

Christ's Agony

A Sermon

by

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LUKE 22:44.

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in his original nature, was infinitely above all suffering, for he was "God over all, blessed for evermore;" but, when he became man, he was not only capable of suffering, but partook of that nature that is remarkably feeble and exposed to suffering. The human nature, on account of its weakness, is in Scripture compared to the grass of the field, which easily withers and decays. So it is compared to a leaf; and to the dry stubble; and to a blast of wind: and the nature of feeble man is said to be but dust and ashes, to have its foundation in the dust, and to be crushed before the moth. It was this nature, with all its weakness and exposedness to sufferings, which Christ, who is the Lord God omnipotent, took upon him. He did not take the human nature on him in its first, most perfect and vigorous state, but in that feeble forlorn state which it is in since the fall; and therefore Christ is called "a tender plant," and "a root out of a dry ground." Isa. 53:2. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Thus, as Christ's principal errand into the world was suffering, so, agreeably to that errand, he came with such a nature and in such circumstances, as most made way for his suffering; so his whole life was filled up with suffering, he began to suffer in his infancy, but his suffering increased the more he drew near to the close of his life. His suffering after his public ministry began, was probably much greater than before; and the latter part of the time of his public ministry seems to have been distinguished by suffering. The longer Christ lived in the world, the more men saw and heard of him, the more they hated him. His enemies were

more and more enraged by the continuance of the opposition that he made to their lusts; and the devil having been often baffled by him, grew more and more enraged, and strengthened the battle more and more against him: so that the cloud over Christ's head grew darker and darker, as long as he lived in the world, till it was in its greatest blackness when he hung upon the cross and cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! Before this, it was exceedingly dark, in the time of his agony in the garden; of which we have an account in the words now read; and which I propose to make the subject of my present discourse. The word agony properly signifies *an earnest strife*, such as is witnessed in wrestling, running, or fighting. And therefore in Luke 13:24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" the word in the original, translated *strive*, is agwnizesqe. "*Agonize*, to enter in at the strait gate." The word is especially used for that sort of strife, which in those days was exhibited in the Olympic games, in which men strove for the mastery in running, wrestling, and other such kinds of exercises; and a prize was set up that was bestowed on the conqueror. Those, who thus contended, were, in the language then in use, said to *agonize*. Thus the apostle in his epistle to the Christians of Corinth, a city of Greece, where such games were annually exhibited, says in allusion to the strivings of the combatants, "And every man that *striveth for the mastery*," in the original, every one that *agonizeth*, "is temperate in all things." The place where those games were held was called Agwn, or *the place of agony*, and the word is particularly used in Scripture for that striving in earnest prayer wherein persons wrestle with God: they are said *to agonize*, or to *be in agony*, in prayer. So the word is used Rom. 15:30. "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:" in the original sunagwnizesqai moi, that ye *agonize together* with me. So Col. 4:12. "Always *labouring* fervently for you in prayer, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God:" in the original agwnizwn *agonizing* for you. So that when it is said in the text that Christ was *in an agony*, the meaning is, that his soul was *in a great and earnest strife and conflict*. It was so in two respects:

1. As his soul was in a great and sore conflict with those terrible and amazing views and apprehensions which he then had.
2. As he was at the same time in great labour and earnest strife with God in prayer.

I propose therefore, in discoursing on the subject of Christ's agony, distinctly to unfold it, under these two propositions,

- I. That the soul of Christ in his agony in the garden had a sore conflict with those terrible and amazing views and apprehensions, of which he was then the subject.

II. That the soul of Christ in his agony in the garden had a great and earnest labour and struggle with God in prayer.

I. The soul of Christ in his agony in the garden had a sore conflict with those terrible amazing views and apprehensions, of which he was then the subject.

In illustrating this proposition I shall endeavour to show,

1. What those views and apprehensions were.
2. That the conflict or agony of Christ's soul was occasioned by those views and apprehensions.
3. That this conflict was peculiarly great and distressing; and,
4. What we may suppose to be the special design of God in giving Christ those terrible views and apprehensions, and causing him to suffer that dreadful conflict, before he was crucified.

I proposed to show,

First, What were those terrible views and amazing apprehensions which Christ had in his agony. This may be explained by considering,

1. The cause of those views and apprehensions; and,
 2. The manner in which they were then experienced.
1. The cause of those views and apprehensions, which Christ had in his agony in the garden, was the bitter cup which he was soon after to drink on the cross. The sufferings which Christ underwent in his agony in the garden, were not his greatest sufferings; though they were so very great. But his last sufferings upon the cross were his principal sufferings; and therefore they are called "the cup that he had to drink." The sufferings of the cross, under which he was slain, are always in the Scriptures represented as the main sufferings of Christ; those in which especially "he bare our sins in his own body," and made atonement for sin. His enduring the cross, his humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, is spoken of as the main thing wherein his sufferings appeared. This is the cup that Christ had set before him in his agony. It is manifest that Christ had this in view at this time, from the prayers which he then offered. According to Matthew, Christ made three prayers that evening while in the garden of Gethsemane, and all on this one subject, the bitter cup that he was to drink. Of the first, we have an account in Matt. 26:39. "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt:"

of the second in the 42d verse, "He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done:" and of the third in the 44th verse, "And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." From this it plainly appears what it was of which Christ had such terrible views and apprehensions at that time. What he thus insists on in his prayers, shows on what his mind was so deeply intent. It was his sufferings on the cross, which were to be endured the next day, when there should be darkness over all the earth, and at the same time a deeper darkness over the soul of Christ, of which he had now such lively views and distressing apprehensions.

2. The manner in which this bitter cup was now set in Christ's view.

(1.) He had a lively apprehension of it impressed at that time on his mind. He had an apprehension of the cup that he was to drink before. His principal errand into the world was to drink that cup, and he therefore was never unthoughtful of it, but always bore it in his mind, and often spoke of it to his disciples. Thus Matt. 16:21. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day ." Again ch. 20:17, 18, 19. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." The same thing was the subject of conversation on the mount with Moses and Elias when he was transfigured. So he speaks of his bloody baptism, Luke 12:50. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He speaks of it again to Zebedee's children, Matt. 20:22. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able." He spake of his being lifted up. John 8:28. "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things ." John 12:34. "The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" So he spake of destroying the temple of his body, John 2:19. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ." And he was very much in speaking of it a little before his agony, in his dying counsels to his disciples in the 12th and 13th ch. of John. Thus this was not the first time that Christ had this bitter cup in his view. On the contrary, he seems always to have had it in view. But it seems that at this time God gave him an extraordinary view of it. A sense of that wrath that was to be poured out upon him, and of those amazing sufferings that he was to undergo, was strongly

impressed on his mind by the immediate power of God; so that he had far more full and lively apprehensions of the bitterness of the cup which he was to drink than he ever had before, and these apprehensions were so terrible, that his feeble human nature shrunk at the sight, and was ready to sink.

2. The cup of bitterness was now represented as just at hand. He had not only a more clear and lively view of it than before; but it was now set directly before him, that he might without delay take it up and drink it; for then, within that same hour, Judas was to come with his band of men, and he was then to deliver up himself into their hands to the end that he might drink this cup the next day; unless indeed he refused to take it, and so made his escape from that place where Judas would come; which he had opportunity enough to do if he had been so minded. Having thus shown what those terrible views and apprehensions were which Christ had in the time of his agony; I shall endeavour to show,

II. That the conflict which the soul of Christ then endured was occasioned by those views and apprehensions. The sorrow and distress which his soul then suffered, arose from that lively, and full, and immediate view which he had then given him of that cup of wrath; by which God the Father did as it were set the cup down before him, for him to take it and drink it. Some have inquired, what was the occasion of that distress and agony, and many speculations there have been about it, but the account which the Scripture itself gives us is sufficiently full in this matter, and does not leave room for speculation or doubt. The thing that Christ's mind was so full of at that time was, without doubt, the same with that which his mouth was so full of: it was the dread which his feeble human nature had of that dreadful cup, which was vastly more terrible than Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. He had then a near view of that furnace of wrath, into which he was to be cast; he was brought to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it, and stand and view its raging flames, and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer. This was the thing that filled his soul with sorrow and darkness, this terrible sight as it were overwhelmed him. For what was that human nature of Christ to such mighty wrath as this? it was in itself, without the supports of God, but a feeble worm of the dust, a thing that was crushed before the moth, none of God's children ever had such a cup set before them, as this first being of every creature had. But not to dwell any longer on this, I hasten to show,

III. That the conflict in Christ's soul, in this view of his last sufferings, was dreadful, beyond all expression or conception. This will appear,

1. From what is said of its dreadfulness in the history. By one evangelist we are told, (Matt. 26:37.) "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy; and by another, (Mark 14:33.) "And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy." These expressions hold forth the

intense and overwhelming distress that his soul was in. Luke's expression in the text of his being in an agony, according to the signification of that word in the original, implies no common degree of sorrow, but such extreme distress that his nature had a most violent conflict with it, as a man that wrestles with all his might with a strong man, who labours and exerts his utmost strength to gain a conquest over him.

2. From what Christ himself says of it, who was not wont to magnify things beyond the truth. He says, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Matt. 26:38. What language can more strongly express the most extreme degree of sorrow? His soul was not only "sorrowful," but "exceeding sorrowful;" and not only so, but because that did not fully express the degree of his sorrow, he adds, "even unto death;" which seems to intimate that the very pains and sorrows of hell, of eternal death, had got hold upon him. The Hebrews were wont to express the utmost degree of sorrow that any creature could be liable to by the phrase, *the shadow of death*. Christ had now, as it were, the shadow of death brought over his soul by the near view which he had of that bitter cup that was now set before him.

3. From the effect which it had on his body, in causing that bloody sweat that we read of in the text. In our translation it is said, that "his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." The word rendered *great drops*, is in the original *qromboi*, which properly signifies lumps or clots; for we may suppose that the blood that was pressed out through the pores of his skin by the violence of that inward struggle and conflict that there was, when it came to be exposed to the cool air of the night, congealed and stiffened, as is the nature of blood, and so fell off from him not in drops, but in clots. If the suffering of Christ had occasioned merely a violent sweat, it would have shown that he was in great agony; for it must be an extraordinary grief and exercise of mind that causes the body to be all of a sweat abroad in the open air, in a cold night as that was, as is evident from John 18:18. "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, (for it was cold,) and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." This was the same night in which Christ had his agony in the garden. But Christ's inward distress and grief was not merely such as caused him to be in a violent and universal sweat, but such as caused him to sweat blood. The distress and anguish of his mind was so unspeakably extreme as to force his blood through the pores of his skin, and that so plentifully as to fall in great clots or drops from his body to the ground. I come now to show,

IV. What may be supposed to be the special end of God's giving Christ beforehand these terrible views of his last sufferings; in other words, why it was needful that he should have a more full and extraordinary view of the cup that he was to drink, a little before he drank it, than ever he had before; or why he

must have such a foretaste of the wrath of God to be endured on the cross, before the time came that he was actually to endure it.

Answer. It was needful, in order that he might take the cup and drink it, as knowing what he did. Unless the human nature of Christ had had an extraordinary view given him beforehand of what he was to suffer, he could not, as man, fully know beforehand what he was going to suffer, and therefore could not, as man, know what he did when he took the cup to drink it, because he would not fully have known what the cup was--it being a cup that he never drank before. If Christ had plunged himself into those dreadful sufferings, without being fully sensible beforehand of their bitterness and dreadfulness, he must have done he knew not what. As man, he would have plunged himself into sufferings of the amount of which he was ignorant, and so have acted blindfold; and of course his taking upon him these sufferings could not have been so fully his own act. Christ, as God, perfectly knew what these sufferings were; but it was more needful also that he should know as man; for he was to suffer as man, and the act of Christ in taking that cup was the act of Christ as God man. But the man Christ Jesus hitherto never had had experience of any such sufferings as he was now to endure on the cross; and therefore he could not fully know what they were beforehand, but by having an extraordinary view of them set before him, and an extraordinary sense of them impressed on his mind. We have heard of tortures that others have undergone, but we do not fully know what they were, because we never experienced them; and it is impossible that we should fully know what they were but in one of these two ways, either by experiencing them, or by having a view given of them, or a sense of them impressed in an extraordinary way. Such a sense was impressed on the mind of the man Christ Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane, of his last sufferings, and that caused his agony. When he had a full sight given him what that wrath of God was that he was to suffer, the sight was overwhelming to him; it made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Christ was going to be cast into a dreadful furnace of wrath, and it was not proper that he should plunge himself into it blindfold, as not knowing how dreadful the furnace was. Therefore that he might not do so, God first brought him and set him at the mouth of the furnace, that he might look in, and stand and view its fierce and raging flames, and might see where he was going, and might voluntarily enter into it and bear it for sinners, as knowing what it was. This view Christ had in his agony. Then God brought the cup that he was to drink, and set it down before him, that he might have a full view of it, and see what it was before he took it and drank it. If Christ had not fully known what the dreadfulness of these sufferings was, before he took them upon him, his taking them upon him could not have been fully his own act as man; there could have been no explicit act of his will about that which he was ignorant of; there could have been no proper trial, whether he would be willing to undergo such dreadful sufferings or not, unless he had known beforehand how dreadful they were; but when he had seen what they were, by having an extraordinary

view given him of them, and then undertaken to endure them afterwards; then he acted as knowing what he did; then his taking that cup, and bearing such dreadful sufferings, was properly his own act by an explicit choice; and so his love to sinners, in that choice of his, was the more wonderful, as also his obedience to God in it. And it was necessary that this extraordinary view that Christ had of the cup he was to drink should be given at that time, just before he was apprehended. This was the most proper season for it, just before he took the cup, and while he yet had opportunity to refuse the cup; for before he was apprehended by the company led by Judas, he had opportunity to make his escape at pleasure. For the place where he was, was without the city, where he was not at all confined, and was a lonesome, solitary place; and it was the night season; so that he might have gone from that place where he would, and his enemies not have known where to have found him. This view that he had of the bitter cup was given him while he was yet fully at liberty, before he was given into the hands of his enemies. Christ's delivering himself up into the hands of his enemies, as he did when Judas came, which was just after his agony, was properly his act of taking the cup in order to drink; for Christ knew that the issue of that would be his crucifixion the next day. These things may show us the end of Christ's agony, and the necessity there was of such an agony before his last sufferings.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn how dreadful Christ's last sufferings were. We learn it from the dreadful effect which the bare foresight of them had upon him in his agony. His last sufferings were so dreadful, that the view which Christ had of them before overwhelmed him and amazed him, as it is said he began to be sore amazed. The very sight of these last sufferings was so very dreadful as to sink his soul down into the dark shadow of death; yea, so dreadful was it, that in the sore conflict which his nature had with it, he was all in a sweat of blood, his body all over was covered with clotted blood, and not only his body, but the very ground under him with the blood that fell from him, which had been forced through his pores through the violence of his agony. And if only the foresight of the cup was so dreadful, how dreadful was the cup itself, how far beyond all that can be uttered or conceived! Many of the martyrs have endured extreme tortures, but from what has been said, there is all reason to think those all were a mere nothing to the last sufferings of Christ on the cross. And what has been said affords a convincing argument that the sufferings which Christ endured in his body on the cross, though they were very dreadful, were yet the least part of his last sufferings; and that beside those, he endured sufferings in his soul which were vastly greater. For if it had been only the sufferings which he endured in his body, though they were very dreadful, we cannot conceive that the mere anticipation of them would have such an effect on Christ. Many of the martyrs, for aught we know, have endured as severe tortures in their bodies as Christ did.

Many of the martyrs have been crucified, as Christ was; and yet their souls have not been so overwhelmed. There has been no appearance of such amazing sorrow and distress of mind either at the anticipation of their sufferings, or in the actual enduring of them.

2. From what has been said, we may see the wonderful strength of the love of Christ to sinners. What has been said shows the strength of Christ's love two ways.

1. That it was so strong as to carry him through that agony that he was then in. The suffering that he then was actually subject to, was dreadful and amazing, as has been shown; and how wonderful was his love that lasted and was upheld still! The love of any mere man or angel would doubtless have sunk under such a weight, and never would have endured such a conflict in such a bloody sweat as that of Jesus Christ. The anguish of Christ's soul at that time was so strong as to cause that wonderful effect on his body. But his love to his enemies, poor and unworthy as they were, was stronger still. The heart of Christ at that time was full of distress, but it was fuller of love to vile worms: his sorrows abounded, but his love did much more abound. Christ's soul was overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, but this was from a deluge of love to sinners in his heart sufficient to overflow the world, and overwhelm the highest mountains of its sins. Those great drops of blood that fell down to the ground were a manifestation of an ocean of love in Christ's heart.

2. The strength of Christ's love more especially appears in this, that when he had such a full view of the dreadful of the cup that he was to drink, that so amazed him, he would notwithstanding even then take it up, and drink it. Then seems to have been the greatest and most peculiar trial of the strength of the love of Christ, when God set down the bitter portion before him, and let him see what he had to drink, if he persisted in his love to sinners; and brought him to the mouth of the furnace that he might see its fierceness, and have a full view of it, and have time then to consider whether he would go in and suffer the flames of this furnace for such unworthy creatures, or not. This was as it were proposing it to Christ's last consideration what he would do; as much as if it had then been said to him, 'Here is the cup that you are to drink, unless you will give up your undertaking for sinners, and even leave them to perish as they deserve. Will you take this cup, and drink it for them, or not? There is the furnace into which you are to be cast, if they are to be saved; either they must perish, or you must endure this for them. There you see how terrible the heat of the furnace is; you see what pain and anguish you must endure on the morrow, unless you give up the cause of sinners. What will you do? is your love such that you will go on? Will you cast yourself into this dreadful furnace of wrath?' Christ's soul was overwhelmed with the thought; his feeble human nature shrunk at the dismal sight. It put him into this dreadful agony which you have heard described; but

his love to sinners held out. Christ would not undergo these sufferings needlessly, if sinners could be saved without. If there was not an absolute necessity of his suffering them in order to their salvation, he desired that the cup might pass from him. But if sinners, on whom he had set his love, could not, agreeably to the will of God, be saved without his drinking it, he chose that the will of God should be done. He chose to go on and endure the suffering, awful as it appeared to him. And this was his final conclusion, after the dismal conflict of his poor feeble human nature, after he had had the cup in view, and for at least the space of one hour, had seen how amazing it was. Still he finally resolved that he would bear it, rather than those poor sinners whom he had loved from all eternity should perish. When the dreadful cup was before him, he did not say within himself, why should I, who am so great and glorious a person, infinitely more honourable than all the angels of heaven, Why should I go to plunge myself into such dreadful, amazing torments for worthless wretched worms that cannot be profitable to God, or me, and that deserve to be hated by me, and not to be loved? Why should I, who have been living from all eternity in the enjoyment of the Father's love, go to cast myself into such a furnace for them that never can requite me for it? Why should I yield myself to be thus crushed by the weight of divine wrath, for them who have no love to me, and are my enemies? they do not deserve any union with me, and never did, and never will do, any thing to recommend themselves to me. What shall I be the richer for having saved a number of miserable haters of God and me, who deserve to have divine justice glorified in their destruction? Such, however, was not the language of Christ's heart, in these circumstances; but on the contrary, his love held out, and he resolved even then, in the midst of his agony, to yield himself up to the will of God, and to take the cup and drink it. He would not flee to get out of the way of Judas and those that were with him, though he knew they were coming, but that same hour delivered himself voluntarily into their hands. When they came with swords and staves to apprehend him, and he could have called upon his Father, who would immediately have sent many legions of angels to repel his enemies, and have delivered him, he would not do it; and when his disciples would have made resistance, he would not suffer them, as you may see in Matt. 26:51, and onward: "And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." And Christ, instead of hiding himself from Judas and the soldiers, told them, when they seemed to be at a loss whether he was the person whom they sought; and when they seemed still

somewhat to hesitate, being seized with some terror in their minds, he told them so again, and so yielded himself up into their hands, to be bound by them, after he had shown them that he could easily resist them if he pleased, when a single word spoken by him, threw them backwards to the ground, as you may see in John 18:3, etc. "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground." Thus powerful, constant, and violent was the love of Christ; and the special trial of his love above all others in his whole life seems to have been in the time of his agony. For though his sufferings were greater afterwards, when he was on the cross, yet he saw clearly what those sufferings were to be, in the time of his agony; and that seems to have been the first time that ever Christ Jesus had a clear view what these sufferings were; and after this the trial was not so great, because the conflict was over. His human nature had been in a struggle with his love to sinners, but his love had got the victory. The thing, upon a full view of his sufferings, had been resolved on and concluded; and accordingly, when the moment arrived, he actually went through with those sufferings.

But there are two circumstances of Christ's agony that do still make the strength and constancy of his love to sinners the more conspicuous.

1. That at the same time that he had such a view of the dreadfulness of his sufferings, he had also an extraordinary view of the hatefulness of the wickedness of those for whom those sufferings were to make atonement. There are two things that render Christ's love wonderful: 1. That he should be willing to endure sufferings that were so great; and 2. That he should be willing to endure them to make atonement for wickedness that was so great. But in order to its being properly said, Christ of his own act and choice endured sufferings that were so great, to make atonement for wickedness that was so great, two things were necessary. 1. That he should have an extraordinary sense how great these sufferings were to be, before he endured them. This was given in his agony. And 2. That he should also at the same time have an extraordinary sense how great and hateful was the wickedness of men for which he suffered to make atonement; or how unworthy those were for whom he died. And both these were given at the same time. When Christ had such an extraordinary sense how bitter his cup was to be, he had much to make him sensible how unworthy and hateful that wickedness of mankind was for which he suffered; because the hateful and malignant nature of that corruption never appeared more fully than in the spite and cruelty of men in these sufferings; and yet his love was such that he went on notwithstanding to suffer for them who were full of such hateful corruption.

It was the corruption and wickedness of men that contrived and effected his death; it was the wickedness of men that agreed with Judas, it was the wickedness of men that betrayed him, and that apprehended him, and bound him, and led him away like a malefactor; it was by men's corruption and wickedness that he was arraigned, and falsely accused, and unjustly judged. It was by men's wickedness that he was reproached, mocked, buffeted, and spit upon. It was by men's wickedness that Barabbas was preferred before him. It was men's wickedness that laid the cross upon him to bear, and that nailed him to it, and put him to so cruel and ignominious a death. This tended to give Christ an extraordinary sense of the greatness and hatefulness of the depravity of mankind.

1. Because hereby in the time of his sufferings he had that depravity set before him as it is, without disguise. When it killed Christ, it appeared in its proper colours. Here Christ saw it in its true nature, which is the utmost hatred and contempt of God; in its ultimate tendency and desire, which is to kill God; and in its greatest aggravation and highest act, which is killing a person that was God.
2. Because in these sufferings he felt the fruits of that wickedness. It was then directly levelled against himself, and exerted itself against him to work his reproach and torment, which tended to impress a stronger sense of its hatefulness on the human nature of Christ. But yet at the same time, so wonderful was the love of Christ to those who exhibited this hateful corruption, that he endured those very sufferings to deliver them from the punishment of that very corruption. The wonderfulness of Christ's dying love appears partly in that he died for those that were so unworthy in themselves, as all mankind have the same kind of corruptions in their hearts, and partly in that he died for those who were not only so wicked, but whose wickedness consists in being enemies to him; so that he did not only die for the wicked, but for his own enemies; and partly in that he was willing to die for his enemies at the same time that he was feeling the fruits of their enmity, while he felt the utmost effects and exertions of their spite against him in the greatest possible contempt and cruelty towards him in his own greatest ignominy, torments, and death; and partly in that he was willing to atone for their being his enemies in these very sufferings, and by that very ignominy, torment, and death that was the fruit of it. The sin and wickedness of men, for which Christ suffered to make atonement, was, as it were, set before Christ in his view.

1. In that this wickedness was but a sample of the wickedness of mankind; for the corruption of all mankind is of the same nature, and the wickedness that is in one man's heart is of the same nature and tendency as in another's. As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

2. It is probable that Christ died to make atonement for that individual actual wickedness that wrought his sufferings, that reproached, mocked, buffeted, and crucified him. Some of his crucifiers, for whom he prayed that they might be forgiven, while they were in the very act of crucifying him, were afterwards, in answer to his prayer, converted, by the preaching of Peter; as we have an account of in the 2d chapter of Acts.

2. Another circumstance of Christ's agony that shows the strength of his love, is the ungrateful carriage of his disciples at that time. Christ's disciples were among those for whom he endured this agony, and among those for whom he was going to endure those last sufferings, of which he now had such dreadful apprehensions. Yet Christ had already given them an interest in the benefits of those sufferings. Their sins had already been forgiven them through that blood that he was going to shed, and they had been infinite gainers already by that dying pity and love which he had to them, and had through his sufferings been distinguished from all the world besides. Christ had put greater honour upon them than any other, by making them his disciples in a more honourable sense than he had done any other. And yet now, when he had that dreadful cup set before him which he was going to drink for them, and was in such an agony at the sight of it, he saw no return on their part but indifference and ingratitude. When he only desired them to watch with him, that he might be comforted in their company, now at this sorrowful moment they fell asleep; and showed that they had not concern enough about it to induce them to keep awake with him even for one hour, though he desired it of them once and again. But yet this ungrateful treatment of theirs, for whom he was to drink the cup of wrath which God had set before him, did not discourage him from taking it, and drinking it for them. His love held out to them; having loved his own, he loved them to the end. He did not say within himself when this cup of trembling was before him, Why should I endure so much for those that are so ungrateful; why should I here wrestle with the expectation of the terrible wrath of God to be borne by me to-morrow, for them that in the mean time have not so much concern for me as to keep awake with me when I desire it of them even for one hour? But on the contrary, with tender and fatherly compassions he excuses this ingratitude of his disciples, and says, Matt. 26:41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;" and went and was apprehended, and mocked, and scourged, and crucified, and poured out his soul unto death, under the heavy weight of God's dreadful wrath on the cross for them.

3d Inference. From what has been said, we may learn the wonderfulness of Christ's submission to the will of God. Christ, as he was a divine person, was the absolute sovereign of heaven and earth, but yet he was the most wonderful instance of submission to God's sovereignty that ever was. When he had such a view of the terribleness of his last sufferings, and prayed if it were possible that

that cup might pass from him, i.e. if there was not an absolute necessity of it in order to the salvation of sinners, yet it was with a perfect submission to the will of God. He adds, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." He chose rather that the inclination of his human nature, which so much dreaded such exquisite torments, should be crossed, than that God's will should not take place. He delighted in the thought of God's will being done; and when he went and prayed the second time, he had nothing else to say but, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done;" and so the third time. What are such trials of submission as any of us sometimes have in the afflictions that we suffer in comparison of this? If God does but in his providence signify it to be his will that we should part with a child, how hardly are we brought to yield to it, how ready to be unsubmitive and froward! Or if God lays his hand upon us in some acute pain of body, how ready are we to be discontented and impatient; when the innocent Son of God, who deserved no suffering could quietly submit to sufferings inconceivably great, and say it over and over, God's will be done! When he was brought and set before that dreadful furnace of wrath into which he was to be cast, in order that he might look into it and have a full view of its fierceness, when his flesh shrunk at it, and his nature was in such a conflict, that his body was all covered with a sweat of blood falling in great drops to the ground, yet his soul quietly yielded that the will of God should be done, rather than the will or inclination of his human nature.

4th Infer. What has been said on this subject also shows us the glory of Christ's obedience. Christ was subject to the moral law as Adam was, and he was also subject to the ceremonial and judicial laws of Moses; but the principal command that he had received of the Father was, that he should lay down his life, that he should voluntarily yield up himself to those terrible sufferings on the cross. To do this was his principal errand into the world; and doubtless the principal command that he received, was about that which was the principal errand on which he was sent. The Father, when he sent him into the world, sent him with commands concerning what he should do in the world; and his chief command of all was about that, which was the errand he was chiefly sent upon, which was to lay down his life. And therefore this command was the principal trial of his obedience. It was the greatest trial of his obedience, because it was by far the most difficult command: all the rest were easy in comparison of this. And the main trial that Christ had, whether he would obey this command, was in the time of his agony; for that was within an hour before he was apprehended in order to his sufferings, when he must either yield himself up to them, or fly from them. And then it was the first time that Christ had a full view of the difficulty of this command; which appeared so great as to cause that bloody sweat. Then was the conflict of weak human nature with the difficulty, then was the sore struggles and wrestling with the heavy trial he had, and then Christ got the victory over the temptation, from the dread of his human nature. His obedience held out through the conflict. Then we may suppose that Satan was especially let loose to

set in with the natural dread that the human nature had of such torments, and to strive to his utmost to dissuade Christ from going on to drink the bitter cup; for about that time, towards the close of Christ's life, was he especially delivered up into the hands of Satan to be tempted of him, more than he was immediately after his baptism; for Christ says, speaking of that time, Luke 22:53. "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." So that Christ, in the time of his agony, was wrestling not only with overwhelming views of his last sufferings, but he also wrestled, in that bloody sweat, with principalities and powers -- he contended at that time with the great leviathan that laboured to his utmost to tempt him to disobedience. So that then Christ had temptations every way to draw him off from obedience to God. He had temptations from his feeble human nature, that exceedingly dreaded such torments; and he had temptations from men, who were his enemies; and he had temptations from the ungrateful carriage of his own disciples; and he had temptations from the devil. He had also an overwhelming trial from the manifestation of God's own wrath; when, in the words of Isaiah, it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief. But yet he failed not, but got the victory over all, and performed that great act of obedience at that time to that same God that hid himself from him, and was showing his wrath to him for men's sins, which he must presently suffer. Nothing could move him away from his steadfast obedience to God, but he persisted in saying, "Thy will be done:" expressing not only his submission, but his obedience; not only his compliance with the disposing will of God, but also with his preceptive will. God had given him this cup to drink, and had commanded him to drink it, and that was reason enough with him to drink it; hence he says, at the conclusion of his agony, when Judas came with his band, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?" John 18:11. Christ, at the time of his agony, had an inconceivably greater trial of obedience than any man or any angel ever had. How much was this trial of the obedience of the second Adam beyond the trial of the obedience of the first Adam! How light was our first father's temptation in comparison of this! And yet our first surety failed, and our second failed not, but obtained a glorious victory, and went and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Thus wonderful and glorious was the obedience of Christ, by which he wrought out righteousness for believers, and which obedience is imputed to them. No wonder that it is a sweet penalty sown, and that God stands ready to bestow heaven as its reward on all that believe on him.

5. What has been said shows us the sottishness of secure sinners in being so fearless of the wrath of God. If the wrath of God was so dreadful, that, when Christ only expected it, his human nature was nearly overwhelmed with the fear of it, and his soul was amazed, and his body all over in a bloody sweat; then how sottish are sinners, who are under the threatening of the same wrath of God, and are condemned to it, and are every moment exposed to it; and yet,

instead of manifesting intense apprehension, are quiet and easy, and unconcerned; instead of being sorrowful and very heavy, go about with a light and careless heart; instead of crying out in bitter agony, are often gay and cheerful, and eat and drink, and sleep quietly, and go on in sin, provoking the wrath of God more and more, without any great matter of concern! How stupid and sottish are such persons! Let such senseless sinners consider, that that misery, of which they are in danger from the wrath of God, is infinitely more terrible than that, the fear of which occasioned in Christ his agony and bloody sweat. It is more terrible, both as it differs both in its nature and degree, and also as it differs in its duration. It is more terrible in its nature and degree. Christ suffered that which, as it upheld the honour of the divine law, was fully equivalent to the misery of the damned; and in some respect it was the same suffering; for it was the wrath of the same God; but yet in other respects it vastly differed. The difference does not arise from the difference in the wrath poured out on one and the other, for it is the same wrath, but from the difference of the subject, which may be best illustrated from Christ's own comparison. Luke 23:31. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Here he calls himself the green tree, and wicked men the dry, intimating that the misery that will come on wicked men will be far more dreadful than those sufferings which came on him, and the difference arises from the different nature of the subject. The green tree and the dry are both cast into the fire; but the flames seize and kindle on the dry tree much more fiercely than on the green. The sufferings that Christ endured differ from the misery of the wicked in hell in nature and degree in the following respects.

1. Christ felt not the gnawings of a guilty, condemning conscience.
2. He felt no torment from the reigning of inward corruptions and lusts as the damned do. The wicked in hell are their own tormentors, their lusts are their tormentors, and being without restraint, (for there is no restraining grace in hell,) their lusts will rage like raging flames in their hearts. They shall be tormented with the unrestrained violence of a spirit of envy and malice against God, and against the angels and saints in heaven, and against one another. Now Christ suffered nothing of this.
3. Christ had not to consider that God hated him. The wicked in hell have this to make their misery perfect, they know that God perfectly hates them without the least pity or regard to them, which will fill their souls with inexpressible misery. But it was not so with Christ. God withdrew his comfortable presence from Christ, and hid his face from him, and so poured out his wrath upon him, as made him feel its terrible effects in his soul; but yet he knew at the same time that God did not hate him, but infinitely loved him. He cried out of God's forsaking him, but yet at the same time calls him "My God, my God!" knowing

that he was his God still, though he had forsaken him. But the wicked in hell will know that he is not their God, but their judge and irreconcilable enemy.

4. Christ did not suffer despair, as the wicked do in hell. He knew that there would be an end to his sufferings in a few hours; and that after that he should enter into eternal glory. But it will be far otherwise with you that are impenitent; if you die in your present condition, you will be in perfect despair. On these accounts, the misery of the wicked in hell will be immensely more dreadful in nature and degree, than those sufferings with the fears of which Christ's soul was so much overwhelmed.

2. It will infinitely differ in duration. Christ's sufferings lasted but a few hours, and there was an eternal end to them, and eternal glory succeeded. But you that are a secure, senseless sinner, are every day exposed to be cast into everlasting misery, a fire that never shall be quenched. If then the Son of God was in such amazement, in the expectation of what he was to suffer for a few hours, how sottish are you who are continually exposed to sufferings, immensely more dreadful in nature and degree, and that are to be without any end, but which must be endured without any rest day or night for ever and ever! If you had a full sense of the greatness of that misery to which you are exposed, and how dreadful your present condition is on that account, it would this moment put you into as dreadful an agony as that which Christ underwent; yea, if your nature could endure it, one much more dreadful. We should now see you fall down in a bloody sweat, wallowing in your gore, and crying out in terrible amazement.

Having thus endeavoured to explain and illustrate the former of the two propositions mentioned in the commencement of this discourse, I shall now proceed to show,

II. That the soul of Christ in his agony in the garden was in a great and earnest strife and conflict in his prayer to God. The labour and striving of Christ's soul in prayer was a part of his agony, and was without doubt a part of what is intended in the text, when it is said that Christ was in an agony; for, as we have shown, the word is especially used in Scripture in other places for striving or wrestling with God in prayer. From this fact, and from the evangelist mentioning his being in agony, and his praying earnestly in the same sentence, we may well understand him as mentioning his striving in prayer as part of his agony. The words of the text seem to hold forth as much as that Christ was in an agony in prayer: "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground." This language seems to imply thus much, that the labour and earnestness of Christ's soul was so great in his wrestling with God in prayer, that he was in a mere agony, and all over in a sweat of blood.

What I propose now, in this second proposition, is by the help of God to explain this part of Christ's agony which consisted in the agonizing and wrestling of his soul in prayer; which is the more worthy of a particular inquiry, being that which probably is but little understood; though, as may appear in the sequel, the right understanding of it is of great use and consequence in divinity. It is not as I conceive ordinarily well understood what is meant when it is said in the text that Christ *prayed more earnestly*; or what was *the thing that he wrestled with God for*, or what was the subject matter of this earnest prayer, or what was the reason of his being so very earnest in prayer at this time. And therefore, to set this whole matter in a clear light, I would particularly inquire,

1. Of what nature this prayer was;
2. What was the subject matter of this earnest prayer of Christ to the Father;
3. In what capacity Christ offered up this prayer to God;
4. Why he was so earnest in his prayer;
5. What was the success of this his earnest wrestling with God in prayer; and then make some improvement.

I. Of what nature this prayer of Christ was.

Addresses that are made to God may be of various kinds. Some are confessions on the part of the individual, or expressions of his sense of his own unworthiness before God, and are thus penitential addresses to God. Others are doxologies or prayers intended to express the sense which the person has of God's greatness and glory. Such are many of the psalms of David. Others are gratulatory addresses, or expressions of thanksgiving and praise for mercies received. Others are submissive addresses, or expressions of submission and resignation to the will of God, whereby he that addresses the Majesty of heaven, expresses the compliance of his will with the sovereign will of God; saying, "Thy will, O Lord, be done!" as David, 2 Sam. 15:26. "But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Others are petitory or supplicatory; whereby the person that prays, begs of God and cries to him for some favour desired of him.

Hence the inquiry is, of which of these kinds was the prayer of Christ, that we read of in the text.

Answer. It was chiefly supplicatory. It was not penitential or confessional; for Christ had no sin or unworthiness to confess. Nor was it a doxology or a thanksgiving or merely an expression of submission; for none of these agree with what is said in the text, *viz.* that he prayed more earnestly. When any one is

said to pray earnestly, it implies an earnest request for some benefit, or favour desired; and not merely a confession, or submission, or gratulation. So what the apostle says of this prayer, in Heb. 5:7. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared," shows that it was petitory, or an earnest supplication for some desired benefit. They are not confessions, or doxologies, or thanksgivings. or resignations, that are called "*supplications*" and "*strong cyings,*" but petitions for some benefit earnestly desired. And having thus resolved the first inquiry, and shown that this earnest prayer of Christ -was of the nature of a supplication for some benefit or favour which Christ earnestly desired, I come to inquire,

II. What was the subject matter of this supplication; or what favour and benefit that was for which Christ so earnestly supplicated in this prayer of which we have an account in the text. Now the words of the text are not express on this matter. It is said that Christ, "being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;" but yet it is not said what he prayed so earnestly for. And here is the greatest difficulty attending this account: even what that was which Christ so earnestly desired, for which he so wrestled with God at that time. And though we are not expressly told in the text, yet the Scriptures have not left us without sufficient light in this matter. And the more effectually to avoid mistakes, I would answer,

1. Negatively, the thing that Christ so earnestly prayed for at this time, was not that the bitter cup which he had to drink might pass from him. Christ had before prayed for this, as in the next verse but one before the text, saying "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me! nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!" It is after this that we have an account that Christ being in an agony, prayed more earnestly; but we are not to understand that he prayed more earnestly than he had done before, that the cup might pass from him. That this was not the thing that he so earnestly prayed for in this second prayer, the following things seem to prove:

1. This second prayer was after the angel had appeared to him from heaven, strengthening him, the more cheerfully to take the cup and drink it. The evangelists inform us that when Christ came into the garden, he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy, and that he said his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and that then he went and prayed to God, that if it were possible the cup might pass from him. Luke says in the 41st and 42nd verses, "that being withdrawn from his disciples about a stone's cast, he kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!" And then, after this, it is said in the next verse, that there appeared an angel from heaven unto him strengthening him. Now this can be understood no otherwise than that the angel appeared to him, strengthening him and encouraging him to go through his

great and difficult work, to take the cup and drink it. Accordingly we must suppose, that now Christ was more strengthened and encouraged to go through with his sufferings: and therefore we cannot suppose that after this he would pray more earnestly than before to be delivered from his sufferings; and of course that it was something else that Christ more earnestly prayed for, after that strengthening of the angel, and not that the cup might pass from him. Though Christ seems to have a greater sight of his sufferings given him after this strengthening of the angel than before, that caused such an agony, yet he was more strengthened to fit him for a greater sight of them, he had greater strength and courage to grapple with these awful apprehensions, than before. His strength to bear sufferings is increased with the sense of his sufferings.

2. Christ, before his second prayer, had had an intimation from the Father, that it was not his will that the cup should pass from him. The angel's coming from heaven to strengthen him must be so understood. Christ first prays, that if it may be the will of the Father, the cup might pass; but not, if it was not his will; and then God immediately upon this sends an angel to strengthen, and encourage him to take the cup, which was a plain intimation to Christ that it was the Father's will that he should take it, and that it should not pass from him. And so Christ received it; as appears from the account which Matthew gives of this second prayer. Matt. 26:42. "He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He speaks as one that now had had an intimation, since he prayed before, that it was not the will of God. And Luke tells us how, *viz.* by God's sending an angel. Matthew informs us, as Luke does, that in his first prayer, he prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from him; but then God sends an angel to signify that it was not his will, and to encourage him to take it. And then Christ having received this plain intimation that it was not the will of God that the cup should pass from him, yields to the message he had received, and says, O my Father, if it be so as thou hast now signified, thy will be done. Therefore we may surely conclude that what Christ prayed more earnestly for after this, was not that the cup might pass from him, but something else; for he would not go to pray more earnestly that the cup might pass from him, after God had signified that it was not his will that it should pass from him, than he did before; that would be blasphemous to suppose. And then,

3dly, The language of the second prayer, as recited by Matthew, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done," shows that Christ did not then pray that the cup might pass from him. This certainly is not praying more earnestly that the cup might pass: it is rather a yielding that point, and ceasing any more to urge it, and submitting to it as a thing now determined by the will of God, made known by the angel. And,

4. From the apostle's account of this prayer in the 5th ch. of Hebrews, the words of the apostle are these, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up his prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." The strong crying and tears of which the apostle speaks, are doubtless the same that Luke speaks of in the text, when he says, "he being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;" for this was the sharpest and most earnest crying of Christ, of which we have any where any account. But according to the apostle's account, that which Christ feared, and that for which he so strongly cried to God in this prayer, was something that he was heard in, something that God granted him his request in, and therefore it was not that the cup might pass from him. Having thus shown what it was not that Christ prayed for in this earnest prayer, I proceed to show,

2nd, What it was that Christ so earnestly sought of God in this prayer.

I answer in one word, it was, *That God's will might be done, in what related to his sufferings.* Matthew gives this express account of it, in the very language of the prayer which has been recited several times already, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done!" This is a yielding, and an expression of submission; but it is not merely that. Such words, "The will of the Lord be done," as they are most commonly used, are not understood as a supplication or request, but only as an expression of submission. But the words are not always to be understood in that sense in Scripture, but sometimes are to be understood as a request. So they are to be understood in the third petition of the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as in heaven." There the words are to be understood both as an expression of submission, and also a request, as they are explained in the Assembly's Catechism, and so the words are to be understood here. The evangelist Mark says that Christ went away again and spake the same words that he had done in his first prayer. Mark 14:39. But then we must understand it as of the same words with the latter part of his first prayer, "nevertheless not my will but thine be done," as Matthew's more full and particular account shows. So that the thing mentioned in the text, for which Christ was wrestling with God in this prayer, was, that God's will might be done in what related to his sufferings.

But then here another inquiry may arise, *viz.* What is implied in Christ's praying that God's will might be done in what related to his sufferings? To this I answer,

1. This implies a request that he might be strengthened and supported, and enabled to do God's will, by going through with these sufferings. The same as when he says, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." It was the preceptive will of God that he should take that cup and drink it: it was the Father's command to him. The Father had given him the

cup, and as it were set it down before him with the command that he should drink it. This was the greatest act of obedience that Christ was to perform. He prays for strength and help, that his poor feeble human nature might be supported, that he might not fail in this great trial, that he might not sink and be swallowed up, and his strength so overcome that he should not hold out, and finish the appointed obedience. This was the thing that he feared, of which the apostle speaks in the 5th of Hebrews, when he says, "he was heard in that he feared." When he had such an extraordinary sense of the dreadfulness of his sufferings impressed on his mind, the fearfulness of it amazed him. He was afraid lest his poor feeble strength should be overcome, and that he should fail in so great a trial, that he should be swallowed up by that death that he was to die, and so should not be saved from death; and therefore he offered up strong crying and tears unto him that was able to strengthen him, and support, and save him from death, that the death he was to suffer might not overcome his love and obedience, but that he might overcome death, and so be saved from it. If Christ's courage had failed in the trial, and he had not held out under his dying sufferings, he never would have been saved from death, but he would have sunk in the deep mire; he never would have risen from the dead, for his rising from the dead was a reward of his victory. If his courage had failed, and he had given up, he would have remained from under the power of death, and so we should all have perished, we should have remained yet in our sins. If he had failed, all would have failed. If he had not overcome in that sore conflict, neither he nor we could have been freed from death, we all must have perished together. Therefore this was the saving from death that the apostle speaks of, that Christ feared and prayed for with strong crying and tears. His being overcome of death was the thing that he feared, and so he was heard in that he feared. This Christ prayed, that the will of God might be done in his sufferings, even that he might not fail of obeying God's will in his sufferings; and therefore it follows in the next verse in that passage of Hebrews, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." That it was in this respect that Christ in his agony so earnestly prayed that the will of God might be done, *viz.* that he might have strength to do his will, and might not sink and fail in such great sufferings; is confirmed from the scriptures of the Old Testament, as particularly from the 69th Psalm. The psalmist represents Christ in that psalm, as is evident from the fact that the words of that psalm are represented as Christ's words in many places of the New Testament. That psalm is represented as Christ's prayer to God when his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow and amazement, as it was in his agony; as you may see in the 1st and 2nd verses, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." But then the thing that is represented as being the thing that he feared, was failing, and being overwhelmed, in this great trial: verses 14 and 15. "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the water- flood overflow me,

neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." So again in the 22d Psalm, which is also represented as the prayer of Christ under his dreadful sorrow and sufferings, verses 19, 20, 21. "But be not thou far from me, O Lord; O my Strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth." It was meet and suitable that Christ, when about to engage in that terrible conflict, should thus earnestly seek help from God to enable him to do his will; for he needed God's help--the strength of his human nature, without divine help, was not sufficient to carry him through. This was, without doubt, that in which the first Adam failed in his first trial, that when the trial came he was not sensible of his own weakness and dependence. If he had been, and had leaned on God, and cried to him for his assistance and strength against the temptation, in all likelihood we should have remained innocent and happy creatures to this day.

2. It implies a request that God's will and purpose might be obtained in the effects and fruits of his sufferings, in the glory to his name, that was his design in them; and particularly in the glory of his grace, in the eternal salvation and happiness of his elect. This is confirmed by John 12:27,28. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?-- Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified, and will glorify it again." There the first request is the same with the first request of Christ here in like trouble: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." He first prays, as he does here, that he might be saved from his last sufferings. Then, after he was determined within himself that the will of God must be otherwise, that he should not be saved from that hour, "but for this cause," says he, "came I to this hour;" and then his second request after this is, "Father, glorify thy name!" So this is doubtless the purport of the second request in his agony, when he prayed that God's will might be done. It is that God's will might be done in that glory to his own name that he intended in the effects and fruits of his sufferings, that seeing that it was his will that he should suffer, he earnestly prays that the end of his suffering, in the glory of God and the salvation of the elect, may not fail. And these things are what Christ so earnestly wrestled with God for in his prayer, of which we have an account in the text, and we have no reason to think that they were not expressed in prayer as well as implied. It is not reasonable to suppose that the evangelist in his other account of things mentions all the words of Christ's prayer. He only mentions the substance.

III. In what capacity did Christ offer up those earnest prayers to God in his agony?

In answer to this inquiry, I observe that he offered them up not as a private person, but as high priest. The apostle speaks of the strong crying and tears, as what Christ offered up as high priest. Heb. 5:6-7. "As he says also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek: who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," etc. The things that Christ prayed for in those strong cryings, were things not of a private nature, but of common concern to the whole church of which he was the high priest. That the will of God should be done in his obedience unto death, that his strength and courage should not fail, but that he should hold out, was of common concern; for, if he had failed, all would have failed and perished for ever. And of course, that God's name should be glorified in the effects and fruits of his sufferings, and in the salvation and glory of all his elect, was a thing of common concern. Christ offered up these strong cries with his flesh in the same manner as the priests of old were wont to offer up prayers with their sacrifices. Christ mixed strong crying and tears with his blood, and so offered up his blood and his prayers together, that the effect and success of his blood might be obtained. Such earnest agonizing prayers were offered with his blood, and his infinitely precious and meritorious blood was offered with his prayers.

IV. Why was Christ so earnest in those supplications? Luke speaks of them as very earnest; the apostle speaks of them as strong crying; and his agony partly consisted in this earnestness: and the account that Luke gives us, seems to imply that his bloody sweat was partly at least with the great labour and earnest sense of his soul in wrestling with God in prayer. There were three things that concurred at that time, especially to cause Christ to be thus earnest and engaged.

1. He had then an extraordinary sense how dreadful the consequence would be, if God's will should fail of being done. He had then an extraordinary sense of his own last suffering under the wrath of God, and if he had failed in those sufferings, he knew the consequence must be dreadful. He having now such an extraordinary view of the terribleness of the wrath of God, his love to the elect tended to make him more than ordinarily earnest that they might be delivered from suffering that wrath to all eternity, which could not have been if he had failed of doing God's will, or if the will of God in the effect of his suffering had failed.

2. No wonder that that extraordinary sense that Christ then had of the costliness of the means of sinners' salvation, made him very earnest for the success of those means, as you have already heard.

3. Christ had an extraordinary sense of his dependence on God, and his need of his help to enable him to do God's will in this great trial. Though he was

innocent, yet he needed divine help. He was dependent on God, as man, and therefore we read that he trusted in God. Matt. 27:43. "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." And when he had such an extraordinary sight of the dreadfulness of that wrath he was to suffer, he saw how much it was beyond the strength of his human nature alone.

V. What was the success of this prayer of Christ?

To this I answer, He obtained all his requests. The apostle says, "He was heard in that he feared;" in all that he feared. He obtained strength and help from God, all that he needed, and was carried through. He was enabled to do and to suffer the whole will of God; and he obtained the whole of the end of his sufferings--a full atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the full salvation of every one of those who were given him in the covenant of redemption, and all that glory to the name of God, which his mediation was designed to accomplish, not one jot or tittle hath failed. Herein Christ in his agony was above all others Jacob's antitype, in his wrestling with God for a blessing; which Jacob did, not as a private person, but as the head of his posterity, the nation of Israel, and by which he obtained that commendation of God, "As a prince thou hast power with God;" and therein was a type of him who was the Prince of princes.

APPLICATION.

Great improvement may be made of the consideration of the strong crying and tears of Christ in the days of his flesh, many ways for our benefit.

1. This may teach us after what manner we should pray to God, not in a cold and careless manner, but with great earnestness and engagedness of spirit, and especially when we are praying to God for those things that are of infinite importance, such as spiritual and eternal blessings. Such were the benefits that Christ prayed for with such strong crying and tears, that he might be enabled to do God's will in that great and difficult work that God had appointed him, that he might not sink and fail, but might get the victory, and so finally be delivered from death, and that God's will and end might be obtained as the fruit of his sufferings, in the glory of God, and the salvation of the elect.

When we go before God in prayer with a cold, dull heart, and in a lifeless and listless manner pray to him for eternal blessings, and those of infinite import to our souls, we should think of Christ's earnest prayers that he poured out to God, with tears and a bloody sweat. The consideration of it may well make us ashamed of our dull, lifeless prayers to God, wherein, indeed, we rather ask a denial than ask to be heard; for the language of such a manner of praying to God, is, that we do not look upon the benefit that we pray for as of any great

importance, that we are indifferent whether God answers us or not. The example of Jacob in wrestling with God for the blessing, should teach us earnestness in our prayers, but more especially the example of Jesus Christ, who wrestled with God in a bloody sweat. If we were sensible as Christ was of the great importance of those benefits that are of eternal consequence, our prayers to God for such benefits would be after another manner than now they are. Our souls also would with earnest labour and strife be engaged in this duty.

There are many benefits that we ask of God in our prayers, which are every whit of as great importance to us as those benefits which Christ asked of God in his agony were to him. It is of as great importance to us that we should be enabled to do the will of God, and perform a sincere, universal, and persevering obedience to his commands, as it was to Christ that he should not fail of doing God's will in his great work. It is of as great importance to us to be saved from death, as it was to Christ that he should get the victory over death, and so be saved from it. It is of as great, and infinitely greater, importance to us, that Christ's redemption should be successful in us, as it was to him that God's will should be done, in the fruits and success of his redemption.

Christ recommended earnest watchfulness and prayerfulness to his disciples, by prayer and example, both at the same time. When Christ was in his agony, and came and found his disciples asleep, he bid them watch and pray, Matt. 26:41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." At the same time he set them an example of that which he commanded them, for though they slept he watched, and poured out his soul in those earnest prayers that you have heard of; and Christ has elsewhere taught us to ask those blessings of God that are of infinite importance, as those that will take no denial. We have another example of the great conflicts and engagedness of Christ's spirit in this duty. Luke 6:12. "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." And he was often recommending earnestness in crying to God in prayers. In the parable of the unjust judge, Luke 18 at the beginning; "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for awhile: but afterwards he saith within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith." Luke 6:5, etc. "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not

rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." He taught it in his own way of answering prayer, as in answering the woman of Canaan, Matt. 15:22, etc. "And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." And as Christ prayed in his agony, so I have already mentioned several texts of Scripture wherein we are directed to agonize in our prayers to God.

2. These earnest prayers and strong cries of Christ to the Father in his agony, show the greatness of his love to sinners. For, as has been shown, these strong cries of Jesus Christ were what he offered up to God as a public person, in the capacity of high priest, and in the behalf of those whose priest he was. When he offered up his sacrifice for sinners whom he had loved from eternity, he withal offered up earnest prayers. His strong cries, his tears, and his blood, were all offered up together to God, and they were all offered up for the same end, for the glory of God in the salvation of the elect. They were all offered up for the same persons, *viz.* for his people. For them he shed his blood and that bloody sweat, when it fell down in clotted lumps to the ground; and for them he so earnestly cried to God at the same time. It was that the will of God might be done in the success of his sufferings, in the success of that blood, in the salvation of those for whom that blood was shed, and therefore this strong crying shows his strong love; it shows how greatly he desired the salvation of sinners. He cried to God that he might not sink and fail in that great undertaking, because if he did so, sinners could not be saved, but all must perish. He prayed that he might get the victory over death, because if he did not get the victory, his people could never obtain that victory, and they can conquer no otherwise than by his conquest. If the Captain of our salvation had not conquered in this sore conflict, none of us could have conquered, but we must have all sunk with him. He cried to God that he might be saved from death, and if he had not been saved from death in his resurrection, none of us could ever have been saved from death. It was a great sight to see Christ in that great conflict that he was in in his agony, but every thing in it was from love, that strong love that was in his heart. His tears that flowed from his eyes were from love; his great sweat was from love; his blood, his prostrating himself on the ground before the Father, was from love; his earnest crying to God was from the strength and ardency of his love. It is looked upon as one principal way wherein true love and good will is

shown in christian friends one towards another, heartily to pray one for another; and it is one way wherein Christ directs us to show our love to our enemies, even praying for them. Matt. 5:44. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." But was there ever any prayer that manifested love to enemies to such a degree, as those strong cries and tears of the Son of God for the success of his blood in the salvation of his enemies; the strife and conflict of whose soul in prayer was such as to produce his agony and his bloody sweat?

3. If Christ was thus earnest in prayer to God, that the end of his sufferings might be obtained in the salvation of sinners, then how much ought those sinners to be reprov'd that do not earnestly seek their own salvation! If Christ offered up such strong cries for sinners as their high priest, that bought their salvation, who stood in no need of sinners, who had been happy from all eternity without them, and could not be made happier by them; then how great is the sottishness of those sinners that seek their own salvation in a dull and lifeless manner; that content themselves with a formal attendance on the duties of religion, with their hearts in the mean time much more earnestly set after other things! They after a sort attend on the duty of social prayer, wherein they pray to God that he would have mercy on them and save them; but after what a poor dull way is it that they do it! they do not apply their heart unto wisdom, nor incline their ear to understanding; they do not cry after wisdom, nor lift up their voice for understanding; they do not seek it as silver, nor search for it as for hidden treasures. Christ's earnest cries in his agony may convince us that it was not without reason that he insisted upon it, in Luke 13:24. that we should strive to enter in at the strait gate, which, as I have already observed to you, is, in the original, *Agwnizesqe*, "*Agonize* to enter in at the strait gate." If sinners would be in a hopeful way to obtain their salvation, they should agonize in that great concern as men that are taking a city by violence, as Matt. 11:12. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." When a body of resolute soldiers are attempting to take a strong city in which they meet with great opposition, what violent conflicts are there before the city is taken! How do the soldiers press on against the very mouths of the enemies' cannon, and upon the points of their swords! When the soldiers are scaling the walls, and making their first entrance into the city, what a violent struggle is there between them and their enemies that strive to keep them out! How do they, as it were, agonize with all their strength! So ought we to seek our salvation, if we would be in a likely way to obtain it. How great is the folly then of those who content themselves with seeking with a cold and lifeless frame of spirit, and so continue from month to month, and from year to year, and yet flatter themselves that they shall be successful!

How much more still are they to be reprov'd, who are not in a way of seeking their salvation at all, but wholly neglect their precious souls, and attend the

duties of religion no further than is just necessary to keep up their credit among men; and instead of pressing into the kingdom of God, are rather violently pressing on towards their own destruction and ruin, being hurried on by their many head strong lusts, as the herd of swine were hurried on by the legion of devils, and ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters! Matt. 8:32.

4. From what has been said under this proposition, we may learn after what manner Christians ought to go through the work that is before them. Christ had a great work before him when that took place, of which we have an account in the text. Though it was very near the close of his life, yet he then, when his agony began, had the chief part of the work before him that he came into the world to do; which was to offer up that sacrifice which he offered in his last sufferings, and therein to perform the greatest act of his obedience to God. And so the Christians have a great work to do, a service they are to perform to God, that is attended with great difficulty. They have a race set before them that they have to run, a warfare that is appointed them. Christ was the subject of a very great trial in the time of his agony; so God is wont to exercise his people with great trials. Christ met with great opposition in that work that he had to do; so believers are like to meet with great opposition in running the race that is set before them. Christ, as man, had a feeble nature, that was in itself very insufficient to sustain such a conflict, or to support such a load as was coming upon him. So the saints have the same weak human nature, and beside that, great sinful infirmities that Christ had not, which lay them under great disadvantages, and greatly enhance the difficulty of their work. Those great tribulations and difficulties that were before Christ, were the way in which he was to enter into the kingdom of heaven; so his followers must expect, "through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven." The cross was to Christ the way to the crown of glory, and so it is to his disciples. The circumstances of Christ and of his followers in those things are alike, their case, therefore, is the same; and therefore Christ's behaviour under those circumstances, was a fit example for them to follow. They should look to their Captain, and observe after what manner he went through his great work, and the great tribulations which he endured. They should observe after what manner he entered into the kingdom of heaven, and obtained the crown of glory, and so they also should run the race that is set before them. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Particularly,

(1.) When others are asleep they should be awake, as it was with Christ. The time of Christ's agony was the night season, the time wherein persons were

wont to be asleep: it was the time wherein the disciples that were about Christ were asleep; but Christ then had something else to do than to sleep; he had a great work to do; he kept awake, with his heart engaged in this work. So should it be with the believers of Christ; when the souls of their neighbours are asleep in their sins, and under the power of a lethargic insensibility and sloth, they should watch and pray, and maintain a lively sense of the infinite importance of their spiritual concerns. 1 Thess. 5:6. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

(2.) They should go through their work with earnest labour, as Christ did. The time when others were asleep was a time when Christ was about his great work, and was engaged in it with all his might, agonizing in it; conflicting and wrestling, in tears, and in blood. So should Christians with the utmost earnestness improve their time with souls engaged in this work, pushing through the opposition they meet with in it, pushing through all difficulties and sufferings there are in the way, running with patience the race set before them, conflicting with the enemies of their souls with all their might; as those that wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

(3.) This labour and strife should be, that God may be glorified, and their own eternal happiness obtained in a way of doing God's will. Thus it was with Christ: what he so earnestly strove for was, that he might do the will of God, that he might keep his command, his difficult command, without failing in it, and that in this way God's will might be done, in that glory to his ever great name, and that salvation to his elect that he intended by his sufferings. Here is an example for the saints to follow in that holy strife, and race, and warfare, which God has appointed them; they should strive to do the will of their heavenly Father, that they may, as the apostle expresses it, Rom. 12:2. "Prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," and that in this way they may glorify God, and may come at last to be happy for ever in the enjoyment of God.

(4.) In all the great work they have to do, their eye should be to God for his help to enable them to overcome. Thus did the man Christ Jesus: he strove in his work even to such an agony and bloody sweat. But how did he strive? It was not in his own strength, but his eyes were to God, he cries unto him for his help and strength to uphold him, that he might not fail; he watched and prayed, as he desired his disciples to do; he wrestled with his enemies and with his great sufferings, but at the same time wrestled with God to obtain his help, to enable him to get the victory. Thus the saints should use their strength in their christian course to the utmost, but not as depending on their own strength, but crying mightily to God for his strength to make them conquerors.

(5.) In this way they should hold out to the end as Christ did. Christ in this way was successful, and obtained the victory, and won the prize; he overcame, and is set down with the Father in his throne. So Christians should persevere and hold out in their great work to the end; they should continue to run their race till they have come to the end of it; they should be faithful unto the death as Christ was; and then, when they have overcome, they shall sit down with him in his throne. Rev. 3:21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

5. Hence burdened and distressed sinners, if any such are here present, may have abundant ground of encouragement to come to Christ for salvation. Here is great encouragement to sinners to come to this high priest that offered up such strong crying and tears with his blood, for the success of his sufferings in the salvation of sinners. For,

1st, Here is great ground of assurance that Christ stands ready to accept of sinners, and bestow salvation upon them; for those strong cries of his that he offered up in the capacity of our high priest, show how earnestly desirous he was of it. If he was not willing that sinners should be saved, be they ever so unworthy of it, then why would he so wrestle with God for it in such a bloody sweat? Would any one so earnestly cry to God with such costly cries, in such great labour and travail of soul, for that, that he did not desire that God should bestow? No, surely! but this shows how greatly his heart was set on the success of his redemption; and therefore since he has by such earnest prayers, and by such a bloody sweat, obtained salvation of the Father to bestow on sinners, he will surely be ready to bestow it upon them, if they come to him for it; otherwise he will frustrate his own design; and he that so earnestly cried to God that his design might not be frustrated, will not, after all, frustrate it himself.

2. Here is the strongest ground of assurance that God stands ready to accept of all those that come to him for mercy through Christ, for this is what Christ prayed for in those earnest prayers, whose prayers were always heard, as Christ says, John 11:42. "And I knew that thou hearest me always." And especially may they conclude, that heard their high priest in those strong cries that he offered up with his blood, and that especially on the following account.

(1.) They were the most earnest prayers that ever were made. Jacob was very earnest when he wrestled with God; and many others have wrestled with God with many tears; yea, doubtless, many of the saints have wrestled with God with such inward labour and strife as to produce powerful effects on the body. But so earnest was Christ, so strong was the labour and fervency of his heart, that he cried to God in a sweat of blood; so that if any earnestness and importunity in prayer ever prevailed with God, we may conclude that that prevailed.

(2.) He who then prayed was the most worthy person that ever put up a prayer. He had more worthiness than ever men or angels had in the sight of God, according as by inheritance he has obtained a more excellent name than they; for he was the only-begotten Son of God, infinitely lovely in his sight, the Son in whom he declared once and again he was well-pleased. He was infinitely near and dear to God, and had more worthiness in his eyes ten thousand times than all men and angels put together. And can we suppose any other than that such a person was heard when he cried to God with such earnestness? Did Jacob, a poor sinful man, when he had wrestled with God, obtain of God the name of ISRAEL, and that encomium, that as a prince he had power with God, and prevailed? And did Elijah, who was a man of like passions, and of like corruptions with us, when he prayed, earnestly prevail on God to work such great wonders? And shall not the only-begotten Son of God, when wrestling with God in tears and blood, prevail, and have his request granted him?

Surely there is no room to suppose any such thing; and therefore, there is no room to doubt whether God will bestow salvation on those that believe in him, at his request.

(3.) Christ offered up these earnest prayers with the best plea for an answer that ever was offered to God, *viz.* his own blood; which was an equivalent for the thing that he asked. He not only offered up strong cries, but he offered them up with a price fully sufficient to purchase the benefit he asked.

(4.) Christ offered this price and those strong cries both together; for at the same time that he was pouring out these earnest requests for the success of his redemption in the salvation of sinners, he also shed his blood. His blood fell down to the ground at the same instant that his cries went up to heaven. Let burdened and distressed sinners, that are ready to doubt of the efficacy of Christ's intercession for such unworthy creatures as they, and to call in question God's readiness to accept them for Christ's sake, consider these things. Go to the garden where the Son of God was in an agony, and where he cried to God so earnestly, and where his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, and then see what a conclusion you will draw up from such a wonderful sight.

6. The godly may take great comfort in this, that Christ has as their high priest offered up such strong cries to God. You that have good evidence of your being believers in Christ, and his true followers and servants, may comfort yourselves in this, that Christ Jesus is your high priest, that that blood, which Christ shed in his agony, fell down to the ground for you, and that those earnest cries were sent up to God for you, for the success of his labours and sufferings in all that good you stood in need of in this world, and in your everlasting happiness in the world to come. This may be a comfort to you in all losses, and under all difficulties, that you may encourage your faith, and strengthen your hope, and

cause you greatly to rejoice. If you were under any remarkable difficulties, it would be a great comfort to you to have the prayers of some man that you looked upon to be a man of eminent piety, and one that had a great interest at the throne of grace, and especially if you knew that he was very earnest and greatly engaged in prayer for you. But how much more may you be comforted in it, that you have an interest in the prayers and cries of the only-begotten and infinitely worthy Son of God, and that he was so earnest in his prayers for you, as you have heard!

7. Hence we may learn how earnest Christians ought to be in their prayers and endeavours for the salvation of others. Christians are the followers of Christ, and they should follow him in this. We see from what we have heard, how great the labour and travail of Christ's soul was for others' salvation, and what earnest and strong cries to God accompanied his labours. Here he hath set us an example. Herein he hath set an example for ministers, who should as co-workers with Christ travail in birth with them till Christ be found in them. Gal. 4:19. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." They should be willing to spend and be spent for them. They should not only labour for them, and pray earnestly for them, but should, if occasion required, be ready to suffer for them, and to spend not only their strength, but their blood for them. 2 Cor. 12:15. "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Here is an example for parents, showing how they ought to labour and cry to God for the spiritual good of their children. You see how Christ laboured and strove and cried to God for the salvation of his spiritual children; and will not you earnestly seek and cry to God for your natural children?

Here is an example for neighbours one towards another how they should seek and cry for the good of one another's souls, for this is the command of Christ, that they should love one another as Christ loved them. John 15:12. Here is an example for us, showing how we should earnestly seek and pray for the spiritual and eternal good of our enemies, for Christ did all this for his enemies, and when some of those enemies were at that very instant plotting his death, and busily contriving to satiate their malice and cruelty, in his most extreme torments, and most ignominious destruction.
