1. By aſſuring them, that all who thought circumciſion neceſſary to ſalvation could receive no benefit from the Chriſtian religion, (chap. v. 2 — 4).

2. By declaring, that he expected juſtification only by faith, (ver. 5, 6).

3. By teſtifying, that they had once received the truth, and had never been taught ſuch falſe doctrines by him, (ver. 7, 8).

4. By inſinuating that they ſhould paſs ſome cenſure on thoſe who miſled them (ver. 9, 10.), by declaring that he was perſecuted for oppoſing the circumciſion of the Chriſtians, (ver. 11).

5. By expreſſing a wiſh that thoſe perſons ſhould be cut off who troubled them with his doctrine.

This Epiſtle affords a fine inſtance of Paul’s ſkill in managing an argument. The chief objection which the advocates for the Moſaic law had urged againſt him was, that he himſelf preached circumciſion. In the beginning of the Epiſtle he overturns this ſlander by a ſtatement of facts, without taking any expreſs notice of it; but at the end fully refutes it, that it might leave a ſtrong and laſting impreſſion upon their minds.

He next cautions them againſt an idea which his ar­guments for Chriſtian liberty might excite, that it conſiſted in licentiouſnefs. He ſhows them it does not conſiſt in gratifying vicious deſires; for none are under ſtronger obligations to moral duties than the Chri­ſtian. He recommends gentleneſs and meekneſs to the weak (chap. vi 1—5), and exhorts them to be liberal to their teachers, and unto all men (ver. 6 — 10). He concludes with expofing the falſe pretences of the Judaizing teachers, and aſſerting the integrity of his own conduct.

Epheſus was the chief city of all Aſia on this ſide Mount Taurus. St Paul had paſſed through it in the year 54, but without making any ſtay, (Acts xviii. 19— 21). The following year he returned to Epheſus again, and ſtaid there three years, (chap. xix.) Du­ring his abode there he completed a very flouriſhing church of Chriſtians, the firſt foundations of which had been laid by ſome inferior teachers. As Epheſus was frequented by perſons of diſtinction from all parts of Aſia Minor, St Paul took the opportunity of preach­ing in the ancient countries (ver. 10.); and the other churches of Aſia were conſidered as the daughters of the church of Epheſus; ſo that an Epiſtle to the Epheſians was, in effect, an epiſtle to the other churches of Aſia at the ſame time.

Dr Lardner ſhows it to be highly probable that this Epiſtle was written in the year 61, ſoon after Paul’s arrival at Rome.

As Paul was in a peculiar manner the apoſtle of the Gentiles, and was now a priſoner at Rome in conſequence of having provoked the Jews, by aſſerting that an obſervance of the Moſaic law was not neceſſary to obtain the favour of God, he was afraid left an advan­tage ſhould be taken of his confinement to unſettle the minds of thoſe whom he had converted. Hearing that the Epheſians ſtood firm in the faith of Chriſt, without ſubmitting to the law of Moſes, he writes this Epiſtle to give them more exalted views of the love of God, and of the excellence and dignity of Chriſt. This Epiſtle is pot compoſed in an argumentative or didactic ſtyle: The firſt three chapters conſiſt almoſt entirely of thanks­

givings and **prayers, or** glowing deſcriptions of the bleſſings of the Chriſtian religion. This circumſtance renders them a little obſcure; but by the aſſiſtance of the two following epiſtles, which were written on the fame occaſion, and with the ſame deſign, the meaning of the apoſtle may be eaſily diſcovered. The laſt three chapters contain practical exhortations. He firſt incul­cates unity, love, and concord, from the conſideration that all Chriſtians are members of the ſame body, of which Chriſt is the head. He then adviſes them to forſake the vices to which they had been addicted while they remained heathens. He recommends juſtice and charity; ſtrenuouſly condemns lewdneſs, obſcenity, and intemperance, vices which ſeem to have been too com­mon among the Epehſians. In the 6th chapter he points out the duties which ariſe from the relations of huſhands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants; and concludes with ſtrong exhortations to fortitude, which he deſcribes in an allegorical man­ner.

The church at Philippi had been founded by Paul, Silas, and Timothy (Acts xvi.), in the year 51, and had continued to ſhow a ſtrong and manly attachment to the Chriſtian religion, and a tender affection for the apoſtle. Hearing of his impriſonment at Rome, they ſent Epaphroditus, one of their paſtors, to ſupply him with money. It appears from this Epiſtle that he was in great want of neceſſaries before this contribution ar­rived; for as he had not converted the Romans, he did not conſider himſelf as intitled to receive ſupplies from them. Being a priſoner, he could not work as former­ly; and it was a maxim of his never to accept any pe­cuniary aſſiſtance from thoſe churches where a faction had been railed againſt him. From the Philippians he was not averſe to receive a preſent in the time of want, becauſe he conſidered it as a mark of their affection, and becauſe he was affured that they had conducted themſelves as ſincere Chriſtians.

It appears from the apoſtle’s own words, that this letter was written while he was a priſoner at Rome, (chap i. 7, 13.iv. 22.); and from the expectation which he diſcovers (chap. ii. 24.) of being ſoon releaſed and reſtored to them, compared with Philemon v. 22. and Heb. xiii. 13. where he expreſſes a like expectation in ſtronger terms, it is probable that this Epiſtle was writ­ten towards the end of his firſt impriſonment in the year 62.

The apoſtle’s deſign in this Epiſtle, which is quite of the practical kind, ſeems to be, “to comfort the Philippians under the concern they had expreſſed at the news of his impriſonment; to check a party-ſpirit that appears to have broke out among them, and to pro­mote, on the contrary, an entire union and harmony of affection; to guard them againſt being ſeduced from the purity of the Chriſtian faith by Judaizing teachers; to ſupport them under the trials with which they ſtruggled; and, above all, to inſpire them with a concern to adorn their profeſſion by the moſt eminent attainments in the divine life.” After ſome particular admonitions in the beginning of the 4th chapter, he proceeds in the 8th verſe to recommend virtue in the moſt extenſive ſenſe, mentioning all the different foundations in which it had been placed by the Grecian philoſophers. To­wards the cloſe of the Epiſtle, he makes his acknow­ledgments to the Philippians ſor the ſeaſonable and libe-