

The Dimension of Eternal Love

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The Address

“That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and, length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” {Ephesians 3:18,19}

My Brethren,

The apostle Paul is so profound a scholar, that I cannot pretend to follow him; every time I read him he sets me, as it were, a task impossible. I therefore am obliged to make up a sermon of bits and scraps.

Five Heads

1st In the beginning of this chapter the apostle treats largely of the dispensation of the grace of God towards him. Verses 2 and 3.

2dly. He speaks also of a mystery hidden in God from the world, which was, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews of the promise of life, verse. 6.

3dly. That he was made a minister of this grace to the Gentiles, verses. 7.

4thly. He expresses, with all humility, his unworthiness of this grace; and yet to him was this grace given, that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, verses. 8.

5thly. He informs us that even now is made known to the principalities and powers that reside in the heavenly places by the church the manifold wisdom of God, verses. 10. And the whole of this sprung from the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus, verse. 11; in whom, that is, in Christ, we have holy boldness, and free access to God; and that with confidence of being accepted by the faith of him, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen, to the glory of God the Father, verse. 12.

Not To Faint Due To His Tribulation

The apostle desires that the Ephesians might not faint at the tribulation which he endured; signifying, that God did not set sufferings of his servants before them with a view to discourage, but to embolden them, and strengthen their faith; therefore they ought rather to glory in, than be dismayed at them, verse. 13. The apostle begins praying in the middle of this epistle, and addresses the Father of Christ, of whom all the elect angels, and all the elect of the human race, called the family of heaven and earth, are named, verse. 15. The blessing that the apostle craves of God is that the Ephesians might be strengthened by his Spirit's might in the inner man. By the inner man he means the whole work of grace which is in every renewed soul, and is called the new, or the inner man, as corruption and pollution are called the old man. It is as though the apostle had said, the grace and Spirit of God, which hath humbled and inclined your wills to choose Christ, in subordination to the will of God, has also appointed Christ to be your everlasting portion. And, as the apostle took it for granted that humbling had subdued their wills, and purifying grace had renewed them in the spirit of their minds, so likewise he judged that the love of God had influenced their affections, and kindled an intense desire after the enjoyment of Christ Jesus. The apostle wishes and prays that the sovereign and all-conquering grace of God might reign and rule in their hearts and consciences. Therefore he desires the ever-blessed Redeemer to reign and rule unmolested, and without a rival, in their affections, as if they were seated with him on his throne. The apostle well knew that erroneous men would be busy in besieging their understandings, and that carnal objects would be laboring, to engross their affections; vanity to entertain their minds, pleasures to attract their desires, and legality to entangle and governing their consciences. Therefore he wishes their inner man to be strengthened with spiritual might; hinting, thereby that all our resolutions, efforts, and watchfulness, would not be sufficient bulwarks against the attempts and attacks of Satan, unless they were strengthened by the spiritual might of God Almighty.

Don't Let Sin Gain The Ascendancy

The apostle well knew, by his own experience, that Satan would lay strong siege to such souls; and he knew for a truth that, if one sin found acceptance and entertainment in the soul, that sin, when it had engrossed the affections, would let in many more, and consequently leave a gap, or breach, for a whole troop of specious sins to follow.

When any sin has gained the ascendancy, it will influence the saint's conversation, and prove a stumbling-block to those who are weak in faith; for the life and walk of such a saint would appear froward, and the tongue perverse; as saith the wise man, “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but persuasiveness therein is a breach in the spirit.” {Prov. 15:4} When sin is indulged by us the Spirit of God suspends, in a measure, his fortifying influence, that the

back slider in heart may be filled with his own ways. {Prov. 14:14}

When this is the case the hedge {to our feelings} is broken down, and we lie exposed to every temptation; as says the Psalmist, “Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they that pass by the way do pluck her?” Ps. 80:12} When thus entangled we try to resist, but are still rebuffed or beaten back; this causes rebellion and murmuring to take possession of our hearts; and it is thus that “the foolishness of man perverseteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.” {Prov. 19:3}

We now expect Christ to step in to heal the breach, bind up the wound, and put all our false gods to flight; and for this we pray; but he says, No; “Where are thy gods?” And he adds, “The back slider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.” When in our back slidings we find this to be the case, we begin to cavil and contend with the Saviour, and to ask why he has withdrawn his former loving-kindness from us? He, being the injured rival, disputes the point with us, and we impiously maintain a contention with him, rather than bear the indignation of the Lord, against whom we have sinned. {Micah. 7:9} Thus, sin having separated between Christ and the soul, {Isa. 59:2} a contention with him seems to fasten the bar of infidelity; as it is written, “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.” {Prov. 18:12} If a contention with Christ is as the bars of a castle, bow much more so when rebellion strengthens them?

Strengthened With Divine Might

The apostle, knowing that this would unavoidably be the case where sin is indulged, earnestly prays that God would fortify each power of their renewed souls with spiritual might against all the invasions of the devil. {Eph. 3:16} For he well knew that, if their souls were strengthened with divine might, the dear Redeemer would keep his residence in their hearts, without any rival being let into their affections; which he hints at in the 17th. Verses, by praying, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith.

His law loved and obeyed

The apostle desires that Christ, as their king, might have his laws loved, obeyed, and meditated on in their minds; and, as king of righteousness, that his blessed scepter might be swayed in affections and consciences; and, as he was their atoning Saviour that peace and pardon might be sensibly enjoyed in their souls and that the altogether-lovely Saviour might be enthroned, exalted, and admired in the throne of their hearts, “That Christ {said he} may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye may be rooted and grounded in love,” verse. 17.

Christ Reigns On Mount Zion

The apostle well knew that Christ, as king of righteousness and king of peace, did not reign in the world; as it is written, “I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword and a fire; and what will I if it be already kindled?”

The whole world is not under the blessed sway of the scepter of grace; Christ reigns on Mount Zion; but all men are not come to Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem. The elect, and them only, constitute the gospel Mount Zion, as it is written, “The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation.” And hence it is that he displays his admirable beauty and omnipotent power; as says the Psalmist, “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.” But there are some who plainly affirm, and still adhere to this, that they will not have this man to reign over them. And, if the Lord hold his peace at them when they make these vows, it is a dreadful sign that they are not elected; and consequently all their vows are established that they have bound their souls with, and all their vows shall stand. None can make their vows void but a father and a husband; and Christ is that father and that husband, who can make them void, so as for the Lord to forgive them. {Numb. 30:4-8} But to proceed; the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, therefore it is not to be taken or defended by carnal weapons. It is true that Christ is the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and by him kings reign, and princes decree justice. But this is under his uncontrollable power as the universal monarch of nations.

His Kingdom Note Of The World

But his spiritual kingdom is not of this world; the throne of grace is in heaven; his laws are from heaven, and written in the minds of all his subjects; his scepter is swayed over every justified soul that believes in his name for justification, and takes him for his everlasting righteousness and strength; his kingdom is set in the souls of believers, as it is written, “The kingdom of God is within you.” This kingdom is altogether spiritual; for the kingdom is not in word, but in power; it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thus, my friends, the Saviour’s laws are written within us, and he must have the pre-eminence in our affections, and sway his peaceable scepter in our consciences, which I trust is our soul’s delight.

Let Us Break Their Bands Asunder

But, if we speak of this, it appears a bane to the world; they cannot endure his binding laws; therefore they say, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us." But why? What are his cords and bands, that are so offensive to those who are so violent?

Why; one of the bands is the binding cord of everlasting love, which the carnal mind, fortified with infernal enmity, cannot brook; as it is written, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can-be."

The other band is the bond of gospel peace; as it is written, "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But the sinner had rather have peace with his sins, and continue to maintain war with God, than cast down his rebellious arms, and send an ambassage, desiring conditions of peace. The other cord or girdle is truth, intended to gird up the loins of the mind, in order to make the sinner watch, and be sober.

However, the ungodly say, "Let us break these bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us." Well, if this must be the case, he that dwells in heaven shall laugh at such: "Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill." {Ps. 2:6}

Comprehend With All Saints

And now we will proceed to consider the words of my text; "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. In these words there seems to be something like a contradiction. In the first clause he wishes us to comprehend, and in the last clause he says it passeth knowledge. But does the apostle contradict himself here? By no means. He would wish that the Ephesians should comprehend with all saints, &c. He means, he would wish that the Ephesians, who were children in the faith, should arrive at as high a pitch of knowledge, experience, and enjoyment of God's eternal love, as any other saints whatsoever. That ye may comprehend with all saints; that you may see eye to eye with the best of them. And yet he insinuates to them that, when they have arrived to the highest pitch of knowledge, they would then know but in part; for the whole of Christ's love passeth knowledge. His plain meaning, seems to be this; I would wish you to know, to your soul's establishment, as much of Christ's love as can be known; but I must tell you that the greatest part to be known only in the bright regions of eternal day; as it is written, "For we know in part, and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. {1 Cor. 13:9,10} The apostle's meaning then amounts to this; he would wish that the Ephesians should know, or comprehend, as much as other saints ever did; and yet would intimate that their knowledge and enjoyment was nothing, when compared to that knowledge and enjoyment which the saints will have in the world to come.

Having thus briefly opened my text, I must beg leave to invert the order of it a little. The words are, "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." If I have obtained your leave to invert the order, I will now deliver my thoughts on the subject in the following manner.

1. I will treat of the love of God.
2. Of the length of this divine love.
3. Offer my opinion on the breadth of it.
4. On the depth of this love.
5. On the height.

And conclude the whole with a word of application.

God Is Love

Where shall I begin in delivering my opinion on the subject? "I must begin with God, "for God is love." {1 John, 4:8} This is clearly revealed in the scriptures of truth, that the nature of God is love. But is this divine affection fixed on all the human race, so as to save them in Christ with an everlasting-salvation? That cannot be proved; for God says that multitudes are in hell already; as you read in the 31st and 32d chapters of Ezekiel. "God loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment." {Deut. 10:18} But the elect are not strangers. "I know my sheep {says Christ}, and I lay down my life for them, and they shall never perish." It was self-moving, love in God to choose

his own elect, and is the first cause of all our happiness. His own will was his council; as it is written, "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." That his wisdom drew up the plan of our salvation is plain from the word of truth; the gospel is "the wisdom of God in a mystery." And by his omnipotent power God performs what self-moving love secretly purposed in himself.

This love of God to his elect cannot be traced by us from its first rise. We can only go by the light of scripture, and affirm what God's witnesses have done before; viz. that God loved his elect with an everlasting love. But the idea of eternity will drown every thought that a mortal is capable of in launching forth into that unfathomable abyss. We may trace his word and works, and conclude as Job did, "Lo these are some of his ways; but how little of him is understood!"

In these profound depths of everlasting love we can find no bottom; like the dove, we must settle on the ark of the covenant, and then we shall be able to look about us.

Unutterable Love

First, then, God's love to his people is unutterable; we cannot express it, but can only furnish imperfect hints of its parts, as the scriptures do. For instance, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. {John, 3:16} And again, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! And it doth not yet appear what we shall be." {1 John 3:1}

The love of God to his elect is not only unutterable, but it is likewise inconceivable; and therefore called, in the last clause of my text, a love that passeth knowledge. It is a love that has been enjoyed by thousands, but cannot be fully described by any. This unutterable and inconceivable love is entirely sovereign. It lay entirely in the absolute and uncontrollable will and mind of God, whether he would create creatures out of the earth or not; and whether he would raise them to heaven {out of sin, when fallen} as the objects of his eternal love, or not.

Sovereign Love

It is sovereign, because fallen angels are excluded. And many of the human race are also excluded; as it is written, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." But when did this love and hatred take place, after Esau had sold his birthright? No, says God; "for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the Younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." {Rom. 9:11-13} God's elect are said to be loved with an everlasting love. And there is a people that are to be called "The border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for verse." {Mal. 1:4} As this love of God is sovereign, so it appears to be entirely free in its fountain; as it is written, "But God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. If God commended his love towards us while we were yet sinners, and reconciled us to himself when we were enemies and without strength, his love must be free and unmerited, unless we can suppose that sin, enmity, and sinful infirmities, are meritorious in the sight of God.

Free In Its Fountain

As this love of God appears free in its fountain, so also it appears to be free in its administration. It cannot be purchased by human merit {falsely so called}. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned." {Song 8:7} Simon Magus bid high for the Spirit of love; but the bidder and the price were both to perish together, for thinking that the gift of God was to be bought with money. So we conclude that Simon Magus, who wanted to buy, and the pope of Rome, who offers to sell, the gifts of God, are both "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." If that man is condemned who offers to buy the gifts of God, and if all the substance that a man offers for this love is to be utterly contemned, this love must be free; free in its fountain, and free also in its administrations.

It Cannot Be Earned Or Worked For

This will appear still plainer if we consider the many work-mongers that have laboured in vain to obtain it. Some have strived for it; but none are crowned unless they strive lawfully. {2 Tim. 2:5} And none can strive lawfully till that love that fulfils the law be in their hearts. Some have run for it; but "the race is not to the swift." {Eccl. 9:11} No, says the Saviour, "Many that are first shall be last." {Matt. 19:30} Others have fought for it in heavy persecutions but "the battle is not to the strong." {Eccl. 9:11} The victory of faith is nowhere promised to the strength of the free-will or the power of the human arm. No, "Let the weak say I am strong." {Joel 3:10} Herod did many things,

but never got the gifts of God for his labour. The Pharisees fasted often; they made many prayers, and long ones too, and honoured God with their lips, and yet were rewarded with the greater damnation for their pains. Matt. 23:14} The young man in the gospel told the Saviour that he had kept the law from his youth up, and was sent away with the sorrow of the world {that worketh death} in his heart. Esau wept for it; but got it not, “though he sought it carefully with tears,” Thus it appears then not to be of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth nor of him that fighteth, nor of him that worketh, nor of him that striveth, nor of him that weepeth, nor of him that buys, nor of him that sells, “but of God that sheweth mercy.” “I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely.” Hosea 14:4} This will appear still plainer if we consider what those who obtained it had to recommend them.

Examples Given Of No Qualification

Let us see what God’s elect have done to merit this love of God. Pray what merit was there in Mary Magdalen? How had she improved her supposed talent, will, power, or light within, or stock in hand, or by whatsoever other name you are pleased to call this phantom? The scriptures say she was possessed with seven devils; but her being a habitation for devils could not recommend her to the love and favour of God; nor could that possibly merit it at his hands. And, as for her body, that was a hacknied vehicle for every son of Belial who chose to hire it. Yet this woman received the gift of gospel repentance, the forgiveness of all her sins; and she loved much, because she was much beloved; as it is written, “We love him because he first loved us.” Simon the Pharisee disdained this humble suppliant, and censured the Saviour as not being of God, because he supposed him ignorant of Mary’s character; however, the Lord stopped his mouth by bringing him in debtor fifty pence, without a farthing to pay his debts. But Mary received her full discharge first, though she owed five hundred. Thus the harlot got the start of the Pharisee; as it is written, “Publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God” before the Pharisees.

If we turn to Nicodemus, he is the most likely of any to merit it at the hands of Christ; for he took his part among the council and complimented the Lord when he came to visit him. But the Lord doth not commend him for these things; and we know he had no other merit to plead, unless we allow that the fear of men and ignorance of real religion can be accounted meritorious.

First, there is no merit in the carnal fear of man; for “the fear of man bringeth a snare.” And, as to ignorance, it is never supposed to merit any thing either at the hand of God or man. It merits nothing, at the hand of God, because the law allows a sacrifice for the sin of ignorance, which presupposes that ignorance is sin instead of merit. {Numb. 15:25}

Pray what did the harlot Rahab do to merit this love of God? Why {says the workmonger} “she received the spies with peace.” Yea, but she was a daughter of peace before she received them: as it is written, “And into whatsoever house ye enter, say, Peace be to this house; and if the son of peace be there {mark that, if the son of peace be there}, your peace shall come upon it.” But suppose there be not a person ordained for peace in that house! Why then peace has nothing to do there; for if the son of peace be not there it shall return to you again, Luke, 10:5,6; and you shall carry it to its right owner. Thus, then, her receiving the spies was only the blessed effect of an eternal cause, which is the eternal council of the Trinity ordaining peace for us in Christ: for thus saith the Holy Ghost to the prophet, Christ shall be a priest upon his throne; “and the counsel of peace shall be between them both;” {Zech. 6:13} that is, between the Father and the Son; and thus Christ is our peace. And that Rahab had no merit to boast of but her receiving the spies, is plain; for her verse name, Rahab, is one given by Isaiah to the devil, and to Egypt; and applicable enough, for it signifies furious pride. This woman was a heathen by nation, a harlot by trade, and a devil by name; and yet she tumbled into the bosom of everlasting love. Thus the love of God appears to be sovereign, discriminating, and free, in its fountain Jehovah; and it is likewise sovereign, discriminating, and free, in its administrations under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. But I pass on to my second general head, which is to treat of the length of this love.

Extended And Improper Use Of Words

On this subject I must be permitted to make an extended, or even improper, use of words.

The dimensions of this love that I am to treat of are fourfold. It is height in a superlative, and depth in an infinite degree; its two axes or poles may be compared to two eternities; and thus we must measure, if I may be allowed the expression, the length.

Immensity seems to be its circumference; but our business is with the diameter, which the apostle calls the breadth. However, Paul allows that it passeth knowledge; and indeed it is better felt and enjoyed than described;

for this pleasing theme has employed, more or less, the tongues and pens of all God's eminent servants for many ages past, and I hope our tongues will never be silent on the subject.

You know, my dear friends, that I am called an enterprising man; I will therefore venture to say what I find warranted by the word of God, notwithstanding our utter inability to find it out to perfection; only let me observe the golden rule, and I will proceed.

Love shines from pole to pole

First, then, let it be noticed that God is love. This love shines from pole to pole, and is from everlasting to everlasting; as says the Psalmist, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." {Ps. 90:2} We will begin with that everlasting which is behind us, and to which the word from is prefixed—from everlasting; and so travel on till we come to the other eternal pole, which has the preposition to prefixed. Do not be startled at my adventurous flight, for we are most surely concerned in these two eternities. Let us begin where the scriptures declare God has begun.

His glorious footsteps of mercy and love towards his elect are dated from everlasting; as it is written, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." {Ps. 103:17} And the Redeemer's going forth in covenant undertakings for the elect bears the same date: whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." {Micah 5:2} But to proceed:

Fathers First Step

The first step that the Father took, in the path of love to his elect, was in treating with Christ in their behalf, and appointing him to be their head, their husband, their surety, their mediator, their father, and their brother. But when was this living head, surety, husband, mediator, father, and brother, elected, ordained, and appointed? Why, it is dated from everlasting; as the Saviour declares, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning, of his way {mark, here are his goings forth from everlasting, called to beginning of his way}, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or verse the earth was. When there was no depths, I was brought forth when there were no fountains abounding with water: before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth." {Prov. 8:22-25} Thus it appears that Christ was elected, appointed, pre-ordained, and set up from everlasting to be future man and mediator; and was delivered to death for his elect by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Thus God the Father makes known his electing and everlasting love to his chosen people, in appointing and giving Christ to them before the world was.

Eternal life in Christ

When he set up Christ for our living head he gave us eternal life in him; as it is written, "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." {Titus 1:1} Christ is the quickening Spirit, that quickens all his redeemed; for he is our life, who has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. In another passage he himself saith, "Because I live ye shall live also." {John 14:19} And it must be so; "For, as in Adam all {his natural seed} die, even so in Christ shall all {his spiritual seed} be made alive." But I proceed.

When Christ was set up he was appointed to be the husband of God's chosen daughter. And as man and wife they were viewed one in union from everlasting; for the covenant of grace is a covenant of eternal wedlock: as it is written, "A certain king made a marriage for his son." {Matt. 22:2} And thus likewise runs the tenor of the covenant of wedlock, as God the Father speaks to his elect, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." {Isa. 62:4,5} Thus the elect were chosen as the king's daughter-in-law from eternity." {Ps. 132:13} They are espoused in time; {2 Cor. 11:2} and the marriage shall be consummated in bliss, when the mystery of God is finished; as it is written, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." {Rev. 19:7} And then she shall be clad in gold of Ophir, and be brought with joy and rejoicing to enter into the king's palace. {Ps. 45:15}

Our Life Was Hid With Christ In God

This mystery was exhibited by Eve's existing in Adam before she was extracted from him; so our life was hid with Christ in God. And, when Eve was taken out of Adam, she was a helpmeet formed for him; so the elect are created anew in Christ Jesus. When Eve was formed, God brought her to Adam; so no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him. When she came to Adam he received her as God's gift; so the elect are given to

Christ. Adam and Eve are said to be one; so also are they that are joined to the Lord one spirit. Adam said, "Man shall leave, his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife;" so Christ came forth from the Father, leaping upon the mountains. And, when some of the Saviour's followers said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee; he answered, Who is my mother and my brethren? And he stretched out his hands towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" Matt. 12:47,48} Thus Christ left his father and mother, and clave to his wife. Adam had one wife brought to him and no more: so Christ says "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number; my undefiled is but one." {Song 6:8,9} When Eve fell Adam was in the transgression, though he was not deceived; so when the elected spouse fell, Christ was not deceived, yet he was made sin, "and was numbered with the transgressors." {Isa. 53:12} When Adam and Eve fell, their marriage was not made void; so the fall of the elect did not break the bond of God's everlasting covenant, but rather paved the way to display eternal love towards the miserable. It appears that both Adam and Eve were chosen vessels; and, when they fell by eating the apples, they fell into soul travail, and were shortly after born again. Eternal love raised them up under the same tree where they fell; as it is written, "I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth, that bare thee." {Song 8:5} This mother {according to Paul, Gal 4:24} is the heavenly Jerusalem; and the heavenly Jerusalem; is the covenant of grace and God's elect in it; both typified by Sarah and her son Isaac. To Adam and Eve was the first promise of the covenant of grace revealed; and by the application of the promise were they brought forth from black despair to hope in God's mercy through Christ.

A Great Mystery

I shall conclude this head with the apostle's mystery, "For no man verse yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." {Eph. 5:29-32} This therefore is another blessed effect of God's everlasting love. But, as a surety Christ was set up from everlasting; as it is written, "But Christ was made with an oath by him that said unto him The Lord swore, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." {Heb. 7:21,22} First, Christ, as a surety, was to pay the debt of perfect obedience to the perceptive part of the law for his elect; as it is written, "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable." {Isa. 42:21} "So by the obedience of one {Jesus Christ} shall many be made righteous." {Rom. 5:19} As a surety, he was to pay the penal sum of suffering for his elect, by dying in their room and stead; as it is written, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." {Hosea 13:24} And thus it behooved Christ to suffer these things, because he had undertaken our cause. And by his precious blood he blotted out our transgressions as a thick cloud from the book of God's remembrance, agreeably to the following text, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." {Zech. 3:9} "Who then shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" {Rom. 8:33}

Ye are come to Mount Zion

This is another blessed effect of everlasting love. But Christ was set up from everlasting, to be a mediator between God and the elect; as it is written, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." {Heb. 12:22-24}

Christ Our Peace

Christ, as our mediator, appeased the wrath of God, removed the curse of the law from us by his death, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting, righteousness. He appears both our peacemaker and our peace; as it is written, "He is our peace, who hath made peace for us by the blood of his cross." {Col. 1:12} Thus we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. This is another blessed effect of God's everlasting love. Christ was also set up from everlasting to be a second Adam, or an everlasting Father; as it is written, "And his name shall be called wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." {Isa. 9:6} And, as a Father of the elect family, he received the promise of eternal life, together with the promise of the Spirit of God, for all those who are called his seed, agreeably to the following scripture: "As for me, this is my covenant with them,

saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the month of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for verse," {Isa. 59:21} Thus God shewed his eternal love to the chosen seed in Christ before the world was. But in this covenant he made a parental reserve for himself; as you read, "But, if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." {Ps. 89:30-34} Then, saith the Saviour, "Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion." {Isa. 8:18} And now the prophet puts forth a riddle to the world, when he says that Christ "was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living." {Isa. 53:8} "Yet he shall see his seed" v. 10. And blessed be his name, he has got a glorious offspring out of the spoils of death, as saith the Psalmist, Unto God the Lord belong, the issues from death." {Ps. 68:20} And this is the seed that shall serve Christ, and be counted to him for a generation." {Ps. 22:30} And that seed shall all one day appear in the blessed image of the second Adam; as it is written, "And, as we have borne the image of the earthy {Adam}, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly: {for} as is the earthy {Adam}, so are his seed also that are earthy; and, as is the heavenly {Adam}, such are they also that are heavenly." {1 Cor. 15:48,49} And this is another blessed effect or result of God's eternal love.

Christ The Firstborn

Christ too in this eternal covenant is called the first-born: "I will make him, my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth; that in all things he may have the pre-eminence." And God promised to be to Christ, in human nature, his "Father, his God, and the Rock of his salvation." Ps. 89:26 God having, promised to be the Father and God of Christ, this blessing was transferred to the elect when the Saviour had finished the work of redemption, and was risen again from the dead; as it is written, "Go, tell my brethren that I am risen; and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." God therefore is become our God, and we are heirs of him, as our eternal portion; as it is written, "And, if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." {Rom. 8:17} In this covenant Christ and his elect brethren are said to be of one; as it is written, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren." {Heb. 2:11,12} The glorious result of all this is to bring many sons to glory. {Heb. 2:10} This therefore is another blessed effect of God's everlasting love. But I proceed.

Christ Gather In The Sheep

As God's servant Christ was set up from everlasting to serve under the law, and to redeem them that were under the law; and then to gather together in himself all the elect sheep, as their chief shepherd; as it is written, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," &c. As a shepherd he was appointed to redeem and gather in the sheep that were given to him; as it is written, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and I lay down my life for the sheep." And again, "This is the will of my heavenly Father, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." It appears plain, in the word of God, that Christ received the sheep, their names, and the number of them, before all worlds as it is said, "In thy book were all my members written when as yet there was none of them." This appears very plain; for God calls them sheep before they were either redeemed, or called, or born: "He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." {Isa. 40:11} And this fulfils the ancient prediction, "And to him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. 49:10} "I will {says God} set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." {Ezek. 34:23} This doctrine will be proclaimed on the judgment-seat; as it is written, "He shall separate them, even as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." {Matt. 25:32-34} This also is another blessed effect of everlasting love.

Eternal Union

Thus God has shewn his everlasting love to the elect in appointing them such a glorious head, set up from everlasting; in whom he has given them eternal life, and eternal union with him as a husband, an honourable discharge by him as a surety, peace by him as a mediator, adopting grace in him as an everlasting father, and an eternal

portion with him as an elder brother. So much for the eternal and unchangeable love of God the Father. But my dear hearers may object and say, Your text treats only of the love of Christ. I answer, When we speak of the love of Christ we do not exclude the love of the Father, nor of the Spirit, for it is one love. The glorious Trinity loved the elect from everlasting. But of each of these in particular.

The Trinity Love The Elect

Of God the Father's love I have treated already; I next proceed to speak of the love of Christ. The Saviour manifested his love to the elect in undertaking their cause, accepting their names and persons, and substituting himself in their room and stead from everlasting; in veiling his infinite Deity in flesh and blood, suffering Shame, reproach, and ignominy, to procure our eternal salvation in time; and lastly, in laying down his life to redeem us from all evil; as it is written, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." {John 15:13}

The dear Saviour had much to suffer; the flood gates of wrath were opened on him, the floods of death compassed him about, and also the floods of temptation. All these met together on the dear Redeemer's head; and our frail nature, and the infirmities of it, with which he was compassed about, shrunk back at the thought of the approaching tragedy: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." However, love was strong as death, and stronger too; for many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it. {Song 8:6,7}

Is this the eternal love of Christ to his elect? It really is; "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." {Rom. 8:35- 37}

The Love Of The Spirit

I next proceed to shew that the love of the Spirit appears from the same date; I mean from everlasting. The Holy Ghost shewed his eternal love to the elect, in bearing witness to this everlasting covenant; as it is written, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." {1 John 5:7} He not only appeared a witness of the covenant, but the seal and sealer; as it is written; "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within, and on the back side, sealed with seven seals." {Rev. 5:1} Thus the Spirit undertook to bear witness to the covenant, to ratify it, and to reveal to all God's elect the glorious benefits arising from it; as it is written, "He shall take of the things that are mine, and shall shew them unto you." {John 16:15} And, blessed be his name, so he does; he leads us into all truth; works faith in us; sheds abroad the Father's love in our hearts; and I believe that love, joy, and peace, are the first fruits of the harvest of glory; and the Holy Spirit himself is the earnest of our eternal inheritance; and he is to abide with us for verse, as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Thus we see the Holy Spirits love; as it is written, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit." {mark that, the love of the Spirit} {Rom. 15:30} "But the fruit of the Spirit is love." {Gal. 5:22} Thus, my friends, we have gone through the second head. I will next shew you the stability of this covenant; and then proceed to consider the third head.

Covenant Signed and Witnessed

This blessed covenant is signed and witnessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; ratified by the sevenfold sealer and seal of heaven; confirmed by the oath of God, and by the blood of Jesus Christ the immutable testator; and thus it is made sure to all the seed. {Rom. 4:6} How sweetly are the elect secured from the wrath of God, blessed with eternal love, and a sweet foundation laid for a strong consolation in all our troubles! First, they are secured from wrath; as it is testified, "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for, as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Oh blessed and sweet security! His loving-kindness too is as strongly secured. "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." It is true, the elect may be tossed in the storms of affliction, and be almost drowned at times in distress; but their situation can never alter the covenant: "O, thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundation with sapphires." This, I think, means all the attributes of Jehovah, which are engaged in behalf of the elect, and who are secured in this covenant; for it immediately follows, "In righteousness shalt thou be established." {Isa. 54:9-14} Thus the covenant is signed and witnessed by three immutable and unchangeable witnesses; sealed and ratified by divine veracity; and confirmed by the oath of an immutable God, who can never be perjured. Eternal life is promised by him who cannot lie, and confirmed by the efficacious blood of him who is without variableness or shadow of turning. {James 1:17}

Surely then these immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to falsify his word, are sufficient to afford us the most solid ground of comfort; as it is written, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for us entered; even Jesus, made an high priest for verse after the order of Melchizedek." {Heb. 6:17-20} Having offered you my thoughts on this divine love from the eternal source, I shall now proceed to the South Pole, which is before us, namely, to everlasting. This is a natural inference drawn from the length of this love mentioned in my text. In doing this I will hereafter touch on the benefits of this covenant, and their being a free donation, as well as of their eternal duration.

The South Pole Of Everlasting Love

I know the Arminians affirm that we may be children of God today and children of the devil to-morrow; but this is rendering God worse than ourselves; for I, who am evil, could not deal so in a natural sense with my children. If what they affirm be true, the length of God's love mentioned in my text, which is said to pass knowledge, is but four-and-twenty hours long at best. But I leave those liars and their lies to the father of lies, and proceed to speak of what God says, for we know that he is true though every man be a liar. {Rom. 3:3} It plainly appear in scripture that the everlasting God chose the elect in his Son Christ Jesus, and that the covenant was sealed by the eternal Spirit in heaven: and it is as plain that everlasting love moved them to it; therefore the covenant is called an everlasting covenant, and we shall find all the blessings of it to bear the same date.

I will therefore consider them distinctly, and only take notice of them as I find God hath mentioned them.

First, then, as God remembered us in our low estate, he hath promised not to forget us; but to remember us for good, and to establish us; as it is written, "Surely he shall not be moved for verse: the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." {Ps. 112:6} Therefore there is no fear of being forgotten before the Lord. And, as all the elect were condemned by the law, the Lord Jesus has brought in an eternal righteousness to justify them; as it is written, "He shall make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." {Dan. 9:24}

But you will say, We are dead in law, and dead in sin. I know that we are all in that state; but in this covenant the elect are pre-ordained to eternal life; as it is written, "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts 13:48} Thus the elect are quickened here, and brought to live by the faith of the Son of God; and their eternal life, which is given us of God, is hid with Christ, as our head, in God; as it is written, "I give my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." John 10:28} "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." {John 6:47} There we see the blessings of this everlasting covenant bear the same date as the covenant doth. But to proceed.

The Devil The God Of This World

The Almighty knew how the devil, the God of this world, would blindfold us in order to lead us to the bottomless pit, and that Satan would send many blind guides to lead us on from one dark mountain to another, that we might follow the devil's doctrine, and so be damned at last. I say the Lord knew this, for "known unto God are all things;" therefore in this covenant he has promised to be an everlasting light to all his people; as it is written, "But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." {Isa. 60:19}

Righteousness For The Elect

In this covenant God hath provided a righteousness for the elect, though by nature they were ungodly. {Rom. 4:5} This righteousness was wrought out for the elect by Christ; as it is written, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." {Rom. 5:19} This righteousness God accepted of our surety, he "being made of God unto us righteousness." {1 Cor. 1:30} This righteousness God also imputes freely without any pre-requisite in us; as it is written, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." {Rom. 4:6} The Spirit of God brings this righteousness near to us in a preached gospel, and reveals it to the eye of faith; as speaketh God by the prophet Isaiah, "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off." {Isa. 46:13} This righteousness is revealed in the gospel for every believers: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." {Rom. 1:17} Faith puts this righteousness upon the poor sinner for his justification before God, as a righteousness procured by God: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law

and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." {Rom. 3:21,22}

Remember, this righteousness is given freely, therefore woe be to that man that thinks to merit it, or add something, of his own thereto; which Christ calls putting a piece of new cloth upon an old garment, that will make the rent worse. I say it is given of God, and cannot either be bought or sold; as it is written, "They that receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." {Rom. 5:17}

Thus, my dear hearers, Christ wrought out this righteousness for us; God the Father accepts it of Christ, and places it to our account, and imputes it freely. The gospel reveals it, the Holy Ghost applies it to the hand of an appropriating faith, and makes it manifest to the sinners conscience; conscience enjoys it, and finds peace to be the effect of it. Thus we, "are justified freely from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." {Acts 13:39}

This righteousness too bears the same ancient date of the covenant; for "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring, in everlasting righteousness." {Dan. 9:24} I next proceed to shew that persevering strength is most surely promised to the elect in this covenant; or else Satan would soon throw us down, even were we as strong as Peter supposed himself to be when he promised never to forsake Christ, though all the rest did; as it is written, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." {Deut. 33:37} Therefore "trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." {Isa. 26:4}

God's elect are not to be left comfort less, though they are so much opposed and hated in the world; for this covenant secures our consolations also, and they bear the same date as the covenant does, as it is written, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." {2 Thess. 2:16,17}

Joy And Glory Secured

Our joy and glory are also secured in this covenant; as it is written, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." {Isa. 35:10} And there is another eternal blessing beyond all these, and that is an eternal weight of glory in the presence of the Lamb; which is likewise to be enjoyed for ever and ever.

Thus, my dear hearers, you see what everlasting love has done for us. Remember that this love is to endure for ever; as saith the church, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." {Jer. 31:3}

The Breadth Of This Love

Having thus discoursed of the length of the love of God, and proved the date of it to be from everlasting to everlasting, I come now to my third general head, which is to treat of the breadth of his love. By breadth we may understand its universal extension to all the elect, whether Jews or Gentiles.

In the antediluvian world the love of God was known but too few families, and they sprung from the loins of Seth; the family of Cain seem to have been kept quite ignorant of it. It was much contracted likewise in the administration of it in the days of Noah; and after the flood it seemed to flow in a very narrow channel, and confined itself chiefly to the descendants of Noah: in short, it ran in one contracted channel till Jacob's family multiplied in Egypt, and then it began to extend itself, and to widen most sweetly at Israel's deliverance from bondage. And here and there a poor Gentile was pulled in by this cord of everlasting love: but the greatest part of them were left to go on in their own ways.

It continued with Israel some hundred years, and the partition all that encompassed them seemed to stand firm for many ages; as it is written, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." In the days of David it extended itself gloriously among the Jews; and after that again it fell into a narrow channel, and continued so for many years, till the golden days of the Son of Man appeared, and then it widened greatly; but was still seemingly confined to the Jewish nation; as it is written, "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." {Matt. 10:5,6} But, though this everlasting love seemed so contracted in its administrations in

those ancient days, yet it was broad in the secret purposes of God. That the Gentiles should be saved, was a part of the great mystery of godliness; as it is written, "Preached unto the Gentiles," &c. But at last the dear Redeemer broke down the middle wall of the partition that separated between the Jewish nation and the Gentiles; and sent his servants forth to preach the gospel to every creature. On the glorious day of Pentecost this everlasting flame of divine love was wonderfully kindled in the twelve apostles, who were appointed to be the twelve ministerial foundations of the gospel church and from them it was communicated to the uniting of many lively stones to the chief corner stone Christ Jesus; the only foundation for faith and hope to build their expectations on.

The Dimensions Of This Love

The dimensions of this love in my text were sweetly revealed to Peter in the vision of a great sheet knit at the four corners. Four of the glorious attributes of God knit the corners, and sweetly agree in letting down to the earth this sheet of everlasting love; as it is written, "Mercy and truth are met together." These two attributes hold two opposite corners. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And after that mutual kiss they agreed or harmonized together to hold up the other two opposite corners. Thus "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." {Ps. 85:10} In this sheet were The elect Gentiles chiefly exhibited. It contained "all manner of four-footed beasts" {mark that, all manner of four-footed beasts}. Their species was human, but brutal by sin, "Every man is brutish in his knowledge." {Jer. 10:18} "I am more brutish {saith Agur} than any man." {Prov. 30:2} Yea, the whole human race are emphatically called beasts; as it is written, "that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts." {Eccl. 3:18} These were the beasts represented to Peter in this sheet, four-footed beasts. Some sinners are also called dogs, as Christ called the Gentile woman. {Matt. 15:27} Some are called swine. {Matt. 7:6} Some are called wolves. {Matt. 10:16} Some lions. {Zeph. 3:3} Some calves. {Mal. 4:2} But "the wolf shall dwell with the Lamb {of God}, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child {or babe in grace} shall lead them." {Isa. 11:6} That sheet contained all the elect from eternity, and is their rest and divine solace when grace has tamed them, as is represented by their lying down with the Lamb.

Arise Peter Kill and Eat

There were creeping things also in the sheet, as well as beasts; some sinners are called serpents, some vipers, Matt. iii. 7; and some are called worms. {Micah 7:17} And there were fowls of the air in the sheet also {mark the elect are called doves; {Isa. 60:8} eagles; {Isa. 40:31} and speckled birds. {Jer. 12:9} These were the living creatures in Peter's sheet: "And there came a voice to him, saying, Rise, Peter, kill and eat:" take the sword of the Spirit, and kill them to all hope in the law; crucify them to the world, that they may be dead unto sin: {Rom. 6:2} kill them to all confidence in the flesh, that their old man may be crucified with Christ; that they may become dead to the law, and be married to another. {Rom. 7:4} "Arise, Peter, kill and eat."

I told you, at the well of Samaria, that I had meat to eat that we knew not of, and that my meat was to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work, John. {4:32,34} I have made thee, Peter, a minister, and the conversion of these sinners must be the meat and drink of thy ministerial appetite, or thirst for souls. Mine elect in this world are compared to fish in the great sea. {Ezek. 47:9-11} And I told thee, Simon, I had made thee a fisher of men. {Mark 1:17} Suck, therefore, of the abundance of the seas, Peter, for that is the food of the minister. {Deut. 33:19} "For the abundance of the seas shall be converted unto me; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto me." {Isa. 60:5} Mine elect are a treasure hid in the sand. {Deut. 33:19} "Though Israel be as the sand on the sea-shore, yet a remnant shall return." {Isa. 10:22} "Arise, Peter, kill and eat;" suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand. {Deut. 33:19} "Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles," {Isa. 60:16} "And in their glory shall you boast yourselves." {Isa. 61:6}

"Arise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." Oh wretched construction! Too carnally understood. "And the voice spake unto him the second time, What God hath cleansed, {mark that, it is spoken in the past tense} what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Peter's last comment on the vision proves what I have asserted, when he says, "But God hath shewed me that I should not call any man {mark here, these beasts and creeping things are called men} common or unclean." {Acts 10:21}

Let it be observed that, when this sheet was let down, all these beasts were in it. It was let down from heaven, and the beasts were in it, to shew their election and eternal union with Christ in the bond of everlasting love, rep-

resented to Peter by the sheet. And afterwards these beasts were drawn up again in the sheet, to shew their safe arrival in glory in the same sheet or bond of eternal love.

And, though they are compared to beasts, Yet they were all in the sheet, and said to be cleansed, though they were not called by grace: for they were not dead to the law, nor were they alive by faith no, they were to hear from Peter the word by which they might live. And the sheet was let down thrice; to shew, first, their eternal union with Christ in the bond of everlasting, love; and therefore they are said to be “preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” {Jude 1:1} Secondly, this sheet is let down at conversation, as appears by the Holy Ghost falling on them when Peter spake to them. And, thirdly, it shall be let down again at the general resurrection of their bodies: for their bodies, as well as their souls, were represented by four-footed beasts, if not more so; and, though they snuffed up the wind at their pleasure, like a wild ass in the wilderness, {Jer. 2:24} yet were they let down from heaven in this sheet, and cleansed in Christ, who is their sanctification, and who sanctifieth them; “For he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are both of one.” {Heb. 2:11} Some of these four-footed beasts were knocking at Peter’s door at the same time that the vessel was drawn up to heaven again: “Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this Vision should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon, and stopped before the gate, and called, and asked, whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee; arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.” {Acts 10:17-20}

Thus this love extended itself in its administrations far and wide, until it gathered some from the east, some from the west, some from the north, and some from the south; and will bring them at last to “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.” {Matt. 8:11} “God gave the word, and great were the company that published it.” Even when the devil raised a persecution against the apostles of God, this was made an instrument, in his wisdom, for promulging his divine law; as it is said, “They went every where preaching the gospel.” Legions of poor souls got hold of these sweet cords of the everlasting love of the Trinity. And some ran one way with it, some another, until they fulfilled this prediction, “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, to and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.” Isa. 54:2,3}

The Earth Will Be Filled With The Glory Of God

And this eternal love in its breadth shall never leave the earth, till “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.” {Rev. 11:15} And then “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters covereth the sea.” {Hab. 2:14}

The Depth

I now come to the fourth head proposed, viz, the depth which is mentioned in my text.

The profound depth of the love of Christ may be subdivided into three heads. It was deep in the eternal counsel of God; it was a mysterious depth in the agonizing sufferings of Christ; and deep in the manifestation of it to poor mortals who were deeply fallen.

First, it is deep as considered in the eternal counsel of God; deep, because it lay hid from everlasting, until it was made known to God’s elect by the Spirit. All the wisdom and learning of the world could never have discovered, much less have fathomed it. It lay concealed in the eternal mind, and would have lain there undiscovered to all eternity, if God had not discovered it by the light of his Spirit. Who among all the race of Adam could have imagined an eternal affection in a just God toward self- condemned rebels, upon the grounds of truth and justice, if God had not revealed it by his Spirit? “As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love of him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” {1 Cor. 2:9-11} But 25

I next proceed to shew that the depth of divine love was wonderfully displayed in the singular sufferings of Christ Jesus. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13} This depth will appear still more conspicuous, if we consider the many enemies with whom the love of Christ had to combat. First, our sins lay as a dreadful burden on him; for, “the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” {Isa.

53:6} And the Saviour “bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” {1 Pet. 2:24} Secondly, the infernal malice and fury of devils: “The prince of this world cometh, but he hath nothing in me.” Yea, even the wicked enlisted under his banner: “This is your hour, and the powers of darkness.” {Luke 22:53} Thirdly, the cruel insults of the Jewish rabble, who derided and blindfolded him, smiting him on the face, crowning him with thorns, bowing the knee before him, putting a reed as a mock scepter into his hand, arraying him in a gorgeous robe, sending him to Herod; and afterward, when under the greatest anguish, commanding him to come down from the cross, and they would believe him. We may add to this the cup of wrath that was given him to drink; the soul-piercing, curse of the law that he was to bear, in order to redeem us from that: the disciples forsook him and fled; and, that vindictive justice might get a full satisfaction, the Father hid his face from him, yea, forsook him. The Saviour bore all the rest with silence; but this extorted so bitter a cry from him, that both heaven and earth answered it; the inanimate rocks opened their mouths; the graves disclosed the dead; the bowels of the earth were moved, and the sun was veiled in sackcloth: these things wrestled hard against eternal love. The infirmities of our flesh made him fear and sweat, and stand sorely amazed: “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,” said the dear Redeemer. But everlasting love waded through all these rapid floods of opposition. Nor could the floods of temptation, of wrath, of persecution, nor the cold floods of death, in the least quench or impede his permanent, divine, and everlasting affection to his own elect: as it is written, “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it,” “for love is strong as death.” {Song 8:7} Surely love must pierce deep in the Saviour’s breast, or he never would have veiled his glory, faced the storm, and waded through the pains hell, to get at the object loved, if love had not been well rooted. Is this the eternal love of Christ to us? So it seems. “Who {then} shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” {Rom. 8:35-37}

The Depth Of This Love In Its Administration

But let us consider the depth of this love in its administration: in bringing many of its objects up out of the various depths into which the devil and sin has sunk them; some of whom justice has seemed to turn as it were to destruction; but everlasting love has prohibited their entrance there, and led them back to God with the greatest placidity; as it is written, “Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men,” {Ps. 90:3} Some have been almost deluged in guilt, horror, wrath, and anguish of soul; and, when their souls have been oversewhelmed within them, eternal love has appeared, and led them to the Rock higher than they; {Ps. 61:2} put a new song in their mouths, and established their goings. {Ps. 40:2} Others have been exercised on their beds with pain, and the multitude of their bones with strong, pain; insomuch that their life abhorred bread, and their souls dainty meat; their flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and their bones that were not seen stick out. Then says Love, “Deliver them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. Their flesh shall be fresher than a child’s; and they shall return to the days of their youth: they shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto them; and they shall see his face with joy.” {Job 33:19}

Others have been possessed with legions of devils; some sunk into black despair; others have been bowed together by Satan; and some have been both mad and dumb; some in the shadows of death; others in the horrible pit. But love has still dived beneath them, and brought them up as on eagles’ wings. This precious cord of everlasting love angled sweetly after poor Jonah, when fatherly displeasure had raised a storm, and cast him overboard, and at last brought him up from the bowels of hell. In short, there are no depths that the elect of God have fallen into, where love hath not waded after them, and brought them up. It brought Manasseh up from the magic depths of Satan; and David from deep calling unto deep, the very echoes or resoundings of hell itself.

Other poor souls have sinned against light and love, after they had tasted that the Lord was gracious. Some, under such circumstances, have cried out, “My hope is perished from the Lord: {others, that} there is no hope; {some, that} I am cast out of his sight;” and others have cursed the day in which they were born, and the man that brought tidings of their birth. Some dejected souls have declared they were as sure of hell as if they were in it: and others have wished they had been there, that they might know the worst. But not one of these that I allude to could, with their dying breath, charge immutable love with the failure. No; love has appeared to make their bed in their sickness. {Ps. 41:3} And the everlasting arms have been under neath them. {Deut. 33:27} Love has sweetly rekindled her expiring flame; and conscience has compelled them to set to their seal that God is true to the irrevocable promise that he has given them: “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over

thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.” {Zeph 3:17} The height of this love may be subdivided into three heads, Firstly, God’s love to Christ, and to the elect in him: this is plain, by his ordaining them to glory by him. Secondly, in God’s exaltation Christ in human nature as our head. Thirdly, our exaltation with him and in him.

God’s Love To Christ

Firstly, then, God’s love to Christ; as it is written, “For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” {John 17:24} And God loved us in Christ, and by the bond of eternal love made us one with him; and the result of this love was giving us eternal glory in Christ Jesus, and ordaining us to it by him; as it is said, “I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” {John 17:23} And the glory that God gave us in Christ is transferred to us by him; as it is written, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.” {John 17:22} Secondly, The height of this love may be considered, and clearly seen in the Father’s exalting, Christ so high in our nature, as the glorious representative of all his seed. God raised up from the dead his son Jesus Christ, without suffering him to see corruption; and then he glorified him, “The God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus.” {Acts 3:13} He not only raised him up, and glorified him, but he hath “highly exalted him.” {Phil. 2:9} Highly exalted him indeed! For he is ascended above all heavens; yea, far above all heavens; for “he that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” Eph. 4:13} God set him “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” {Eph. 1:21}

Thus, my dear hearers, you see God the Father’s love to us in Christ, in setting, him up to be our head from everlasting. 2dly, In preparing him a body in time to be taken into union with his Godhead. 3dly, In not suffering that body to see corruption, but raising it from the dead. 4thly, In giving him glory, or glorifying him. 5thly, In raising him up, and exalting, him far above all heavens; and putting all things in subjection under his feet.

I Am Crucified With Christ

But you will say, Where are the elect all this time? I answer, When Christ died we were crucified with him, “Knowing that our old man is crucified with him.” {Rom. 6:6} “I am crucified with Christ,” says Paul. And, when Christ was raised from the dead, the elect were raised also: “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.” {Isa. 26:19} Yea, and when Christ ascended the elect ascended; and, when Christ took his seat far above all heavens, the elect took their seats in him, and sat down with him; as it is written, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love {mark, his great love, this is the bond of eternal union} wherewith he loved us {mark that, loved us} even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, {mark the union, quickened us together with Christ} by grace ye are saved.” Now mark the resurrection and ascension; “And hath raised us up together, {mark the union again, raised us up together} and made us sit together, {mark the union again, made us sit together} in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” {Eph. 2:4-6} This is no new doctrine; for it shone sweetly in the old laws, where God commanded the Israelites to bring the first sheaf of their wheat harvest to him; “When ye be come into the land which I give unto you; and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest.” {Lev. 23:10} This institution of the gift of the sheaf of the first fruits was in order that the harvest might be consecrated, and also to secure the promised blessing of God on the field. {Deut. 28:3} Let us now see the Holy Ghost’s meaning in all this. That sanctuary into which the sheaf was carried was typical of heaven; as it is written, “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing, which was a figure for the time then present.” {Heb. 9:8,9}

Christ A Sheaf Offering

As that sanctuary was a type of heaven, so the first sheaf offered was a type of Christ; and the harvest under God’s blessing was a type of all God’s elect. First, Christ calls himself a corn of wheat, before his death: “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” {John 12:23,24} Mark here, before Christ died he calls himself a corn of wheat that shall bring forth much fruit; after his resurrection, by reason of our union with him, he is called “a handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof {mark that, the elect are called the fruit thereof} shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for verse” {mark here, the handful of corn is

called a person; his name shall endure for verse.} And now mark the fruits also, “His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men {mark, there is the fruit of this handful of corn} shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed.” {Ps. 72:16,17} We now follow this sheaf, Christ Jesus, up to the heavens, for Jesus is entered into the holiest of all, now to appear in the presence of God for us; and there we find Christ is received as the first fruits; “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits {mark that, become the first fruits} of them that slept.” {1 Cor. 15:20} There Christ, the first fruits, has ascended far above all heavens. But you will say, Where are the elect all this time? I answer, They ascended in him as in their head; and are personally to follow him in their spiritual form and order; as it is written, “But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming; then cometh the end.” {1 Cor. 15:23,24}

Gather Together The Elect

Christ, having entered as the first fruits, has promised to send his angels to reap his harvest, that is, “to gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.” {Matt. 23:31} All these elect persons are called sheaves, and, when bound in the bundle of life, shall be gathered into the same sanctum sanctorum as Christ Jesus the first fruits was; as it is written, “Now also many nations are gathered against thee that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion: but they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel, for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.” {Mic. 4:11,12} Thus he shall gather his wheat into his garner, but he shall burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable.

I now proceed to the third branch of this general head of discourse, viz. the height of this love in the personal exaltation of the elect at the glorious resurrection.

Promise Of The Holy Ghost

God promised to Christ the fullness of the Spirit in the eternal counsel; and promised likewise that the same Spirit should never depart from him, nor from his seed. This blessed Spirit is called the promise of the Father to Christ; and Christ sends that Spirit upon all the elect in the appointed time: “Jesus being exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” {Acts 2:33} The Holy Spirit is to make the elect know their privileges, by leading them into all truth. He searches the deep things of God, and makes them known to the chosen; he washes, sanctifies, and cleanses them; he resides in them as the earnest of their future inheritance; and he seals them up to the day of eternal redemption; he sheds abroad God’s love in their hearts, and shall at last quicken and raise up our mortal bodies; as it is written, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” {Rom. 8:11} Let it be observed, brethren, that the Holy Ghost, which is given to us, is the earnest of our future inheritance, and is coupled together with glory, whenever he takes up his residence; as it is written, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” {1 Peter 4:14} Here then you see the Spirit and glory of God rests upon the elect. The same Spirit is to quicken our mortal bodies; yea, our vile bodies are to be changed, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ. Thus they are to bear the image of the heavenly Adam, and to mount up and meet the Lord in the air, and then to sit down on the judgment-seat with our dearly beloved head, as his mystical body; that all out persecuting enemies, both men and devils, may be judged by the elect of God; as it is written, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? Now much more things that pertain to this life?” {1 Cor. 6:2,3}

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Thus the elect are to appear on the judgment-seat with Christ their head, who comes to avenge his and their wrongs; as speaketh the Holy Ghost, “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.” {Ps. 149:5-9}

The judgment being finished, and the doom of the wicked for verse fixed, the elect shall see a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth shall pass away in a flame of fire, prefigured by the destruction of Sodom and the adjacent cities; “The elements shall melt with fervent heat,” and the wicked be chased away with it; whilst the Judge shall render his vengeance with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire; the heavens being dis-

solved, and the elements melted; as Peter says. {2 Pet. 3:12} Then shall the new heaven and the new earth appear; which, according, to his promise, we look for, wherein shall dwell righteousness, {2 Pet. 3:13 or righteous persons; and these shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years: "But the rest of the dead {that is, the wicked dead} lived not again" till the thousand years were run out. This is the first resurrection, in which the blessed and the holy have their part; and at the close of the thousand years will all the dead be judged: "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And now comes the ultimate end of all our blessedness; every enemy will be destroyed; the Saviour's regal scepter, which was swayed over the militant church, will be laid by; and the triune Jehovah, or Elohim, will be all in all. {1 Cor. 15:28} Then, my brethren, we shall understand something of the height of this love mentioned in my text. Having endeavored to wade through the length, breadth, depth, and height of this love, I shall just mention some species or dimensions which weak believers are apt to think contrary to what I have laid down; and which they are ready to imagine will, some time or other, separate them from this love of God; and then pass on to the application.

Paul the apostle seems to defy the king, of terrors. I mean death, to cause a separation; and he defies life also, whether prosperous or adversary; and angels, whether good or bad; emperors, kings and princes; judges, magistrates, present troubles, and future judgments: the highest pitch of joy or prosperity, and the deepest abyss of horror, trouble, tribulation, or poverty, to bring about a separation between God and the elect, or break the bond of his love, which is the bond of eternal union; as it is written, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." {Rom. 8:38,39}

The Application

I come now to the application, for I reckon that your patience is almost worn out: but blessed be God, we do not work by the day.

What know you of this love? Is it shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost? Do you know experimentally the pardon of your sins? Christ said that Mary Magadalen's sins were many, and that they were forgiven her, and she loved much; and, where little is forgiven, the same will love little. Thus you see that love always attends a pardoned soul. And, if you say "I love the Lord," and feel a most cordial affection for him, for his people, his word, and his worship; remember thy love is nothing but a reflection from his love to thee; as it is written, "We love him because he first loved us." But, perhaps, some of you may say "You are too high; we cannot come up to that experience." Stay where you are, and I will come nearer to you. Do you find a disinterested love to them that savour most of Christ Jesus in the world? - "Why {say you} is the word disinterested put in? What do you mean by that?" I mean that a hypocrite may love a godly man for what he can get from him, and not for Christ's sake; as Pharaoh loved Joseph for unfolding his dreams, and saving his country from perishing; and as the king of Babylon loved Daniel; and as Potiphar's wife loved Joseph, with the carnal and damnable love of a whore. I ask, therefore, If ye love the children of God because their knowledge, their life, and conversation in holiness, appear amiable in your sight? Perhaps you say "No: I love all people alike, whether they fear God or hate him whether they are orthodox or heterodox." If so, your love has not holiness for its object; it bears no other stamp than merely the impression of the old man. Let me shew you the word of the Lord on this point: "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He in whose eyes a vile person is contemned {mark that}; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." {Ps. 15:1,4} But some will say "I bless God, I can stand the trial of that pure disinterested love which you describe." Very well, so far good: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." {1 John 3:14}

But again, my friends, do you feel sin a plague and a burden to you? Is this your greatest grief; even the unholy motions that are felt from the living, corruptions of your heart, because you cannot subdue them, nor keep your thoughts and mind pure, and stayed on the Lord, as you are exhorted to do? Do you answer "Yes, I hate the former, and I love the latter?" What saith the Psalmist? "I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love." {Ps. 119:113} And again, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Ps. 97:10} Again, brethren, Do you feel a hatred to erroneous doctrines, which are so dishonourable to God, and destructive to men? I mean such as Arminianism, Deism, Antinomianism, together with all other doctrines of devils? And are your wills brought into subjection to the will of God, so as to consent to wholesome doctrines, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ? If you say "Yes," and conscience says the same, hear the word of the Lord, "Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way." {Ps. 119:104}

But again, some will say “I bless God, I can say I love him; for I have been as poor as verse Job was, but his providence has blessed the work of my hands, so that I have abundance laid up in store for my use, while I can see many poor souls destitute of both house and home; yea, and even some of God’s people too, who have hardly food to eat, or raiment to put on; therefore God’s love has appeared discriminating to me.” Stop, don’t you run away; I will come a little closer to you. Your love seems to be more fixed on the providence of God as to the body, than in the discriminating grace of God in Christ revealed to the soul; and has a little of the tincture of those who followed Christ over the sea of Tiberias for the loaves and fishes, and were sent back with an empty belly and a killing reproof. Suppose God should destroy all your substance, as he did the substance of Job; how then would you stand afflicted to God? But further; if you were to take your wealth, family, friends, neighbours, with every benefactor, and lay them in one end of the balance, and Christ alone in the other, which, thinkest thou, would gain the draught in the balance of thy affections? Nay, do not start back at this question. I say, which would then gain the draught? Upon a proper examination, canst thou say with the Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee?” {Ps. 73:25} If Christ was to put the question to you as he did to Peter, when he said “Simon, lovest thou me?” Couldst thou answer in the affirmative, “Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.” {John 21:17} But again, another may say “I cannot say that I love Christ; I wish I could: but this I do find, that all things of this world will not satisfy the boundless desires of my soul; there is a secret anxiety in my mind, which cannot be satisfied by all created and sublunary enjoyments. These are all broken cisterns that can hold no water; {Jer. 2:13} they disappoint rather than satisfy me; and increase my thirst rather than supply my wants; therefore I know that my thoughts are everlasting about a more satisfactory substance.” Is this thy case? Then “commit thy works unto the Lord {in humble confession and prayer}, and thy thoughts shall be established.” {Prov. 16:3} But perhaps you proceed and say, “I have heard so much from the pulpit about the amiableness, the suitability, the sufficiency, the fullness, and the love of Christ to poor sinners, that if I thought I should have no part or lot in him, I should view myself of all mortals the most miserable.” Thou hast got love, but it lies in the ashes, covered over with darkness, doubts, fears, and unbelief: be patient, be diligent, and hope for a saving, manifestation of pardoning love; for truth hath said, thou shalt not be disappointed of thy hope. The disciples going to Emmaus were in thy case; but, when Jesus drew near and walked with them, he blew away their ashes, and rekindled the expiring flame: “Did not our hearts burn within us when we communed with us by the way?” {Luke 24:32}

But again, some will say “My desires are so intense after Jesus, springing from a deep sense of need, and from some glimmerings of his excellent worth, that I cannot rest till I am persuaded of my soul’s interest in his eternal love.” Yours is love in the smoke; therefore don’t fear, it will not go out; for God says he will not break the bruised reed, though its melancholy jarring sound is not so musical as “the voice of doves tabering, upon their breasts.” {Nahum 2:7} I say, God declares that he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till he has brought forth judgment unto truth.” {Isa. 42:3} “But {say you} I long to enjoy a sense of his atonement in my conscience, and to find an heartfelt union with him, and a joyful love to him; to say as the spouse does, “My beloved is mine, and I am his or, with Peter, “Whom having, not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” {1 Pet. 1:8} This joy that you have mentioned is love in the flame; be thankful for the former, but aim at the latter, “that ye may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” {Eph. 3:19}

Trouble Spring From A Wrong Conception

Let me shew you one great reason why you are kept in perpetual suspense, and tossed about with unbelief, doubts, and slavish fears. Deal faithfully with your own consciences, and try yourselves by what I am going to advance. - Your troubles spring from wrong conceptions of God, the fountain of all happiness. Don’t you view God as arrayed in terrible majesty, with indignation against you as a sinner? Don’t you conceive him to be an inexorable judge, comparable to a devouring flame or consuming fire? Are you not afraid, day after day, that he will cut you down as a cumberer of the ground, and bring you to judgment, and at the last day expose you before angels and saints as a polluted sinner, with all your secret and unclean sins disclosed to all the host of heaven? If you say, “Yes, these are my thoughts and my conceptions indeed, you have described my case; and pray how you find all this out?” Leave that to God; and view God as speaking to you by me.

You say that what I have said are your conceptions, and therefore you are filled with a slavish fear of God; and this fear is attended with tormenting cogitations; and the workings of your mind are what Job calls tossings, “I am

full of tossings to and fro.”

If I have mentioned your conceptions aright, let me tell you that you view God in his fiery law; and he is that judge, that terrible sovereign, and that consuming fire, which I have mentioned, as considered in his violated law, and out of Christ. And while you conceive thus of God you will be tormented; as it is written, fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love.” {1 John 4:18}

If what I have mentioned be agreeable to your experiences, you err in your conceptions; I say, as an awakened and quickened sinner, you err in your conceptions; and that holds you down a captive to slavish fear and unbelief. Let us look a little at the back parts of God; {Exod. 33:23} seeing we cannot see his face and live. {Exod. 33:20} I say, let us view his back parts, as Moses did. And we will suppose ourselves in the rock Christ, as Moses was in the cleft of a rock at Horeb, when God shewed him his back parts; which rock certainly was a type of Christ; and we will endeavour for a while to give credit to what God says in his word; as it is written, “In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan, the piercing serpent, even Leviathan, that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” Now we will suppose that this prophecy means destroying the works of the devil in the elect by Christ Jesus, which it certainly does, “In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine: I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me,” {mark that, fury is not in me}. {Isa. 27:1-4} But we will still proceed to view the back parts of God while we are in the cleft of the rock Christ; and let us hear what God says to us in this situation, “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long, suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty,” {Exod. 34:6,7} without a surety; who is Christ, the end of the law for righteousness. Now what do you think of the back parts of God? “Why {say you}, blessed be his holy name, he is better to follow than to meet.” Why then “be ye followers of God as dear children;” {Eph. 5:1} and thou shalt not see Peniel, the face of God, till the corrupted veil of mortality shall be swallowed up, and then thou wilt not want to shun that transporting sight; “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” {Matt. 5:8}

Christ Reconciling The World Unto Himself

Again, brethren, if you view God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing your trespasses unto you; but sending his son to bless you, by turning every one of you from your evil ways; and that the flame of God’s wrath is quenched in the Saviour’s blood; his sword of justice sheathed in the body and soul of a dear Redeemer; and the law disarmed of its dreadful curse; death disarmed of his sting; the devil himself dethroned and cast down; death plagued; the grave destroyed; the gates of hell barred against every believers and the doors of heaven displayed to all that ask, seek, and knock; surely these things are sufficient to support a hoping soul: especially if we consider that our reconciled God is now our most propitious Father; yea, the Father of all mercies, and the God of all comfort; our husband; also our friend; a present help; our strong hold; our unchangeable love? our God, guide, and guard; yea, our rich provider, the strength of our heart, our justifier, our Saviour, the shield of our help, and our portion for verse. Well, what dost thou now think of the verse blessed God? “Blessed be his name {say you}, he seems altogether sweet and lovely, as those scriptures represent him which you have quoted.” The word of God bears me out in all that I have said. And he is that blessed one to thee, if thou viewest him reconciled in the Mediator, and comest to him by Christ. View him as I have represented him from his own word, and thou wilt find him the perfection of beauty, and the best of friends; and this will disarm your souls of that slavish fear and torment; and sweetly soften, dissolve, and attract your affections to love him as the greatest of names, and the fountain of infinite happiness. But some may say, “What is all this long harangue and strict scrutiny about love for?” Because the apostle says, “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity,” or love; and this charity, or love, never faileth. Beside, if all thy religion springs entirely from the fear of hell, without any hatred to sin, thirst for holiness, love to God, or desire after his favour all your religion is eye service; it is with you according to the Kentish proverb, “No longer pipe, no longer dance.” I mean, you move on in your religion no longer than while conscience spurs you, vengeance drives you, or carnal gain or human applause allure you. You are an eye servant; you cannot work but while the whip is upon your back. The very moment that your master Moses lays by the lash of scorpions you are gone to the alehouse, card-table, ballroom, rout, play-house, or some idle amusement or other. And, as soon as Moses comes in, then you set off to the sanctuary again, to offer to God a silly dove without a heart; {Hos. 7:11} or else to mock him with a dry form of prayer; and every time you perform

that task you offer thirty lies to God; and then you wipe your mouth, like the whore in the Proverb, and say, "This day have I paid my vows." But, if you live and die in that state, God will requite you with the greater damnation. Let me now appeal to your conscience in the sight of God. If you hear a preacher who enforces the Spirit's work on the soul; that preaches down human merit, will, and power, and insists on the application of truth, the love of the truth, the experience of truth, the enjoyment of the truth, the practice of the truth, or a walk in the truth; who treats much of the life of faith, the joy of hope, the liberty of the Spirit, the enjoyment of love, a heart-felt union with Christ, peace of conscience, and a tender regard for the honour of God; don't you despise and rail against such preachers and preachings? If Conscience is to be umpire or arbitrator, will she not say, Yes? As the Lord God of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, if you live and die a stranger to all that I have said upon these points, you cannot escape the damnation of hell. {Matt. 22:33}

An Appeal To Conscience

But again; I will come with another appeal to conscience. Are you not fond of hearing a thundering law preacher, who deals chiefly in the vengeance of heaven, and fetches all his artillery from the fiery law of God? And don't you find that discourse is most descriptive of your legal feelings that savours most of death, judgment, destruction, damnation, and the very flames of hell? "Yes {say you}, while this storm is going, over my head, I am all religion; and while it is preaching, I think in my own mind, O, how will I watch, and work, and pray, and perform my task, &c. when I get home again!" Ay; but before you get your feet over the threshold of your own door, the sound of the thunder is gone out of your ears, and all your blind zeal that was awakened, and the working frame that was communicated to your spirit, are gone; and you are immediately taken captive by the devil, and led into some besetting sin; and by that secret sin you are held a prisoner all the year round. This you know is truth; let Conscience do her office. "I cannot deny {say you} but that this is the case; and how you find it out I know not." No, nor are you likely to know: but this I tell you, in the church of God there are both servants and sons: "The servant {says the Saviour} shall not abide in the house for verse, but the Son abideth verse; and, if the

Son make you free, then are you free indeed." If you are a servant, you will stick to the rod of Moses, till your spirit and conscience will be hardened like a blacksmith's anvil: but, if you are a son of God by faith in Christ Jesus, the undeserved love of the Father, and the dying love of the dear Redeemer, when preached, applied, and enjoyed, will make your soul like melting wax before the flame, until your softened spirit will become susceptible of every divine impression, and your tender conscience will feel the least sin heavy indeed: every just reproof will be then an excellent oil; yea, one reproof from the lips of the gracious will enter deeper into your heart, as a wise child, than an hundred stripes into a fool. {Prov. 17:10} God own and bless the few hints that I have dropped among, you, to his own honour and your eternal comfort. I add no more.