declarations of his acceptance of their walk and conduct ; as in the instances amongst many, may be seen by us, in his declaration to his servants *Abraham* and *Moses*, in what he says of them : “ And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment ; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” Gen. xviii. 17—19. “ And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam : and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words : If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.” Num. xii. 5—7. What is this, but a testimony of approbation of the acceptance of the outward acts, and behaviour of both these persons, for what they were in their walk before the Lord. This is not their acceptance in Christ, but the acceptance of their persons, and walk before the Lord, in their communion with him, in Christ, and through the gracious influences of his Spirit operating on their minds, and producing an outward conformity to Christ, which was evidenced to others, in their lives and conversations. The acceptance of our persons in the Person of Christ, is an eternal act in the mind and will of God, which was from everlasting, and will be the same to everlasting. Our being led by the Holy Spirit to Christ, and to the Father in Him, this is a blessing enjoyed by us whilst we are in a time-state. We in our requests to the Lord, have access through Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father : this leads us to walk before the Lord unto all well-pleasing, and to study to apply ourselves to do and practice those things which are most truly acceptable in his sight. We do not do those things, which the Scriptures expressly declare are acceptable to the Lord, that we may be accepted of him ; but we do so and so, because we are accepted of him. We do not walk with God that we may obtain his favour ; but we walk with God that we may enjoy his favour. In the keeping his commandments there is great reward, though not *for* the keeping them. May the Lord shine on his most holy truths, and keep them up in our minds, by the teaching of his Holy Spirit : so as that at all seasons, in all places, cases, and circumstances, we may each of us walk as seeing him who is invisible. This will be so far from making us legal, that it will most certainly prove

us, outwardly, and to the demonstration of others, to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. May these things sink down into our hearts. The Lord grant it for his Name's sake. Amen.

SERMON L.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.—1 JOHN III. 23.

It would be well were we ever in our minds to preserve this idea of the sacred Scriptures, that there is no one subject in them, but is clearly stated, with all its effects and consequences. There is no darkness and obscurity, be it either truth, doctrine, experience or practice. We may not, we do not understand every part of the word equally and clearly alike; we are not infallible: it is well for us we are not; because we are thereby made sensible of the necessity of our continual dependence on the Holy Spirit for his sacred light and instruction. It is to Him we are constantly to repair for the knowledge of every part of holy writ. I am here disposed to express myself thus, for the following reason, viz. as in the former verse the apostle had said to saints, including himself with them, using the term *we*—*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*, and had not expressed what those commandments were; to clear up this, he therefore adds, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment*. This is the sum and substance of the whole doctrine of Christ. Some read the word here rendered *commandment*, *doctrine*. *This is the doctrine*: or, *this is his doctrine, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. I cannot but observe, though it be entirely my own, what deep impression the last sermon our apostle heard pronounced by our Lord Jesus Christ must have made on his mind. It was so deeply engraven on his heart, it seems to constitute the whole of this epistle: many parts of which are written and expressed, so exactly like it, that one can scarce conceive, how the children of God, should be capable of overlooking it. The sermon of our Lord's to which I refer, is what is contained in the 15th and 16th chapters of *John's* gospel, which is concluded at the 28th verse of the 16th chapter. I think this casts a dignity upon the whole Epistle. The words of Christ were not only full of grace and truth; but the majesty and glory, the truth and importance, the life and energy contained in the same, remain, and will do so down to the end of time, as the blessed effects produced by them in the minds of the elect, will last to all eternity. One scripture makes way for the explanation of another: this is the case here. The words now before

me, and which are now to be attended unto, I shall attempt to open and set before you, and that which is contained in them, in the following way.

1. What, and whose commandment this is, the apostle is here speaking of. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

2. What is contained in this doctrine, or commandment, concerning believing.

3. That loving one another is the consequence of receiving, or believing this doctrine, or commandment.

4. Whose commandment this is, that we love one another. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

I conceive here are two Persons here designed—The Divine Father in the former part of the verse : and our Lord Jesus Christ in the latter. It being in a more particular sense, the command of the Father for believing on Christ : as it is more immediately our Lord's command to his disciples and followers, to love one another. Of these particulars in their order, and connection : only let it be observed I shall be very short on the subject of loving one another, there having been said already so much concerning it. As I have thus given you my plan, for discoursing on the present passage before me, so I begin it thus.

1. By considering what, and whose commandment this is, the apostle is here speaking of, when he says, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

It appears most clearly from the words themselves, it must be the commandment of the Divine Father. He standing in this relation of Father unto him; not only agreeable to the order of the Divine Subsistences of the Three in Jehovah, in their relation to each other, but also as it respects the covenant offices which subsist between them in the economy of grace. With respect to the word *commandment*, we have it made use of by Christ himself, when he is speaking of the great covenant acts and transactions between the Father and himself, and of his carrying the same into act and execution. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John x. 17, 18. Again, our Lord says, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John xii. 49, 50. As all this hath reference to what passed between God, and the glorious Mediator before all worlds, so it leads us to observe, the will of God expressed to Christ in the everlasting covenant, is the original of salvation—That the incarnation of the Son of God, together with his Suretyship, life, sacrifice, and death, all which as commensurate with the will of the Divine Father, expressed here by Christ, under the idea of commandment, is the salvation itself: which as perfected is revealed in the everlasting gospel which is the transcript and record of it, which *Paul* says, "according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is made known,

to all nations for the obedience of faith." This is the commandment, or doctrine of God; which he hath given unto his church as the doctrine of salvation: and this is both the commandment, or doctrine, of the Father, and of Christ. It is the commandment, or doctrine of God the Father, as he conceived the divine scheme of grace, and purposed in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will: and it is the doctrine of Christ, as he came from heaven in Person, to make it known, to accomplish it, and freely and fully to declare it. Thus he speaks—"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John vi. 37—40. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ himself, opens the secret of the mystery of grace unto our view. He is the accomplisher of all the will of God, in this most surprizing grace. And he says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 29. This is the universal faith of the whole church of God, expressed by one, as the mouth of all the rest: "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 69. I think from what hath been delivered, it is evident, what, and *whose* commandment this is, in these words before us. The nature of it, or what is contained in it, is, salvation. This was, as it respects the original of it, from the Father. He it was who said, *I will send them a Saviour, a great one, and he shall deliver them.* It is his revealed will, we should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life and salvation: this is the doctrine of the whole volume of revelation, both in the Old Testament and in the New. Christ is the Father's ordinance of life and salvation. He is revealed in the Old Testament, as the Messiah, who was to come into our world, by his open incarnation, to do the will of him that sent him, and in his own Person, and by his sole and alone mediation, accomplish all the Divine Father's purposes of grace: and save his people in himself with an everlasting salvation. And he it is who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 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." Isa. xlv. 22—25. This doctrine is carried into the New Testament, and runs throughout the whole of it: neither is there the least difference in it but this—The former contains the revelation and promise of all this; the latter declares it is all accomplished; it is to be seen; and that it shines forth in its meridian glory and splendour in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That which is contained in the *commandment*, or doctrine, is, salvation by grace: salvation for sinners, by the blood and righteousness of Christ Jesus. It is the will, yea, it is the good pleasure of the divine Father, that we should receive, believe, and rest our everlasting all, upon *the Person*, and mediation of his co-equal and co-essential Son. This

the whole scriptures give full evidence of, and testimony unto. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* It is the will of the Father, Christ should be highly exalted, as the head of his church—As the Saviour of his church—As the righteousness of his church—As the Purifier of his church—As having loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood. It is the will of the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell. It is the will of the Father, the whole church both in earth and heaven should receive therefrom all its supplies. “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” John i. 16. And the doctrine of the Person, work, Offices, fulness of Christ, is the bread of life to the church. It is the spring of everlasting life unto it : yea, it is this which is the water of life and salvation : therefore the church saith, “All my springs are in thee.” Psalm lxxxvii. 7. The apostle here saying, *And this is his commandment, or doctrine, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,* expresses the whole substance of the faith of God’s elect : as also how Christ, as the ordinance of life and salvation, is the one and sole foundation of faith : and also the immediate object of faith : and that he is also the subject of faith : as also that this makes a most evident distinction, that the *we* spoken of in these words, differ and are distinguished from all others, and that in and by their very believing : it is *we* to whom the apostle belongs ; to whom this doctrine of salvation belongs : it is *we* who have God for our Father, who have fellowship with him, and his Son Jesus Christ, to whom it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe on him, and who have already believed on him, who are interested in what the apostle is here speaking of. He was as much concerned and interested in this commandment, or doctrine, at the time he wrote this, as we are now : for the subject is not about our first believing on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it concerns our going on, in every act of spiritual life, in the exercise of the same upon Christ, and the Father in Him. This deserves consideration : we should do well to apply our minds to this : as it would lead us to see the glory contained in the doctrine of Christ—Of the Father’s everlasting love, and how his grace shines forth in all its glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of grace is invariably one and the same : there will never be any alteration in it ; for it is the everlasting gospel. We as hearers and professors of it, may give up the glorious truths of the same, and receive and embrace errors of various sorts and kinds : yet this by no means can corrupt the gospel of the blessed God. Our minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus ; but the Word of the Lord, Christ the Essential Word endureth for ever. And the everlasting gospel, by the which he is preached is, in all its truths and doctrines, immutably one, and the same for ever. “The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Pet. i. 25. There may be a greater knowledge and valuation of Truth, by the which I mean, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, in one age than in another, yet it is the same glorious gospel in one age that it is in the other. It should therefore be remembered, that as the Lord shines forth in his sovereignty and wisdom, in bringing forth in such distinct and particular periods of time, such and such persons, some who are eminent for Truth, and some for their opposition to it, so he has at one time a more flourishing church, than at another : and that this is always in pro-

portion to the number of the elect, which are in a time state, during every succession of age, as the world goes on, and creatures, even we men, pass on with it. It is the Lord the Holy Ghost who alone can give us the knowledge of Christ. He only can make and keep us alive to Christ. It is by Him alone we can be kept in the knowledge of the Truth. He only can keep up the Truth in our minds. He only can keep our minds in the Truth. It is wholly beyond any power in ourselves. It must be by the power of the Holy Spirit: yet our knowledge of Truth, our high prizings of the Truth, our living the Truth, our enjoyments of the Truth, our dying in the Truth, our prospect of enjoying all contained in the Truth even in glory, can add nothing to the Truth: it exceeds and transcends in worth and excellency all we can possibly express and conceive. What *Job* says of *Wisdom* is as I conceive very applicable here; he puts the following questions: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold." The question then is put: "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." chap. xxviii. 12—23. I conceive this may serve as suitable to the present subject, so far as we may have advanced esteem for Truth thereby. But lest I should darken counsel with words without knowledge, and depreciate Truth instead of exalting it, I will proceed to the next particular head of my present subject, and endeavour as the Lord may be pleased to enable me,

2. To shew what is contained in this doctrine and commandment, concerning believing: *And this is his commandment, or doctrine, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* I should prefer the word doctrine, to commandment; yet as it has been already opened, it comes, I conceive to one and the same.

The gospel is made up all of grace. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one great and grand subject of it. His salvation also is gloriously displayed therein: therefore this whole doctrine and commandment, is most undoubtedly contained in Christ—In his relation to God—In his relation to his church—In his completeness in the sight of God—In the church's completeness in Him—In the way in the which he is pleased to make himself known to his people, and how they are brought to the true and saving knowledge of Him: so as to live a life of faith on Him—a life of communion with Him, and are hereby enabled to cleave to Him—To esteem Him as their exceeding joy: and thus going on from faith to faith, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, they follow on to know the Lord, who makes their path as the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. This I appre-

hend, must be the substance of these words now before us; for it must not be conceived that faith is a natural act; or that it can at any time be exercised by us without Looking unto Jesus. It must be the Holy Ghost, who by his taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us, draws out our faith into act and exercise, agreeable to those views of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he hath created and formed in our minds of Christ and his salvation. It is I apprehend a general mistake; when we hear of faith, and think of faith, we are conceiving of the act of it; which we generally make to consist in believing that Christ died for us, and that we are interested in him: and this we build upon some impression, frame, feeling, and experience, we either have had, or have; and we value ourselves very much upon the same: yet all this hath nothing to do with the faith of God's elect, with believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God. We must first have the knowledge of Christ, before we can have the knowledge of our interest in Him. The knowledge of Him must of necessity go before our believing on Him; and this comes into our renewed minds, by the revelation the divine Father is pleased to make of his Son in us: this he does without any act of ours. The apostle says, "It pleased God, who called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me." Gal. i. 15, 16. When Christ is revealed in us, then we receive life from Him; which by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, produces in our renewed minds the true knowledge of Christ: this is the means whereby the Lord the Spirit, is pleased to produce faith in Christ: which he draws out into act and exercise upon Christ, as he is revealed in the word of grace. And as it pleaseth him to open our minds to apprehend Christ, in his Person, love, salvation and fulness, we receive all this into our minds. Thus what we are led to know of Him, and concerning Him, from the Scriptures of Truth, the Holy Spirit is pleased to exercise our faith upon: so that hereby we live on Christ, and he dwells in our hearts, and our faith is exercised on Him, just as the eye is upon the object: which whilst it views and takes it in, sees not the eye with which it beholds the same. So whilst we are actually taking into our minds, most precious views and discoveries of God's everlasting love, and the glories of Christ's Person, and complete salvation, yet we look not at faith, which is the eye of the mind, with which it actually perceives the same, any more than the eye sees itself, when it is looking at any object. Such an account of faith as this, must certainly give us to consider, the object of faith, superior to the act of faith: and that without the one, there could be no existence for the other. If these things are as thus stated, then the doctrine and commandment of faith, must most undoubtedly consist in the grace and salvation, revealed, expressed, and set before us in the everlasting gospel. Therefore the knowledge of the sublime truths of the everlasting gospel, is of the greatest importance: as without them we have no object, or subject to fix our thoughts upon, which can yield support, comfort, and relief. It cannot be in an enjoyment, supported without knowledge, which can by any means be sufficient, for an enlightened mind. There must be a clear, scriptural knowledge of Christ, and of the Father's love to us in Him, and of his acceptance of Him, and his finished obedience and sacrifice, or there can be no believing on Him for life eternal: this is the doctrine of God. This is his commandment concerning his Son Jesus Christ, that we should rest perfectly contented with the revelation and record, that he hath made and given in the

Sacred Scriptures. It is from them, by the enlightenings of the Holy Ghost, as hath been before expressed, we receive the knowledge of Christ into our minds: in this we are altogether passive; we are born of God before this; for it is to our spiritual mind the revelation of Christ is made. What we receive into our minds concerning Christ, is the foundation of all the spiritual acts of our minds, which are distinguished by various acts of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ: and the particular exercise of the spiritual acts of the mind is faith in its acts and exercise. Our living Christ is the effect of knowing Him. We live by faith as our minds are exercised on Him. We walk by faith, in the belief of what we are in Him, and that he hath brought us nigh to God by the blood of his cross, by which he hath made peace. We triumph in Christ, as we view his triumphs over the world, sin, satan, death, hell, and damnation. We rejoice in Him, as we see ourselves complete in Him. It is in our knowing him, we know our interest in Him. We are not first brought to know our interest in Christ, and then brought to know Christ. No; it is not so; but we are first brought to know Christ, then we are led by the Holy Spirit to believe in his blood and righteousness for our everlasting salvation—Then we are led by the Eternal Spirit into real communion with Christ: and in this holy fellowship Christ hath with us, and that we have with him, we have the true knowledge of our personal interest in Him, and his salvation, and in all the blessings, and benefits of the same, made known unto us, by the Divine Spirit; and from hence we can boldly say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. If these things are so, then receiving the knowledge of the Father's love into our renewed mind, and having true apprehensions of Christ, agreeable with the revelation made of his Person, Love, Salvation, and Mediation in the gospel, reflected on our minds from the same by the Holy Spirit, is of great importance: and it is hereby Christ is in us, and formed in our hearts, the hope of glory. So that all the exercise of faith on Christ, and on the Father's love in Him, is under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, who dwelleth in us; therefore our exercising our minds in belief of the Truth, cannot but be pleasing unto God, because, it is for the sum and substance of it, nothing more or less, than receiving Christ into our minds, and giving full credit to the Father's record and testimony of Him, in the written word. All which may most truly be attributed, as it here is, to the Divine Father: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. So that the divine Father is here acknowledged as the Original of salvation, and as setting Christ most completely before us, in his gospel, doctrine, and commandment, as his Salvation to the church: which I conceive is the comprehensive meaning of the text, as it stands in connection and relation to what goes before, and follows it. And thus having given the best exposition I am capable of, concerning what the Father's commandment, or doctrine is, respecting what the Salvation is, and of what is contained in the doctrine, or commandment concerning believing, I proceed to my

3rd. particular. To shew, that loving one another, is the consequent of receiving, or believing this doctrine, or commandment: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment*.

I have before suggested, I should be very short on this present particular in my text: for this reason, because so much has already in some

former sermons been said of it; therefore it would be needless to enlarge. Indeed the apostle here only expresseth it, to shew, how receiving and abiding in the doctrine of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, is the producing cause, and the very means of the continuation of this love in saints towards each other. As Jesus Christ, in his union and relation to his saints is one and the same to all his people, so they are one and the same, and equally alike interested in his complete salvation. The true knowledge of this cannot but promote love in the brethren, one towards another. It is agreeable to the Father, and Christ, that we should love one another. In the doing of the same, and in believing in his Son Jesus Christ, we do that which is pleasing in his sight: which whilst it doth not render our persons acceptable unto him, yet it renders our walking with Him, and our works, which are produced in us, and by us, as the effect of our receiving his doctrine of salvation by Christ alone, acceptable to Him: it being agreeable with his most holy will.

As I conceive this sufficient for this third head of my present discourse, so much having been delivered in former sermons concerning loving the brethren, I therefore go on to the last particular.

4. To shew whose commandment this is, expressed in these words, *that we love one another*. I will here recite afresh the whole text. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

It appears to me, the Person of God the Father is designed in the former part of the words: and the Person of Christ in the latter. My reasons are as follows. It is very clear from the context, and the first clause of the text, the divine Father is intended, and that as the Father of Christ, whom we call upon in prayer, and from whom we receive that which we request in the Name of the glorious Mediator. The evidence of which is from the words themselves. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* All that is here expressed and contained, most certainly belongs to the Father, and it is all spoken of him, and concerning him. He loved us in Christ. He gave us to Christ. He gave Christ for us. He bestowed salvation on us in Him. He gave us all things in Christ. He hath set forth Christ, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. It is by the revelation made of his Son Jesus Christ, we are brought to the knowledge of Christ, and his salvation, and hereby our faith and hope is in God: all which, agrees with the whole system of grace; which as we are gradually enlightened into, we more and more perceive all the communicable blessings of the Holy Trinity, are contained in the fulness of our Lord Jesus Christ—That he communicates them unto us. We cannot be more blessed than we are in Him; yet we do not actually enjoy in our own souls, all those blessings we have in Him: We enjoy them in a way of communication to our minds: this is done as the Holy Spirit is pleased to shine on these, and give fresh apprehensions of those spiritual blessings contained in the Father's everlasting love, which he hath expressed in what he hath bestowed on us, in his Beloved. I would here observe, these subjects are all of them suited to faith, even that faith which is wholly supernatural; therefore it should never be said by any of the saints, I cannot apprehend it; and conclude it cannot be, because, it may be, we may not at present

either receive, believe, or apprehend and enjoy the same. Truth is immutable. It is not the more, or the less, for our knowing, or not knowing it; neither can we ever fully comprehend the truths revealed to us, in the sacred volume of inspiration. We can believe that which we cannot comprehend, because the same is founded on the immutable will of God, as recorded and set forth by him in his revealed and written word. We can enjoy that in God, which we shall never fully comprehend of him in heaven, to the ages of eternity. The knowledge of God is that which makes way for the spiritual apprehension of God. There is an infinity in the subject revealed; but the mind is finite, to whom the subject is made known: this is not sufficiently considered; hence we make more of our knowledge of the gospel, than of the gospel itself: it is in one point of view, strange it should be thus, with any of us; yet so it is, scarce any of us but fall into this error: whereas the grace of the Three in Jehovah, made known in the everlasting gospel, is so far beyond our salvation, and even glory everlasting, that we shall never be able to comprehend the same; no, not in heaven. All we are in Christ, our Head, our Lord, our Saviour, our All, our Portion, our Inheritance, our Glory, our Blessedness, is but the fruit and effect of God's everlasting love. If so, what must the fountain, God himself be! What must his love in Christ Jesus be to our persons, as considered in him! What must our salvation in Christ be! why such as exceed our uttermost conception: they transcend our utmost apprehension. Indeed it is truly well with us, when we rightly confess this; because we are hereby led to acknowledge we neither know, enjoy, nor at any time experience the everlasting love of the Father to us in Christ Jesus, but by the immediate light, teaching, and fresh illumination of the Holy Ghost. But all this is not immediately connected with the present head of discourse, any farther than it concerns the clearing up, that the former part of the text, concerns the Father: as the latter part contained in these words, *and love one another, as he gave us commandment*, belongs and is spoken of as referring to our Lord. My reasons for thus conceiving, are as follows. Most assuredly all which concerns the gospel, in which Christ is revealed, set forth, and made known, must most especially belong to the divine Father. If there be a command for believing on Christ, for life and salvation, this according to the economy of the covenant between the Father and the Son must be given from the Father, though it may be enforced by Christ as Mediator. The following words seem to me to confirm this: "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John xii. 44—48. The faith of God's elect is produced in them, by the gospel. It is by it they are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is wrought in them by the secret and invincible operation of the Holy Ghost within them: not as the fruit and effect of any commandment given concerning it; but as a gracious effect of free sovereign grace. It is therefore to be considered not as a duty, but as a gift and privilege bestowed out of

the riches of free grace. In this light our apostle speaks of it in the following words ; “ But as many as received him, to them gave he power, right, or privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John i. 12, 13. Now as it is the commandment, or doctrine of the divine Father, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, so it is the will of Christ, and his commandment that we should love one another. I therefore think that here in this place, we are to conceive the Person of Christ to be understood, it being so expressly again and again commanded by our Lord to his disciples, as may be seen by looking into the 15th chapter of *John’s* gospel. I therefore conceive the words of my text, as most expressly declaring what is most truly pleasing to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Viz., to believe in the Father’s well beloved Son : and to obey his Son’s command, which consists in loving one another as he gave us commandment. This then is a very blessed outward evidence of our being believers in God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. We solemnly asserting and declaring, our assent and consent, to that which the Father hath revealed, and set before us, concerning his Son Jesus Christ ; and we believing on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, we acknowledge ourselves to be wholly dependent on Him, for life and salvation ; and give this full and outward proof of our acknowledging him to be our Lord and sovereign, by loving one another for his sake, and because he hath commanded us so to do. Thus having expressed myself, as fully as it was in my power ; I will recite again the words of my text, and so draw to the close : *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he, that is, Jesus Christ, gave us commandment : for this is his, in a very particular sense : He having said, This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.* May the Lord bless what hath been delivered, if he please ; so as that we may apprehend clearly the connection and dependence of these words, with the former. Or, in other words that we may rightly consider how causes produce their proper effects—That the one cannot be rightly known and understood, but the other must be improved and advanced thereby—That our reception of Truth, will be outwardly evidenced by the keeping the commandments of God : and in a very particular manner by believing on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and loving one another for his sake, and because he hath commanded us so to do. The Lord command his blessing on what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON LI.

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.—1 JOHN iii. 24.

THESE words which close this chapter are a continuation of the subject before us; and finish it. They prove the blessedness which follows on the former premises, and how Christ's indwelling in us, and our dwelling in Him, are most certainly evidenced hereby; that we hereby know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. In the whole of our reading these words, and all throughout this chapter, and the whole of this Epistle, it is very evident, one great design of it, is to separate the precious from the vile: and even to discriminate one professor from the other. All the three chapters, of which this is the last verse, fully evidence this; and therefore the true and right apprehension thereof, will serve to guide us to a right conception of the whole which is now before us. I conceive, if we read from the 21st verse to the close of our present verse, we shall see very clearly the true and express meaning of the whole: which I will therefore transcribe: *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* From the whole context, it appears, this whole Scripture concerns the whole church of God, as collectively considered; and as it respects their giving outward evidence, by their loving the brotherhood, and obtaining answers to their prayers; as also by their believing on the name of the Lord Jesus, that they were the Lord's; partakers of the faith of God's elect. Also the same expresseth and belongs to an individual member of Christ's mystic body, as truly as it doth to the whole community. In the words before us, it is *he*, not *we*: in many of the past verses, the apostle speaks in the plural; yet he alters it here for the singular. He in the former verse says, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* In the words before us, he speaks of the blessed fruits and effects of this: *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* In my attempt to open the words of my present text, I will propose the following particulars.

1. What is spoken of the person here particularized: he is one that keepeth the commandments of God. These were expressed in the former verse: and this being founded on it, points out one who is a real practical believer: *And he that keepeth his commandments*: this is the person spoken of.

2. The blessedness of such an one, and wherein his blessedness consists: he dwelleth in Jesus Christ, and Christ dwelleth in him: *he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.*

3. The knowledge such an one hath of the truth and reality of this: *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Surely this must contain the essence and reality of all which may most justly be entitled true experimental blessedness. I begin with my

1st. particular. In the which I am to notice the person spoken of who is here particularized thus; he is one that keepeth the commandments of God. He is neither a mere professor, nor a false one, nor a neuter. He is a practical christian: what his practice consists in, and what those commandments are, which he most closely attends unto, are declared, as we connect the former verse with this. *And he that keepeth his commandments.* This is the description of the person the apostle is here speaking of.

The whole of what hath been set before us, in the former part of this Epistle, hath been, for the substance of it, to shew, that communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is the source and fountain of all true and practical holiness—That such as are blessed with fellowship with the Divine Father, and his Son, are influenced hereby, through the grace and teaching of the Holy Ghost, to walk, live, and act according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The truth of this, and the contrariety to this, in the children of God, and the children of the devil, form almost the whole sum-total of this chapter, which we are now brought to this last verse of. Love to the brethren, and hatred to the brethren, have been treated of, as fully descriptive to whom such as are under a profession of the gospel belong. Such as are on the Lord's side, and love the brethren in word and deed, these have confidence in God. They have free access to the throne of his heavenly grace. They receive gracious supplies of grace, in answer to their prayers. These keep the commandments of God, in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and by walking in him by the same faith by the which they have received him. They love one another as Christ hath commanded them. These continue in the keeping the commandments of the Lord. And one of these, for all the rest, is here spoken of under the term *He.* *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* So as the apostle began with *he* he ends with *we*, including all saints therein, as he also doth in the word *us*: *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Here then is the language of assurance, spoken out by the apostle in his own name, and likewise in the name of all the saints. Yet my subject at present, calls me to drop this here: it will be taken up in the close of this discourse; as I am in this part more, and most particularly to speak concerning the description of the person, whom the apostle is here speaking of. He is speaking and deciphering the individual thus, as *one who keepeth the commandments.* By the which we are here most certainly to understand, one who believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusts alone in Him for everlasting life; who hath received Him into his mind; who believeth on Him in his heart; and centres in Him as the Father's ordinance for life and salvation. I ground all this on what is expressed in the two foregoing verses:

in the which keeping the commandments and doing those things which are pleasing in God's sight, are connected with the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. So that He is in Christ, who is a believer on Christ, and lives by the faith of the Son of God: and as faith brings its own evidence of this, so living on Christ, and in communion with Christ confirms all this, and gives the fullest evidence to the spiritual mind of the truth and reality thereof: and to keep Christ, the object and subject of Salvation in mind, and to be looking simply and wholly to him, as the author and finisher of faith, is the great excitement to practical holiness and the outward acts and exercises of true godliness. Such as keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, are those who abide in the Truth as it is in Him—who live in the Truth—who walk in the Truth, and are zealous for the same. The expression, *he that keepeth his commandments*, is most certainly very expressive of a continuance in well-doing. A believer hath Christ for his continual object—The word of Truth for his perpetual guide—The Holy Spirit as his Divine Instructor—The love of the Father as the fountain of his everlasting blessedness. So that as the same is realized in his mind, he runs with alacrity in the way of God's holy commandments, be they duties or precepts, ordinances or commands: one of old said, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Psalm. cxix. 128. The one great stimulus to all which, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father's love in him: in proportion as this is kept up, and maintained in act and exercise in the mind, the more clearly and evidently, all the fruits and effects of it appear, in the outward life, conversation, walk and warfare of a christian: and this individually, in a believer as a believer; and this collectively in a community of believers really and truly such. Hence the same blessing which is the consequence of it in one, is the same in them all. Christ is a believer's life: and the manifestation of this consists in the believer's living on Christ, in the full exercise of all his spiritual faculties, senses, and affections on Him. A true believer may well be defined to be one, who is so swallowed up in Christ, and so possessed by Christ, that his whole end in living and dying, is to glorify him. This Epistle may be considered in some of its particulars, and specialities, to be the portrait of a true christian, as he is brought into conformity, and subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ, by the indwelling and effectual working of the Holy Ghost within him, and upon him. The believer hath an intuitive view, sight and apprehension of Christ as revealed in the gospel: by the which Christ dwelleth in him, and he in Christ. And in his believing on Him, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him: this constrains the believer to walk close with the Lord, and humbly before him: this cannot be without obedience; and his greatest act of obedience to the Divine Father's revealed will, is to be well pleased with Christ, who is the object of his ineffable delight. It is by honoring Christ, and submitting unto him in all things, the believer glorifies the Father, and the Spirit; in the which he honors, glorifies, and worships the Three in Jehovah. The Father beholds the believer with the utmost complacency in Christ. The Holy Spirit exalts Christ in the eye and heart of a believer: and the believer in those sights that he hath of Christ, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to take of His things, and shew, and reveal

the same unto the mind, is most divinely swallowed up, and Christ becomes his All—The chiefest and fairest of all the fairs. It is from such apprehensions as these, he rests fully and everlastingly satisfied with Christ; being thoroughly satisfied, He is all-sufficient to satisfy his mind on earth, and in heaven to all eternity. Whilst the eyes of the believer's mind are kept looking on Christ, he is swallowed up in him, and what he sees and beholds in him. When his eye is off Christ, he is just in such a condition as *Samson* was when his locks were shorn—weak as other men. A believer's only strength is in Christ; when he looks to him, he hath a proof and experience of it. If he looks to his faith for it, he will most assuredly find himself without it; for there it is not. It is not in the very actings of it. No; nor in the comforts of it; Where is it then? Why, beloved, it is wholly in the object and subject of his faith: it is in Christ crucified, and Christ exalted: and this Jesus saith, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Having shewed that the person spoken of in the words of my text, as he that keepeth the commandments, which consists in believing on the name of Jesus Christ, and loving the brethren because Christ hath commanded it, is a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation—is the *He* of whom the apostle is here speaking, I proceed to my next particular. Which is this.

2. To shew the blessedness of such an one: and also wherein his blessedness consists: he dwelleth in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ dwelleth in him. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.*

This must be blessedness indeed: it is most truly and divinely so. I carry all this to Christ, he being the last Person mentioned: otherwise it might have been applied unto the Divine Father, who dwelleth in the *fathers*, as doth also the Holy Ghost, as truly as the Son doth. But it being thus expressed in the foregoing words in the former verse, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment," therefore I carry it to Christ; and shall consider how He dwelleth in a believer, and how the believer dwelleth in Christ. The apostle puts the believer's dwelling in Christ first, and then he speaks of Christ's dwelling in the believer. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* This is most exactly as his Lord, and our Lord, hath stated the same subject: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me," John vi. 54—57. Our apostle was most divinely taken with the words of his most precious and divine Lord, and therefore he most gladly makes use of them on all occasions. I shall first speak of a believer's dwelling in Christ, and afterwards of Christ's dwelling in the believer. This is agreeable with the order of my text, therefore I shall thus pursue the same. And 1st as it respects the believer's dwelling in Christ. This is by faith: this is the medium of faculty, by the which Christ is received into the mind, and by it the believer dwells in Christ, which is to be understood of those spiritual outgoings

of the soul towards the Lord Jesus Christ, in the which the heart of the believer is overcome with a sense and spiritual apprehensions and perceptions of Christ; as it hath respect to the glorious revelation which is made of him in the word of his grace: in the which the full glories of his Mediation are displayed. He shines forth therein in his Personal, essential, mediatorial, and relative Glories; so that the believer enlightened by him, and favoured with an intuitive perception of Him, is most efficaciously drawn, attracted to and engaged on Him. And thus the believer dwells in him; He being the object and subject of the believer's thoughts. It is on him, the spiritual faculties are deeply and intensely fixed: so as to dwell in him; and, as I may say, to be wholly swallowed up in Him. If it be asked what is the medium, or by what means this is produced in the spiritual mind, and also how it is maintained in the spiritual understanding of the believer? I reply; it is by means of the word; in the which Christ is revealed; and by the which we receive into our mind increasing apprehensions of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is pleased most graciously to open and explain the Scriptures to the mind, and he opens to the mind, his own views of Christ, as set before us in the Sacred page. And as the truths contained in the word and promises of Christ, dwell and have their residency in the believer's mind, so hereby the believer dwells in Christ: he is fixed in Him: he dwells in Him: He is his one object and subject: his foundation: his centre: his circumference: his whole heart is set upon Him: his whole soul delighteth in Him. Christ is the believer's food: physician: his All; yea, He is his everlasting All: he says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD." This then is one part of a believer's blessedness, he dwells in Christ. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* He who is taught of God, and liveth a life of faith on the Son of God, and hath communion with him, in the graces and blessings of his great salvation, cannot but walk up and down in the name, and fear of the Lord. Such an one dwelleth in Christ. He walks as one united to Christ. He perseveres in his acknowledgment and dependence on Christ: and hereby gives outward evidence of his being one with Christ, and Christ hereby also gives outward evidence in such a believer's outward conformity to Him, that he is one with Him. I shall omit to speak of a believer's blessedness in this, until I have in the 2nd place, given an account of Christ's dwelling in the believer; which is expressed in the words before us thus. *And he in him.* It was before, *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him,* (i. e. the believer in Christ,) *and he in him.* (i. e. Christ dwelleth in the believer.) Now Christ dwelleth in the believer by possessing his mind with blessed and sensible apprehensions of his presence with the soul. And as he fills the mind with some glorious apprehensions of his most glorious Person—Of his incomprehensible love—Of his glorious work—Of his most excellent righteousness, and efficacious Sacrifice. As Christ is pleased to manifest himself to the believer, so He hereby dwells in, possesses, and inhabits him, so that He is in him, and unto him, what the soul is to the body. He is the life of the believer: all his spiritual life originates from Christ's living in Him. "Christ liveth in me;" so speaks the apostle. Gal. ii. 20. This indwelling of Christ in a believer, is the distinguishing of him

in this present state: he hereby is differenced from all other Professors whatsoever: indeed it is here made the good distinction, between the christian who enjoys Christ, who dwells in Christ, and Christ in him, and such as only profess him, and have no inward spiritual communion with him. As the believer dwells in Christ by way of spiritual meditation, and in the exercise of faith, and Christ dwells in the believer in the manifestations of his love, and most gracious presence to the spiritual apprehension of the believer; so herefrom results most blessed communion between the believer and Christ, and Christ and the believer. I thus express it, because it is according to the order the apostle here states it: he puts the believer first, and Christ next; as he here speaks of this great subject, as it falls under the observation of sanctified sense: otherwise it most certainly all begins in and with Christ, and is carried on by Him in the believer. And most undoubtedly the whole essence of the believer's blessedness must consist in his being in Christ, in his indwelling in Christ, and Christ's dwelling and abiding in him; which in this place, must most unquestionably have a very great and particular respect to an abiding in the doctrine of Christ, and his abiding in the believer, by the continuance of the doctrine in the mind; nor is there any other way by the which we can abide in Him, and He in us. I would now speak of the blessedness of such an one; and then express the blessedness; in what it consists. The blessedness of such an one who dwells in Christ, and hath Christ dwelling in him, must be transcendently great: in it all goodness must be contained: it must be the very essence of all manifestative grace: nothing can possibly go beyond it this side glory. There cannot but be communion with Christ on the believer's part, in proportion to his knowledge of the Lord Jesus: this must be chiefly in a mental way; which, where it is clearly and rightly apprehended, is the best and most profitable way, in the which the spiritual mind can be employed. It is the means of enlarging it—of engaging it—Of constantly exercising it: and the more it is thus exercised, the more it is spiritually improved. A life of actual communion with Christ, is, it cannot but be, a life of blessedness: and all that is here to be understood, is inwardly, not outwardly. It is what the faith of the believer perceives and enjoys of Christ inwardly, which I apprehend to be the subject here; so that the blessedness of such an one as dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him, must consist in personal, particular, and actual fellowship with Christ, in his Person, love, salvation, fulness, and in being made a partaker of Christ in sensible communion and enjoyment: which is such blessedness as the world can neither give, nor take away; nor can it be exceeded but by a vision of Christ, and an uninterrupted enjoyment of him in heaven and eternal glory. Not that the real believer hath the blessedness of uninterrupted communion with Christ, in the present state of grace, neither has Christ with him; there is a suspension of this, as it respects the clear manifestations of it on both sides. This is most readily acknowledged. Or we should not do justice to the subject; for the Lord withdraws at times and seasons from his people, so as that thereby they may the more sensibly feel their entire dependence on him, and learn thereby to live wholly in an entire renunciation of all they are, both good and bad, and live wholly out of, and off all within themselves on the work and fulness of Christ. And it is as they are thus living, they are again and again

favoured with real communion with the Lord, and the Lord favours them with his communion visits. The blessedness of this mutual communion, the believer's dwelling in Christ, and Christ's dwelling in the believer, consists in a free open intercourse with each other; so that the believer opens his heart to Christ, and the precious Lord opens his heart to the believer, and thus there is free and intimate access to each other. Surely it must be blessedness which cannot be fully expressed, nor described, which is contained in this. It is hereby certified to the believer that he is interested in Christ, and Christ is interested in him: this, every act of holy intercourse, and communion with the Lord, serves to confirm: and it is in this indwelling of Christ, it is increased and strengthened. For Christ to dwell in the heart by faith, is an infinite display of grace! It is glory and life everlasting, in the bud; it is the very first-fruits of it; it is the which the believer hath his taste, relish, and enjoyment, of that harvest of everlasting blessings and blessedness, which must, and cannot but follow, in that perpetual communion which the believer and Christ, will have and enjoy in the state of eternal glory. Thus I have endeavoured to explain these words of my text, *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* I go on to my next particular, which is this.

3. The knowledge such an one hath, of the truth and reality of this. *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

Whilst in the former part of the verse, the apostle spoke of an individual person, yet as this blessedness here spoken of, was common to all the saints and children of the Most High God, he therefore includes himself, and all the household of faith, as partakers of the same ineffable grace: saying, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* It may here be very convenient, to the intent the full glory of the text may shine forth, and we may see it in its fullest meaning, and lustre, to mention the whole of it in this place, for the end mentioned: this shall be done; may the Lord bless the design; *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Christ's indwelling in us, and our indwelling in Him, we dwelling in Him, and his dwelling in the believer; this is certified to the people of the Most High God, by the Divine Spirit: hence the apostle brings this subject which is now here before him. As he here labours to confirm the saints, and give each of them, every direction suited to their various cases; and as he had been speaking of this great blessing, the believer's dwelling in Christ, and Christ's dwelling in the believer, so he gives this one grand, general, and universal evidence of our personal interest in Christ, and the Father's love in him: it is by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we have the full and clear evidence of this. The revelation of Christ in us, the shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, are all from the gracious influences, and sacred operations of the Holy Ghost, within and upon us. It should not be overlooked, that the distinct offices of the Holy Trinity, are agreeable to their covenant dispensation of grace. So here, the indwelling and abiding of the Holy Spirit in the real professors, is the apostle's criterion of these, who have infallible evidence of their being the Lord's: this evidence they have in

themselves : it ariseth from their dwelling in Christ : from his dwelling in them, and from their continuation in the faith : and they have this knowledge in themselves : so that they are not at an uncertainty about it. And as all the saints have the same ground for assurance and confidence in the Lord, one as the other, hence it is the apostle speaks of it, as an universal blessing which was to be considered as that which the whole church of God was interested in. It does not follow from hence that all the saints fully enjoyed it. No ; not even then, though they had apostles for their teachers and instructors ; nor can we expect it should be found, that all the saints have the enjoyment, and confidence, which belong to them, are bestowed by free grace upon them, and that are set before them in the everlasting gospel, for their use and benefit, now in this present time and age. In some seasons, and states of the visible church, there is greater light and knowledge, let in upon the minds of saints, and that into some particular truth and doctrine, and again more in other times. All which depends on the good pleasure and sovereign will of God. Therefore we should not, either in preaching, discoursing, or writing, oppose any truth, or assertion agreeable with the same, because it may exceed the attainment, or the apprehension of some saints. Let it be fairly stated just as it is in the word, let it be wholly and altogether scriptural, then leave it, for the Holy Spirit to shine upon, and reflect the knowledge of the same upon the minds of the regenerate, just as seemeth good to his Divine Majesty. This is the way for Truth as Truth to be maintained, and preserved, and for the same in all things, to be magnified and glorified. As it respects our confidence in the Lord, it is wholly founded on Christ without us. His great and glorious Salvation is made known within us. The revelation of Christ, and of the Father's everlasting love to our persons in Him, is made known to us, by the Holy Ghost, which revelation is made known, and apprehended by us, in the light that is imparted to our new nature : our old nature hath no part, nor concern, nor is it a whit affected by all this. Therefore whilst we have a true, inward, spiritual knowledge of Christ in our souls, and have the inward sense, and evidence hereof, yet this is altogether supernatural. It consists in an intuitive perception of the Truths of Christ ; by the which Christ is received into the mind, dwells in the heart ; by which means, the influence of his love, life, and death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession is evidentially realized in the soul. This is most certainly the case in all the new-born sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, in whom the Holy Spirit has been pleased to take of the things of Christ, and shew the same unto them. As the Holy Spirit keeps up the glorious subject, Christ, and Salvation in our minds, and keeps us, and fixes our minds on this subject, and leads us to centre in the same, so that at all times we have it, the stay and foundation of all our faith and hope in God, we have an assurance in ourselves, respecting the ground of our confidence before him. That we are in any manner, and measure thus fixed, this is altogether from the Holy Spirit. It is by his inward discovering and increasing our knowledge of the Person, Salvation, grace and fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ to our minds, that we increase in our confidence in the Lord. Hereby we are strengthened, and confirmed in our confidence, that Christ dwelleth in us—That we dwell in Christ. From our own knowledge of him, and our communion

with him, we know that he abideth in us; and this is to us, and it may also be to others who converse with us, a full proof and evidence of the truth thereof, in the confession we make of this, according to our profession of our most holy faith. "We know that our Lord Jesus Christ abideth in us:" and this we are fully assured of, "by his Spirit which dwelleth in us." The Holy Spirit is given to the saints, according to the dispensation of the grace, by the Father, and Christ too: so that this great gift bestowed on the whole church of Christ, is the fruit of the Father's everlasting love, and the effect of our blessed Immanuel's intercession. We have the whole of this, most gloriously set forth in the following scripture, "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus iii. 5—7. The Holy Spirit is the one great Inspirer of the Church—The one Fountain and Principle of life to the whole Church—The one enlightener of the same. He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son: He is an Indweller: He is the Spirit of Christ: He leads into all Truth: He glorifies the Father and the Son: and hereby he leads his beloved ones, into clear and spiritual apprehensions of Christ's indwelling in them, and their indwelling in Him. This being the true state of this grand subject, and the inward and outward evidence the Lord's called people have of the same, therefore the apostle saith, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* The Holy Spirit by his continuance with us, is an immutable evidence of Christ's being ours—Of his being in us—Of his abiding in us: it being by the Holy Ghost, that we have the actual knowledge of Christ; and communion with him in our own souls. And here it should be observed, that the Holy Ghost is the efficient of all grace within us—The Father is the fountain of everlasting love to us—The Son is the only Saviour; and our whole and complete salvation is in Him alone. We are now, and evermore saved in Him, with an everlasting Salvation; He being revealed in us, from the word, and by the Spirit, He is our object, and subject, We dwell in him, by spiritual contemplations of Him: He dwells in us by his giving us inward and spiritual apprehensions of him: and which is so fully apprehended by us, and realized in our hearts, that we know it to be a reality: and are able to say for ourselves, from the certainty we have of the same, *And hereby we know that he* (i. e. Christ) *abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Thus here is an inward, and an outward evidence of personal union, and communion with Christ. We have the one in us, and have the full certainty thereof, so as to be able to say, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* The Holy Ghost gives us this evidence in our own souls; which we perceive the truth, and experience the reality of, by the real communion we have with the Lord Jesus Christ, in our own minds: this so influences our whole conversation, as that we give outward evidence to others, that we have been with Jesus. The Spirit given us, is immediately bestowed on us, from Christ: and we are anointed and sealed by him, unto the day of eternal redemption. All this concerns the *we*

and the *us*, spoken of throughout the whole of this, and the two former chapters, in the which *we* and *us*, the apostle includes himself. May the Holy Ghost be pleased, most graciously pleased to shine upon, and bless the subject delivered, so far as may be, for the real benefit of his beloved ones. Grant this Holy Father, for the honor of thy Son Christ Jesus, through the grace of thine Eternal Spirit. Amen.

END OF VOLUME THE FIRST.









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