

SERMON XIII.

Alluring the Hearts of Men to CHRIST, by a fourth Motive contained in another Title of CHRIST.

HAGGAI ii. 7.

— *And the desire of all nations shall come.*

THE former chapter is mainly spent, in reproving the negligence of the Jews, who, being discouraged from time to time, had delayed the rebuilding the *temple*: and, in the mean time, employed their care and cost in building and adorning their own houses: but, at last, being persuaded to set about the work, they met with this discouragement, that such was the poverty of the present time, that the second structure would no way answer the magnificence and splendor of the first. In Solomon's days the nation was wealthy, now drained; so that there would be no proportion betwixt the second and the first. To this grand discouragement the prophet applies this relief; that whatsoever should be wanting in external pomp and glory, should be more than recompensed by the presence of Jesus Christ in this *second temple*. For Christ, "the desire of all nations," saith he, shall come into it. Which, by the way, may give us this useful note: That the presence of Jesus Christ gives a more real and excellent glory to the places of his worship, than any external beauty or outward ornaments whatsoever can bestow upon them. Our eyes, like the disciples, are apt to be dazzled with the goodly stones of the temple, and, in the mean time, to neglect and overlook that which gives it the greatest honour and beauty.

But to return. In these words we have both the description of Christ, and an *index* pointing at the time of his incarnation: he is called "the desire of all nations;" and the time of his coming in the flesh, is plainly intimated to be whilst the second *temple* should be standing. Where, by the way, we find just cause to admire at and bemoan the blindness that is happened to the Jews, who, owning the truth of this prophecy, and not able to deny the destruction of the second temple, many hundred years past, will not yet be brought to acknowledge the incarnation of the true Messiah notwithstanding.

But to the point. The character, or description of Christ, stiled *the desire of all nations*, who was to come into the world in the time of the second temple, Mal. iii. 12. and that, after grievous concussions and shakings of the world, which were to make way for

his coming; for so our prophet here speaks, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," to which the apostle alludes, in Heb. xii. 26. applying this prophecy to Jesus Christ, here called the "desire of all nations:" putting the act for the object, desire for the thing desired: as in Ezek. xxiv. 16. "The desire of thine eyes," i. e. the desirable wife of thy bosom; so here, the "desire of all nations," i. e. Christ, the object of the desires of God's elect, in all nations of the world: a Saviour infinitely desirable in himself, and actually desired by all the people of God, dispersed among all kindreds, tongues, and nations of the world. From whence this note is,

Doct. That the desires of God's elect in all kingdoms, and among all people of the earth, are, and shall be drawn out after, and fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The merciful God beholding the universal ruins of the world by sin, hath provided an universal remedy for his own elect, in every part of the earth. Christ is not impropriated to any one kingdom or nation in the world; but intended to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth; and accordingly speaks the apostle, Col. ii. 11. "There is neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." In the explication of this point two things must be enquired into.

1. Why Christ is called the desire of all nations.

2. Upon what account the people of God, in all nations, desire him.

First, Why he is called the desire of all nations, and what that phrase may import; and there are divers things that are supposed, or included in it.

First, That God the Father hath appointed him as a common remedy for the sins and miseries of his people, in all parts and quarters of the world. So in the covenant of redemption, betwixt the Father and the Son, the Lord expresseth himself, Isa. xlix. 6. and he said, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Suitable whereunto is that prophecy, Isa. lii. 15. "He shall sprinkle many nations." If God had not appointed him for, he could not be desired by all nations.

And, indeed, herein the grace of God doth admirably shine forth in the freeness of it, that even the most barbarous nations are not excluded from the benefits of redemption by Christ. This is what the apostle admires, that Christ should be *preached to the*

Gentiles, 1 Tim. iii. 16. a people that seemed to be lost in the darkness of idolatry; yet even for them Christ was given by the Father, "Ask of me (saith he) and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Secondly, Christ, *the desire of all nations*, plainly notes the sufficiency that is in him, to supply the wants of the whole world; as the sun in the heavens suffices all nations for light and influence, so doth the Sun of righteousness suffice for the redemption, justification, sanctification and salvation of the people of God all over the world; Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

Thirdly, It implies the *reality that is in godliness*. It shews you that religion is no fancy, as the atheistical world would persuade us; and this evidently appears in the uniform effects of it upon the hearts of all men, in all nations of the world, that are truly religious: all their desires, like so many needles touched by one and the same loadstone, move towards Jesus Christ, and all meet together in one and the same blessed object, Christ. Were it possible for the people of God to come out of all nations, kindreds and languages in the world, into one place, and there confer and compare the desires and workings of their hearts, though they never saw each other's faces, nor heard of each other's names, yet, as face answers to face in a glass, so would their desires after Christ answer to each other. All hearts work after him in the same manner; what one saith, all say: These are my troubles and burdens, these my wants and miseries; the same things my desires and fears: one and the same Spirit works in all believers throughout the world; which could never be if religion were but a fancy, as some call it; or a combination or confederacy, as others call it: fancies are as various as faces; and confederacies presuppose mutual acquaintance and conference.

Fourthly, Christ, *the desire of all nations*, implies the vast extent his kingdom hath, and shall have in the world; out of every nation under heaven some shall be brought to Christ, and to heaven by him; and though the number of God's elect, compared with the multitudes of the ungodly in all nations, is but a remnant, a little flock; and, in that comparative sense, there are few that shall be saved; yet considered absolutely, and in themselves, they are a vast number, which no man can number, Matth. viii. 11. "Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." In order whereunto, the gospel, like the sun in the heavens, circuits the world. It arose in the east, and takes its course towards the *western world*; rising, by degrees, upon the

remote, idolatrous nations of the earth : out of all which a number is to be saved, even “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God,” Psal. lxxviii. 31. And this consideration should move us to pray earnestly for the poor Heathens, who yet sit in darkness, and the shadow of death ; there is yet hope for them.

Fi,thly, It holds forth this, that when God opens the eyes of men to see their sin and danger by it, nothing but Christ can give them satisfaction : it is not the amenity, fertility, riches and pleasures, the inhabitants of any kingdom of the world do enjoy, that can satisfy the desires of their souls : when once God touches their hearts with the sense of sin and misery, then Christ, and none but Christ is desirable and necessary, in the eyes of such persons. Many kingdoms of the world abound with riches and pleasures ; the providence of God hath carved liberal portions of the good things of this life to many of them, and scarce left any thing to their desires that the world can afford. Yet all this can give no satisfaction without Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations, the one thing necessary, when once they come to see the necessity and excellency of him : then take the world who will, so they may have Christ, the desire of their souls. Thus we see upon what grounds and reasons Christ is stiled the desire of all nations.

Object. But there lies one great objection against this truth, which must be solved ; viz. if Christ be the desire of all nations, how comes it to pass, that Jesus Christ finds no entertainment in so many nations of the world among whom Christianity is hissed at, and Christians not tolerated to live among them ? Who see no beauty in him that they should desire him.

Sol. First, We must remember the nations of the world have their times and seasons of conversion ; those that once embraced Christ, have now lost him, and idols are now set up in the places where he once was sweetly worshipped. The sun of the gospel is gone down upon them, and now shines in another *Hemisphere* ; and so the nations of the world are to have their distinct days and seasons of illumination. The gospel, like the sea, gaineth in one place what it loseth in another ; and in the times and seasons appointed by the Father, they come successively to be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ ; and then shall the promise be fulfilled, Isa. xlix. 7. “Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his “holy One, To him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers ; kings shall see and arise, “princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful.”

Secondly, Let it also be remembered, that although Christ be rejected by the rulers and body of many nations ; yet he is the desire of all the elect of God dispersed and scattered among those nations.

In the next place, *Secondly*, we are to enquire upon what account Christ becomes the desire of all nations, i. e. of all those in all the nations of the world, that belong to the election of grace. And the true ground and reason thereof is, because Christ only hath that in himself which relieves their wants, and answers to all their need. As.

First, They are all, by nature, under condemnation, Rom. v. 16, 18. under the curse of the law; against which, nothing is found in heaven or earth, able to relieve their consciences, but the blood of sprinkling, the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus: and hence it is, that Christ becomes so desirable in the eyes of poor sinners, all the world over. If any thing in nature could be found to pacify and purge the consciences of men from guilt and fear, Christ would never be desirable in their eyes; but finding no other remedy but the blood of Jesus, to him, therefore, shall all the ends of the earth look for righteousness, and for peace.

Secondly, All nations of the world are polluted with the filth of sin, both in nature and practice, which they shall see, and bitterly bewail, when the light of the gospel shall shine amongst them; and the same light, by which this shall be discovered, will also discover the only remedy of this evil to lie in the spirit of Christ, the only fountain opened to all nations for sanctification and cleansing: and this will make the Lord Jesus incomparably desirous in their eyes. O how welcome will he be that cometh unto them, not by blood only, but by water also, John i. 5, 6.

Thirdly, When the light of the gospel shall shine upon the nations, they shall then see, that by reason of the guilt and filth of sin, they are all barred out of heaven; those doors are chained up against them, and that none but Christ can open an entrance for them into that kingdom of God! that "no man cometh to the Father but by him," John xiv. 6. "Neither is there any name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved, but the name of Christ," Acts iv. 12. Hence the hearts of sinners shall pant after him, as a hart panteth for the water-brooks. And thus you see upon what grounds Christ becomes the *desire of all nations*. The improvement of all followeth, in five several uses of the point; viz.

1. For information.
2. For examination.
3. For consolation.
4. For exhortation.
5. For direction.

First use for information.

First, Is Christ the desire of all nations? how vile a sin is it then in any nation, upon whom the light of the gospel hath shined, to reject

Jesus Christ? And say, as those in Job xxi. 14. "Depart from us, "we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." To thrust away his worship, government, and servants from amongst them; and in effect to say, as it is Luke xix. 14. "We will not have this man "to reign over us." Thus did the Jews, Acts xiii. 46. they put away Christ from among them, and thereby judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. This is at once a fearful *sin*, and a dreadful *sign*. How soon did vengeance overtake them like the overthrow of Sodom? O, let it be for a warning to all nations to the end of the world. He would have gathered the children of Israel under his wings as a *hen* doth her brood, even when the *Roman Eagle* was hovering over them, but they would not; therefore their houses were left unto them desolate, their city and temple made an heap.

Secondly, If Jesus Christ be the desire of all nations, *how incomparably happy then must that nation be, that enjoys Christ in the power and purity of his gospel-ordinances!* If Christ, under a vail made Canaan a glorious land, (as it is called) Dan. xi. 41. what a glorious place must that nation be, that beholds him with open face in the bright sun-shine of the gospel! O England, know thy happiness and the day of thy visitation: what others desire, thou enjoyest: provoke not the Lord Jesus to depart from thee, by corrupting his worship, longing after idolatry, abusing his messengers, and oppressing his people, lest his soul depart from thee.

Second use for examination.

If Christ be the desire of all nations, examine whether he be the desire of your souls in particular; else you shall have no benefit by him. Are your desires after Christ true spiritual desires? Reflect, I beseech you, upon the frames and tempers of your heart. Can you say of your desires after Christ, as Peter did of his love to Christ? Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I desire thee. Try your desires as to their sincerity by the following characters:

First, Are they vehement and ardent? Hath Christ the supreme place in your desires? Do you esteem all things to be but dross and dung in comparison of the excellencies of Jesus Christ your Lord? Phil. iii. 8. Is he to you as the refuge-city to the man-slayer? Heb. vi. 18, 19. As a spring of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land? Isa. xxxii. 2. Such vehement desires are true desires.

Secondly, Are your desires after Christ universal; i. e. is every thing in Christ desirable in your eyes? The *hypocrite*, like the *harlot*, is for a divided Christ; they would be called by his name, but live upon their own stock, Isa. iv. 1. If his holiness and govern-

ment, his cross and sufferings be desirable for his sake : such universal desires are right desires.

Thirdly, Are your desires after Christ industrious desires, using all the means of accomplishing what you desire ! You say you desire Christ, but what will you do to obtain your desires ? If you seek him carefully and incessantly in all the ways of duty ; if you will strive in prayer, labour to believe, cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, i. e. be content to part with the most profitable and pleasant ways of sin that you may enjoy Christ, the desire of your souls ; then are your desires right desires.

Fourthly, Are your desires after Christ permanent desires, or only a sudden motion or fit which goes off again without effect ? If your desires after Christ abide upon your hearts, if your longings be after him at all times, though not in the same height and degree, then are your desires right desires. Christ always dwells in the desires of his people ; they can feel him in their desires, when they cannot discern him in their love or delight.

Fifthly, Will your desires after Christ admit no satisfaction, nor find rest any where but in the enjoyment of Christ ? then are your desires right desires. The soul that desires Christ, can never be at rest till it come home to Christ, 2 Cor. v. 2, 6. Phil. i. 23. The devil can satisfy others with the riches and pleasure of this world, as children are quieted with rattles ; but if nothing but Christ can rest and terminate your desires, surely such restless desires are right desires.

Sixthly, Do your desires after Christ spring from a deep sense of your need and want of Christ ? Hath conviction opened your eyes to see your misery, to feel your burthens, and to make you sensible that your remedy lies only in the Lord Jesus ? then are your desires right desires. Bread and water are made necessary and desirable by hunger and thirst ; by these things try the truth of your desires after Christ.

Third use for consolation.

Do you indeed, upon serious trial, find such desires after Christ as were described above ? O, bless the Lord for that day wherein Christ, the desire of all nations, became the desire of your souls ; and for your comfort, know that you are happy and blessed souls at present.

First, Blessed in this, that your eyes have been opened to see both the want and worth of Christ. Had not Christ applied his precious eye-salve to the eyes of your mind, you could never have desired him ; you would have said with them in Isa. liii. 2, 3. " He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, " there is no beauty that we should desire him : " Or, as they to

the spouse, Cant. v. 9. "What is thy beloved more than another "beloved?" O, blessed souls, enlightened of the Lord, to see those things that are hid from them that perish!

Secondly, You are blessed in this, that your desires after Christ are a sure evidence that the desire of Christ is towards you: had he not first desired you, you could never have desired him. We may say of desires, as it is said of love, we desire him because he first desired us: your desires after Christ are inflamed from the desires of Christ after you.

Thirdly, Blessed in this, that your desires shall surely be satisfied, Matt. v. 6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after "righteousness, for they shall be filled." Prov. x. 24. "The desires of the righteous shall be granted." God never raised such desires as these in the souls of his people, to be a torment to them for ever.

Fourthly, Blessed in this, that God hath guided your desires to make the best choice that ever was made in the world; whilst the desires of others are hunting after riches, pleasure, and honour in the world; toiling themselves like children in pursuit of a painted butterfly, which when they have caught, doth but daub their fingers: God, meanwhile, hath directed your desires to Christ, the most excellent object in heaven or earth. Any good will satisfy some men; O, happy soul, if none but Christ can satisfy thee! Psal. iv. 6.

Fifthly, Blessed in this, that there is a work of grace certainly wrought upon thy soul; and these very desires after Christ are a part thereof.

Sixthly, Blessed in this, that these desires after Christ keep thy soul active and working after him continually in the ways of duty, Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired, that will I seek after." Desire will be a continual spring to diligence and industry in the ways of duty; the desire of the end quickeneth to the use of means, Prov. xviii. 1. Others may fall asleep and cast off duty, but it will be hard for you to do so, whose souls burn with desire after Christ.

Seventhly, Blessed in this, that your desires after Christ will make death much the sweeter and easier to you, Phil. i. 23. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better." When a Christian was once asked, Whether he was willing to die? He returned this answer*, "Let him be unwilling to die, who is "unwilling to go to Christ." And much like it, was that of another, *Vivere renuo, ut Christo vivam*: I refuse this life, to live with Christ.

* *Illius est nolle mori, cujus nolle ire ad Christum.*

Fourth use for exhortation.

In the fourth place, let me exhort and persuade all to make Jesus Christ the desire and choice of their souls. And here I fall in with the main scope and design of the gospel. And O that I could effectually press home this exhortation upon your hearts; let me offer some moving considerations to you, and may the Lord accompany them to your hearts.

First, Every creature naturally desires its own preservation; do not you desire the preservation of your precious and immortal soul! If you do, then make Christ your desire and choice, without whom they can never be preserved, Jude, ver. 1.

Secondly, Do not your souls earnestly desire the bodies they live in? How tender are they over them, how careful to provide for them? though they pay a dear rent for those tenements they live in. And is not union with Christ infinitely more desirable than the union of soul and body? O covet union with him! then shall your souls be happy, when your bodies drop off from them at death, 2 Cor. v. 1, 3. yea, soul and body shall be happy in him, and with him for evermore.

Thirdly, How do the men of this world desire the enjoyments of it? They pant after the dust of the earth; they rise early, sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness; and all this for very vanity: Shall a worldling do more for earth, than you for heaven? Shall the creature be so earnestly desired, and Christ neglected?

Fourthly, What do all your desires in this world benefit you, if you go christless? Suppose you had the desire of your hearts in these things, how long should you have comfort in them, if you miss Christ?

Fifthly, Doth Christ desire you, who have nothing lovely or desirable in you? And have you no desires after Christ, the most lovely and desirable one in both worlds? "His desires are towards you," Prov. viii. 31. O make him the desire and choice of your souls.

Sixthly, How absolutely necessary is Jesus Christ to your souls? Bread and water, breath and life, are not so necessary as Christ is; "One thing is necessary," Luke x. 42. and that one thing is Christ. If you miss your desires in other things, you may yet be happy; but if you miss Christ you are undone for ever.

Seventhly, How suitable a good is Christ to your souls! comprising whatsoever they want, 1 Cor. i. 30. Set your hearts where you will, none will be found to match and suit them, as Christ doth.

Eighthly, How great are the benefits that will redound to you by Jesus Christ! In him you shall have a rich inheritance settled

upon you : all things shall be yours, when you are Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 22. And is not such a Christ worth desiring?

Ninthly, All your well-grounded hopes of glory are built upon your union with Christ, 1 Cor. i. 21. If you miss Christ, you must die without hope. Will not this draw your desires to him;

Tenthly, Suppose you were at the judgment-seat of God, where you must shortly stand, and saw the terrors of the Lord in that day : the sheep divided from the goats ; the sentences of absolution and condemnation passed, by the great and awful Judge, upon the righteous and wicked : would not Christ be then desirable in your eyes ? As ever you expect to stand with comfort at that bar, let Christ be the desire and choice of your souls now.

Fifth use for direction.

Do these, or any other considerations, put thee upon this enquiry ; how shall I get my desires kindled and enflamed towards Christ ? Alas ! my heart is cold and dead, not a serious desire stirring in it after Christ. To such I shall offer the following directions.

Direct. 1. Redeem some time every day for meditation ; get out of the noise and clamour of the world, Psal. iv. 4. and seriously bethink yourselves how the present state of your soul stands, and how it is like to go with you for ever : here all sound conversion begins, Psal. lxxix. 59.

Direct. 2. Consider seriously of that lamentable state, in which you came into the world ; children of wrath by nature, under the curse and condemnation of the law : so that either your state must be changed, or you inevitably damned, John iii. 3.

Direct. 3. Consider the way and course you have taken since you came into the world, proceeding from iniquity to iniquity. What command of God have you not violated a thousand times over ? What sin is committed in the world, that you are not one way or other guilty of before God ? How many secret sins upon your score, unknown to the most intimate friend you have in the world ? Either this guilt must be separated from your souls, or your souls from God to all eternity.

Direct. 4. Think upon the severe wrath of God due to every sin ; "The wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. And how intolerable the fulness of that wrath must be when a few drops sprinkled upon the conscience in this world, are so insupportable, that hath made some to chuse strangling rather than life ; and yet this wrath must abide for ever upon you, if you get not interest in Jesus Christ, John iii. 36.

Direct. 5. Ponder well the happy state and condition they are in who have obtained pardon and peace by Jesus Christ, Psal. xxxii. 12. And seeing the grace of God is free, and you are set under

the means thereof; why may not you be as capable thereof as others?

Direct. 6. Seriously consider the great uncertainty of your time, and preciousness of the opportunities of salvation, never to be recovered, when they are once past, John ix. 4. let this provoke you to lay hold upon those golden seasons whilst they are yet with you; that you may not bewail your folly and madness, when they are out of your reach.

Direct. 7. Associate yourselves with serious Christians; get into their acquaintance, and beg their assistance; beseech them to pray for you; and see that you rest not here, but be frequently upon your knees, begging of the Lord a new heart, and a new state.

In conclusion of the whole, let me beseech and beg all the people of God, as upon my knees, to take heed, and beware, lest by the carelessness and scandal of their lives they quench the weak desires beginning to kindle in the hearts of others. You know what the law of God awards for striking a woman with child, so that her fruit go from her, Exod. xxi. 22, 23. O shed not soul-blood, by stifling the hopeful desires of any after Christ.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations.

SERMON XIV.

Containing the fifth Motive to apply CHRIST, drawn from another excellent Title of CHRIST.

1 Cor. ii. 8.

Which none of the princes of this world have known, for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

IN this chapter the apostle discourses to the Corinthians, of the excellency of his ministry, both to obviate the contempt which some cast upon it for want of human ornaments, and to give the greater authority unto it among all: and whereas the spiritual simplicity of his ministry laid it under the contempt of some, he removes that several ways, by shewing them,

First, That it was not suitable to the design and end of his ministry, his aim being "to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," ver. 1, 2.

Secondly, Neither was it for the advantage of their souls; it might indeed tickle their fancies, but could be no solid foundation to their faith and comfort, ver. 4, 5.