

CHRIST ALONE EXALTED

IN THE

PERFECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SAINTS

NOTWITHSTANDING SINS AND TRIALS

BEING THE FULL SET OF 52 SERMONS

OF TOBIAS CRISP, D.D. WORKS

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, AT BRINKWATER, IN WILTSHIRE

PUBLISHED AFTER HIS DEATH IN 1643

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

NOTES EXPLANATORY OF SEVERAL PASSAGES IN THEM

WITH MEMOIRS OF THE DOCTOR'S LIFE

BY JOHN GILL, D.D.

Republished by Bierteron Particular Baptists
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Fareham
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Mr. Cole, (Elisha Cole) In his Treatise on Regeneration, says, "This work savours of a true Gospel Spirit; they who carp at it, I fear, will be found wider from the Gospel in their Principles, than this Author (as they vainly imagine) was in his."

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of Grace. And if by Grace, then is it no more of Works : otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of Works, then It is no more Grace : otherwise Work is no more Works" Romans xi, 6, 6.

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Preface by Henry Pinnell

TO THE IMPARTIAL READER

Reader; truth needs no shield to shelter it; her own bare breasts are armor of proof against all daring darts of ignorance and pride; and therefore walks fearless in the midst of all those torrents of bitter words; whoever vaunts in putting on his harness? Truth only triumphs in putting it off; this never quits the field without the Garland; for God that calleth to the combat carrieth on with a conquering hand; the gates of hell assault, but prevail not; for we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. The Prince of the air musters up his forces, and retreats; his black guard falls on with him, and are shamefully beaten back; kings, with their armies flee before it; the powers of darkness, like Jehu, march against it, furiously they attempt, they storm, but at the brightness that is before this Sun, the thick clouds remove; one of truth subverts the tents of darkness. What is stronger than truth, whose going out is as the morning, and riseth up to a glorious day? That ancient Emblem is a true Image of truth; a candle in a Lantern upon an high hill, beleaguered with tempestuous blasts, hangs out the flag of defiance, with this motto, *Nisi Dominus Frusta*; that is "except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." {Ps.127:1} It is but lost labour to dig a trench about that city for which the Lord hath appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks; but though it be secured from subversion, yet it is not protected from opposition. You know how it went with Christ; was not his cradle cut out of the same wood of which his cross was made? His first entrance upon the stage of this world foreshadowed a black day at his departing; his sudden flight into Egypt from Herod's barbarous jealousy was but the Prologue to that sad tragedy, {a sad tragedy indeed to the carnal perception of those that put him to death,} which he ended on Mount Calvary; nor may his children or servants expect better entertainment; bonds or afflictions, or both, abide them that are faithful; they have called the Master an impostor, or glutton, Beelzebub; and is the servant above his Lord? I know this servant of truth hath had his share in suffering for it; envious men pursue those that out-go them; a Pharisee will stone any, even Christ, that shall presume to teach them beyond their old divinity. Much dirty gear hath been

cast upon the Author of this book, which, if it could have fastened on him, I were {by special engagements} bound to wipe it off; but a false tongue cannot make a guilty person; Rabsheka's railing made no breach in Jerusalem's walls. Christ alone must be exalted, and all flesh made his foot-stool.

But there be some who seek to darken the wisdom of God with the words of men, and draw a specious veil over divine mysteries, that so {it may be not intentionally} understanding is hid from the simple; these make a fair show in the flesh. But I had rather see the king in his plainest clothes than his fool in a painted coat. Where is the scribe? Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? The loftiness of man must be laid low, his glory buried in the dust, all his perfections come to an end; but if thou desirest to see truth in a comely dress, and clear complexion, thou mayest have a full view thereof in this ensuing discourse. Say not the treatise is too small to contain so vast a subject, but rather admire his skill that discovers so much of heaven through so small a perspective. We applaud their art that contract the wide world into the narrow compass of a slender map; what a deal of worth is in a little diamond? How do men prize the dust of gold? Despise not small things; say not it is a little book; a little star may light thee to Christ; great bodies have most humours; grosser volumes commonly are thickened with too much earth. If thou ask what is in this? I answer, as the voice once spake to Austin, *Tolle Lege*; {that is, take up and read;} or as Philip to Nathaniel, "Come and see." If I should say all that I know of the author, some that know me would say that I flatter him, because of my relation to him in his life, though I know there is little to be gotten by dead men's favour. But this I shall be bold to affirm, there is no Antinomianism in the title or tract; and from all vicious licentiousness of life, and scandalous aspersions cast on his person by lying lips, I stand upon my own experience, and more than twelve years knowledge to vindicate him; let the father of lies, and all his brood, come forth to make good their charge against him. I fear not to appear in his cause; yea, if I should not open my mouth in his behalf, whose industry and integrity God and his saints have so much approved, and from whose labours and yoke-fellow I have reaped so much comfort, if yet I should be silent, I desire to be marked with a black coal.

Try him now, and judge; thou wilt find no poison in his hive; no serpent lurks under his leaves. Take up and read; come, and see whether Jesus of Nazareth be not here; not sealed up in a sepulchre, and guarded with a rude train to keep his disciples from him, as the High Priests used to do; but thou shalt find him in his garden, opening his fountain, blowing on his spices, leading into his banqueting-house, staying with flagons, comforting on every side; thou shalt find more in this book than I will promise; only be persuaded to peruse it; if thou lovest thy rest, read it; for here is news of dry land, footing for thy soul, the Olive branch doth witness it; fear not, be not dismayed; the waters are abated; let not thy sloth make thee guilty of thy misery. Will not the weather-beaten mariner employ all his strength and oars to thrust into a quiet harbour? Is anything more desired by the chased hart than the cooling streams? How do men, pursued by the enemy, rejoice in the shelter of a strong hold? Can anything be more welcome to a notorious offender, justly condemned, than a gracious pardon? Is not God and his righteousness all this, and much more to a poor creature in such conditions? Behold a haven, a brook, a tower, a pardon, a full, a free pardon, a ransom for thy soul; the righteousness of God breaking through the sides, the hands, the heart of Christ, to make way to thee, to revive thy dying, drooping, bleeding heart. Incline thine ear, hearken for time to come; hear, and thy soul shall live; forsake not thine own mercies to observe lying vanities; lean not to the reeds of Egypt, when thou hast the rod of God's strength put into thy hand. Shall there be a price in the hand, and no heart to it? It may be thy feet have not yet stumbled, though thou hast walked on the hills of earth, the mountains of the world, the high mountains of the flesh, thy way hath been smooth and easy; so is the wild ass's till her month overtake her; thy conscience, perhaps, hath fancied some shadow of peace by the dull glimmering of an earthly spark; but they that walk in that light, at last lie down in sorrow. {Isaiah 1:11}

Be not proud therefore, but give glory to God, before he cause darkness, before he turn your light into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness; that darkness that might be felt was not the least of the Egyptian plagues. What greater torment than the conscience once sensible of being destitute of the light of life? The author's aim is to lead thee into Goshen,

to guide thy feet into the way of peace; follow him, walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, that faith, of which circumcision was no cause, nor evidence to himself; for he had it, and he knew he had it, before he was circumcised; by this faith he gave glory to God; we give glory to the robe of God's righteousness, when we put none of our own under it to make it sit uneasy, nor wear any of our own upon it, to obscure the full glory of it; thou wilt find this garment the best fashion, and as well held forth by this, as by any man, whose intentions were to cover all blemishes, all sins, to hide all deformity with it; yet to shelter no lust, nor sin under it. I might launch out into his life, and call in all his practice to prove it; but till more need require, I shall refer thee to Mr Lancaster in his preface to the first volume, and to the present trial of his doctrine. Let a Christian heart moderate a critical eye, and find fault that can. The God that once breathed the rich knowledge of himself through the frail organs of this earthen vessel, into the ears of those that heard him, now dart a greater glory of his righteousness and grace into the eyes of all their understandings that shall read him.

I know I can add no worth to this work; it is of divine value, it hath the stamp of heaven, the image of God is on it; the author is gone home, and yet living with the Lord, though some think the saints die, and like the wicked, leave a stink behind them. I deny not the mortality of any, nor need I hang this man's hearse with odoriferous encomiums; yet he that visits his friend, though never so godly, in the grave, had need take a little frankincense in his hand, if he be buried among men; all the air in the world is so contagiously infected with the stinking breath of the living, that you cannot come near the dead without a bundle of myrrh. Malice and madness like a gangrene stands at the tomb and tent of every blessed soul, crying, "touch me not." Of all men, one would have thought so sweet a man as Christ had needed no spices in his sepulchre; for he did no evil, and he saw no corruption; yet Joseph would not inter his body without sweet odours, though Mary had bestowed a whole box of precious ointment on his feet in his life-time, but a little before his burial. Let the saints walk never so wisely, warily, circumspectly; let them keep their feet as clean, as sweet as they can, they had need of their winding sheet and coffin perfumed; I say not

with the parasitical smoke of a perfumed oration, but with a just vindication of their innocency as occasion shall require. But I hope there will be need of no engagement from me this way in the author's behalf; for his two last sermons in this volume are a clear vindication of him from those common aspersions laid upon him and the doctrine he preached, which for that reason amongst others, has now come into the world before their full growth, the author being taken away before he could bring forth all his conceptions in the pursuit of those two subjects; which we desire the reader candidly to accept as the last breathings forth of the spirit in that precious saint whilst he was below. But if this stops not the mouth of envy, I shall not think any cost too great to raise up and continue the memory of truth's favourites and friends; nor esteem any labour too much, whereby I may approve myself the friend and servant of Christ Jesus and his church, otherwise than which {by God's grace} thou shalt never find,

The Subject of Christ,
and Servant of his Saints,

Henry Pennell

Memoirs Of The Life, Of Tobias Crisp, D.D.

Tobias Crisp descended both by father and mother from the richest families of the city of London, in which they had borne, the highest offices; he was the third son of Ellis Crisp, a rich merchant and alderman of the said city, (as his father before him had been) and was sheriff of the same when he died, Nov. 13, 1625. Sir Nicholas Crisp was the elder brother of Tobias, a person of great capacity for business, a rich and industrious merchant, was taken notice of at court in the reign of King Charles the First, by whom he was knighted¹ and made one of the farmers of his customs; he was a famous royalist in the times of the civil wars, did much service to the king, and suffered much in his cause; he was one of the committee sent by the City of London to King Charles the Second, at Breda, to invite him over, by whom he was received with peculiar marks of affection as his father's old friend; and, upon the king's restoration, was reinstated into

his post as one of the farmers of the customs, and was created a baronet, April 16, 1665, and died Feb. 26, following.

Tobias was born in Bread-street, London, in the year 1600, and had his education for grammar-learning in Eton School, near Windsor, and began his academical studies in the University of Cambridge, where he continued until he commenced bachelor of arts; and from thence he removed to Oxford, for the finishing of his studies, and attaining some certain parts of learning, and was incorporated a member of Baliol College² in Feb. 1626. When he received the degree of doctor in divinity is not certain, only it appears, that upon the breaking out of the civil wars, he had been of some years standing in that degree.

In the year 1627, and about the 27th year of his age, he became rector of Brinkworth in Wiltshire, where he continued until the time of the civil wars, and was much followed for his edifying way of preaching,³ and for his great hospitality to all persons that resorted to his house. His style of preaching tended to edification, being spiritual and evangelical, and suited to the case of souls made truly sensible of sin: and adapted to their condition, and to the peace and comfort of them, as well as was plain and familiar, and easy to be understood by those of the meanest capacity; appears by the following discourses, in which he often illustrates the deepest mysteries of grace by things common among men, and known to all. And as he had a plentiful estate of his own, he was liberal and hospitable to strangers that came far and near to attend upon his ministry; and, according to good information from some of his descendants, an hundred persons, yea, and many more, have been received and entertained in his house at one and the same time, and ample provision made for man and horse.

He set out first in the legal way of preaching, in which he was exceeding zealous, and had an earnest desire to glorify God in his life and ministry; nor did he seek for, but refused all worldly advancement, to which his way was open through his parentage and friends; but gave himself up wholly⁴ to the preaching of the word, and a conscientious practice of it, and was unblameable in his life and conversation; none being

² Wood's Athenae, lb.

³ Wood lb.

⁴ Lancaster's preface to vol. III of the Doctor's sermons.

more, and few so, constant in preaching, praying, repeating sermons, performing public, family, and private exercises, in the strict observation of the duties of the Lord's-day : nor did he at all abate, but increased, in his zeal for glorifying God in this way, after he had a clearer knowledge of Christ, and of the doctrines of grace ; working from better principles, and with better views, willing to spend, and be spent, for the service of the meanest of God's people ; being far from pride, vanity, and self-conceitedness, and full of meekness, lowliness, and tender-heartedness ; whereby it appeared, that the gospel of Christ had a very great influence upon his soul, and which engaged him to preach it freely without any expectation of worldly advantage, and in a way which was sure to bring upon him not the credit and esteem of men, but reproach and persecution, his doctrine being falsely charged with Antinomianism : though the innocency and harmlessness of his life, and his fervency in goodness, as Mr. Lancaster observes, was a manifest practical argument to confute the slanders of Satan, against the most holy faith which he preached. Mr Neal⁵ says, that the Doctor in his younger days had been a favourer of Arminianism ; but, changing his opinion, he ran into the contrary extreme of Antinomianism. That he was inclined to Arminianism, if not in it, and went on in the legal way of preaching for some time, is certain ; which he relinquished upon a rich experience and clear knowledge of the free grace of God in Christ ; but that he went into real Antinomianism, must be denied ; his sermons upon " Free grace the teacher of good works," and " The use of the law," with others, abundantly prove the contrary. However, the above writer is pleased to give this character of him, that he "as certainly a learned and religious person, modest and humble in his behaviour, fervent and laborious in his ministerial work, and exact in his morals." Nor does he want the testimonies of men of the greatest figure, in learning and religion, to his character and usefulness: particularly the famous Dr. Twisse, prolocutor to the assembly of divines and whom some have called " Flos scholasticorum," thus, on occasion, expressed himself concerning him ; that he " had read Dr. Crisp's, sermons⁶, and could give no reason why they were opposed, but because so many were converted by his

preaching, and (said he) so few by ours." That excellent Dutch professor of divinity, Kcornbeck, calls him a learned divine, and says, "*Pervolui ego tres voluminum libellos Tobiae Crispi, doct. thcologi, quorum titulum fecit, 7Christ alone exalted ;*" and observes, that he, with others of the same principles, had no ill design, but that the glory of Christ might the more appear, cast down all the works, dispositions, and conditions of men, and confidence in them, besides him. That truly good man Mr. Cole, the author of a valuable treatise on Regeneration, declared, that if he had but one hundred pounds in the world, and Dr. Crisp's book could not be had without giving fifty pounds for it, he would give it, rather than be without it⁸ ; saying, " I have found more satisfaction in it, than in all the books in the world, except the bible " When the Doctor entered into the marriage-state is not certain ; very probably about the time, or before, he became Rector of Brinkworth, as should seem by the number of children he had, he dying in 1642. He married Mary Wilson daughter and heiress of Rowland Wilson of London, merchant. She was sister to the famous Colonel Rowland Wilson, who was So distinguished in the times of the civil wars; who, though he was heir to £2000 per annum in land, and partner with his father in a large personal estate employed in merchandize, yet, for the service of God, and the good of his country, took upon him the command of a city-regiment⁹ under the parliament. He was one of the trustees for the sale of deans' and chapters' lands, and muster-master-general of the forces of Warwick and Coventry; was appointed a commissioner of the high court of justice for the trial of the king, but refused to act ; was member of parliament, and alderman and sheriff of the city of London : the accepting of which last office was voted by the parliament, an acceptable service to the common-wealth ; he was of the council of state for the year 1649, and died quickly after, being attended to his grave by the members of parliament and council of state, the lord-mayor and aldermen, divers citizens of London, and officers of the army, the city-regiment, of which he was Colonel, and other companies of soldiers. He died before his father, who gave the greatest part of his substance to the children

7 Sum. Cont p. 702, I. 10.

8 Mr. Samuel Crisp's pre. ut supra

9 Whitlocks's memorials &c. p. 72 363-384, 390-394, 398-425, 428

5 Hist of the Purians vol.iii. p28

6 Mr. Samuel Crisp's Preface to Crist made sin, p 4.

of Dr. Tobias Crisp, and his widow, who survived the Doctor 31 years¹⁰, she dying 20th of September, 1673 ; by whom he had thirteen children, two died before him, and he left eleven behind him ; their names were Rowland, Ellis, Mary, Tobias, Samuel, Esther, Edward, Rowland, Nicholas, Elizabeth, Anne, Jane, John. His son Samuel, who was one of the governors of Christ Church Hospital, London, published the last edition of his father's works, with a preface to them, and wrote several things in defence of them; one called, "Christ made sin ;" another, "Christ alone exalted," in Dr. Crisp's sermons ; a third, "Christ Exalted, and Dr. Crisp vindicated." He was one of the first that joined in the communion of the church, at Clapham Surrey in the Nonconformists' way, and survivor¹¹ of them all. He died June 20, 1703.

But to return to the Doctor ; upon the breaking out of the civil wars, and to avoid the insolence of the cavalier soldiers, he left his rectory of Brinkworth in Aug. 1642, and retired to London ; where, and about it, he preached several of the sermons afterwards printed ; whereby his sentiments about the doctrines of grace were soon discovered, in which he was opposed city-divines¹² ; and (to use Mr. Wood's words) baited by fifty-two opponents in a grand dispute concerning the freeness of the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, to poor sinners ; by which encounter, which was eagerly managed on his part, he contracted a disease that brought him to his grave. He died of the small-pox, February 27, 1642, being about forty-two years of age, and was buried in a vault, belonging to his family, under part of the church of St. Mildred, in Breadstreet, London.

So, as (Mr. Lancaster says)¹³ after his natural strength was sensibly spent, in the service of the Lord, by constant and laborious preaching, praying, repeating, and studying, often-times whole nights, to the impairing and ruining of his health, it pleased the Lord to call him, by his last visitation, unto his eternal rest ; wherein there appeared such faith, such joy, such a quiet and appeased conscience, such triumph over death and hell, as made the standers-by amazed ; and, a little before his death, he professed, before some present, the stedfastness of his faith, to this effect, "

that as he had lived in the free grace of God, through Christ, so he did, with confidence and great joy, even as much as his present condition was capable of, resign his life and soul into the hands of his most dear Father."

Sermons

1 Christ The Only Way {1}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
{Jn.14:6}

In the 33rd verse of the former chapter, you shall find Christ breaking the sad and doleful business, which he knew well would go near to the hearts of his disciples; namely, his departure from them; "Little children, yet a little while ye shall seek me, but shall not find me." Peter, upon this, asks him whither he goes? He tells him, whither he cannot follow him now, but afterwards he shall. Now, knowing how sadly this went to the hearts of his disciples, Christ labored to raise them up, and to establish them against the drooping that these sad tidings might occasion; and that is the beginning of this chapter, "Let not your hearts be troubled;" and therein doth endeavor to stir up their spirits first, by telling them the expediency of that departure of his. It was the purpose of God, that as all things should be wrought effectually by Christ, so the communication of all these things to our spirits, should be by the Spirit of Christ. Now Christ tells them expressly, "That except he goes away, the Comforter cannot come to them;" he, that must have the dispensing of those things to their spirits, namely, the Comforter, cannot come unto them. But, secondly, he stays not here; he encourageth them with another argument; "I go to prepare a place;" and he tells them the place where; "In my Father's house are many mansions." And lest they should suspect, he tells them, "If it were not so, I would have told you." And because he would not speak in a cloud of these things, he tells them, "You know whither I go, and the way ye know." Now Thomas comes in with an objection; "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Christ answers him, in the words of the text, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

I will not spin out the tune about the coherence

¹⁰ Mr. Crisp's pre.&c. ut supra.

¹¹ Mr. Grace's funeral sermon, p.41.

¹² Athenae, p.II.

¹³ Lancaster's pre. &c. ut supra.

and analysis of this text; the main point is briefly this; Christ is our way, so that there is no coming to the Father but by Him.

In the handling of which truth, let me tell you, that I know this doctrine is generally received, as it is generally delivered; but, I fear, in the particularizing those things that make up the full truth of the doctrine, every spirit will not, nor can receive it. That you may, at least, see the clear truth in the bowels of this general doctrine; {for, beloved, you must know there is hidden manna, in this very pot} I say, that you may both see it, and taste the sweetness of it, let us consider; First, in what regard Christ is said to be “the way to the Father.” Secondly, what kind of way he is. Thirdly, from whence he doth become this way. Fourthly, what use we may make of it.

I. In what sense Christ is said to be our way, that there is “no coming to the Father but by him.” You all know beloved, that every way highway, or pathway, necessarily imports two terms, from whence and whereunto; when a man enters into a way, he leaves the place where he was, and goes to the place where he was not. Christ being our way, the phrase imports thus much to us, that by Christ we pass from a state and condition wherein we were to a state and condition wherein we were not; the last term is expressed in the text, “He is the way to the Father;” the first term must be implied. To come to him, ye must leave some condition where we were before. Bear a while with the expression, till I open the thing to you.

The state, from which Christ is our way to the Father, is twofold; first, a state of sin; and secondly, a state of wrath. The state whereunto Christ is the way, is, indeed, expressed here to be to the Father; the meaning is, to the grace of the Father, and to the glory of the Father. The sum is this; Christ is our way, from a state of sin and wrath, to a state of grace and glory, that there is no coming from the one to the other, but by Christ. But we must descend to particulars, that we may know the fatness and marrow of this truth; which indeed hath an inebriating virtue in it, to lay a soul asleep, with the admirable sweetness and excellency thereof; for no music can tickle the ears as this truth may, when it is truly and thoroughly dived into; no, nor tickle the heart neither. Beloved, I must tell you, when your soul once find this real truth, they cannot choose but say, we have found a ransom.

First of all, Christ is a way from a state of sinfulness. Now what mystery is there in this, more than ordinary, will you say? Beloved, it is certainly true, there is nothing of Christ, there is nothing comes from Christ, but it is in a mystery; the gospel seems to be clear, and so it is, to those whose eyes Christ opens, but certainly it is hid to some persons that shall perish. “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, O Father, because it pleased thee.” But what hiddenness is in this? There is a two-fold consideration of sinfulness, from which Christ is our way in a special manner. There is first that which commonly we call the guilt of sin, which indeed is the fault, or a person’s being faulty, as he is a transgressor. There is, secondly, the power or dominion of sin. Christ is the way from both these. First of all, Christ is the way from the guilt of sin; for a man to be rid of the guilt of sin is no more but this, namely, upon trial to be acquitted from the charge of sin that is laid to him, and to be freed from it; or for a person, in judgment, to be pronounced actually an innocent and a just person, as having no sin to be charged upon him; this is to be free from the guilt of sin. A man is not free from a fault, as long as the fault is laid to his charge; he is then free from the fault, when it is not charged upon him. All the powers of the world united are not able to pronounce a person faultless and an innocent person, but only the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the way by which a poor sinner, even in this world, may be pronounced an innocent person; even in this world, I say; and be acquitted and discharged from the fault and guilt of his sin. It is impossible the law should do it; the apostle speaks of it expressly, “the law of the spirit of life in Christ hath freed me from the law of sin and death.” {Rom.8:2} Here it is put upon Christ, to free from the guilt of sin. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,” for sin condemned sin in the flesh. The law, saith the text, could not do it; not that the law could not pronounce innocence where innocency was; not that the law could not condemn sin, where it is condemnable by its authority; the law can do this, if it can find subjects whereupon to do it. But the law runs upon these terms, as it finds a person himself without fault; so it pronounceth sentence upon him; if it finds a fault in his person, then it chargeth this fault

upon the person alone, as thus; “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Till then thou canst not be absolutely freed from the acting of a thing in its nature that is faulty; thou canst not hear it speak any otherwise but of faultiness, which it chargeth upon thee.

Much less can the heart of man acquit him as an innocent person, or do away from him that sinfulness, namely, the guilt of his own sin. “If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts.” “If a man say he hath no sin, he is a liar,” with St. John, “and the truth is not in him.” If the heart should say to any man he is an innocent person, it doth but lie.

If angels should spend their strength, and should be annihilated, to procure the innocency of a poor sinner; alas, their very being is too poor a price, or too mean a value, to take away the sins of the world.

Beloved, to go a little further in it, it is not man’s righteousness that he does, though assisted by the Spirit of God in the acting of it, that can pronounce him an innocent person, that can be a way to him from his fault and guiltiness. This you know, that the payment of the last half year’s rent is no payment for the first half year’s rent, nor is it amends for the non-payment of that which was due before; if that had been paid before, for this likewise must be paid now. Suppose a man could perform a righteous action without blame, what satisfaction is this for former transgressions? Nay, beloved, let me tell you, there is nothing but menstruousness, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, in the best of man’s righteousness, for all our righteousness is a menstruous cloth; {Is.64:6;} but as for Christ, that blessed Saviour, he is able to “save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;” not only to save them in respect of glory hereafter, but also to save them in respect of sinfulness here; to snatch them as a fire-brand out of the fire of their own sin, to deliver them from their own transgression. Christ, I say, is the way, and the absolute and complete way, to rid every soul that comes to God by him, from all filthiness; so that the person to whom Christ is the way, stands in the sight of God as having no fault at all in him. Beloved, these two are contradictions, for a person to be reckoned a faulty person, and yet that person to be reckoned a just or an innocent person; if he be faulty, he is not innocent; if he be innocent, he

is not faulty. Now it is the main stream of the whole gospel, that Christ justifies the ungodly. If he himself justifies him, there is no fault to be cast upon him; mark it well, as that wherein consists the life of your soul and the joy of your spirits. I say, it holds forth the Lord Christ as freely tendering himself to people, as considering them only as ungodly persons receiving him; you have no sooner received him, but you are instantly justified by him, and, in this justification, you are discharged from all the faults that may be laid to your charge. There is not one sin you commit, after you receive Christ, that God can charge upon your person.¹⁴

A man would think, that there needs not much time to be spent to clear such a truth as this is, being so currently carried along by the whole stream of the gospel. But beloved, because I know tender hearts stumble much at it, give me leave to clear it unto you by manifest scriptures, such as are written in such great letters, as he that runs may read them. Observe that in Psalm 51. “Wash me,” saith David; what then? “I shall be whiter than snow.” Snow, you know, hath no spot at all, no fault, no blemish. David shall be less blameable, have less faultiness, have less spottedness in him, than is in the very snow itself. In Canticles 4:7, you shall find Christ speaking strange language to his church; admirable language indeed; “Thou art fair my love,” saith Christ, “thou hast no spot in thee at all.” I do but cite the very words of the text; therefore let none cavil least they be found fighters against God; “she hath no spot in her.” In Isaiah 53, where he speaks admirably concerning the effectualness of Christ’s death, he tells us, “That the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;” thy iniquities, my iniquities; as our forefathers’ iniquities, so our posterity’s iniquities; the iniquities of us all the Lord hath laid upon Christ; they cannot lie upon Christ, and us too. If they be reckoned to the charge of Christ, they are not reckoned to the charge of the person that doth receive this Christ; but “the Lord hath laid them upon him,” saith the text; and what iniquity? Doth he lay upon him some iniquity, and leave some iniquity to us? Look into Ezek.36:25, and you shall see the extent of iniquities that God hath laid upon Christ; that he takes away from the sinner, I

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¹ That is, to condemnation; because all have been charged on Christ, and he has made satisfaction for them; and besides, in this manifestative justification the Doctor is speaking of, there is an open and full discharge from all sin. Gill.

mean the sinner justified by Christ that received him; there you have the covenant largely repeated, the new covenant; not according to the covenant God made with our fathers; and the first words of the covenant are these; "I will sprinkle you with Clean water, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," from all your filthiness; small sins, as some will call them; great sins, turbulent sins, scandalous sins, any sins, any filthiness; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols. Look into Ezek.16:6, a notable chapter indeed, setting open the unsearchable riches of the love of Christ to men; I "saw thee polluted in thine own blood," saith he; such blood "that no eye could pity thee, or do any good to thee." Well, no creature doth pity him; was it so with God? No. "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live; yea, when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee live; when I passed by thee, thy time was the time of love," saith God, "I spread my skirt over thee and covered thy nakedness." Mark it, I pray you; not a scanty skirt to cover some of this blood and filth, but a broad skirt, a large skirt, a white raiment, as Christ calls it himself in the Revelation; "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thy nakedness may not appear." It seems there is such a covering of Christ that he casts upon a person, while he is considered in his blood, that covers his nakedness, that none of it doth appear; and yet, a little further in Ezekiel 16, then was she dyed in deep water, after she was in covenant; "yea I thoroughly washed away thy blood;" and this was added, that no man might cavil. It is true, God casts a covering over our sinfulness, but it is our sinfulness still; it is but covered; nay, with the Lord, I have washed it away; "then washed I thee with water." But some will say these are obscure texts and mystical; a man cannot build upon these, that faultiness is not reckoned to believers, being taken off by Christ. To come, therefore, to a clearer manifestation of the gospel, mark what the apostle saith in Eph.5:27, Christ "purges and sanctifies his church that he might present it to himself not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it may be holy, and without blame." The words run in the present tense; not that in glory only we shall be without spot, but now, even now, we shall be without blemish, we shall be without spot and wrinkle; and that he might now present us to himself.

So in II Cor.5:21, you shall see the truth spoken more emphatically, the Apostle runs in a mighty strain in this business; "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Both terms are expressed in the abstract; he was made sin for us; here you see plainly, our sins are to be translated to Christ; that God reckons Christ the very sinner; nay, God reckons all our sins to be his, and makes him to be sin for us; and what is the fruit of this?¹⁵ We are thereby made the righteousness of God in him. If we be righteousness, where is our sinfulness to be charged upon us? He tells us expressly, in I John 1:7, "That the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" the blood of Christ doth cleanse us; he doth not say, the blood of Christ shall cleanse us from all sin; but he saith, for the present time, the blood of Christ doth cleanse us from all sin. John the Baptist hath this expression, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." He takes them away. How doth he take them away, and yet leave them behind, and yet charge them upon the person that doth believe? The person must be discharged, or else how can they be taken away. This is the main thing imported in that notable sacrifice of the scape-goat. {Lev.16:21} The high-priest must lay his hand upon the head of the goat to be carried away into the wilderness; the text saith, "it was the laying the sins of the people, and that when they were laid upon him, he goes into the wilderness." He goes into the wilderness and leaves their sins behind him; then the end of this service were frustrated; for he was to carry them away upon him; so Christ, as the scape-goat, hath our sins laid upon his back, and he carries them away; and, therefore, in Psalm 103:12, it is said, "that God removes our sins from us, as far as the East is from the West; he casts our sins into the bottom of the sea." Besides all these texts of scripture, I might produce multitudes more, if need were, for this purpose; but, I think, there can be nothing in the world more clear than this truth, that Christ is such a way to a poor believing soul that he hath received, that he might take and carry away all the sins of such a person; that he is no longer reckoned as having sins upon him.

But some will object, do not those that receive Christ actually commit sin? I answer, yea, they do

¹⁵ That is, by imputation; not as the author and committer of sin; and, in the same way, God reckons our sins to be Christ's; not as committed by him, but are imputed to him. Gill.

commit sin, and the truth is, they can do nothing but commit sin. If a person that is a believer hath anything in the world, he hath received this, that if he doth anything that is good, it is the Spirit of God that doth it, not he; therefore, he himself doth nothing but sin, his soul is a mint of sin. But then, you will say, if he doth sin, must not God charge it where it is? Must not he be reckoned to be a sinner, while he doth sin? I answer, no; though he doth sin, yet he is not to be reckoned a sinner, but his sins are reckoned to be taken away from him.¹⁶ A man borrows a hundred pounds; some man will say, doth he not owe this hundred pounds, seeing he borrowed it? I say, no, in case another hath paid the hundred pounds for him. A man doth sin against God, God reckons not his sin to be his, he reckons it Christ's; therefore he cannot reckon it his. If the Lord did lay the iniquity of men upon Christ {as I said before,} then how can he lay it upon their persons? Thou hast sinned, Christ takes it off; supposing, I say, thou hast received Christ. And as God doth reckon sin to Christ, and charges sin upon him, so, if thou be of the same mind with God, thou must also reckon this sin of thine upon Christ; his back hath borne it, he hath carried it away.

For my part, I cannot see what every person will object; I will endeavor to make this truth clear as the day to you. Do but consider with yourselves what Christ came into the world for, if not to take away the sins of the world? He need never to have died, but to take away the sins of the world. Did he come to take them away, and did he leave them behind him? Then he lost his labour. Did he not leave them behind him? Then his person is discharged of them from whom he hath taken them; but if the person be not discharged of them, he is not a justified person in himself; neither can you account his person justified as long as you account his sin upon him. It is a contradiction to say, that a man is innocent, yet guilty. Beloved, then here is a point of strange ravishing usefulness to souls, that can but draw towards it and receive it. All

¹⁶ Not that the believer who has received Christ, ceases to be a sinner in himself; for the Doctor affirms, in this same paragraph, that he commits sin, and does nothing but sin; and much less that he ceased to be a sinner before he was a believer or from the death of Christ, as D. W. in his "Gospel Truth, &c.," falsely being charged to him, and expiated and atoned for by his sacrifice; as also, seeing such a one has received, with Christ, a discharge from all his sins into his own conscience, he should reckon himself, and his sins, as God does, who reckons them to Christ, and not to him. Gill.

the difficulty lies, whether it be my portion, and thy portion; whether I may say, Christ is my way, thus from this guilt, that there can be none of this charged upon me. I say, if thou dost receive Christ, if thou dost but set footing into this way, Christ; as soon as ever thou art stepped into this way, thou art stepped out of the condition thou wast in. Men's receiving of Christ! What is that? You will say; to receive him, is to come to him; "he that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Mark; many think there is such a kind of sinfulness that is a bar to them; that though they would have Christ, yet there is not a way open for them to take him. Beloved, there is no way of sinfulness to bar thee from coming to Christ; if thou hast a heart to come to him, and, against all objections to venture thyself with joy into the bosom of Christ, for the discharge of all thy sinfulness; Christ himself {which I tremble to express; though it be with indignation} should be a liar, if thou comest to him, and he casts thee off. "Every one that will," saith he, "let him come and drink of the water of life freely." You shall find, beloved, the great complaint of Christ, thus, "he came to his own, and his own received him not;" and to the Scribes and Pharisees, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The truth is, men dote upon the establishing of a righteousness of their own to bring them to Christ; and it is but presumptuous or licentious doctrine, that Christ may be their Christ, and they receive him, and be considered simply ungodly, as enemies; but they are abominably injurious to the faith of Jesus Christ, to the exceeding bounty of that grace of his, who saves from sin, without respect of anything in the creature, that he himself might have the praise of the glory of his grace. The covenant, concerning the blotting out of transgressions, is a free covenant; "not for thy sake do I this, be it known unto thee," saith the Lord, "for thou art a stubborn and stiff necked people; but for my own sake do I this." All this grace to acquit thy soul, here and hereafter, comes out of the bowels of God himself; and he hath no other motive in the world, but simply, and only, his own bowels, that put him upon the deliverance of a poor wretch from iniquity, and discharge of sin, from that load which otherwise would grind and crush him to powder; I say, his own bowels are the motive. God neither looks to anything in the creature to win him to show kindness, nor yet anything in the creature to debar him; neither

righteousness in men that persuades God to pardon sin; nor unrighteousness in men that hinders him from giving this pardon, and acquitting them from their transgressions; it is only and simply for his own sake he doth it unto men.

Thus you have seen the first particular that I have endeavored to clear from all cavils and objections that may be laid upon it.

In one word, beloved, mistake me not, I am far from imagining any believer is freed from acts of sin; he is freed only from the charge of sin; that is, from being a subject to be charged with sin; all his sins are charged upon Christ, he being made sin for him; yet Christ is not an actual sinner; but Christ is all the sinners in the world by imputation; and through this imputation all our sins are so done away from us, that we stand as Christ's own person did stand, and doth stand in the sight of God.¹⁷ Now, had not Christ made a full satisfaction to the Father, he himself must have perished under those sins that he did bear; but in that he went through the thing, and paid the full price, as he carried them away from us, so he laid them down from himself. So that now Christ is freed from sin, and we are freed from sin in him; he was freed from sin imputed unto him and laid upon him, when he suffered; we were freed from sin as he takes it off from our shoulders, and hath carried it away. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." That is, with sin. And what follows? "And I will give you rest." As long as the burden is upon the shoulders, so long there is no rest. Therefore this doth necessarily import, that Christ must take away the burden, that we may have rest. Secondly, Christ is not only the way from the fault of sin, but he is the way from the power of sin. There is a threefold power of sin; there is first, a reigning power; and secondly, a tyrannizing power; and thirdly, a bustling or ruffing power of sin;

¹⁷ This shows what is the Doctor's true sense in a former passage, where he says Christ is "the very sinner;" that is, by imputation, as here explained, and not an actual sinner. One would be tempted to think, at first reading this clause, that the Doctor was for universal redemption, when he says, that Christ is "all the sinners in the world" by imputation; and, perhaps, such expressions as these with some others that will be observed hereafter, made the learned Hoornebeck conclude, that he held the doctrine of universal redemption; but his sense is not, that Christ personated all the sinners in the world, or had all the sins of every individual person laid on him; but that he was all those sinners in the world, or represented them, whose sins were imputed to him; and these, as he often says in his sermons on Isaiah 53:6, were the iniquities of the Lord's people, of the church, and of the elect. Gill.

and they are all three of them distinct. Christ is a way from all these in believers; from the reigning power of it; so the Apostle speaks expressly, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." {Rom.6:14} Grace there is Christ himself. "His servants ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death," or of righteousness unto life; but, thanks be to God, "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." The meaning is this; while we are under the law, and have no better help, sin reigns in us, the law cannot bridle it in; but when we come under grace by Christ, the dominion of the law, or rather the dominion of sin, which the law cannot restrain, is captivated and subjected by Christ; "I will subdue your iniquities," as it is spoken by the prophet Micah. We are discharged from the fault and guilt of sin, that is, absolutely at once; {Acts 13:39;} but the discharge from the reigning power of sin, that is done by degrees; the faultiness of sin is left behind the back of the believer, but the power and resistency of sin lie all along in the way; but still Christ breaks through, and makes way, I Cor.10:13, where you have this admirable expression, "No temptation hath happened unto you, but such as is common to men; God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way that you may be able to bear it."

There is a tyrannizing power of sin; that is, not when sin is chosen of the soul, as that under which the soul both affects and will live; but when sin hath gotten a present over-mastery of the soul, and in spite of all the spirit can do, will keep it under. This, I say, is the tyranny of sin; and this was the case of the apostle Paul, Romans, chapter 7, "when I would do good, evil is present with me;" I find "a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin;" so that "the good I would do, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that do I." In regard of which he makes a bitter complaint; but mark the end of all, "but thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here you see that though sin hath a tyranny over the spirit of a person, yet through the Lord Jesus Christ this tyranny is abated.

Yet thirdly, it is abated by degrees; for the bustling power of sin, namely, though it cannot be entertained, yet it will be troublesome to the soul. Now Christ is the way, by degrees, also, from this trouble of sin; for

by degrees he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, and brings down the power of it by treading down Satan, that is the egger on of sin, to make it so troublesome; by overcoming the world, that administers occasion of this troublesomeness. "Fear not," saith Christ, "I have overcome the world." But still, I say, he doth this by degrees, and so he doth it by degrees, that sometimes he lets the work be at a stand; and sometimes the tyranny shall be over the spirit, and the spirit shall be under that tyranny a good while; sometimes the spirit shall be under the troublesomeness of sin, and be constantly exercised with it. But you must know that it is neither the tyranny, nor the troublesomeness of sin in a believer, that doth eclipse the beauty of Christ, or the favor of God to the soul. Our standing is not founded upon the subduing of our sins, but upon that foundation that never fails, and that is Christ himself; upon his faithfulness and truth. Men think they are consumed, when they are troubled with sin; why? Because of their transgression. But mark what the Lord saith; "I, the Lord, change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." It is not, you change not, therefore ye are not consumed; but I change not; I have loved you freely, I will love you freely, I cannot alter; "whom he loves, he loves unto the end;" and this is in respect of his unchangeableness.

Though there be ebbings and flowings of the outward man; nay, of the inward man, in the business of sanctification; yet this is certainly true, that believers are kept by the mighty "power of God, through faith, unto salvation." They are kept in holiness, sincerity, simplicity of heart; but all this hath nothing to do with the peace of his soul, and the salvation and justification thereof.¹⁸ Christ is he that justifies the ungodly; Christ is he that is the Peacemaker; and as Christ is the peacemaker, so all this peace depends upon Christ alone. Beloved, if you will fetch your peace from anything in the world but Christ, you will fetch it from where it is not. "This people," saith the prophet Jeremiah, "hath committed two evils." What are they? "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." {Jer.2:13}

¹⁸ That is, to make peace with God for his soul, since Christ is the Peace-maker, Saviour, and Justifier; otherwise to be kept in these things contributes to spiritual peace of mind, under the influence of divine grace and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Gill

What is that fountain of living waters? Christ is the fountain of peace and life; and men forsake that peace that is to be had in Christ, when they would have peace out of righteousness of their own, out of their great enlargements, out of humiliations. These are broken cisterns, and what peace is there in them? Is there not sinfulness in them? Who can say, I have washed my hands? If there be sinfulness in them, where then is their peace? Sin speaks nothing but war to the soul. Let me tell you, beloved, you that look after peace from the subduing of your sins; what peace can it afford you, in case there be any defects of subduing of your sins? There can be no peace!

Suppose God had nothing in the world to charge upon you; but only that sinfulness in the very subduing of your corruptions; what peace could you have? What could but God find in us? Suppose your eyes were enlightened to see yourselves, how much filthiness there is in all your wrestlings; I say, how much defects and infirmities might you see? Could you choose but fall foul upon your own spirits, for these infirmities and defects of your best performances, seeing the wages of sin is death? What can you run to then? None but Christ, none but Christ. While your acts, in respect of filthiness, proclaim nothing but war, Christ alone, and his blood, proclaim nothing but peace. Therefore I give this hint by the way, when I speak of the power of Christ subduing sin; because, from the power of it in men, they are apt to think their peace depends upon this subduing of sin. If their sins be subdued, then they may have peace; and if they cannot be subdued, then no peace. Fetch peace where it is to be had; let subduing of sin alone for peace; let Christ have that which is his due; for it is he alone that speaks peace.¹⁹ It remains, we should speak further, that as Christ is a

¹⁹ Let it be observed, that the Doctor is speaking not of subduing sin, as it is an act of God's grace, and owing to the power of Christ, who has made an end of it, and so made peace; on this subduing of sin peace depends, {Mic.7:18, Deut.9:24} but of men's subduing sin, by their own power and strength, and in order to make peace with God; whereas subduing sin, or mortifying the deeds of the body, believers are concerned for, is not of themselves, and done in their own strength, but through the Spirit, Power and Grace of God; and not to make peace with him, but to show their dislike of sin, their gratitude to God, and that they are debtors to him, to live after the spirit, {Rom.8:12,13,} wherefore subduing of sin is to be let alone for the end mentioned, in order to peace with God, that Christ might have his due and glory, who has both made and speaks peace; otherwise subduing of sin, or the weakening the power of it, by the Spirit and Grace of God, is the concern of every believer, and is wished for by him, and makes for the tranquility of his mind. Gill.

way from sin, both in respect of fault and power, so he is a way from wrath; and he is a way to the grace and glory of the Father, and what kind of way he is. But the searching into every corner of this truth, for the sitting of it, hath brought me exceedingly back beyond my expectation. I shall have further occasion in the afternoon to speak of it.

2 Christ The Only Way {2}

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” {Jn.14:6}

Now we go on; Christ, as he is the way from sin, so he is the way from wrath; and indeed, must be the way from wrath, when he is the way from sin; wrath is but the wages of sin, the effect wrought by sin. Take away the cause, and the effect dies; destroy the root, and the branches wither of themselves. Man’s sin is the root of wrath; when sin is destroyed and abolished, wrath must needs sink and perish. Christ is so the way from wrath, that all that receive him are wholly discharged, both from God’s affection of wrath, {as I may so speak,} and from the effects of that affection of his. Wrath is considered in these two respects; First, simply, as the displeasure of God itself; the offence that God takes; Secondly, in the fruits of this offence, that he manifests in the expression of his indignation and displeasure. Christ is the way, the only way, the effectual and infallible way, from all this wrath, to all that do receive him.

First, from the affection itself of wrath. Let me tell you, beloved, {I would to God you could receive it according to the manifest evidence of Scripture,} that God no longer stands offended, nor displeased; though a believer, after he be a believer, sins often.²⁰ Yet, I say, God no longer stands offended and displeased with him, when he has once received Christ; and unto them, saith God, “Fury is not in me.” {Isa.27:4} And in

20 As every believer does, and yet God is not offended with him; the meaning is not, that his sin is not offensive to God; it is in its own nature being contrary to the nature of God, as the Doctor in a following page observes, and where he also distinguishes between God’s being offended with the sins of believers, and with their persons; and it is in this latter sense he is to be understood here; for God loves them with an everlasting love, and has no fury in him towards them; and besides all their sins are fully satisfied for by Christ who thereby has took away all cause of offence, that is, sin. So the very learned Witsius, referring to this passage of the Doctor’s, observes, he is to be understood in respect of that most full reconciliation which Christ has obtained, and which is adjudged to believers in justification. Gill

Isaiah 53:5, {among many other notable expressions of God’s being well-pleased towards poor sinners through Christ,} he saith, “He was wounded for their transgressions;” and then you have this admirable expression of the effect of his wounding, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;” satisfied, here, is as much as pacified; they are all one. The travail of the soul of Christ makes God such amends for the sinfulness of believers that he can no longer stand offended and displeased with them. If God doth remain offended with them, there is yet some of their sinfulness remaining to be taken away, that this offence also may be taken away. All their sins must be taken away from them, and all offences will be removed from them. But, except God will be offended, where there is no cause to be offended, {which is blasphemy to speak,} he will not be offended with believers. For I say he hath no cause to be offended with a believer, because he doth not find the sin of the believer to be the believer’s own sin, but he finds it the sin of Christ.²¹

He was made sin for us; God laid the iniquities of us all upon him. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin; He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and if he bear our sins, he must bear the displeasure for them; nay, he did bear the displeasure, the indignation of the Lord; and if he did bear the indignation of the Lord; either he did bear all, or but part; if he did not bear all the indignation of the Lord, then he doth not “save to the uttermost those that come to God by him;” as he is said to do. {Heb.7:25} I say, not to the uttermost, because here is some offence, some indignation, left behind; and for lack of taking this indignation upon himself, it falls upon believers. So that, either you must say, Christ is an imperfect Saviour, and hath left some scattering of wrath behind, that will light upon the head of the believer; or else you will say, he is a perfect Saviour, and takes away all displeasure of God; then there remains none of it upon the person of a believer. Beloved, for my part, I understand not what

21 Being imputed to him, and atoned for by him; and so the offence by it, to the justice of God, is ceased, having an ample satisfaction. So the above mentioned judicious professor Witsius gives the sense of the passage. “God is not offended without a cause, there is no cause of offence but sin; Christ has borne and taken away all the sins of believers, and the most just offence of God for them; and not only some part of the offence, but all, all entirely, therefore there remains none that lies upon believers; to these God says, “Fury is not in me.” Is.27:4. Gill.

clouds are in the mind and judgment of other men; to me it seems, there is no truth more abundantly cleared, in all the Scriptures, than this one truth of the transferring of our sins, and so the offence for them, wholly upon the Person of Christ; and thus a poor soul hath rest from the indignation of God, as Christ takes the burden off from his shoulders. There is a twofold burden; first, in sin itself; and secondly, in the indignation of God for it. Who can bear this indignation of the Lord? Christ alone and he hath borne it.

Yes, but you will say, is not God offended at the sins of believers, when they do commit them? Hath Christ taken away the offence against sin by his death? I answer, No; therefore do not mistake yourself; for there may be easily a mistake for lack of serious pondering the words I deliver. I have not said, God is not offended with the sins that believers commit; but that God stands not offended with the persons of believers, {Jonah 4:6; I Kings 9:4,5,} but for the sins committed by them. He hath that everlasting indignation against sin as ever. And as there is the same contrariety in sin against his nature, so there is the same contrariety in God's nature unto sin. All contrarieties have a mutual contrariety against each other; as water is contrary to fire, so fire is contrary to water; as sin is contrary to the nature of God; so the nature of God is contrary to sin; there is an abhorrency of God to that sinfulness, but not an offence in God to the person that commits that sin; because the offence of God for that sin hath spent itself upon the Person of Christ; and, by having so spent itself, there remains none of it to light upon the person of a believer; Christ having borne all this offence for sin. And therefore, as I said before, either grant that Christ hath satisfied the Father, that the Father is pleased in his Beloved Son, according to Christ's own speech; either grant this, or say, Christ hath not done all. In Matthew, the 3rd chapter, is heard a voice from heaven, at the baptizing of Christ, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He doth not say, with whom I am well pleased, but in whom I am well pleased; that is, in whom I am well pleased, with you. Though in our natures, and in the sinfulness of them, there is matter of displeasure, yet in Christ, for all this, God is well pleased with us. And yet there is none of God's indignation against sin lost in all this, because he is not offended at all with the

believer; for he hath satisfied his own offence in his Son more fully than he would have satisfied it in our own persons; for we must have been everlastingly suffering, before God would have been fully satisfied. Now therefore, as the payment of a great sum all at one payment, and at a day, is a better payment, than by a penny a year, till a thousand years be out, mark what I say; so Christ's satisfying the Father at once, by one sacrifice of himself, is a better satisfying of him, than if we should have been infinite days in paying that which his justice requires, and his indignation to sin doth expect. So here is no derogation to the loathsome nature of sin, and the purity of God, and the great offence God takes at sin; but only here is the transaction of it from the person of a believer, to the Person of Christ himself, that willingly took this upon him; and not only did he take it upon him, but it was according to the determinate counsel and purpose of God that he should do it; nay, the pleasure of God, for "it pleased the LORD to bruise Him." {Is.53:10} So much briefly for the affection of wrath, and how much Christ is a way to take away that affection of God's wrath; that is, wrath simple, as it is an offence from him to a believer.

Secondly, Christ is a way to take away the effect of God's displeasure; Christ is the only way to take it away. "Shall I give the fruit of my body," saith the prophet, {Micah 6:7,} "for the sin of my soul? Thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil?" No, alas; this will not buy out the penance of one sin, when he hath sinned; it is all too mean a price; there must be a better to take away that wrath; that is, the heavy punishment of God from a believer. I say a better price than this; not a dearer price to us poor men, but yet a more clear and acceptable price unto God; a price, in its nature, infinite and invaluable; but, of this price, not a farthing goes out of our purse; there is the greatness. Christ is a way to take away all wrath in respect of the heavy hand of God, which is the fruit of man's sin. In brief, beloved, the sum plainly is this, Christ is so the way from wrath, that God doth never punish any believer, after he is a believer, for sin; I say, God doth not punish for sin.²² This seems to be a harsh proposition

²² The reason is, because the whole punishment, due to his sins, has been borne by Christ, his surety for him; and to inflict punishment twice for the same sins, once upon the surety, and again upon the believer, is contrary to the justice of God, as well as derogatory to the satisfaction of Christ; for either he has borne the whole of punishment, or only a part; if the whole, which is the truth, then none can be laid upon

to many; but give me leave to clear what I say; and so, according to the clear evidence of truth, reject or receive what I deliver to you. In Isaiah 53, a chapter of most admirable excellency to set forth the wonderful and incomprehensible benefit of Christ; observe that Christ “was wounded for our transgressions;” mark the punishment; “He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed.” Now beloved, I will ask but this question: Are the wounds of Christ only part of the punishment? Or, are they the whole of our punishment? The bruising of Christ, were they to be part of the punishment our sins deserved? If they were but part, we must bear the rest ourselves; but then, we must be co-saviours with Christ, co-bearers of indignation and wrath. “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.” {Is.63:3} No creature in the world was able to be a helper with him.

I speak of believers only; they do not bear one lash of that deserved wrath that is poured out for sin, not one lash or stroke; for Christ trod it alone himself. Yea, but you will say unto me, does not God afflict his children and believers? All the world seeth and knoweth he doth; therefore, why speak you against this? Beloved, give me leave to ask you; is there not a great deal of difference between God’s afflicting believers, and punishing believers for sin? Yea, but are not the afflictions of believers for sin? I answer, No; afflictions are unto believers from sin, but not for sin.²³ What is the meaning of that, you will say? God, in afflicting believers, doth not intend to punish them, as now laying on them the desert of their sin, for that is laid upon Christ alone; but he doth afflict them in part to be a help to preserve them from sin; I say, all afflictions to believers are to keep them from sin, rather than punishment unto them for sin. Yet, some will say, no men in the world are afflicted, but their afflictions are for sin. I answer, Yea, there are

the believer; but, if only a part, Christ’s satisfaction is not complete, and then the believer must be a co-bearer and co-saviour with Christ, as the Doctor observes; neither of which ought to be said. Gill.

²³ That is, they are not punishments for sins, or are in a way of vindictive wrath for them; but they are in love, and for the good of God’s people; they are fatherly chastisements for sins, in order to take them away, or purge them from them, or prevent them, or preserve from them, as the Doctor afterwards explains himself. Gill

that have been. The disciples put a question to Christ concerning the man that was born blind; “Whether did this man sin, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Saith Christ to them, “Neither he nor his parents;” not that neither of them had sinned, but that neither he, nor his parents had any sin, as a cause of that affliction or trial upon him; but that the power of God might be seen in him. So God, afflicting a believer, hath no respect unto sin, as if he did afflict for sin. For my own part, I cannot see how a man can say that Christ bore all the punishment of sin, if we bear any of it ourselves. And, if Christ did not bear it all, I cannot see how Christ can be a sufficient Saviour without some other to help him out, in that which he himself did not bear. I speak all this, beloved, the rather because when poor believers are crossed and afflicted in any way, they are presently ready to suspect that God hath cast them off for their sins, and is angry with them for sinning against him. I say, in respect of sin he hath committed, which he thus suspects, there is not the least drop of the displeasure of God, not the fruit of such displeasure comes near him. “But every son whom I love, I rebuke and chasten,” saith the Lord. God seeth that afflictions will purge, and so therefore he sends them. The father gives not his child a purge to make him sick, but to take away some bad humours that made him sick, and for the prevention of disease, or for the removal of some disease; that is the father’s end in purging the child. And this is the end why God afflicts his people; not for their sins, but to take them away; {Is.27:9;} that is, to prevent the hastiness and inconsiderateness of a believer, that he may not be so rash, running headstrong in his own ways, but may be the more considerate for the time to come. It is most certainly true beloved, that as soon as ever a person is a believer, he is so ingratiated into God, and with him, that there is nothing in the world from that instant, unto a believer, but mercy. God managing his mercy in his own way for the best to his; sometimes by the rod, as well as by sweet-meats; but still he runs in a way of mercy. “All things shall work together for good;” this is God’s way to believers. And if this could but be received of them; and that even then, when they are gold cast into the fire, that God, all that time they are in the fire, as the prophet Malachi speaks, sits “as a refiner;” then they would be more quiet in the expectation of that purity, in which

they shall come forth, when the time of their coming forth is; when you see the refiner cast his gold into the furnace, do you think he is angry with the gold, and means to cast it away? No, he sits as a refiner; that is, he stands carefully over the fire, and over the gold, and looks unto it, that not one grain be lost; and when the dross is severed, he will out with it presently, it shall be no longer there. Even so Christ sits as a refiner; when once his gold shall have its dross severed, then he takes out his gold, and it becomes as gold seven times purified in the fire. But still, I say, as a fruit of wrath, God never doth punish, or afflict, or chastise; {which word you may rather use, because it is the ordinary phrase of the gospel.} “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” {Rev.3:19}

In brief, Christ is the way from wrath, not only in respect of the present, but also in respect of the future; I mean a way from everlasting damnation. Give me a believer that hath set his footing truly in Christ, and he blasphemes Christ that dares serve a writ of damnation upon that person. Suppose a believe be overtaken in a gross sin, it is a desperate thing, in any man, so much as to serve a writ of damnation upon this believer; it is absolutely to frustrate, and make void the Mediatorship and Saviourship of Christ, to say that any believer {though he be fallen by infirmity} is in the estate of damnation. {Jn.5:24, I Thes.1:10, Rom.8:38,39} And I say unto thee, thyself, whoever thou art, that thou art ready to charge damnation upon thyself, when thou art overtaken; thou doest the greatest injury to the Lord Jesus Christ that can be; for in it thou directly overthrowest the fulness of the grace of Christ, and the fulness of the Satisfaction of Christ to the Father. Art thou a believer, and yet art thou in danger of damnation? Wherefore hath Christ suffered? Hath he died in vain? If he hath not died in vain, but hath borne thy damnation, how shall he pour forth this damnation upon thee again, unless he be unjust; which is blasphemy to speak.

But you will say this is presumption; then may a man go on, and do what he list, there is no fear of damnation; this is the way to take the bridle from men, and make them kick up their heels as the wild asses upon the mountains. I answer, it is true, were a man to be guided by himself, and to order his own way, according to the pleasure of his own will; but, beloved, you must know, that the same Christ that

hath borne the wrath of the Father, and the effects thereof, doth free poor sinners from damnation; the same Christ takes as strict an order, to restrain and keep in the spirits of a man, as to save that man. Beloved, although a wild ass, being loose, runs at random, yet this ass may be taken, and so tamed, that he may be set as loose as he was before; yet he will not run as unruly as he did before, by virtue of his being tamed. It is true, our natures themselves are mad; and, if they had the reins, would run wild; but you must know, that Christ breaks this wildness, and then he dare let a believer loose to that, in respect of which, an unbeliever, a wicked man, would take advantage to sin. The Lord discourses of Ephraim; “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; {Jer.31:18,19;} here is a wild bull, an unruly creature. You may be sure Ephraim was thus; yet God hampers Ephraim well enough for all this; “Convert thou me, and I shall be converted.” “Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded” within myself. Mark you, I pray, now let Ephraim loose; alas! Ephraim is ashamed. Ephraim would blush to look after that which he was mad after before; he is confounded within himself; he cannot tell which way to stir now, as before. Christ doth break the spirits of him; so that there is not now the licentiousness in him, through the power of Christ, which was naturally in him, till the power of Christ came upon him.

Why must not hell and damnation be a bridle to keep men in, will you say? I answer, marks what the Psalmist speaks, “thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” {Psa.110:3} Here you see how tame the people of Christ are. Thy people are a willing people. How so? By fear of damnation? No such thing. But in the day of thy power, and in the beauty of holiness, they shall be a willing people. First, the power of Christ comes over a person, that frames his spirit to a willingness and aptness; then comes the beauty of holiness, that wins, persuades, allures, and draws them to willingness; and where there is a willing spirit to walk with Christ, there is no danger of taking liberty. The philosophers observe a rule, that the will is not compelled; a man cannot constrain his will. Let the will of a person but be to the pleasure of Christ,

nothing can constrain him to go beyond Christ; he may haply be overreached, and be over-taken, but he will never break loose; he will never run away, though the gate stands open on every side. The brass and pasture are so sweet that Christ hath put a believer into; that though there be no bounds to keep in such a soul, yet it will never go out {I Pet.1:5} of this fat pasture, to feed in a barren common. Therefore, in answer to the objectors, who naturally think there is a way open to such licentiousness, by taking away all wrath from a believer, and that therefore he will break out into all manner of excess, I tell you, the power of Christ restrains him. Thus I have dispatched the second thing, from whence Christ is the way; he is the way from sin and wrath; wrath in the affection, wrath in the effects of it.

I come now, in the next place, to consider how Christ is the way, not only from sin and wrath, but the way, and the only way, to grace and glory. Grace, in scripture, admits of a double acceptation, proper and improper. We usually take grace for that which is improperly grace; for we commonly call grace those divine qualities and virtues, and holy dispositions and actions, wherewith we are possessed, by which we do improve and employ ourselves in the world. This we usually call grace; and in some sense, it is grace; but that which is most properly grace, is nothing else but merely favour and bounty, and loving kindness itself; and so, consequently, all sanctification is not, so properly grace itself, as the fruit of grace. God first casts his favour and loving-kindness upon a person, then out of his favour flow the several fruits of his loving-kindness; and the fruits are those fruits of the Spirit, frequently mentioned by the Apostle. Now Christ is a way to grace in both these respects; Christ is a way to favour and lovingkindness in God; Christ is a way to all fruits or graces, as you call them.

Christ is a way to loving-kindness itself, and the favour of God; this, loving-kindness and favour of God, consists in these branches; first, in a willing reconciliation of God, unto an alienated creature. A person is then said to be received into grace, when he hath been cast off, and forbidden to come near; as when princes cast men out of their favour, they confine them, and remove them from them, that they shall not be near the court; now when princes are pleased to cast a fresh aspect upon those persons again, and so

call them to court, and to be friends with them, this is properly grace. So beloved, after God seems to have cast off a person, and to put him far off from himself, and to remove him out of his sight, to confine him from coming near him; when he will return to him again, and will show him the light of his countenance, that he did formerly hide, this is properly favour. The Apostle, you shall find, doth expressly mention this Reconciliation of God, and ascribes this grace merely unto Christ alone, "Ye who were sometimes afar off;" mark but the expression, "hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ;" {Eph.2:13;} here you see the ingratiating reconciliation by the blood of Christ. "God was in Christ," saith the Apostle, "reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them;" {II Cor.5:19;} in Christ reconciling, and therefore "Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant." {Heb.8:6} Nay the Apostle tells us expressly, that Christ is the only Mediator, and there is no other to reconcile men to God, but Christ alone. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." {I Tim.2:5} So, we see plainly, to be at peace with God, there must be only the Lord Jesus Christ that must make peace; he himself is the way.

I remember a passage in Job, when there seemed to be a variance between God and him; first, Job tugs at a pitiful stand, "I cannot answer him," saith, Job, speaking of God; why so? For there is no "daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both;" {Job 9:33;} as much as to say, there is no hope of agreement with God, till another interpose himself, and be a daysman; that is, hath power over us both. Such effectual umpires between men are indifferent, and have both parties in difference in their power, to command the one, and the other; to command the creditor to yield and to prevail with the debtor to pay as much as he is able; and this umpire is Christ alone.

There are many other expressions of God's grace; of his loving-kindness and favour, and it is plain, throughout the whole scripture, that Christ is the only way to all. As to that adoption that the Apostle speaks of, {when he breaks out into admiration} saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" {I Jn.3:1} "Is it a small matter to you" {saith David, speaking to some of the servants of Saul, persuading him to marry

the king's daughter} "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in Law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" {I Sam.18:23} So say I to you, "Is it a small matter to you to be the sons of God?" Oh; what great love! But this great grace and favour is only by Jesus Christ. In Galatians 4:4,5, it is plainly Christ that brings this grace of adoption, to make us sons. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Here you see, all that Christ doth is to this end; that at length, through that he hath done, we might receive the adoption of sons. As Christ is a way unto the pure grace, and mere favour, and loving-kindness of God; so also unto all the fruits of grace, all the manifestations of it in the expression of God's loving-kindness in the fruits of the Spirit.

To give you some instances; the first of all these kinds of the grace of God, that he doth ever bestow upon a person is the opening of his eyes to see himself filthy and to see what he is; here begins a closing with Christ, to see a need of him, and to see the usefulness of him being received. Now mark this great business, of the opening of the eyes of a person, and you shall see that Christ is a way unto it; {Isa.42:6-8;} there the Father doth treat with Christ, and in his treaty he speaks thus to him, I will "give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." You see that it is Christ that must open the blind eyes of men. Beloved, men are mistaken that think that the Law makes them to see their own vileness; for a gracious sight of our vileness is the only work of Christ. The Law is a looking-glass that is able to represent the filthiness of a person; but the Law gives not eyes to see that filthiness; bring a looking-glass and set it before a blind man, he seeth no more spots in his face, than if he had none at all; though the glass be a good glass, yet the glass cannot give eyes; yet, if he had eyes, the glass might represent his filthiness. The Apostle James compares the Law to a looking-glass and that is all the Law can do; to have a faculty to represent; but it doth not give a faculty to see what it doth represent; it is Christ alone that doth open the eyes of men, to behold their own vileness and filthiness; and when Christ will

open the eyes, then a man shall see himself what he is.

Secondly, repentance is a great grace; yet you shall find, beloved, {Acts 5:31,} that it is exclusively the work of Christ to give repentance unto men; for God hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel. It is Christ that grants repentance unto life; and if ever you will repent, with a Gospel Repentance, either you must fetch it from Christ, he must be the way, or you must go without it.

Faith is a grace of graces, the root of all graces to believers, and this is properly Christ and none but Christ, that works faith in a believer; the Apostle speaks this expressly. "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." {Heb.12:2} Christ is the Author, it is he that begets it.

Thirdly; consider the whole spiritual life; for Christ is the only way to all spiritual life whatsoever. "I live," {saith Paul} "yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." There is no life, but as Christ lives in men. Whence is the natural life of man? It is from the soul; the soul once separated from the body, is dead; so long as the soul is united to the body, the man is alive. Christ is the life of every believing soul; Christ is he that frames and gives life to men. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." {Eph.2:1} Christ it is that quickens men when they are dead in trespasses and sins. And in John 5:25, you have this admirable expression, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." There is no life but by Christ alone; he is the way to all spiritual life whatsoever. So in brief, beloved, there is not a scrap {as you may say} pertaining to a Christian, but it comes from Christ alone.

Fourthly, God hath therefore filled Christ full of all things that we might fetch all from him. The Apostle tells us expressly, "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, tells us to what purpose he was "full of grace and truth," saying, "and of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace." The Psalmist, {Ps.68:18,} hath this expression, "thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." The Apostle, quoting that text, turns the words thus; "wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and

gave gifts unto men;” {Eph.4:8;} it is as much as to say, that God bequeathed as much to Christ, as shall serve for his body; and this he distributes to the body, according to the proportionable need of it. The head is first the fountain, and hath all animal spirits planted in it; then doth it from itself derive all those animal spirits to every part, from whence all have their several motions. So that, I say, the supply of all the believer’s wants concerning grace, be it in matters of mortification of sin; be it in the performance of duties of piety, mercy, and justice, or any other whatsoever; the supply of all must come from Christ alone, as he speaks himself. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” {Rev.1:8} The beginning and the end of all things. “All my springs” {saith the Psalmist, Ps.87:7;} “are in thee.” He speaks of Christ in the name of God, as if God spake to Christ his Son; “all my springs are in thee;” therefore you shall find God always dealing with men, as Pharaoh dealt in Egypt with his own people; they came complaining of their wants to Pharaoh; “Go to Joseph,” {saith Pharaoh} “hear what he saith;” he turns all over to Joseph. Thus doth God deal with men; “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;” with God the Father; therefore, Christ saith, “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;” so that Christ is Judge alone; as Christ will dispose of all things, so his Father sets to his seal, and underwrites his hand, and never examines what Christ doth; but every deed that is signed by Christ, the Father without any more ado, seals it, and manages all things by the hand of Christ; therefore, Christ saith, in the last of Matthew, “All power is given unto me, both in heaven and in earth.” The Father made all over to him, everything. The truth is, beloved, the Godhead is absolutely a Being of itself, {Deut.6:4;} but this Godhead was pleased to unite the humanity to itself, and the Godhead having the humanity united to it, is one person.²⁴ Thus it pleased Christ to manage all things in the world, not in the Godhead alone, but as the Godhead hath the manhood united to it. You must not conceive, when God makes over the managing of things to Christ that he sits still. But the Godhead hath now the manhood united to itself; so

it is Christ, God and man; that works together; and, by this kind of way, there is nearer and better access for us unto God; because here is an humanity that is of some relation unto us, and so of near acquaintance with us. The Godhead in its simple nature is of too remote a distance for us to come near.

Fifthly, moreover, Christ is not only a way to grace, but the increasing of it is in Christ. The Apostle {Col.2:10} tells us, that “we are complete in him, who is the head of the body, the head of all principalities;” not only that we have substance and being, but that we are complete in him; and, in the latter end of the chapter, the Apostle follows the allusion of the head and body, and saith, that the parts “having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” {Col.2:19} When the parts are united to the head, and the head, through the veins and nerves conveys nourishment to those parts, then the parts not only live, but increase with the increase of God. The Apostle, {I Pet.2:4,5} saith, “to whom coming, as unto a living stone,” {speaking to believers,} “ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” He doth not say, stones that have life, but “lively stones;” they have more than bare life; nay, further, as lively stones are built up together. There is a growing up by the power of Christ, in coming to the “living-stone,” as the Apostle doth there call Christ.

And that is not all neither; for we have not only growth by the grace of Christ, but restoration {Ps.23:3,} and recovery in case of relapse. Suppose a believer fall, the same Christ that gave him life, and set him upon his legs, must raise him up again when he is down. “Though I fall, yet shall I not be cast down,” saith he; that is, I shall not be left, but shall be raised again. “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.” {Is.35:10} They shall return to Zion; they were of Zion before; a man is not said to return, except he were in the place before, and so is coming again; so the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion. How? They are ransomed of the Lord; for it is the ransom of Christ that brings them back from bondage to their Zion again; and when he brings them back, he brings them back “with everlasting joy

²⁴ That is, the Godhead, as subsisting in the Son of God, is a Person of itself, and taking the humanity into union with it, both became one person. Gill

upon their heads;" they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing fly away.

Thus I have endeavored to declare the main thing, in what kind of way Christ is a way from a state of sin and wrath, to a state of grace. I should have further considered what kind of way Christ is, and upon what grounds Christ is become such a way as he is; but I consider the season; I shall not therefore trespass upon your patience, though my fingers itch to be dealing in that which remains. There is an abundance of excellency behind. Christ is a free way; Christ is a near way; Christ is a way of quick riddance of all business you have to do in the way; Christ is a firm way, for there is no fear of sinking; Christ is a satisfying and pleasant way. All his "ways are ways of pleasantness." {Pv.3:17} Christ is a safe way, there is a continual guard and conduct in that way; Christ is an easy way to hit; "way-faring men, though fools," {saith Isaiah} "shall not err therein." Christ is a spacious way, "thou hast set my feet in a large room," saith David. Now all this is founded upon the good pleasure of God; who will have Christ to be the way; it is founded upon the interest that Christ hath in God; it is founded upon the purchase of Christ that hath bought this for man; it is likewise founded upon the conquest of Christ, as he makes his own way, and beats all off that keeps thee from finding this way; and it is founded, lastly, upon his bowels to the sons of men, that can never pass over the gulch, till he hath made himself a bridge for them. These things I should have showed you by setting forth the excellency of this Way; but of these hereafter.

3 Christ The Only Way {3}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6}

I have a word or two to speak more fully, if possible it may be, to satisfy such as are not fully resolved in the things I formerly delivered. Christ, I said, is the way from wrath, from the wrath of the Father; from wrath in its affection, {as I may so speak;} from wrath in the fruits of this affection of wrath. I delivered this position indeed; that 'the punishment, or the rod of God, or rather chastisement, is not for sin, but from sin.' Some stumble at the expression, peradventure through mistake. In brief therefore, beloved, to clear

both myself and your judgments, if it be possible; when I say that believers are not afflicted for sin, I mean thus; God, when he afflicts a believer, he hath not an eye to the desert of his sin, and there upon doth lay part of this desert upon his back; for Christ hath borne the whole desert of sin upon his own back. Whatsoever desert of sin the believer doth bear, Christ did not bear it, or else God takes satisfaction twice for one thing. Mark it well, I pray, beloved, if the Lord will scourge a believer, as now pouring out upon him what his transgressions hath deserved, wherefore did Christ die? Christ died to satisfy for the fault of sin; and, in his death, God was actually satisfied, as you shall find it in Isaiah 53. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." {vs.11} With what was he satisfied? He was satisfied with "the travail of his soul;" with the burden his soul bare, with the punishment of sin that was upon him. If God was satisfied with the "travail of his soul," how can God come to exact a new satisfaction by pouring out his wrath for sin upon believers? To be satisfied, and to ask more is a contradiction; for either he was not satisfied, or, being satisfied, he could ask no more. In brief therefore, beloved, consider thus much, there is not the least action, or rather intention of any revenge, for a sin committed, when the Lord in any kind afflicts his people; all the revenge that sin deserves, Christ hath taken away and hath borne it upon his own back; and therefore, he is said to "save to the uttermost {Heb.7:25,} them that come to God by him." He saves to the utmost, saith the Apostle; he hath not left a dram, nor a jot behind, not so much as the least scatterings of wrath to light upon the head of a believer, for whose sake he bare the indignation of the Lord. Whereupon the very nature of affliction in general is altered and changed; as death in particular; it was the wages of sin at first; it is become the bed of rest now. "They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness," {Is.57:2,} saith the prophet. Afflictions were the rod of God's anger; they are now the gentle purges of a tender Father. God heretofore afflicted for sin, now God afflicts men from sin. "This is all the fruit," saith the prophet, "to take away his sin;" {Is.27:9;} not to take away the present sin, as if affliction did make an end, and so blot out transgression; this doth directly strike at the heart of

Christ himself.²⁵ But “this is all the fruit to take away sin,” that is, to break off sin, to prevent sin. “Before I was afflicted {saith David} I went astray, but now have I learned to keep thy Law;” therefore, {saith he} “it is good for me that I have been afflicted;” in this regard, because of prevention. {Ps.119:71}

If you will but carry it clearly without carping, or a spirit that seeks contention and quarrelling, you never need to stumble at such a position as this; for afflictions are the smiles of God, as gracious as the choicest embraces. God never manifests a loving stroking of a soul, more than he doth, when he afflicts it, to make his love appear in these afflictions. And the truth is, as Christ has purchased rest and peace for believers, so he hath likewise purchased afflictions for them too; the wisdom of God seeing afflictions as useful as dandlings themselves; but still, I say, this remains firm, that Christ is a way from all wrath whatsoever, as it is the manifestation of God’s displeasure unto the creatures sinning; and thereby pouring out the desert of this sinfulness, or the fruit of the desert of this sinfulness, upon them; Christ is a way to the state of grace; grace in respect of favour, grace in respect of the fruits thereof; and this we have dispatched.

The next thing under consideration is, what kind of way Christ is to those that come to the Father by him? I shall speak as briefly as possible I may. Take notice, in general, that the Lord hath laid out Christ as a way, with all the possible conveniences that may either win a people into this way, or satisfy and refresh a people that are in this way. {Cant.5:1} The Lord hath so furnished Christ, the way, with all possible accommodations, as there cannot be devised what the heart of man himself can desire; but he shall find it in this way, Christ; so that all I shall speak of this subject is, that as it may give abundance of light, so you may apply it all along, by way of motive to stir you up, to quicken you to set footing into this way, in respect of those several conveniences that do accompany it.

In the first place, there is this great and ineffable excellency and accommodation in Christ, the way, that he is a free way for all comers to enter into, without any cause of fear, that they shall trespass by entering; for Christ is a free way, I say; a way that costs

nothing; a way barred up to no person whatsoever; a way whose gates are cast off from the hinges; nay, rather, a way that hath no gates at all unto it; a cheap way to us, but a costly way indeed unto the Father, and to Christ too. O beloved; a man might study a while to find out, whether there be more preciousness in Christ himself, as he is our way, or in the fitting of Christ to be our way. The Person of Christ is invaluable, there is nothing to be compared with him; but considering him as our way to salvation, whether there be more preciousness in that, or in the fitting of him for it, is not so easy to determine. Ye are bought with a price; {saith the Apostle;} not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” {I Pet.1:18,19} Observe it, I pray, that Christ might be a fit way for us to the Father, it cost the Father and Christ himself that in comparison of which, silver and gold, and the most precious things in the world, are called but corruptible things; which makes the Apostle break out into a way of expostulation and admiration, rather than into a way of affirmation. Oh behold, “what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” {I Jn.3:1} Greater love than this can no man show, than to lay down his life for his enemies. What did it cost the Father? It cost him that which was most precious to him of all things in the world; it cost him his own Son, not a cessation of the being of his Son, but the bitterness of his Son; though a man doth not lose his child, yet it goes to his heart to see his child tormented; much more when he himself must be forced to be the tormentor. Abraham thought God put him hard to it, when he must be the butcher, to slay his own and only son, his dear Isaac. God, the Father, was put to it as much, nay, much more; for in Abraham the thing was but offered, God would not have him do it actually; yet it went to his heart that he should be appointed to do it; but it would have cut his heart severely if he had actually done it, if he had cut the throat of Isaac. If nothing could content him before he had a child, {“what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless;”} what would Abraham have said, if receiving a child, he should have been made a butcher to his own child? Yet the Father was put to this, to make Christ a way to believers. Christ was his only beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. {Mt.3:17} “I was daily his delight, {speaking of the Father and

²⁵ For it is Christ’s work to take every present sin from off the conscience of the believer, by the application of his blood and sacrifice; hence he is said to be “the Lamb of God that taketh away,” that continues to take away, “the sins of the world.” Gill

Christ under the notion, wisdom} rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth." {Pv.8:30,31} Must it not come near unto him to part with such a Son? Nay, must it not go near to him that he himself must not only be a spectator of all that cruelty, but the principal actor himself in the tragedy? He doth not leave Christ to men, but when men could not fetch blood enough, he takes the rod into his own hand, and will fetch it himself from his beloved Son. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." {Is.53:10} It did not only please the Lord that men should bruise him; but "it pleased the Lord" himself "to bruise him." It was a strange apprehension, that God should look upon the anguish of the soul of Christ, and, instead of breaking out into furiousness against the instruments of cruelty, he himself should be satisfied with beholding it; as much as to say, it did his heart good to see it. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" not only satisfied towards men, but satisfied himself; it gave him content to see the travail of his Son.

Certainly, beloved, the bowels of God must infinitely be beyond the reach of the creature, towards a poor sinner, that he could go so far in a contrary way to his own Son; that there might be the fruit of these bowels to his enemies. One would think, God should rejoice to see the confusion of his enemies; and not rejoice to see the bitterness of the travail of the soul of his Son, that his enemies might escape scot-free; but this it cost the Father; he must not only behold, or allow the suffering Of his Son, but he must be an actor of it himself; nay, he must be pleased in it. Certainly, the Father was exceedingly pleased with it, because it doth commend the great end of the Father; for the main end he drove at was the salvation of sinners; and this, in his infinite wisdom, he saw the fittest way; that it could not be done, but by this way; therefore it pleased him, in that his purpose should not be frustrated of his end. You know, when a man hath a great mind to a thing, if the way he goes in prospers not, he is displeased; if it prosper, he is contented in it, he delights to see his business succeed; so was it with the Father.

You may see what it cost Christ too, as well as the

Father; the Father must resign his part in his Son; a great matter, not only to part with him, in respect of death, but in a manner to part with him in life too; "My God, my God, {saith Christ} why hast thou forsaken me?" Here, you see, God parts with him in life; and Christ must part with his life, as well as the Father must part with the Son; nay, in some manner, Christ must part with that which is better than his life, with the glory and majesty of his Divinity. He did not part with the essence of his Divinity, but with the glory thereof; as Phil.2:6-8, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Christ did empty himself, as the meaning of the word is; he did put off and lay aside the majesty and glory he had, that he might seem to be a mere Carpenter's Son. For a king all his life-time to undergo the notion of a beggar, and not to recover out of this estate all his whole life, but even to lie down in this low condition in the grave, it would seem a great loss unto him; man would reckon this a great matter, for a king to debase himself so low; yet it cost Christ more than this; for look upon all the sufferings of Christ; look upon death itself, together with the reproach and shame thereof. The death he died, was called "a cursed death of the cross;" although he was not ashamed, that is, he despised the shame; yet shame and reproach he must bear. So, if we look upon God and Christ as making a way for men, it is not a free way, it is not a cheap way, but looking upon ourselves, that have received the benefit of this way, and this Christ, it is a free way indeed, free for man without any cost or charge; free, as he is a way to all sorts of men, none excepted, none prohibited; whoever will, may set footing in Christ. There is nothing can bar one person more than another from entering into Christ as a way. I know beloved, that this seems harsh to the ears of some people, that there is no difference to be made among men, not only poor, as well as rich, but that the wicked, as well as godly, are admitted; that is strange. But let me tell you, Christ is a free way for a drunkard, for a whore-master, for a harlot, an enemy to Christ; I say, Christ is as free a way for such a person to enter into him, as for the most godly person in the world.²⁶

²⁶ That is, who has been such a person; not that continues

But do not mistake me; I do not say, Christ is a free way to walk in him, and yet to continue in such a condition; for Christ will never leave a person in such a filthiness, to whom he hath given to enter in himself. Mark well what I say; but for entrance into him, Christ is free a way for the vilest sort of sinners, as for any person under heaven. If Christ hath given a heart to a sinner, to set footing into himself; that is, to receive, to take him for his Christ; if Christ hath given him a heart to take him for his Christ in reality, to take him truly and unfeignedly; Christ is a way for such a person to the Father, though he be the vilest person under heaven. And he is to him a way unto the Father, even while he is ungodly, before he is amended; and he may take his part in this Christ, as an ungodly person, as well as when he is righteous. In this regard I say, Christ is a free way; God looks for nothing in the world from the sons of men, be they what kind of men soever, he looks for nothing from them, to have a right to Christ; but he did freely give Christ unto them, without considering of anything that they might bring along with them.

Nay, more, God doth not only not look for anything, but he will not take notice, nor regard any discouragements in men, to keep them from the inheritance, to keep him off from giving unto them a right unto Christ.

I would fain have this point cleared, and fully and exactly proved, because, I fear that many persons will not receive it; but, I tell you, we must not be afraid to set forth the praise of the glory of God's grace, as fearing the squeamishness of some men. First, therefore consider, that Christ is delivered over unto men, to be their way unto the Father, of mere gift, of free gift; what is freer than a gift? That Christ is delivered over to be a way to the Father, by a mere and absolute gift is most plainly expressed. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people. {Is.42:6} In matter of gift, what is there in the richest man in the world, more than in the lowliest beggar, to partake of it, supposing the thing that comes to him as gift? A beggar can take a gift as well as the richest man;

so, as is presently observed; the sense is, that such are free to come to Christ, notwithstanding their former life, and that without any conditions and qualifications fitting them for his acceptance; and so stand upon as good a foot with respect to Christ's free and hearty admittance of them into him, the way, as the most godly person in the world. Gill

nay, a thief, that is one condemned to the gallows, may receive a gift of the king, as well as the greatest favorite in court; and, if anything be tendered as a mere gift unto a thief, his very being a thief, and his being ready to be executed, is no prejudice in the world to bar him from participating of that which shall be bestowed upon him as a gift; if Christ be a free gift unto men, then it must follow, to whom the Father will reach out Christ; there is nothing in that person to hinder the participating of him. But some will say, though Christ be a gift, yet he is a gift upon condition.

I answer, I cannot say but there is a flat contradiction to say that Christ is a free gift, and yet conditions required. What are the conditions in a Covenant, but a mere bargain and sale? I will do this, and thou shalt do that; do this and thou shalt have that; what difference is there between this, and a bargain and sale? That God should require conditions of men, is but to receive Christ upon bargain and sale; but Christ must be really and actually a gift. When the king gives a pardon to a thief, what are the conditions? Peradventure the thief can do his king service, if his life be spared; but if his life be spared upon service doing, it is not a gift, but a bargain, as much as to make contract, thus, do such a piece of service, then life is yours. I say that this derogates from the nature of a gift, that there should be a condition required; and the Gospel, that is, Christ given over to men, cannot be said to be freely given over to them, if man must buy him. Mistake me not, I speak not all this while against holiness and righteousness that becomes a people to whom Christ is a way; for holy and righteous they shall be; Christ will make them holy, and put his Spirit into them, to change their hearts and to work upon their spirits; but this is not the condition required to partake of Christ; Christ himself gives himself, and then he bestows these things when he is given. I say, Christ is given to men first, before they do anything in the world; and all they do, they do by Christ present in them. "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." We do not so much live but by the life of Christ which is life in us. All the actions of life proceed from the soul, now present; how then comes the actions of the soul to be a condition to partake of the soul, that gives life, and by its presence, works such actions? Christ is the soul of every believer that animates and

acts the believer in all things whatsoever; must not this life, Christ, be put into a believer, before he can actuate life, which is a stream that springs from that life? How then can this be a condition to receive, to have Christ, when Christ is first come, by whom these things are produced that are called conditions, and afterwards wrought, he himself being present to work them? So, say I, God bestows Christ upon men to be a way to bring them to the Father; he is an absolute and free gift; there is no other motive that Christ should be anyone's Saviour than merely the good pleasure of the Father, the bowels of God himself. "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be polluted; and I will not give my glory unto another." {Is.48:11} Here is the freeness of Christ to a person coming to him, when he comes merely for God's sake; and God merely upon his good pleasure will do it, because he will. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," {saith Paul,} "so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." {Rom.9:15-17} So that Christ becomes a way unto them, not out of their will, not out of their disposition, not out of their holy walkings, but out of that mercy that proceeds out of the mere will of God. The Lord's own good pleasure is the only fountain and spring thereof. Beloved, I beseech you, seriously ponder and consider, that the Gospel is therefore called the Gospel, because it is glad tidings unto men; and so the angel interpreted it, "Behold, I bring glad tidings." Why glad tidings? In this respect glad, the poor sinner, he is a broken creature; nay more, he is a dead creature. "Ye, who were dead in trespasses and sins." That life now is reached out unto such a person, that is a dead person; herein it is plain, that there comes forth that grace from the Lord himself that a creature being dead, who can act nothing towards life, yet he shall receive life. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." {Jn.5:25} How come they by life! Is there any action of theirs towards life? They are dead; it is the voice of the Son of God that puts life into their dead souls; and it is glad tidings, that though the creature can do nothing, yet Christ brings enough with him from the fountain of the Father, to bestow upon them, to bring them to him. {Jn.15:5, Is. 26:12} To show

you a plain scripture, that Christ becomes a way to the Father, merely as a free gift, without any thing in man required, look into Isaiah 55:1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," saith the prophet; and then he falls upon an abjuration in the next verse; "wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Here is the closure of all; dost thou thirst, that is, hast thou a mind really to Christ, that Christ should say really to thy soul, "I am thy salvation?" It may be thou dost suspect, saying within thyself, Christ is not my portion; I am not fit for Christ; I am a great sinner, I must be holy first; this is bringing a price to Christ; but you must come without money, and without price; and what is this to come without money and without price? {Rev.3:18} It is nothing but to take the offer of Christ, these waters of life, to take them merely and simply as a gift brought, and this is a sure mercy indeed; these are the sure mercies of David, when a man receives the things of Christ, only because Christ gives them; not in regard to any action of ours, as the ground of taking them; I mean, in regard of any action of ours, that we must bring along with us, that must concur that we may partake of this gift. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." {Jn.7:37} Christ speaks there thus to his people, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely;" {Hos.14:4;} that is, I will love them for mine own sake. The Apostle speaks excellently concerning this free grace of God bestowed in Christ upon them; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." {Rom.3:23,24} Mark brethren, first he takes off all creatures, and all that a creature can do, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and then he shows how we should partake of Justification, namely, freely through Christ. The Apostle speaks at large concerning the participation of Christ, to be our Christ of mere free gift, where he makes a large comparison of our participation of sin from Adam,

and of our participation of life from Christ; and still in every passage, speaking of participating of life from and by Christ, he comes in with these expressions of gift, and that it comes freely. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." {Rom.5:15} There is grace, and the gift by grace; so running in this expression in the 17th verse, where he saith, "for if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Still, I say, observe it, that we partake of life in Christ, and by Christ; and it runs altogether upon this strain, that it comes by mere gift.

Do but look in Ephesians 2:4-10, and there you shall perceive how clear and full the Apostle is in this business, that Christ is made a way to life absolutely and merely of free gift. "But God," saith he, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Mark how he goes on; "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Still he runs upon mercy and grace, and works he excludes, that no creature might boast.

If anything were done on our part to partake of Christ, we might have whereof to boast. So likewise speaking of Abraham, "for if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" {Rom.4:2;} and thus we should have to glory, if we should have the least hand in the participating of Christ; therefore God would give Christ freely unto his creature; because man should have no stroke in participating of him, that so it might be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that we should not glory; yea, "that no flesh should glory in his presence." "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more

grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." {Rom.11:6} And therefore the same Apostle tells us that from this grace "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." {Eph.3:12} In regard that Christ is given unto men to be a way unto the Father, and merely of free gift, hence it is that we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Should we regard our own works or qualifications, there would be some mixture of distrust; we should have some fear that God would find out such and such a thought; therefore we could never come with boldness and confidence, if we did not come in Christ as a free gift bestowed upon us; for if there were one condition, and the least failing in that condition, God might take advantage upon that default, and so possibly we might miscarry; and we being jealous and privy to it, that there are faults in all we do, we should be "subject all our lives to bondage," {as saith the Apostle,} and should fear that God will take advantage of all that which is undone on our part; and so not fulfill what he hath promised on his part. But seeing we have Christ bestowed as free gift of the Father, "we come with boldness and access to the throne of grace." To establish, or a little more to clear this, look in Hebrews 10:18-20. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." How come we to have boldness? Through the new and living way made by the blood of Christ; not a new and living way by his blood and our actions, but by his blood; that is, only by his blood, merely by his actions; and so passed over freely to us; this is that which makes us come with so much boldness.

Look into the closure of all the Scriptures, and you shall find there can be nothing imagined more free; nay, so free, as the participating of Christ to be the way to the Father; nothing so free as this. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, {mark the expression,} let him take the water of life freely." {Rev.22:17} Hast thou but a mind to Christ? Come and take the water of life freely; it is thine, it is given to thee; there is nothing looked for from thee to take thy portion in Christ; thine he

is as well as any person under Heaven; therefore, you shall find our Saviour exceedingly complain of this, as a great fault, “you will not come to me, that you might have life.” Yet, “all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;” {Jn.6:37;} upon no terms. Thou mayest object a thousand things, that if thou shouldst come and conclude Christ is thy Christ, he will reject thee, and that it will be but presumption; but, in so doing, thou rejectest thyself, and forsakest thy own mercy; but Christ saith, whosoever he be, what person soever, “I will in no wise cast him off, if he come unto me.”

Secondly, as Christ is a free way, made over to men by free gift, without any thing in man to partake of this Christ, so he is a safe way to those that do take him; I say, Christ is a safe way, a secure way; here is no danger of miscarriage in Christ. Let men take any other way in the world to heaven, but Christ, and there are thousands of dangers, and thousands of ways to miscarry; but there is no way that a soul can possibly miscarry, that takes Christ for his way. “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat,” {saith Christ, Lk.22:31, speaking to Peter;} “but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;” nay, he undertakes so, for them that come to him, “that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.” Believers that receive Christ have not only the guard of angels to secure them, but they have the guard of the Spirit of Christ, that shall lead them; not only lead them into truth, but lead them into all truth. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” {Jn.16:13} The Spirit will not take a believer and lead him by the hand, and set him into the way, {as a friend doth, to lead one a mile out of town, and then leave him alone to go the rest of the way;} no, but the Spirit leads him into truth, and into all truth; he will be a companion of the soul, to secure it; a conduit to the very harbour and haven itself. It is a privilege of this nation, that merchants may have a convoy, a navy royal, it may be to go out with them, but it will hardly come in with them; therefore there is not absolute security in this convoy; but he that takes Christ, he hath the Spirit to go in and out before him; to go forth, to come back, to be all the way with him; nay, he hath given Himself to be his protector. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” {Heb.13:5} In all other ways there may be danger, in respect of rubs, in respect of

difficulties or troubles that may arise in them; but, do but look in Isaiah and you shall see what safety there is in this way of Christ, unto those that make choice of him, in respect of any danger that may lie in the way, as the prophet tells us that “an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein;” and verse 9, {mark the security} “no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there;” no lion, no ravenous beast, nothing to make them miscarry. If a man haply travel through a wilderness, there may be bears and lions; as in New England, and in other foreign parts, they lie open to many dangers; so let a man choose righteousness; I mean his own righteousness, as his way to heaven; Oh; what a world of danger lies here! Satan hath continual advantage against him from that righteousness; his own corrupt heart is ready to swallow him up; but there is no lion in the way, Christ.

Thirdly, as Christ is a safe way, so he is a lightsome way; Christ, I say, is a lightsome way to the Father. Solomon tells us, “truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.” It is a great heaviness and bitterness to the spirit of a traveler to be benighted; to be overtaken with darkness is very uncomfortable; therefore, when we come to the summer seasons, they are the best seasons for travelers, because lightsome and long. All ways to the Father, but Christ, are mere darkness; nothing but darkness; Christ is the light of the world. “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” {Jn.14:26} “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” {Jn.1:9}

Fourthly, Christ {and this is an excellent consideration} is a near way; all that take him to come to the Father by him, have a short way to the Father, in comparison of any other way whatsoever. Christ is the string, other ways are the bow; all other ways are compasses about; nay, they are labyrinths, in which men lose themselves, after they are wearied with toil; Christ is a near way to the Father. “He is near that justifieth me;” who shall condemn me? {Isa.50:8} But more especially observe how near a way Christ is to the Father; you have it excellently described in

Romans. "But the righteousness which is of faith, {that is, of Christ,} speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; Or, who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead; but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." {10:6-8} Mark, when a man chooses Christ for his way to the Father, there needs no clambering up to heaven to fetch down Christ, nor digging to the bottom of the deep to fetch him up; Christ is such a way to the Father, that instead of bringing the man to the Father, he brings the Father down to him; "the word is nigh unto thee, even in thy heart." Therefore, the Apostle tells us, "but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." {Eph.2:13} Just as if there were such a course taken, that the Indies {whence are all treasures} should be brought and set at the suburbs of London; just so doth Christ bring the Father unto men, and becomes such a way, as that there is but one step, from the lowest condition of sinfulness to the highest of being a son of God. There is but one step between the Father and them that choose Christ to be the way. And therefore the first thing Christ preached, was this, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What is that? It is present. You have heard much, I suppose, of your northern passage to the Indies; a great deal of time hath been spent to find such a cut, that the voyage may be done in half the time. O look upon Christ, he is such a way to the Father, that the voyage is done in a step from a state of ungodliness to the state of Justification, to the state of Salvation settled upon the soul. Christ is such a way, that there is but one step from one term to another. Look now but upon the old way of the Law, there must be a continuance "in all things written in the book of the Law to do them;" there must be a going on to perfection of righteousness, before men can come to Justification unto life and salvation. This is a long way!

Now, how near hath Christ made the way unto the Father? This near, "he that believeth, shall be saved." Let me be bold to tell you that you are in as full an estate of Justification before God; you are in as true a state of Salvation, you that are believers; as they that are now already in heaven.²⁷ "Believe in the Lord Jesus,

²⁷ That is, their state of salvation is real, and they are in as safe a state, and have as good a right and claim as the saints in heaven,

and thou shalt be saved." Such a near way is Christ!

Yet still people will be caviling, where are good works all this while? What, justified by faith alone! Saved by Christ alone! Let me tell you, if Christ be the way, works are not the way, except they be Christ.²⁸ But must not we work? Yea, but for other purposes; the Lord hath propounded other ends for which we are to work. "For ye are bought with a price; {that is accomplished,} therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." {I Cor.6:20} "Being delivered {our safety is past} out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." {Lk.1:74,75} Do we serve towards deliverance? Then deliverance is not before serving; but saith Zachariah, "Being delivered - we serve." First, we are delivered from wrath, before we step a step into any duties whatsoever; for we do not the duty to be delivered, but we do the duty because we are delivered.

And seeing all things are settled by Christ for us, of free gift, all we do is for Christ himself; I say, all that we do, we do for Christ, not for ourselves.²⁹ If we do it for ourselves, we do but labour in vain. Suppose we could compass never so much good by doing, it is but labour in vain, it was compassed beforehand for us. If a man will run a hundred miles for money, if that money be proffered to him before he step out of his house, at his door, his journey is in vain; seeing he might have had it before he stepped out of his door; and that which was the end of his journey, might have been attained without troubling himself at all. Christ comes and brings Justification, Loving-kindness and Salvation, he lays them down, presents them, delivers them to the heart; when we are ungodly, he enters into Covenant, that we should become his. What need then all this travel for life and salvation, seeing it is here already?

Objection: But, seeing we get nothing by it, this is a discouragement for men to work, may some say.

Answer: It is true, it is a discouragement to all selfish men to work; and whether a man work or work

though not in equal possession; they are heirs of it, kept unto it, and shall certainly enjoy it; and are as completely justified as they; and, therefore, their state of justification is as full. Gill

¹⁵ They are ways which God has ordained his people should walk in, in order to glorify and serve him, as follows, but not the way of salvation. Gill

²⁹ Not to obtain righteousness, life, and salvation to ourselves, but for the honour and glory of Christ alone. Gill

not at all, it is all one, if it be but for himself; for if a man work never so much, and if he be wholly selfish for himself, God rejects it; but when a man will work for Christ, that hath a touch of the loving-kindness of Christ, and therefore stands ready to speak forth the praise of the glory of his grace that hath so freely saved him; for such man to work, is as welcome to him for Christ's sake, as if he were to work for his own salvation. You have many ingenuous spirits in the world who will be more free to serve a friend that hath already raised them, than others will be to serve a master, that they may be raised. There is a service of thankfulness, which usually is more cordial, more sedulous, than all mercenary services that are forced. This is the true service of a believer in serving Christ; his eye is to the glory of Christ, in regard of what Christ hath done already for him; and not in expectation of anything Christ hath to do, which he hath not done. He looks upon all as perfectly done for him in the hand of Christ, and ready to be delivered out into his hand, as several occasions require; and being thus completed by Christ, not to be mended by the creature, having nothing to do for himself, all he doth, he doth for Christ. Thus you see Christ is a near way unto the Father; there cannot be possibly a nearer way; so that now there is a great deal of labour and bitterness saved; thus you may be encouraged to receive Christ for your way. These are some remarkable considerations in Christ, wherein he is our way, wherein we may receive him, wherein is abundance of comfort; but the time hath out-stripped me.

4 Christ The Only Way {4}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
{Jn.14:6}

The next thing considerable is what kind of way Christ is to the Father. First, as you have heard already, he is a free way; there is not a bar set up against any person in the world, for the way is open; it is a foul delusion of Satan in the heart of any man whatsoever, to say, Christ doth not belong to me; I would fain have Christ, but I may not close with him; let this consideration be ever so plausible, it is a false consideration; for there is no bar in the world, if there be but a heart to step into him. If a man have a mind to step into the king's highway, which is the subject's

privilege, no man can say to him, you trespass in so doing; it is made to be common for all; so is Christ a common way to all sorts of persons whatsoever, to whom there is a heart given to step into him. {I Cor.6:11, Acts 6:14}

Some are offended that I should say so; namely, that Christ is a way even to the drunkard, and to the whoremonger; and the vilest sort of persons have as good a right to Christ for their way to the Father, and to apply Christ to themselves, as any. But, be not injurious to the grace of God; be not injurious to yourselves and others; for what saith Christ himself, speaking to those justiciaries, the Pharisees, both devout and blameless men in their lives? Even this, "that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while they are shut out." If we, the ministers of Jesus Christ, should preach that a whore hath right to lay hold upon the kingdom of God in Christ, to lay hold upon Christ for salvation; this would be counted a licentious doctrine. Take heed you cast not dirt into the face of Christ; "Publicans {saith he,} and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven;" I say it, therefore, and say it boldly, the wickedest wretch that stands here at this present time in the presence of God, if the Lord hath but given a heart to that wicked wretch, now at this instant, willingly to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, to take the Lord Jesus Christ for his Christ, though he be now in the vilest condition that ever he was in his life; I say, if he have a real willingness at this instant, to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, it gives him an absolute, complete, and perfect interest in Christ; he is as much his Christ, as the Christ of a saint saved in glory. We are ready to run another strange way; if a man have a little holiness and righteousness, he thinks now that in regard of that holiness and righteousness, he may without presumption close with Christ; but he doth in this overthrow the way of the Gospel. Christ "came to save that which was lost," saith the text; but a person it seems must be found before he be saved. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners;" but a man must be righteous before he have to do with the calling of Christ; see now, whether this be with or against the Gospel. Free grace therefore, even to sinners, is no licentious doctrine, nor doth it a jot maintain the continuance in sin. I say, therefore, Christ belongs to a man that closeth with him, though he be in his sinfulness; Christ indeed washes, cleanses,

and adorns a person, when he is clothed withal; but there is none clean, till Christ himself enters, who makes clean where he enters.

I thought good to speak briefly thus much by way of addition to what I have delivered before; did I know the objections of persons against what I delivered, I should gladly endeavour to give satisfaction to them; but observe, you shall find the whole strain of the Gospel run continually thus; “Christ came to save the lost;” “Christ died for the ungodly;” “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;” “he received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord might dwell among them;” and such like are the terms of the Gospel, upon which Christ is tendered to our souls. Now; then, I say, to every afflicted soul, art thou rebellious, an enemy, ungodly, a harlot, lost? Nay, art thou worse than enmity itself? If thou art not worse, Christ came for thee, while thus, though no better; he comes to tender himself unto thee to take him, whilst thou art thus, before thou art any better. Now if this be true, when Christ is reached out unto thy spirit, why art thou so doubtful? Why wilt thou answer, no, I dare not close with him, he belongs not to me? But, suppose Christ should speak from heaven as audibly to thy spirit, as I do to thy ear, and say, “be of good cheer, as vile a sinner as thou art, I am thy Christ;” wouldst thou close with him then? Should that be Gospel indeed? I tell you, Christ cannot, Christ will not speak more from heaven than he doth in his Gospel; if you find he speaks in his Gospel; it is much as if he spake it to your spirits from heaven. It was a delusion of the rich man in the parable, he would have Lazarus go and tell his brethren from him in what torments he was; what saith Abraham? “And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” {Lk.16:31} I say unto you, if you will not hear the voice of the Gospel, neither would you hear the voice of Christ speaking to you, for you would suspect whether it were Christ or no.

Well, but you will say, this is a way to lead men to a licentious course of life. I say the contrary; it is the only way to lead men into a more enlarged way of holiness, than any way in the world, and this I will declare by and by unto you.

We have further considered, that Christ is a safe way; that Christ is a lightsome way; that Christ is a

near way; we cannot dwell upon these; for we will go on to make good what I promised to you; the consideration of Christ as a free way, to all comers, is the only way to build men up in a more enlarged course of holiness and righteousness, than all the devices in the world can raise them to. Let me tell you, the rarest self-denial, the frequentest prayer in the world, the greatest study, the most beating down of the body by rigorous fastings; and reckon what other graces you can, they come all short to build up a man in obedience to the will of Christ; they all come short of this one thing, to lay hold upon him as a man is a sinner; and to receive it is an undoubted truth, that Christ is as much my Christ now, as he is the Christ of a saint in heaven. And this will further appear, if we enquire how Christ is such a way, as there is no way, wherein there is a quicker and better riddance of the businesses and employments believers shall have in the world, than in Christ. I will note one thing by the way, before I go on, to make clear this thing, and that is this; it is a received conceit among many persons, that our obedience is the way to heaven; and though it be not, say they, the cause of our reign, yet it is the way to our kingdom.³⁰

Pardon me; if I give you a hint or two of another thing before I go on; for let me deliver you this position; that there is no believer, under heaven, doth come to heaven before he hath served his generation; there is no man a believer, that hath received Christ, but after he hath received Christ, he is created in him unto good works, that he should walk in them. He that sprinkleth them with clean water, that they

³⁰ This is a distinction of Bernard's, which some divines are very fond of; though, I think, he only says, it is the way of the kingdom; so it may be the way or course of those that belong to the kingdom, and yet not be the way to it; obedience and good works are to be performed by all these that are in the way; they lie in the way, and are taken up and done by those that are in it; but they themselves are not the way, but Christ alone; and the learned Hoornbeek observes in his “Summa Controversiarum Religionis;” pg.716, that “the Doctor allows, in some following passages, that sanctification of life is the business a believer has to do in his way Christ; and that good works are concomitant unto heaven to those that shall come thither; and he also enumerates the several ends of doing good works, though not for salvation; which shows, that he was far from being an enemy to good works, or for giving into licentious practices.” Gill

become clean from all their filthiness, puts also a new spirit in them, and doth cause them to walk in his statutes and testimonies. He takes away their stony hearts, and gives them hearts of flesh; he writes his Law in their inward parts, and puts his fear into their hearts, that they do not depart from him. So that I say in conclusion, sanctification of life is an inseparable companion, with the justification of a person by the free grace of Christ. But withal, I must tell you, that all this sanctification of life, is not a jot the way of that justified person unto heaven; it is the business a man hath to do in his way, Christ; but it is not the way itself to heaven; if there be no more to clear it but the very text, it is enough; Christ here saith, "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me." Now I ask this question, are our works of sanctification Christ himself, or are they not? If they be Christ himself, then there are thousands of Christs in the world; if they be not Christ; then there is no coming to the Father by them; because the coming to the Father is by him alone, and by him as he is the sole way.

Now what derogation is there in this unto works, to say, they are not the way to heaven; they are concomitant unto heaven unto persons that shall come thither. The truth is, since redemption is managed by Christ, the Lord hath pointed out other ends and purposes for our obedience, than salvation; salvation is not the end of any good work we do; the ends of our good works are, the manifestation of our obedience and subjection; the setting forth of the praise of the glory of the grace of God; and as it is the setting forth the praise of God's grace, so actual glorifying him in the world; the doing good to others, to be profitable to men; the meeting of the Lord Jesus Christ in them, where he will be found according to the promise; these are the special ends that obedience is ordained for; salvation being settled firm before. All that I will endeavour to build up; is this, to keep the true prerogative of Christ to himself alone and that no righteousness of man entrench upon those privileges that are only his. Take away anything of Christ and give it to any creature, and you deny Christ in part; you destroy the Gospel, the life of which stands in the soleness and oneliness of Christ, from the beginning to the end of our perfection.

Now, to come unto that which I promised; Christ, I say, is such a way unto men, that whosoever chooseth

him for their way, by him they come to a quick riddance and dispatch of all the business of holiness and sanctification, which they are to do, while they are in Christ the way; as it is with merchants that go to sea, for it may be the end of their voyage is the Indies; but they have business in France, Holland, Spain, or Turkey, and they put in there; their business is not the way to the end, but it is something they have in the way to do, before they come to their journey's end. All our obedience and righteousness are but so many several businesses here, which we are to dispatch, while we are in our way to Christ, toward heaven; and while Christ is our way, he provides so for us that our business goes on. Now this Christ that we have chosen to be our way is he alone that oils the wheels of our spirits, and puts them into a nimble frame. Therefore, {in I Pet.2:4,5} "to whom coming, {saith the Apostle,} as unto a living Stone, {speaking of Christ,} disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Mark it, I pray you; Christ being a "Living Stone," makes every one that comes to him "living;" for Christ doth not only give life to a person to be active in doing, but he gives liveliness to him to be nimble in activeness; {Ps.119:32;} as we say, such a man is a lively man, when he is quick in his business. The Lord Jesus is as a strong arm that draws a bow; the greater the strength of the arm is, the swifter is the flight of the arrow, and the further the arrow reaches; a weak arm makes the arrow fly slowly, and fall quickly; the Lord Christ being the strength of every soul, he draws the bow with a mighty arm. Do but conceive the more squeamish or sick any man is in his stomach, the more unapt such a person is to labour, for he is soon tired and spent; now from whence proceeds the qualmishness of the stomach? It proceeds from want of spirits, or from weakness of spirits; weakness of life is the occasion of faintness in the stomach. But suppose there be a strong life, strong spirits in men, they are mighty to labour. Such is Christ our way, saith the Apostle, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory;" "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Beloved, Christ is life itself; "in him was life, and that life was the light of men." There is no life, like the life of Christ; it is a fountain of life; and all life that is besides, is but the

stream of that fountain. If therefore Christ be our life within us, according to the strength of that life, such is the strength of the spirit. A great rooted tree you know, sends up abundance of sap into the branches; whereas a small rooted tree feeds the branches leanly; the larger the root is, the larger the sap, and bigger the growth, and the fuller is the fruitfulness of the tree. Now Christ is a large root of the soul, where he is once received; and as he is such a root, so there are answerable spirits coming from him. Mark what the Apostle saith, though he confesseth of himself, he could do nothing of himself; yet, saith he, "I am able to do all things by Christ that strengthens me;" yea, so able to do all things, that he confesses to the praise of Christ's power, "when I am weak, then I am strong;" as if he had said the stronger my strength is in myself, the weaker I am to anything; but the less strength there is in me, the more strong am I in Christ; therefore he sends us to Christ for strength; "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." I beseech you, consider, if you would be active persons indeed, you must have it from him in whom all power and activeness consist. You that are poor maid-servants or widows, you do but little in the world, your stock doth not reach far; but if you were married to a rich merchant, or some such great man, you could do much more; because by the marriage of such a man, you are interested into a large stock, and his stock is yours; so closing once with the Lord Christ, the whole stock of Christ is yours; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and riches, and graces besides; "for it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell." {Col.1:19} Now, when we have a great stock to trade upon, there may be a great deal of doing; and, for lack of stock, there cannot be so much dealings; so, as there is a fulness of stock in Christ, there may be a fulness of activeness in you; especially, when Christ doth give you, with that stock of life and strength, a faculty of ability, to act that stock; when he gives not only strength, but wisdom to manage such strength unto advantage. {I Chron.29:14, Phil.2:13}

Besides, Christ is such a way, that the business you have to do in the way, shall be done by him exactly, completely, and neatly. There is never a school-master in the world can teach the perfect trade of walking uprightly, but Christ alone; therefore in the New Covenant, you shall find this one of the main

clauses, "they shall be all taught of God;" that is, that Christ who is God and man, the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Men are but bunglers that are taught by any other but God. We that are the Ministers of the Gospel leave you dunces in Christianity in matters of practice, until the Lord Jesus Christ come into that ministry, and, by his Spirit, teach your spirits and then when he comes, you shall be exact in skillfulness; "I am wiser than my teachers," saith David; so when Christ comes to teach you, you shall be wise as your school-master. Now if a school-master cannot make true Latin, the scholar will hardly do it; if the scrivener cannot write well, the scholar will make but crow's-claws, as we used to say; therefore learn this truth, if you will be exact in the Christian scholarship, in the mysteries of Christ; go to school to Christ; that is, take Christ for your Christ; wait upon him to instruct you to direct you, to make you skillful; then shall you be infinitely more exact, than by running to any other teacher in the world. Christ, then you see, is such a way, by which we attain to a quicker riddance of all the business we have to do in this way, than any other course besides.

Consider in the next place, as Christ is a way of quick riddance, so he is a sure way, a firm way, a hard way; for there is no fear of sinking while we keep this causeway, this road, as I may call it. Gluts of rain make some clayey, boggy ways, sinking; both cart and man, and all, may stick fast and sink in them; as for Christ, he is a way so rocky, that all the rain that falls upon this way, runs away; it makes it never a jot the more sinking. A man may be as firm, as secure in the greatest storm, as he shall be in the fairest weather. I mean thus, Christ will not deceive; everything in the world else will deceive a man, but Christ will never deceive him. You have observed, sometimes, I know, some places that have been as green and fair to the eye, as the best way that ever men set foot into; but set your foot into them, and you sink up to the neck, they are boggy quagmires. I must tell you, while men make their own righteousness and obedience their way to the Father, they seem to be in a fair and green way which promises firmness; but he that dares to trust himself in the way of his own righteousness to the Father, shall find himself so sinking, that if Christ come not and pluck him out, he shall sink over head and ears. Ye that go to the Father, and think to set yourselves

in his presence, and stand in his delight, in the way of your own righteousness, shame and confusion of face will cover you before you are aware. Paul durst not be found in it, but looked upon it as dung; dung you know is sinking; the righteousness of Paul, he saw it, he knew it, it did not only stink in the nostrils of God as dung, but it was a sinking way; he himself could never keep firm footing to go to the Father by it; therefore, he saith, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." {Phil.3:8,9} Let a man venture himself upon Christ, as he is a way to the Father, and he shall not sink. "Fear thou not;" {saith Christ;} "for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." {Is.41:10} "I will uphold thee;" all the righteousness of man is not able to uphold him; nay, there is that in man's righteousness that will sink him; where there is sinfulness in men's actions, in their righteousness; that sinfulness is enough to trip up their heels, to lay them in the dirt, to lay them flat upon their backs that they cannot rise again. {Rom.11:10} Let men come before God with this righteousness, if God find fault with that in which they present themselves, they are gone forever. Let a man keep the whole Law, and at last fail in one point, he is guilty of all. {James 2:10} See then, how firmly he stands, that is built upon a Rock. He that builds upon Christ, builds upon a rock; nothing can shake him; {Mt.7:25;} he transgresses, it is true, but Christ carries away his transgression, that before it comes to the eye of the Father, it is gone into the wilderness. He casts it behind his back, he throws it into the bottom of the sea, it is blotted out, as the text speaks. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." {Isa.44:22} So that still, I say, as water falling upon a rocky way, glides away as fast as it falls, that the way is as hard as before the rain fell, and a man may stand as firm there as before; so all our sinfulness, while we are in the way Christ, as thick as it falls, Christ hath so made himself such a way, that it passeth off from us to him, and from

him also. We have garments made now a-days, that if rain falls it will glide off a man, and so not soak into him. Christ is our garment; all the wet that falls upon us, lights on him; it falls from us to Christ himself; that is, all our transgressions, when once we are in Christ, pass from us to him. {Zech.3:3,4, Isa.6:7} Now he hath a garment as well for himself, as for us; that though our sins fall from us to him, yet they remain not upon him. The Lord, indeed, laid the iniquities of all upon Christ; but he passed away all this iniquity from himself, by making full satisfaction to the Father. If Christ should have our sinfulness remaining upon him, when it glides from us, he himself would be a sinking way to us. If Christ were sinful in the eyes of God, we could never be clean in his eyes; it is through his cleanness that we become clean. Now Christ is such a way to believers that receive him, that he took away all their sins from them, bore them all, and left them in his own grave, and raised himself without them. {Heb.9:28} So here is no sin charged upon believers, nor upon Christ; it was laid upon Christ, it is true, but he hath cast it off, and sweat it out; it is evaporated and gone from him too.

Thus you see Christ is a firm way, a secure way, to a person; he shall not stir, he shall not be moved, as long as he keeps Christ to be his way. Once again, as Christ is a firm way to believers, so he is a most pleasant way; I say, a most delightful, a most refreshing and recreating way; Christ is a way, as if it were all strewed with flowers; for there is nothing but mirth and sweetness in him. In Proverbs 3:17, you shall find Christ spoken of under the notion of wisdom, of whom it is affirmed that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" not only pleasant ways, but ways of pleasantness; as if there were nothing but pleasures; as if the ways were substantial pleasures or full of all manner of delight. Do but observe a notable expression in Isaiah 35:1,2, where the prophet speaks as if he had been an Apostle in the time, or after the time of Christ; you may see, by him, what a pleasant way Christ is to all those that choose him for their way; in the 1st verse, you have him expressing himself thus, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose;" he means thus, that whereas men lived as in the wilderness and in a desert place; that is, in a sad and solitary condition; they shall be translated into such

a way, into such a pleasant way, that there shall be gladness and rejoicing; there shall be the blossom of roses in this way. And to illustrate the pleasantness of the way into which Christ translates his, by translating them into himself, he goes on in the 2nd verse, "it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God;" nothing but pleasure; it is compared to Lebanon, the sweetest place in the world; to Carmel and Sharon, places of great delight; such shall be the way chalked out and held forth unto believers. Look into the last verse of the chapter, and see what a way of pleasure Christ is unto all those that receive him; "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." Behold the mirth that is in the way, Christ! There is nothing but joy and gladness.

But some will say that believers find it otherwise; there is not such joy and gladness, but they are often oppressed with sadness and heaviness of spirit. I answer, there is not one fit of sadness in any believer whatsoever, but he is out of the way Christ.³¹ I mean, in fits of sadness in respect of his jealousy of his present and future estate; he is out of the way of Christ, he enjoys not him as he ought, while he is in such fits. Therefore, the Apostle puts believers upon rejoicing always. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." {Phil.4:4} There is matter of nothing but joy in him; while there is mourning in believers, there are meltings in those mournings; and more joy in the mourning of a believer, than in all the mirth of a wicked man. I appeal to you, that have had melted hearts, whether you have not found a secret content in your meltings, that you rather fear the change of that mourning, than that you are troubled with it?

That which is a most common proverb in the world is most certainly true in this present case, "some men for joy do weep, others for sorrow sing." I say, believers weep for joy, and never mourn more kindly than when they see the joy of the Holy Ghost, in the freeness and fulness of the Lord Christ, poured out

³¹ That is, as to the enjoyment of him, as it is afterwards explained; or with respect to the exercise of faith, or comfortable walking in the way, Christ, as becomes a believer; otherwise he that is once in Christ is always so; he can never be out of him, as to interest in him, and salvation by him. Gill

upon them; there is never any more kindly mourning for sin, than that mourning, when the soul is satisfied of the forgiveness of sins; I say, the soul is first satisfied with forgiveness of sins, before there is that real kindly mourning in those that are believers. You have heard of some persons, I know, that have been condemned to be executed, who at the scaffold have been so obdurate and stiff-necked, that not a cry, not a tear came from them; yet, just when their necks went to the block, upon the coming of the pardon, when they were discharged, they that could not weep a tear, nor be affected with their estate, no sooner, do they see a pardon, and themselves acquitted, but they melt all into tears; so it is with believers, the more they see Christ in the pardon of sin and the love of God in Christ to receive and embrace them, the more they melt. Therefore, Solomon hath a notable expression; "if thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee." {Pv.25:21,22} As much as if he should have said, kindness is the best way in the world to melt the most obdurate wretch. Thus God deals with men through Christ; he gives them bread when they are hungry, and drink when they are thirsty; and thus he heaps coals of fire upon their heads; that is, he melts them.

So, you see, what an admirable way Christ is, all full of pleasure; there is the Spirit of Christ to make music unto a soul. "Speak comfortably unto my people," saith God; and this is the Office of the Spirit, and the Spirit doth nothing else but speak comfortable things. Christ is a way, as the cellars of wine are unto drunkards, that are never better than when they are at the cup; and, therefore, no place like the cellar, where there is fulness of wine always to be tippling and drinking; I say, Christ is such a way; and let it not be offensive to say so, for the church speaks in the same language. "He brought me to the banqueting house, {into his wine-cellar;} and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." {Cant.2:4,5} Christ hath such a variety of delicacies served in continually, and such sweetness in this variety, that the soul is no longer satisfied than it is with Christ. Here is not staying with cups, much less with half cups, but staying with whole flagons; there is a kind of inebriating, whereby Christ doth,

in a spiritual sense, make believers, that keep him company, spiritually drunk; he overcomes them with wine. "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." {Is.25:6} Here is abundance, it is a feast, and "a feast of fat things" full of marrow, which is the best of fatness; a feast "of wine well refined upon the lees," pure and clarified wines; this is the entertainment Christ hath for those that keep him company. The Psalmist, in Psalm 36:7,8, hath an excellent expression to this purpose, {speaking of the excellency of Christ,} saith he, "how excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Well, what follows, when they put their trust under the shadow of his wings; that is, when they shall make choice of him to be their way; "they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." Mark, "of thine pleasures," for {saith he} with thee is the well of life. {Jn.4:14} Here are not only pleasures, but rivers of pleasures; here is not only life, but a well of life; such dainties and delicacies, such curiosities and rarities, as the world can never know, nor see, nor taste. We read in the Book of Revelation of "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." {Rev.2:17} This I am sure of, there are delights in Christ, none can possibly reach unto, but those to whom Christ doth give himself, and those that receive him; therefore, in Matthew 11:25, our Saviour thanks his Father thus; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." And it is worth observing, he doth not thank him, that he hath revealed them to the mighty, great and wise, that abound in all the manner of abilities far above others, but "unto babes;" there is much in that phrase; for a babe is the weakest of all sorts of men; implying thus much, that the weakest of all believers, in the body of Christ; as I may say, the feeblest babe, shall partake of such hidden things, such excellencies of Christ, that all the world shall never be able to dive into, reach, nor comprehend; and Christ himself takes such delight in their societies, that he takes occasion to bless God,

the Father, that he is so large for his sake, to do so much for them, above what he did for others. So ye see, Christ is also a pleasant way, a way of exceeding great content and delight. There is yet one thing more.

Christ is a way of all the ways in the world the most easy to be hit; there is no difficulty to find it out, nor to find out a progress in it. Many ways may lead unto a comfortable end; but there are so many cross ways to turn men out, that they lose themselves. In the way of works a man may presently lose himself; there is not one work he doth, but he commits sin in it, and so he presently steps aside, and loses himself, and must begin again, and go about, and come where he was at first. God will never let any soul come near unto him that comes to him with any sin whatsoever. If there be any one sin, all must be undone, and a man must begin again, as they say. I speak this of the righteousness of man, while he makes that his way to God. Therefore Christ is the way; there is no stepping aside in Christ, no losing of him. There cannot be an error committed, which when a man comes to the Father by Christ, shall be taken notice of, as an error from that person; so, I say, it is the easiest way in the world to be hit. It is true what Peter saith of Paul, "many things in his writings are very hard to be understood;" but mark, in the Gospel, things that do pertain unto the justification of a sinner, are written in such great and plain letters, that he that runs may read them. Do but observe a few expressions, which show how easy it is to hit the way, Christ himself being the way. In Isaiah 35:8, the prophet speaks of a highway that "shall be, and the wayfaring men; though fools, shall not err therein." The Psalmist tells us, that "the commandments of God give light unto the eyes;" and the Gospel without question makes the simple wise; there are some things you know, that you are able to teach fools; though you are not able to teach them deep mysteries. Beloved, Christ the way to salvation, makes himself so plain to those that come unto him, that though they be very fools, yet they shall not mistake, nor err; nay, though fools and wayfaring men. A wise man, if he be a wayfaring man, that is, a stranger, may miss his way; but if a man be a stranger, and a fool too, it must be a very easy way that he hits. A fool may hit a way in which he hath long conversed, which strangers may easily miss; but, saith the Holy Ghost, the way that Christ is made to men, is such a way, that "fools,

though wayfaring men, shall not err therein.”

Again, Christ is the way, and such a way, as is a spacious, large, elbow-room way, as I may so say; there is abundance of largeness and elbow-room in Christ the way to the Father; therefore Christ himself saith, “if the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.” When Christ comes to bring liberty to men, then they are at liberty indeed; therefore, it is said, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” {Gal.5:1} When a man enters into Christ, he enters into liberty and freedom; there is a contracted bondage in every way and condition but Christ alone.

But some will say, how do you answer that place in Matthew 7:14? “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” How can Christ be such a way of liberty, when the way is said to be an exceeding straight and narrow way? I answer, first mark the words that go before, where Christ speaks not this simply, but comparatively; the way is straight and narrow in comparison of that which he speaks of; for the words before are, “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;” then he comes in afterwards with these; “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life;” that is, in comparison of the vast liberty and scope the world takes to walk in, and the vast rangings of their vain hearts, it is a strait way; but, simply considering Christ in himself, he is a large way; large in respect of the number that go in it, and in respect of the elbow-room therein. In a narrow way, few can go a-breast, it will hold but a few men; but, in open broad ways, many may go together. Mark now, how Christ is a large and spacious way; “and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” {I Jn.2:2} See what a spaciousness there is in Christ, that the whole world, the multitude of people of all sorts in the world, may have elbow-room in this way.³²

³² The design of the Apostle in these words is to comfort his little children with the advocacy and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who might fall into sin, through weakness and inadvertency; but what comfort would it yield to a distressed mind, to be told that Christ was a propitiation, not only for the sins of the apostles and other saints, but for the sins of every individual in the world, even of those that are in hell? Would it not be natural for persons in such circumstances, to argue rather against, than for themselves, and conclude, that seeing persons might be damned notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ,

But, secondly, “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way.” What is this straightness? To this question perhaps you will answer, a strict, austere and severe life; a preciseness and exactness without giving to a man’s self any liberty whatsoever; this is the straitness of the way that leadeth unto life. But give me leave to add, I confess the stricter Christians can walk the better; and Christ will more and more confine the life of a believer unto a holy exactness; but, under favour, I conceive, this is not the meaning of the text here, that by the straitness of the way is meant strictness of conversation; but rather the meaning is, “strait is the gate and narrow is the way;” that is, it hath not that latitude in it, that generally men think it hath. What is that? Men generally think, that besides Christ, there is something more in the way that leadeth to life, and that is a man’s own righteousness; not only Christ, but a man’s own righteousness jointly together with Christ; these are the way to salvation; this is the conceit of many men; but I say, it is straight and narrow, in this regard, that all a man’s own righteousness must be cut out of the way; it must be so narrow, that there must be nothing in the way, but Christ; when a man’s own righteousness is taken into the way, besides Christ, then it is a broader way than Christ allows of; he allows only that way to himself.³³ And that this is

that this might and would be the case. In the writings of the Apostle John, the word ‘world’ admits of a variety of senses; and therefore the sense of it in one place cannot be the rule for the interpretation of it in another; which can only be fixed as the text or context determine; sometimes it signifies the whole universe of created beings; {Jn.1:10;} sometimes the habitable earth; {Jn.16:28;} sometimes the inhabitants of it; {Jn.1:10;} sometimes unconverted persons, both elect and reprobate, {Jn.15:19;} sometimes the worse part of the world, the wicked; {Jn.17:9;} sometimes the better part, the elect; {Jn.1:29, 6:33,51;} sometimes a number of persons, and that a small one in comparison of the rest of mankind; {Jn.12:19;} in one place it is used three times, and in so many senses; {Jn.1:10;} he; that is, Christ “was in the world,” the habitable earth, and “the world,” the whole universe, “was made by him;” and “the world,” the inhabitants of the earth, “knew him not;” and which is not to be understood of them all; for there were some, though few, who did know him; and I will venture to affirm, that the word ‘world’ is always used in the Apostle John’s writings in a restrictive and limited sense, for some only; unless when it designs the whole universe, or habitable earth, senses which are out of the question; for none will say Christ died for the sun, moon, and stars, for fishes, fowls, brutes, sticks, and stones; and that it is never used to signify every individual of mankind that has been, is, or shall be, in the world; in which sense it ought to be proved it is used, if any argument can be concluded from it in favour of general redemption. Gill.

³³ Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his “Vindiciae Legis,” pg.32, finds great fault with the Doctor’s sense of Matt.7:13,14, applying the words to Christ, which he represents as a forced interpretation of them; whereas nothing is more easy and natural, for, as Christ elsewhere calls

the meaning, seems to me by the words that follow; "Beware" {saith Christ in the next words,} "of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves;" it seems, in this Christ gives a warning, how to beware of false prophets, by telling men, "that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life." And what false prophets were they? If you consult with Luke, {Acts 15:1-24,} you shall understand who these false prophets were, and withal, the meaning of this text; for there you shall find that these false prophets were they that troubled the church, and occasioned that assembly, the first council that ever was; some {say the council} that "went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law," {vs.24,} or else you cannot be saved. These are the false prophets Christ meant, that would make the observation of the Law of Moses and Circumcision to be co-partners with Christ, as a way to salvation; to whom say the Apostles, "we gave no such commandment." You shall find that in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, all the Apostle's contests were with such "false prophets that came in sheep's clothing;" they were not false prophets that came in wolves' habits, that are openly profane and scandalous; for these can deceive no man, as they show themselves to all; but they are "false prophets in sheep's clothing;" that is, they seem to be sheep, they seem to be austere; they seem to preach nothing but righteousness and holiness; but yet they are ravenous wolves. How so? They make men build upon their own righteousness, and not upon Christ, and so destroy poor souls; these are those the Apostle bids us beware of. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the

himself a door, and a way, Jn.10:9 and 16:6, why not here a gate and a way? Moreover, if anything besides Christ is here meant, there must be more ways than one to heaven, and Christ could not be the only way; for certain it is, that the way here spoken of leads to eternal life, for nothing else can be meant by life; and as to what this writer says, that then by the opposition, not wickedness, but the devil himself would be the broad way; it may be replied, that not the devil only is opposed to Christ, but everything that is wicked, yea that has the appearance of good, but is not really so; and the broad way may very well be thought to take in the devil, and all his lusts, which men will do, and walk in; and not only open vice and profaneness, but all the false disguises of religion and holiness, and a man's own polluted and pharisaical righteousness, to which Christ and his righteousness stand opposed. Matt.5:20. Gill

Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish; having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" {Gal.3:1-3} Thus he argues against the false prophets that will establish the righteousness of man as the way to life.

In a word or two, there are two things more considerable, I will but touch them; Christ is a shady way; in hot weather, men much desire shady places; you know the case of Jonah, when he was scorched with heat, God provided for him a gourd, and how comfortable was it upon him? Christ is a shady way. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past;" saith Christ. {Isa.26:20} When the scorching glooms of God's wrath break out into the world, Jesus Christ is a hiding-place, "until the indignation be over-past."

Again, Christ is a quiet way. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." {Is.32:17} There are some private ways men affect, because there is but little disturbance; but in some other ways, especially in some common road-ways, there is nothing but quarrelling and reveling; but Christ, he is a quiet way; all is peace while you are in Christ. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." {Rom.15:13} Believe, and there is all peace for you; "being justified," that is, while you are in Christ to justify you, there is "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" {Rom.5:1;} and nothing but peace. I see the time is past; something else I should have considered, especially the ground why Christ is such a way, but I shall rather break off abruptly.

5 Christ's Pre-Eminence

"That in all things he might have the preeminence."
{Col.1:18}

This admirable, sweet, and comfortable Apostle of the Gentiles makes it the master-piece of his Apostleship to woo and win people unto Christ. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." {II Cor.5:20} As in all the rest of his Epistles, so especially in this, and more especially in this 1st chapter, he shows an excellent faculty he

hath this way, in this business of wooing people to come to Christ; he observes what most effectually takes with people to beguile their spirits, as he speaks himself, with a kind of craft to catch their affections; especially, if you observe from the 15th verse of this chapter, and so on, you shall find, the Apostle meets with everything that is most enamoring and taking with the people. The world is mightily taken with beauty, with completeness of person; Oh! saith one, let me have a beautiful person, it is no matter how poor; if beauty be so taking, then, saith the Apostle, I will present a rare piece indeed to you, in presenting Christ; for such is the beauty of Christ, that there is no beauty like his; Christ {saith he} is "the image of the invisible God;" which is but one commendation of his. But, will some say, so is every man as well as Christ; what rareness is there in Christ in this regard? It is true, man is after the image of God, but where the Apostle calls Christ "the image of the invisible God," he speaks in an eminent manner; therefore, you shall find him expressing himself more fully, in setting forth the rare beauty of Christ in Hebrews 1:3. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Christ is the image of God to the life, as I may say; he is so like him, you cannot know one from the other; he hath so the perfections of God, that there can be nothing more like than he is unto the Father, expressing the brightness of his glory. But there are some, though they find beauty, yet that alone will not take; besides that, some men look for lineage, what stock a person is of; is he come of a good house, of a noble and royal blood? Blood is a great matter, especially with high spirits. Well, if this will take, then there is no stock like of Christ; he is of the greatest house in the world. "The firstborn {saith the Apostle} of every creature;" he comes of that great house, of God himself.³⁴

And so doth the creature too, you will say; what rarity is there in Christ above the creatures, for they all come of God. I answer; but, beloved, the creatures are of and in the house of God, as the Apostle speaks of Moses, {Heb.3:5,} "as servants in the house;" "but Christ as a Son." {vs.6} Christ is not only of royal house, but he is born of flint royal house; he is the natural Son of the Father. "This is my beloved Son;" so that he is of the very blood-royal; {as I may so say with reverence}

³⁴ He is the first parent, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered. Gill.

and he is not a younger brother in this house neither, for he is the first-begotten of the house; that is a great matter among persons to marry the heir of a family; so he is. Nay, more than that, he is the only-begotten of the house; there is never another in all the family; and that is a great encouragement, he is "the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth," saith the Apostle. {Jn.1:14} So that if men go all the world over, to find a match in the noblest house, they will never meet with such a one as this of the Son of God. Thus he commends him. But yet some are ready to say, suppose he be of a noble house, he may be in disgrace, and he may live privately, and have no authority, nor be able to do any great matters. If this will do, then the Apostle commends Christ as the rarest, in respect of his power and authority; for "all things were made by him, and for him;" that is, all things in the world are at his command and beck; they bow unto him, they stoop before him; at his name every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and everything goes through his hands.

Yea, but it may be, will some say, he is in disgrace in court, and that is a blur upon him. I answer, No, he is not so great in the country, but he is as great in the court too; for, as he hath the whole world under his power, so he hath the great King at his back; he commands in heaven, as he doth upon earth; there is nothing that he can ask of the Father, but it is answered; he never has a nay; if any come to be suitor to him to put up a petition, he is sure to speed.

But, for all this, he may be but a poor man, though he have never so great power in court and country; and if he be poor, I shall live but poorly with him; if he were rich, and had abundance of wealth, then there were some hope, some encouragement to take such an one. I answer, Christ is not greater in court and country than he is rich in treasure; so you shall find in the 19th verse, "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." All fulness; all the treasures of wisdom are hid in him; he hath the whole world to dispose of; therefore silver and gold are not to be compared unto him. Yea, but yet there is one thing more; though he hath riches, yet he may prove a niggard, close-fisted, he may keep all to himself; the party that hath him may be poor enough, for want of contribution.

But beloved, he is not more rich himself than he is liberal to contribute of his treasures to make those that are his, sharers to the uttermost of all that he hath. Therefore in chapter 2:10, {for he follows this subject all along,} the Apostle tells us, not only, in verse 9, that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" but that, "ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." The Head, you know, is not a niggard; what fulness the head hath, it communicates to every part; Christ is a head, and a head of fulness, the fulness of the Godhead. And, as the head is not sparing, but dispersing and scattering all that is in it, so that every member shall have a share; and note, share not merely to keep life and soul together, as we say, but a share to make a man complete; so, if any persons in the world would devise what they could desire in such a one to match themselves unto, you shall find that a creature cannot frame those perfections, in its fancy, which it would enjoy. I say, men cannot frame any perfection to come so near the real perfections of Christ, as a shadow comes near the substance. You have a proverb, that "bachelors' wives and maids' children must be rare creatures;" that is, their fancy will devise what kind of one they will have, and what kinds of perfections they desire. Let the fancy devise what kind of perfection it can, to please sense, Christ shall really out-strip, in perfection, all these fancies, more than a substance doth out-strip a shadow.

Now, the Apostle, having delivered himself thus fully by way of wooing unto Christ, he comes to close in the words of the text; and so declares the end and purpose for which he sets out Christ in so many excellencies as he did; the end of this was, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;" that he may be taken for the most excellent thing in the world; that all things may be rejected, rather than he; and he set above everything in the world. So then, the point in brief is this, in regard of the rare excellencies, perfections and usefulness of Christ, which are incomparable, he ought to have the preeminence in all things. In handling of which, we shall consider.

First, what the pre-eminence is which Christ ought to have.

Secondly, why he should have the pre-eminence in all these; and then a word or two of application.

First, what is this pre-eminence that Christ should

have. I will not insist upon the word pre-eminence; you all know, for to give a person or thing the pre-eminence is no more than this, to set up such a person or thing above all others, and especially for those uses and purposes we have occasion of them for. I say, to choose such a person before any other, as a person who can better and more certainly bring to pass what we desire than any else can. So that in brief, to give Christ the pre-eminence is to set up Christ above all things in the world; to choose Christ, rather than anything, for every use and purpose to make of him; I say, above and before anything whatsoever, as apprehending him infinitely more able and sufficient unto such purposes than anything else is.

But more particularly, that we might the better see what this pre-eminence is that Christ ought to have; you must know, that there is an infallible pattern drawn out unto us, according unto which we are to write our copy. In general, therefore, the pre-eminence we are to give unto Christ is the pre-eminence that the Father hath given unto him before us, and revealed unto us, that we may, in our way, give the same to him; therefore, we must consider a while what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ. You shall find that the Father in many things infinitely sets up Christ above all things in the world; for he chose Christ before all things in the world. For instance; first, the Father gives Christ the pre-eminence of his affections, his love and his delight. There is nothing in the world that the Father loves and delights in, as he doth in his Son. All the delight the creatures have from the Father are but beams from the sun of righteousness, in the eyes of God. That Christ hath more abundance of the Father's love, than any creature in the world hath, I will give you but one passage or two, for the clearing of it. Look into Proverbs 8:30 & 31. By the way, you must note, first, that wisdom, spoken of in this chapter, is generally understood by all to be Christ alone; and that which is indeed affirmed of wisdom, can be affirmed of none but Christ. Among other particulars, note these two, to manifest it is Christ, and that he hath that choice affection of the Father. "I was set up {saith Wisdom here} from everlasting, from the beginning." {8:23} I was set up from everlasting; none was everlasting but the Father to set him up; none could be everlasting but the Sun to be set up. All creatures had their beginning and being in time.

Now, observe the affection of the Father in this; "I was set up from everlasting;" it doth properly set forth the nature of pre-eminence. Wisdom speaks of many things; God did lay the foundations of the earth, made the sea, and several creatures; but "I was set up from everlasting;" as much as if he should say, these have their place in the world, but my place is above them, in the affection of God. And, that this setting up is meant of God's affection to Christ above any creature in the world, mark what he speaks in verse 30, "then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;" the meaning is, Christ is here considered as the darling of the Father. All the creatures in the world are brought up by God, in a large sense; but he was brought up with him, that is to say, he was the very fondling of him. When Abraham had an Isaac, Isaac must be brought up with Abraham, and Ishmael must be sent abroad; Ishmael shall have a portion, but shall not be brought up with him. This shows the difference of affection to one before the other. Bringing up with him as an argument of affection; "I was brought up with him, I was daily his delight." God made the creatures, but Christ was his only delight; that is, he could not look upon any creature in the world, and delight in it; but this delight he had in his Son, did swallow up the delight he had in any creature. In brief, the love and delight of the Father hath such a pre-eminence in the Son, that the truth is, there is no creature in the world that doth actually participate of one jot of the love of the Father, but by the Son, and for the Son's sake; as the Son becomes the channel, or rather the spring, that receives from the ocean of God's love. That love the creature participates of, it participates of it by Christ; for you know that when we partake of sweet streams that run in rivers and channels, we are beholden to the spring for the stream; and what the spring receives, that it conveys to the channel from the ocean. The heart of God, as I may so speak, is the ocean, the first rise of all love to the creature; Christ is the spring that first receives from him, and then through him is all love diffused to the creature. {I Jn.4:19}

You know that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God; how do we partake of God again? "God is in Christ, {saith the text,} reconciling the world unto himself;" so that this uniting again to the

Father, in the participating of the love of the Father, comes again in Christ. "You that sometimes were afar off, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ;" afar off, in respect of the affection of God, in regard of our sinful nature; but made nigh, that is, reduced again into the affection of God by the blood of Christ.³⁵ Here is the pre-eminence of Christ above the creature, he hath infinitely more of affection; he is the spring and fountain of that affection that the creature partakes of. Now then, we are to give this preeminence unto Christ, that reveals this unto us, that so we may see the pattern according to which we are to walk, and do likewise. We should, so make Christ the choicest in our affection; we can never place love and affection more orderly, than by placing affection according to the pattern God sets; so far as we affect according to God and imitate him in affecting, so far are our affections placed aright; to put the cart before the horse; to affect things of lower degree above things that are higher; to give preeminence to things that should come behind, and to bring that behind that should have pre-eminence, is the disorder of man's affection; it swerves from the pattern and example of God himself. So then, Christ hath the pre-eminence over all persons with us; when he is really promoted and exalted above all creatures in the world in our affection. "Whom have I in heaven but thee;" saith Asaph; and "I desire nothing in the earth in comparison of thee." {Ps.73:25} Here is the pre-eminence of affection given unto Christ, when there is nothing in the world in the affection comparable unto him. You shall see the like in the Canticles, 5:9,10, the church discoursing about her beloved, the strangers ask her, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved?" She answers, "my beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand." Here is the pre-eminence ascribed. When the people of Israel heard David say, he would go to war, they fell upon him with "thou art more worth than ten thousand of us." Here was the pre-eminence given to the king. So, I say, when in affection Christ is promoted as the chief among ten thousands; nay, let all things in the world be set with Christ, they are trash to him; then, I say, is given real pre-eminence unto Christ, when, in affection, in regard of the excellencies of Christ, he is

³⁵ This must be understood, as the Doctor explains it, of the open participation and enjoyment of the love of God, and not of the secret love of God, and the cause and origin of it; which is his own sovereign will, and not the blood of Christ. Gill.

set above everything in the world.

Secondly, the Father gives Christ this pre-eminence besides; namely, in a far more enlarged and multiplied proportion of gifts and parts above all creatures. Christ is the Benjamin of his Father, whose inheritance is more than five times as much as all the rest of the brethren. The Apostle tells us that "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name;" {Phil.2:9;} and in Hebrews, that he hath anointed his Christ "with the oil of gladness above his fellows." {Heb.1:9} You shall find that God promotes Christ even above angels; as in Hebrews 1 & 2 which insists mainly upon this point, in how many respects God exalts Christ above angels. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" {1:5} But, I say, principally in respect of parts and gifts, you shall find that that which God bestows upon Christ, is far more than he bestows upon any creature. In John 3:34, it is said that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" we receive drop by drop of that we have; we have it but scanty, to that which Christ hath; he hath received the Spirit not by measure. The truth is, Christ receives a proportional gift as head; now a head not only requires to have what should supply itself of spirit; but such a proportion as is sufficient to supply all the parts, from the head to the foot; therefore, it must needs have more than the several parts themselves; we need no more than for our own sustenance. Christ is our Head, and therefore as a head must have the pre-eminence; that is, a larger proportion of gift's than others; for others are but to find for themselves, but he is to maintain himself, and to maintain the whole body too. Thus should we give Christ the pre-eminence, to which the Father hath exalted him above creatures, giving unto him more than unto creatures; nay, giving unto creatures all they have by him; I say, so should we give him the pre-eminence likewise. Whither should a creature go for water, but unto the spring? Whither should the creature go for strength, but unto the fountain of strength? Is it not derogation unto Christ that all fulness should be in him alone, and we forsake this fountain of fulness to go unto broken cisterns that will hold no water? Mark it well, as often as ever you run to any creature in any necessity or exigency, either before you go to Christ, or instead of going to Christ; so often you rob Christ of that pre-eminence that God hath given unto him, and you should give unto him. If

any creature in the world seem in your fancy to have a helpfulness, a likelihood of strength, and of supply; and this likelihood of supply seems more likely than one from Jesus Christ; so far is the pre-eminence of Christ brought down, and the creature hath gotten a pre-eminence above him. Look to it, beloved, while you run to the creature, to the world, for this, and that, and the other thing, and think it must come this way, or it will never come, Christ is wholly neglected of you; and you that are of a more spiritual strain, that when you are under any trial, run to any grace, or temper of spirit in you, or any qualifications, or any performances you can tender; and look after them, as the thing that most likely will furnish you with what you want, while you look faintly and coldly upon Christ, and the freeness of that grace that Christ brings alone with himself; so long you deny unto Christ the pre-eminence of those parts and gifts God hath given unto him above other things. If God hath given unto any creatures more than unto Christ, you might rather have sought unto them than unto Christ; you might more properly look and wish for supply in them than in Christ; but if Christ hath more than any creature in the world; nay, if Christ be made the sole and only fountain of supply, whether for the spirits or the outward man; then must he have this preeminence to be sought unto rather than anything in the world, for the furnishing of you, and supplying you with that, that must come from this Fountain.

Thirdly, the Father gives Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation to bear up all things; as the Apostle tells us, "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," {I Cor.3:11;} and in Hebrews 1:3, speaking of Christ as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power;" God then gives, to Christ this pre-eminence to be the Foundation. The creature therefore robs Christ of his pre-eminence, when Christ must not be the foundation to bear up all things, but other foundations shall be laid; as if there were a firmer or securer bottom to bear up than Christ himself. In Isaiah 28:16, you shall see what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ as the foundation. "Behold, {saith he,} I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Peter hath an addition hereunto, in I Peter 2:4, "to whom coming, as unto a

living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Christ an elect, precious stone, a living stone. Mark what pre-eminence he hath given to Christ, to be such a kind of foundation to uphold all things.

To give a touch of these things; first, he is a stone, the firmest bottom in the world, for the security of that which is laid upon it from sinking; give Christ this pre-eminence too. Beloved, look unto him, and consider him as a stone, an immoveable rock; such a rock as you may sit down with this confidence; that though heaven and earth shake and come together, whatsoever is laid upon him shall never totter. He is a "tried stone," saith the text; that is, more than barely a stone. You know what pre-eminence those medicines have that have probatum est {it is tried or proved} over-written; that is an approved medicine, and, upon trial, found to be good. You know what pre-eminence that armour of proof hath, when a musket is discharged upon it, and the bullet pierces it not; this is of pre-eminence above others. Christ is "a tried stone;" there is a probatum est written over the head of this stone; he was tried by the Father, he is tried by believers, he is tried by his enemies; and a probatum est is written over his head, that he is a stone with a witness, tried by the Father, first, in his secret council; he found that nothing in the world could stand under that business which was to be done; he was tried by him on earth, as "he made the iniquities of us all to meet on him," {Isa.53:6,} and yet they could not make his back to break; here he was tried, he made him a butt for all his wrath, the whole quiver of his envenomed arrows; yet he stood to it; he was tried by believers; they have put him to it to the utmost; he is tried by his very enemies, who find him a grindstone to grind them to powder; bulwark of security for all such whom they oppose.

Christ is not only a tried stone, but "a precious tried stone," saith the Apostle, that is more; he gives him this pre-eminence, to be a precious stone. You know, when the Holy Ghost sets forth the glory of the church in the Revelations, under the name and title of such and such precious stones, of which the foundation, the gates, and the walls were made, it is set forth in way of excellency, that they are precious stones; here, I say, is pre-eminence, that Christ is a precious stone, as well as a tried stone; precious to God, nothing so delectable as what he doth; precious

to believers, precious in respect of beauty; {no beauty like his;} precious in respect of his value; nothing of worth comparable to him; "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul," "thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," {Mic.6:7,} come not near in value to the ransom of the soul; but Christ hath ransomed it, and is raised from the grave. All the creatures in the world, gathered up together, could never make up a sum to buy out the soul; therefore Christ is precious, precious in value and worth; all receipts in the world spend out their virtue, and are dry things, to the virtue and excellency of Christ; such is the virtue that is found in Christ, that let him but come and lay his mouth to the foot, where the thorn is, he draws out the thorn; nay, he lays his mouth to the plague sore of the soul, and he sucks out the venom; {Num.21:8,9 with Jn.3:14,15} it is true, he drinks his own bane, for the present, it costs him his life; but he sucks out the poison from the person that makes use of him. There are many precious stones, they say, that are of admirable virtue, but yet none is compared unto Christ.

He is "a sure foundation," saith the prophet, that is more; not only precious, but sure; so sure, that lay what load you can lay upon the back of Christ, he stoops not; and, therefore, he was excellently typified by those brazen pillars in Solomon's temple; for they were made of brass, on purpose to show their strength, whereon the whole weight of the porch of the temple lay. Christ hath this pre-eminence given unto him of the Father, that although an infinite weight were to be imposed upon him, yet he should go away with all. And in this regard, Sampson was a type of him, who, being barred up in the city among the Philistines, takes the gates of the city, and carries them up into a mountain, and there lays them; he is so "sure a foundation," that lay the load of all the sins you ever committed; lay the load of all the sins of all the people that shall be saved by him, yet he stoops not; these break him not, he will carry them away as easily as Samson the gates; add to that, the load of all your duties and performances, and businesses in the world; lay all upon Christ, he will do all for you. But, must not we do them; ye will say? Yea, he will do them for you, and in you; first, he will do them for you, namely, in fulfilling all righteousness in his own person, which he presents to his Father, as that righteousness whereby believers shall be justified before the Father. As he doth all for them, so he doth

all righteousness in them. Your duties are as the duty you do to a deceased friend; you think it is the last duty you shall do for him, to carry him to the grave; though you may have bearers, you shall go under the corpse, but the bearers shall have all the weight upon their shoulders, so that you go easy, in respect of the assistance of the bearers; all the duties we have to do, may seem weighty; this is a hard saying, and that is a hard saying, who can obey it? But know, that the Lord Christ is such a pillar, such a bearer, to take all the weight of duties upon his back, that he carries the burden; and so carries it, that you shall go but as the friend of the corpse, the burden shall be off from your shoulders. In all duties God calls for of any person, the strength of Christ is made perfect in the weakness of him that is to do them. Christ takes not men simply from doing, but he takes away the heaviness and the task. We look upon duties as a yoke and a burden; but mark what Christ saith, "take my yoke, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light."

How can this be, that it should be a yoke, and yet easy; a burden, and yet light? It is a yoke and burden in itself to any person that carries all himself, without Christ; but easy and light when Christ bears the weight of it. Again, add to this, that Christ is so sure a foundation, that, besides duties, lay all your burdens upon him, for his back is broad enough to sustain all; the burden of your spirits, the burden of your outward man, all the burdens of the church in general, while she is under the greatest calamities; Christ, I say, is a sure foundation to bear all these; to bear the burden of all the cares of all the people of God. "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you," saith the Apostle. Finally, Christ is a sure foundation; commit all your comforts unto Christ, he will uphold all your comforts, for he will renew them and enlarge them.

Besides, Christ is an elect stone, singled out by God himself, for this very office, in respect of his excellency and usefulness, to have the pre-eminence. And as he is elected unto it; this imports, it is God's own act that Christ should have such a pre-eminence, to be the foundation. Besides, as it is the act of God, so there is a certainty that God himself must be drawn dry, before Christ shall, or be left any jot unable to do that which is imposed upon him. Look, therefore, what God himself, in heaven is able to do, as he is God; all this is Christ made able to do, by him that sends

him about this employment; so that he must be spent, before Christ shall be dry. If a father hath a child, that he prizes as his own life, a slave in the gallies, he will send the ransom of his son to the gallies; he will spend all that ever he hath, rather than his son shall not be redeemed. There is no wise man sends a servant about any employment in the world, but he furnishes him thoroughly to dispatch that business about which he sends him; it is a vain thing for a master to send a servant for five pounds worth of anything, and not give him so much money. Doth God send Christ into the world to redeem sinners, to sustain the burden of sins, and not furnish him to do the work he sends him about? He might as well have kept him at home, if he did not furnish him thoroughly, that he might dispatch it.

Finally, Christ hath such a pre-eminence, as to be a living-stone, and such a living-stone, as makes all stones living that come near him. Here is the pre-eminence Christ hath; of the loadstone, you observe, all iron or steel that comes near it, it draws all to it, and communicates of its own virtue, to the iron it draws; this is, most like to Christ; for Christ is such a loadstone, that he draws many after him; and, as he draws them after him, so he communicates his own virtue to them; so that now, as he is a living-stone, he communicates life to them, though they were dead in sin; and not only so, but he communicates a power to them, to make other things lively. You have an observation, when once a knife is touched with a loadstone, it will draw another; it is most certain Christ hath this virtue to draw souls to himself, and when he draws them, they partaking of life from him, he gives unto them to be instruments of life unto others. "When thou art converted {saith Christ to Peter,} strengthen thy brethren." Now, seeing Christ hath all this pre-eminence given unto him by the Father, to be such a foundation to bear up all things, let us give him this pre-eminence to lay all upon him, and not upon anything else whatsoever; and so far as we do lay all upon "this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner stone, this sure foundation, this elect corner stone, this living stone;" so far as we will venture all upon him, we so far give him the pre-eminence; but, if he will be setting defenses to the house that is built upon a rock, what is this but a disparagement to the foundation? If the foundation be firm and good, wherefore then

served defenses? It is apparent the house will sink, when it cannot stand alone without them; so far as you set up any props unto Christ the foundation, that is to bear up all by himself, so far you disparage Christ; so far you bring him down, and give him not the pre-eminence. I see the time steals away. There are many particulars, wherein I should show you how you may give the pre-eminence unto Christ. But I must hasten.

Consider, briefly, why should Christ have the pre-eminence? Why should not other things sit cheek-by-jole with him?³⁶ I answer, because it is the good will and pleasure of the Father that he should have the pre-eminence. What is the reason Joseph must be the chief man in Egypt? Pharaoh will have it so. What is the reason that Mordecai must be led through the city with pomp and triumph, and Haman lead the horse, when Mordecai was counted a slave to Haman? Why, King Ahasuerus will have it so. And, if God will have it so, it must be so; if there were no other reason, but God the Father's will, we, that are subjects, should yield to the Father his own will, and give that honour to him, whom he will honour. What shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honour? "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." {Est.6:8,9} As much as to say, those the king honours, the people must honour with him; so, if God the Father will honour the Son with a pre-eminence upon earth, his will must be a Law to us; we must honour him with that pre-eminence, because he will have it so.

Secondly, Christ must have the pre-eminence above all other things in the world, as he is born unto it; he is heir of all things. You know, it is the right of the heir to have the inheritance, or, a double portion above his brethren; Christ, therefore, being the heir of the world, the first begotten of the Father; nay, the only Son; it starts with nature, he should have the pre-eminence above a younger brother.

Thirdly, Christ hath bought this pre-eminence; he hath paid for it to the uttermost value of it. He that

buys a lordship, it is fit he should be lord of the manor; it is not fit any inferior tenant should be above him, as long as he hath purchased and given a price for it; Christ hath purchased this pre-eminence, and he paid the Father the uttermost farthing. "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied" with it; and therefore he ought to have it.

Fourthly, Christ ought to have the pre-eminence of all things, in that he alone is able to manage this pre-eminence. You know there are many favourites in States sometimes, that have the doing of all businesses of state, in respect of the favour of the prince; but the state comes to ruin, and they also, if they be not able to manage the state. If any creature in the world should have the pre-eminence given to him to manage all affairs in the world, but Christ himself; certainly, it would prove to the world, as the poet feigned it did by the son of Phoebus, that went about to drive the chariot of the sun; Phoebus could manage the same in order; but Phaeton, a novice, a stripling, an ignorant fellow, comes in; he steps up to rule the sun, and the whole world is set on fire; I say, it would be so at least with the world, if any creature should have the pre-eminence to manage the affairs of it. Look to the wisest man in the world and most able to manage the affairs of the world; yet he hath so many irons in the fire, some of them burn for want of looking to; therefore, Christ should have the pre-eminence, because he can go through stitch with whatever business he undertakes.

Fifthly, Christ should have the pre-eminence in all things, because he hath best deserved it at our hands; we usually honour those people to whom we are most bound; according to the kindness received, so is our exalting of the person. Now, what creature in the world comes near to Christ in loving kindness and desert at our hands? Where had we been, had not Christ stepped in between us and the Father to make peace with the Father for us? Oh; what a fearful account should we have come unto at the great tribunal of the Lord, had not Christ beforehand cancelled all that God could charge us withal, and blotted out our transgressions, and presented us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing in the sight of God. In Christ you live, move, and have your being; by him you have access to the throne of grace, through a new and living way; all you have, and all that you are, all that you hope for hereafter, comes only from this fountain, this Christ, who hath

³⁶ Side by side, or in equality with him. Gill.

purchased all of the Father for you. If any creature in the world can do these things for you, let the creature be exalted above him; but if he leave all the creatures of the world behind, and out-strip them, good reason there is, according to his desert, that he should have the preeminence. The Apostle, considering the infinite desert of Christ to be exalted by men, breaks out into this vehement expression, “if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;” that is, let him be accursed with a great curse. {I Cor.16:22} So deserves this Christ at the hands of man.

Now for application of it; is it Christ’s due to have the pre-eminence? Then bring down everything that exalts itself above Christ; rear and set up the thrown-down and dejected Christ in you; you that have exalted the world, and made it your god, bring down, this idol, grind it to the dust, set up the Lord Christ; if you will have anything in the world, let Christ hear of it. When men would have anything of a king, they never go to the scullion in the kitchen, but to the favourite, by whom the king hath declared he will deliver things. When the people came to Pharaoh, he sends them to Joseph, as Joseph said, he would do; so, I say to you, would you have anything of God, go to Christ, go by Christ to him. If you come in any other name in the world, if God answers you in that you would have, he answers you with a curse. “This is my beloved Son, hear him;” as he will direct you, so you shall speed; if Christ say, your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven; if Christ will make a deed of gift to you; of liberty from bondage, of grace, or of glory; if Christ hath once past the deed, the Father will underwrite to it and subscribe it. “If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed;” for “of his fulness we do receive grace for grace.” In John 17:2, it is said that the Father “hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” As you will have these things, go to Christ; if you go anywhere else in the world, but to Christ, you shall go without; they are to be had nowhere else. God hath given Christ the pre-eminence; he must rule all, he must determine, and the Father will yield. The Father hath given all judgment to the Son, and he himself will judge no man. The government is laid upon his shoulders; therefore you must go where God sends you, if you will speed for anything of him.

Learn of Christ more, let Christ be the Alpha and

Omega; in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ; do all by Christ, get all by Christ. But must not we serve in duty, will you say? I answer, ye must serve in duty and obedience, but look not that that duty should bring anything; it is Christ brings everything you get; you get nothing by duties; assure yourselves, while you look to get by that you do, you will but get a knock; because of so much sinfulness in the duty; but if you will have any good, you must get it by Christ; your duties you perform, are that wherein you are to walk in the world, and before the world, that you may be profitable to men; but as for getting anything, assure yourselves, while your labour to get by duties, you provoke God, as much as lies in you, to punish you for such presumption, if not for the filthiness of the things you perform.

And as you must bring everything down that exalts itself above Christ; so you must set Christ above everything; know, this will be “the great condemnation, that light,” that is Christ, “is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light;” they love to run to other things, and to forsake the light; this will be the condemnation. So far as Christ is slighted, and other things promoted above him, so far you take away the great end for which Christ was sent into the world, which was that he might have the pre-eminence in all things.

6 The New Covenant Of Free Grace

I will “give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” {Is.42:6,7}

The Lord is pleased by this sweet evangelist of the Jews, this evangelical prophet Isaiah, to pour forth his own gracious thoughts and purposes concerning his dear Son Christ; in this chapter especially, he reveals and declares himself from the beginning of it.

It is worth the while to mark the coherence, to see how these words come in.

First, he declares who it is that he sends into the world for such a business, by two titles, in verse 1, first, he calls him a servant; that is, in respect of the employment and business he hath to do, wherein he is to serve the Lord; and in reference to this business, he tells us what he doth, that this his servant may dispatch it effectually, “Behold my servant, {saith he,}

whom I uphold.” Secondly, he calls him his elect, and that in reference to the designation or separation of him, the singling him out unto this business. And he doth further amplify the description of him, by the tenderness of this elect unto him, “my elect, {saith he,} in whom my soul delighteth;” here is the description of the person; Christ is this person, as you shall hear by and by, whom he thus describes.

In the next place the Lord propounds the great end for which he doth elect this his servant, and uphold him, and furnish him with his Spirit; for he saith also, “I have put my spirit upon him;” and the end of it is, “that he may bring judgment to the Gentiles;” here you see who he is; how he is furnished; and to what end he is furnished. A servant upheld, the Spirit put upon him, to the end, that he might bring judgment to the Gentiles. The Lord proceeds further, and shows how this Servant of his shall deport and demean himself; after what manner he shall carry this business in the world, “to bring judgment to the Gentiles.” He describes this in two circumstances. First, Christ shall dispatch this business of the Father, not in a ruffling or stirring way; he shall not make a great noise, as men use to do, sounding trumpets before them, when they do any good; but as you have it in the 2nd verse, “he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street;” he shall go privately about his business. And secondly, he doth illustrate the manner of managing and ordering this business, by the tenderness of the Spirit of this Christ towards those people with whom he shall deal; he doth, I say, illustrate this tenderness of his Spirit admirably, in the 3rd verse, “a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench;” he shall not deal roughly or harshly, but gently, and mildly; and yet as little noise as he shall make, though he shall not seem to promise any great thing by his privacy of deportment and carriage; yet, for all that, in the 4th verse, the Lord, by his prophet; tells us, that he shall be never the further off from performing the business he takes in hand; “he shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth.”

And then, in the 5th verse, the Lord is pleased to confirm this by undeniable arguments, that there shall not be a failing in Christ to compass this great business; the arguments, I say are strong, “thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and

stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein;” he is not a mean person that undertakes this thing, but the mighty Lord; he that hath done all great things in the world, that have been done heretofore, it is he that undertakes it; and therefore, there is no fear that it should fail.

Having thus discoursed in general, concerning the business of Christ in the world, and the manner of managing it; he comes again with the same thing, and descends unto particular instances and illustrations of what he delivered before, but generally; therefore, first, in the beginning of the 6th verse, the Lord is pleased to show forth the authority and commission by which Christ is authorized unto this great business; “I the LORD {saith the text} have called thee in righteousness;” this call is the commission of Christ; “no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” {Heb.5:4} That gives authority to a business, to be called of God. Secondly, he reiterates the helpfulness of God, as well as his call unto it, in the following words, I “will hold thine hand, and will keep thee.” And so, thirdly, he falls in with an explication or interpretation. First, how Christ shall compass this great business which he calls him out unto; he shall do it thus, by the Father’s giving of him to be a covenant for the people. I will “give thee for a covenant of the people.” {vs.6} Secondly, what Christ is to do, or the end for which he is called out to be a covenant. Before it was said, “to bring judgment to the Gentiles;” that was his business in the end of the 1st verse, and now he expounds what this judgment is. “To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house, &c.”

There are two main things in the text. The first is, the way by which Christ compasses the great business of the Father upon earth, and that is, by being “given to be a covenant to the people.” Secondly, the business itself, whereunto he is called out, that is, “to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison.” So you see how sweetly these truths hang together. For the words themselves, there are these particulars considerable in them. First, who it is that speaks, this gracious language in the text; you shall find, in the beginning of the verse, it is the Lord; “thus saith the

Lord, I will call thee, and give thee for a covenant.”

Secondly, we may consider the person to whom this gracious language is directed and spoken; and that is unto Christ; expressed only in this place by the name of ‘thee;’ thus “give thee for a covenant.” Mark here I pray you, it is not, I will give myself; it should be so, if the Father had spoken to or of himself only; but it is plain here are two several persons mentioned, I and thee; if there be two several persons, then it cannot be God speaking to himself; it must be the Father speaking to the Son, to Christ.

Yea, but you will say, it is somebody else that speaks, and is spoken unto.

Nay, but mark in Isaiah 49 where the same expressions are used, that are in this text; and then you shall plainly see, it is the speech of the Father unto Christ, by many circumstances that will illustrate it. In the 5th verse he begins thus; “and now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him;” it is none but Christ that brings Jacob back. “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” {Eph.2:13} And in the 6th verse, he saith, “it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel.” Who is it that raiseth the tribes of Jacob, and restores the preserved of Israel? None but Christ, who is the Saviour of all that are saved.

Here he begins to fall upon some of the words in the text itself. “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.” Here it is plain now that it is only Christ; for none is the salvation of men unto the end of the earth, but Christ alone. Again, look in the 8th verse and you may see more of the words of the text; “thus saith the LORD, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” Here you see likewise, that he who is the Saviour of Israel, is he who is given for a covenant to the people. And in the 9th verse, “that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, show yourselves;” so here is the same thing delivered more plainly, and Christ more fully expressed. This I have opened more at large, because all I shall speak will depend upon the opening of this truth.

Thirdly, in the next place, we are to note, what he speaks unto Christ here, even gracious language in respect of us. “He will give him for a covenant.”

Fourthly, note here unto whom the Father gives Christ for a covenant; the text saith, “unto the people, and unto the Gentiles;” that is, to Jews and to Gentiles, to all sorts of people.

Fifthly, note the end and purpose for which the Father gives him to be a covenant unto the people; “to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison.”

So, you have the parts of the text, which afford many excellent truths, and we might single them severally out; but for the sake of brevity, I will reduce the whole substance of this text into one proposition.

Doctrine: The Father is pleased to give Christ for a covenant to the people and Gentiles, to open their blind eyes, and to bring them as prisoners out of prison. This doctrine, you see, is directly the words of the text, adding only that explication, that it is the Father that doth give Christ. There is abundance of marrow and fatness in this present truth I have delivered unto you, more than people usually can find out in it. We will endeavour therefore to break the bone that all the marrow may be seen, and none of it may be lost. For this purpose, we must desire you to observe these following particulars.

I. What it is for Christ to be a covenant, or, the covenant?

II. What it is for Christ to be given to be a covenant?

III. What it is for Christ to be a covenant to open the blind eyes?

IV. If time will permit, we will then consider to whom this Christ is given to be a covenant; who they are that may partake of him, given to be a covenant unto them?

I will begin with the first of these, what it is for Christ to be a covenant; and herein will consider two things.

First, what this covenant is, that Christ is unto us. Secondly, how Christ himself is said to be this covenant.

What this covenant is, which Christ is unto persons. First, a word or two in general concerning the nature of a covenant. The common and usual manner of covenants, as you all know, is this; namely a mutual agreement between parties upon certain

articles or propositions, propounded on both sides; so that each party is bound and tied to fulfill his own conditions, which if either of them fail in, the other is therefore freed from his part, and the covenant becomes nullified, void, and frustrated. You all know, this is the true nature of a common covenant.

There are two sorts of covenants generally wherein God enters with men. There are divers particular covenants, but I will omit to speak of them; such as the covenant with David to establish his throne to himself, and to his posterity; this the prophet Jeremiah speaks of at large, which I shall only touch upon and mention, the rather, because some are conceited there was no other covenant made with David, but the covenant of grace. "Thus saith the LORD; if ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers." {Jer.33:20,21} This covenant is for the establishment of David's throne, and this is a different covenant from the covenant of grace; that is common to all sorts of believers, one with another; but I omit that.

There are two main general covenants God enters into with men; the one is called the first covenant, the old covenant, the covenant of works; it stood upon these terms, "do this, and live." The other is called a new covenant, by the prophet Jeremiah; and, by the Apostle, in Hebrews 8, it is called a better covenant, a covenant of grace. As for the first, the old covenant, the covenant of works, which stood upon these terms, "do this, and live," it is very probable, if not certain, that Christ was this first covenant unto men, even the covenant of works; for, however it be not a covenant of grace, as the second and new covenant is, yet it may, in some sense, be called a covenant of grace, in reference unto other creatures; for all creatures are under this tie, to do this; that is, what their part is which God hath imposed upon them; yet no creature hath this privilege of grace, that in doing this, he should live; the sun doth his part, he runs his race; yet the sun lives not in, or upon the performance hereof; brute creatures do their part; that is, the trade they were set about; yet, they die and perish, and are no more, when they have done. "What is man, that thou art mindful

of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" {Ps.8:4} That he should have life, and no other creature in the world, seeing there can be no difference in the creatures of themselves; the difference must be in the grace of God, which makes it that some creatures should live by doing, and others not. In Proverbs 8:31, you shall see the ground of this covenant; when the Lord made all things in the world, Wisdom, which is Christ, there tells us, that she was the delight of the Father, and her whole "delight was with the sons of men." I say, the foundation upon which the difference was built, between man and other creatures, that he hath this covenant by grace, others not, is this, all the delight of Christ was with the sons of men; he himself singled out the sons of men to be his delight, as he was the delight of the Father; and for his sake the Father will do more for them, than for other creatures.

But now, the covenant which the Lord mentions in this place, by the prophet, is not the first, but the second covenant. "I will give thee for a covenant to the people;" he means here, not the covenant of works, but the covenant of grace; which covenant is mentioned in Jeremiah 31:33, and renewed again by the prophet Ezekiel, in chap. 36:26; and also Hebrews 8, where you shall find both the covenant itself, and how, and in what sense, Christ is said to be that very covenant unto men. In verse 6, this is appropriated unto Christ, to be his great privilege, to have the sole hand and managing of this new covenant. "But now {saith the Apostle} hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant;" and what is this "better covenant?" Mark what follows in verse 8, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers;" for in verse 10, "this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Here is the substance of the covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be

my people.”

Now, all that I will note briefly out of all this, shall be only one proposition, wherein you shall see both a vast and comfortable difference between this new covenant, and all other covenants that God made with men; it differs, I say, exceedingly, and the comfort lies in the difference, which is this. All other covenants of God, besides this, run upon a stipulation; and the promise runs altogether upon conditions on both sides; the condition on God’s part was, they should live; the condition on man’s part was, that he might live, he must do this; and mark, the conditions in that covenant were such, that in case man did fail to perform his condition, the covenant was broke, and God was free from giving life; which accordingly came to pass; for man failing in doing, the covenant was actually broken, disannulled, and frustrated, and man lay under the curse of the breach of the covenant in not doing. But in this covenant of grace, to wit, the new covenant, it is far otherwise; for there is not any condition in this covenant; mark what I say, and I beseech you hear me with an impartial and unprejudiced opinion. I know I shall go against the strain of some; but, I hope, what I shall deliver shall be firmly proved from scripture. I say, the new covenant is without any conditions whatsoever on man’s part. Man is tied to no condition that he must perform, which if he does not perform, the covenant is made void by him.³⁷

The first argument is this, the covenant is called an “everlasting covenant;” and here, in Hebrews 8, God saith, “I will be merciful to your iniquities, and your sins will I remember no more.” Now suppose there were conditions for man to perform, and suppose

³⁷ This, though abundantly confirmed by the following arguments, is found fault with by some, particularly by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pg.59, and yet is no other than what some of the most judicious divines have asserted, particularly the famous Witsius; “We, {says he in his “Economy of the Covenants;” Book 3, chap.1, sect.8.} agree with them, who think, accurately speaking, that the covenant of grace has no conditions on our part, properly so called.” And elsewhere, he has these words; “this is owned, that this is the true and proper condition of the covenant of grace, by which it is chiefly distinguished from the covenant of works, that all righteousness in which the right to life is only founded, is performed by the Mediator and Surety of the Covenant; hence it follows, this righteousness being admitted, that no condition, properly so called, can be required of the elect, by which they obtain for themselves freedom from punishment, and a right to life.” And indeed what some call conditions of the covenant, as faith, repentance, and obedience, are no other than parts or blessings of it, which are absolutely promised in it; {see Ezek.36:26,27;} or what the Doctor afterwards calls the fruits and effects of the Covenant. Gill.

man did fail in those conditions, what were become of the covenant? Man did fail in the condition, whilst there were conditions before in the first covenant, and thereby the covenant was frustrated. Man is not now so confirmed, but if there were conditions for him to perform, which if he did not perform, the covenant should be broken; I say, he is not so confirmed, but he might fail in those conditions; nay, if those be the conditions, that some men conceive, then he daily fails. And, if the covenant stands upon such conditions, the covenant is frustrated so soon as the conditions are broken. So, I say, if the covenant stands upon any conditions to be performed on man’s part, it cannot be an “everlasting covenant,” except man was so confirmed in righteousness, that he should never fail in that which is his part.

But, you will say, there are many conditions mentioned in this covenant; it is said, that there must be “a Law put in the mind, and written in their heart,” with many other such things. I answer, beloved, it is true, God saith, “I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, &c.” But do you find in this or in any other mention of a covenant that this is the condition to be performed on man’s part; I say, that this is the condition of the covenant, and such a condition, that if a man perform it not, the covenant is frustrated? There is no such thing in the text.

But you will say, Conditions, or no conditions, a man must have his heart in this manner. I answer, it is true, by way of consequence, that after we are in covenant with God, he will bestow these things upon us as fruits and effects of that covenant; but, it is not true, by way of antecedence, that God doth require these things at our hands, before we shall be partakers of the covenant.

Argument 2: Observe, I pray, and you shall plainly perceive, that man hath no tie upon him to perform anything whatsoever in the covenant, as a condition that must be observed on his part; let the covenant itself be judge in this case; as it plainly shows where all the tie lies, and as plainly shows, that the whole performance of the covenant lies only upon God himself; and that there is not one bond, or obligation, upon man to the fulfilling of the covenant, or partaking of the benefits of it. Mark it in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, or in Hebrews; read those passages over, wherein the tenure of the covenant is contained, and you shall

easily see where the tie is, as Hebrews 8:10, “for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;” he will put it in, and write it; and he will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people. The word shall, here, is a word of over-ruling; it is a word of power; as if he had said, I will order it so; it follows, “and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” Know him how, by their own study and industry? No; see John 6:45, and you shall see that that condition of knowing the Lord is to be performed by the Lord, for it is there said, “they shall all be taught of God.” Observe, also, the larger expression of the covenant in Ezekiel 36:25-28, and there also, you shall plainly perceive, that still all the tie lies upon God himself, and nothing at all upon man. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God;” and in verse 29, “I will also save you from all your uncleannesses;” and I will multiply the fruit of the earth, I will do it. Where is there in all this one word that God says to man, thou must do this? If God had put man upon these things, then they were conditions indeed; but, when God takes all upon himself, where are the conditions then on man’s part?

Give me leave, I will ask you but this question; suppose there should be a fault {I make but a supposition} of performing in this covenant, whose were the fault? Must not the fault or failing to perform the covenant be his, who is tied and bound to everything in the covenant, and saith, he will do it? If there be a condition, and there should be a failing in the condition, he that undertakes all things in the covenant must needs be in fault; but the truth is, these particulars mentioned are not the conditions of the covenant, but they are consequents of the covenant;

the main substance of the covenant is included in these words, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” But, “sprinkling with clean water, taking away a stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh;” all these are nothing but the fruits of the covenant, which is, that God is the God of such a people, and the people are the people of such a God. For by virtue of this union, or uniting himself to his people, God doth cleanse and purge, he doth sanctify and refine them. As he becomes the God of his people, so he purges and cleanses them. {Acts 15:9} He doth not come first to men, and say, make yourselves clean; get you the Law of God in your minds; get you the fear of God into your hearts; get you power to walk in my statutes; and, when you do this, then I will be your God; if it did run so, then here were conditions indeed; but, it runs not thus; all the tie lies upon God’s part, to do everything that is mentioned in the covenant. “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.” {Ps.57:2}

But you will object, and say, if all lies upon God’s part and man must do nothing, then all his life time he may do what he list. I answer, you must make a difference between doing anything in reference to the covenant, as the condition thereof, and doing something in reference to service and duty to that God who freely enters into covenant with you. I say only, that in a way of condition of the covenant you must do nothing.

Argument 3: Nay, the covenant in the actual substance of it, is made good to a person before he can do anything.³⁸ The main thing in the covenant is God’s being the God of a people, and the model and draught of that, nothing but God’s love to man; God’s love to give himself to man; God’s love to take man to himself. Now this love of God is cast upon man before he can do anything; before the children had done good or evil. “Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.” Shall I need to tell you, that the covenant is then fulfilled in the substance of it, when men are actually justified. When men are justified, God hath made good his covenant unto them; he is their God, and they are his people; now where are the conditions of this covenant? Take but notice what the Apostle

³⁸ Christ, who is the Covenant itself, the sum and substance of it, must be first given to a man, before he can do anything good; for without Him we can do nothing; and faith must be given, without which we cannot please God. Gill.

saith, and tell me what conditions you find in it? “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness &c.” {Rom.4:4,5} There are two phrases here to show there can be no conditions to make up the covenant on man’s part; first, “to him that worketh not;” if there must be no working to partake of justification, then there is no conditions unto it. And again, if we must “believe on him that justifies the ungodly,” then justification is past-over to a person whilst he is ungodly; now, where is the condition of the covenant, while there remains nothing but ungodliness in men? But if these things must be fulfilled as conditions, namely, to change our hearts, and such like; then we are not justified as ungodly, but as righteous; and so it directly contradicts that of the Apostle. We must therefore conclude that this covenant, which is then made good when a person is justified, is conferred and bestowed on him, before there can be any such thing as a condition in him.

Yea, but you will say to me, peradventure though works be not the condition of the covenant; yet, we hope you will yield, faith is the condition of the covenant.

I answer, beloved, I beseech you observe me carefully in this, for I am now upon a vital point, and I shall desire to go as evenly as the scripture will guide me in it. I must needs tell you directly, and according to the truth, that faith is not the condition of the covenant.³⁹

“He that believes shall be saved, he that believes not

³⁹ This also is condemned as an error, by D. W. Gospel Truth, &c. pg. 57; but it is with great propriety and truth here asserted; for faith is the fruit of electing grace, the gift of God, the operation of his Spirit, and of which Christ is the author and finisher; and is not of men, or in their power to produce in themselves, or exercise; yea, it is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and not a condition of it; or is what men have in consequence of their being in the covenant, and not as the condition of their entrance into it. And the same is acknowledged by great many divines, particularly that excellent writer, often quoted, Professor Witsius; “the covenant of grace,” says he, “or the Gospel strictly so called, which is the formula of the covenant, seeing it consists in mere promises, properly prescribes nothing as a duty; it requires nothing, it commands nothing, no not indeed, believe, trust, hope in the Lord, and the like.” And again, “nor does that seem to be accurately said, that faith is a condition which the Law requires of us, that we may be accounted righteous and guiltless with God. The condition of justification properly speaking, is no other than perfect obedience; this the Law requires, nor does the Gospel substitute another, but teaches that the Law is satisfied by our Surety Christ; moreover, it is the business of faith to accept of the satisfaction offered to it, and by accepting, to make it its own.” Gill.

shall be damned.” Is not faith here the condition of the covenant?

I answer, there is no person under heaven shall be saved till he have believed. This I grant; yet this will not make faith to be the condition of the covenant. For first, consider faith as an act, our act, and as we do it, so I say it is a work; our act of believing is a work. If therefore we perform the condition that is a work for the enjoyment of the covenant, then the covenant doth depend upon a work; but it doth not depend upon a work, for the text saith, “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, &c.”

You will say, in that text, believing is required to the justifying of the ungodly.

I answer, an ungodly person, after he is justified, believes; but you must understand it, it is not the faith of the man that simply and properly justifies, but it is that Christ in whom he believes; believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly; it is he that justifieth, that is Christ. It is not believing that justifies. Mark well that phrase; “him that justifieth.” Justification is an act of Christ, it is not an act of faith!

But you will say, it is an act of Christ by faith.

I answer, then Christ justifies not alone. Is faith Christ himself? If not, then Christ must have a partner to justify, or else faith doth not justify, but Christ alone doth it. Nay, I say more, Christ justifies a person before he believes; for, he that believes is justified before he believes; for I ask you, whether in justification a man must believe a truth or a falsehood? You will say that he must believe a truth; then say I, it is a truth that he is justified before he believes it; he cannot believe that which is not, and if he be not justified, that he may believe it, he then believes that which is false. But he is first justified before he believes, then he believes that he is justified.⁴⁰

But what then serves faith for?

I answer, it serves for the manifestation of that justification which Christ puts upon a person by himself alone; that you by believing on him, may have the declaration, and manifestation of your

⁴⁰ Justification before faith, though caviled at by many, is certain; since God justifies the ungodly, and since faith is the fruit and effect of justification, and the act which is conversant about it, and the object must be before the act; and besides justification took place at the resurrection of Christ; yea, from all eternity, as soon as he became the Surety of his people; and which has been embraced, affirmed, and defended by divines of the greatest note for orthodoxy and piety, as Twisse, Pemble, Parker, Goodwin, Ames, Witsius, Maccovius, and others. See my “Doctrine of Justification,” pg.36–54. Gill

justification.⁴¹ Mark what the Apostle saith, whereby you shall find the true use of faith, that is not the condition, without which we receive no benefit from Christ; but rather it is the manifestation of that which is already done, and received. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." {Heb.11:1} I pray you observe the Apostle's expression, for there is abundance of light in it. Faith is the evidence of things, it is not the being of things; and it is the evidence of things not seen. A man is justified, and that by Christ alone, but it is not known to him, it is an unseen thing. Well, how shall he see this, and know that it is so? The text saith that "faith is an evidence;" faith gives evidence to this thing, faith makes it known; by faith we come to apprehend it; by faith we come to rejoice in it, as we apprehend it to be our own. It is true, indeed, Christ has honored faith admirably; but let us take heed we do not over-honour it, to give the peculiar reserved prerogative of Christ himself unto it. If faith were a concurrent thing with Christ, and Christ did justify a person alone, what would follow? Consider, when a man is justified, he is justified from all unrighteousness, and if his faith justifies him from all unrighteousness, this thing will unavoidably follow; that that thing which is full of unrighteousness will justify a man from unrighteousness; as much as to say, a man is justified from sin by sin.

But you will say, faith is not sin.

I answer, No, faith itself is not sin; but that faith acted by believers is full of sin; and the fulness of sin

⁴¹ And, indeed, for what else can it serve; since it is neither the cause, nor matter, nor condition of justification? At most it can only serve as the hand that receives the righteousness of Christ for justification, and claims an interest in it, and takes the comfort of it; nor does the Doctor say, it serves only for a manifestation, but that it does serve such an end; as it is certain it does, as has been owned by many judicious divines; and particularly the learned Hoornbeeck thinks, that the difference between Dr. Crisp, and others, may easily be made up, by distinguishing justification into active and passive; the former is the act of God justifying, the latter the termination and application of it to the conscience of believers; the one is done at Christ's satisfaction, the other when a person actually believes; "this indeed is a manifestation of that." Afterwards he says, "we do not reject the distinction between justification as made in Christ and as manifested to the soul, though in the explication of it, we do not in all things agree." And it is the former, and not the latter, that is properly justification, as Maccovius observes, "it is said of God that he justifies, Rom.4:5, and of us that we are justified, not that there is therefore a twofold justification; for that which is passive is improperly called justification, and is only the sense of active justification." And what then is this passive justification, which is by faith, any more than a perception, evidence, and manifestation of what is properly Justification? Gill.

in it makes faith in some sense, a sinful faith; and if it be sinful, how can that which is sinful justify man from sinfulness? What need Christ be without all sin to justify a person, if anything else could do it that hath sinfulness in it? You must either say, there is no sin in your faith, or else you must say, you are justified by that which hath sin in it; yet, I say still, as faith is an evidence, a manifestation, so it may be said to be our justification; that we are, in regard of our own hearts, and our own spirits, justified by faith; but Godward, as we stand actually before him, a discharged people from sin, and so consequently partakers of the covenant; as we stand thus, I say, it is not faith that justifies, neither wholly, nor in part; but Christ alone freely for his own sake, considering a person as ungodly, so he justifies him.

Beloved, let me tell you, though faith itself cannot thus be called our righteousness; yet in respect of the glory that God ascribes to it, that it seals to men's souls the fulness of righteousness, how can you consider a person a believer, and withal ungodly? When men are believers, they cease to be ungodly; but if they are not justified till they believe, Christ doth not justify the ungodly, but the godly; and then that truth which I have delivered cannot hold current, that we must believe on him that justifies the ungodly; but rather, we must believe on him that justifies the righteous. But, as I said, we do not believe that we may be justified; but we do believe, and truly believe, when we are, and because we are justified. So that still it stands firm, we are not justified, we are not in covenant, we partake not of the covenant, by any condition we perform, till which performance the covenant cannot be made good unto us; but we are in covenant, and Christ makes us to be in covenant, for his own sake, without any condition in the creature, "showing mercy to whom he will show mercy;" without anything, I say, the creature is to do, to this end, to partake of the covenant.

In the next place consider, how Christ himself can be said to be the covenant. For the text tells us, that he doth not only give Christ that there may be a covenant with men; but, saith; "I will give thee for a covenant." Christ himself is made the covenant. I answer that Christ is the covenant three ways. First, Christ is the covenant fundamentally. Secondly, Christ is the covenant materially. Thirdly, Christ is the covenant equivalently.

First, Christ is the covenant fundamentally; that is, he is the original of the covenant, the beginning of the covenant. The covenant of grace takes its being from Christ. Adam was all mankind, as all mankind was in Adam, in the loins of Adam; so Christ is the covenant, and all the covenant is, as it were, in the loins of Christ, and springs out of him; he is the covenant maker; he is the covenant undertaker; he is the covenant manager; he orders the covenant; he is the covenant dispatcher; he doth everything in the covenant; he makes the articles; he draws God the Father, and man, to an agreement unto the articles. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” {Ps.110:3} “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” {II Cor.5:19}⁴² Christ brings God down to the terms of the covenant, to yield to them. Christ brings man also to be willing to it. Christ is called “the Mediator of a covenant.” {Heb.8:6} A mediator, what is that? A mediator of a covenant is the person that hath the management of it on both sides. A covenant is no covenant till it be concluded, and done; there may be articles, but it is not actually a covenant till both sides are agreed; so there cannot be a mediator of a covenant till there be one that is able to bring both sides together, and make up a conclusion. And thus Christ is the covenant, or the Mediator of the covenant, as he manages all things in it. Job hath an excellent expression to show forth the soleness of Christ to deal in the covenant between God and men; for he makes a bitter complaint and pitiful lamentation; he knew not how to deal with God, and gives this as a reason of it, “for he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.” {Job.9:32,33} It is Christ that is this daysman. It is all one with an umpire, or a mediator; he must come between, and lay his hand upon us both; what is that? Upon God and us; the meaning is that he that is the daysman, the mediator, must be such a

person that hath power on both parties that enter into covenant together; he must lay his hand upon God; that is, he must have power with God, and bring God to such terms as he propounds; and lay his hand upon man, to bring man on; and when he lays his hand upon both, then he is a mediator of the covenant. And, in this sense, Christ is a covenant, as he hath the managing and dispatching of all the business of the covenant, from the first to the last.

Secondly, as Christ is fundamentally, so he is materially the covenant; Christ himself is the covenant, as he is Christ. This seems strange; but there is an admirable wisdom of God to be adored in this thing; the covenant substantially stands in this; “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Now Christ is both these in himself; he is God unto his people, and he is the people unto God, and before him. Both these meet in that one Christ, and are both of them admirably illustrated to us, Matthew 1:23, where, upon the birth of Christ, the angel saith, “they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Christ is “God with us” not only as Christ’s Godhead did take the human nature simply; but Christ is God with us, that is, Christ is so ordered by the Father for men, that the Father may see the Deity and Humanity made up in one, to wit, Christ’s person; and so, consequently, all the people that are the people of God, are considered in Christ, as part of him; for Christ is considered two ways, either as he consists of the Godhead, and one individual human nature; or, as he consists of that and a compact of many persons considered as members of Christ’s mystical body; so Christ is the Head, and all those that are in covenant with him, are members; and this head and members together make up one complete and entire body. Consider Christ thus, and then you shall see in him God, the God of his people, and men the people of God, and both these meet together only in Christ.

Christ, in a very few words, doth very excellently set forth this his own being, materially, the covenant. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” {Jn.17:22} Here first, he speaks of unity among themselves, as members have unity in one body; then he goes further in the next verse, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;” as much as to say thus; I, as I have assumed humanity, and

⁴² By whom are meant, not all the individuals of mankind, for these are not all in Christ, nor all reconciled to God, multitudes dying in enmity to him, nor all interested in the blessing of non-imputation of sin; whereas each of these is said of the world here; but the elect of God, who are chosen in Christ, whose peace, Christ is, whose sins are not imputed to them, and against whom no charge of any avail can be laid, and particularly the people of God among the Gentiles are here designed, who are frequently called the world in scripture; being the world which God loved, for whose sin Christ is the propitiation, and of the reconciling of which mention is particularly made. Jn.3:16; I Jn.2:2; Rom.11:12,15. Gill.

besides the humanity, have assumed the members of my mystical body, so I am in them, and they in me; and by this my being one with them, and they one with me, they become one with us both; so, God to be the God of his people, and the people to be the people of God, meet in this one Christ, God and man; Christ as head united to his members, and they as members in covenant with him.

Thirdly, Christ himself is said to be the covenant equivalently; I mean thus, though the main substance of the covenant be fulfilled to believers as soon as they are justified, that is, while they are ungodly; yet there are particular branches, or rather fruits of the covenant, to be fulfilled to believers in their season; to have God more abundantly pouring out himself in all manner of graciousness, this is to be fulfilled in season. Now, Christ is said to be the covenant, as a present pawn, or earnest delivered into the hands of a person, at the very instant of his justification; which pawn, is of equal value and worth with the whole covenant, when it is fulfilled to the uttermost; so, Christ being given over to men, as a pawn and earnest, they have, at the first instant, the whole covenant equivalently. If a man deliver money to another, and he receives a pawn worth the money, then he hath the money in his hand, though not in coin, yet in value, he hath as much as the money is worth; and so, by consequence, it is as much as if he had the money itself. Christ, delivered over in justification, is of equal value with all that is to be fulfilled, when the covenant is fulfilled to the uttermost. He being of equal value, it follows, that Christ is the covenant by estimation, though not in respect of the accomplishment and fulfilling of the several fruits.

Thus I have done with the first branch; this I desired to clear more fully; because I find the world is marvelously puzzled with the mixture of other things besides Christ in the covenant; we will go a little further this morning, because I would dispatch that I intend, and would not willingly leave anything, not knowing when, or whether ever I shall see your faces again. I will therefore enter upon the next thing of great concernment; I hope there hath been no mistake of what I have spoken, and then I know the truth of it will justify itself against all contradiction.

II. The second thing is, what is it for Christ to be given for covenant? I answer, all that benefit that Christ

is, or all that Christ can be to a person, is a mere deed of gift; and it, comes only as a very true and real gift unto men, upon no other consideration, but simply the Father's good will {Is.65:1} to make a gift of it; and this depends necessarily upon what we showed before. If that which we have hitherto spoken be not true, this cannot be true; if the covenant be with condition, and the condition to be performed for the covenant; then certainly Christ is not a mere gift. That which a man buys or pays for, he makes a reckoning of it as due debt; he cannot make a reckoning of it as a gift; but you see it plainly in the text, that Christ is given to be covenant; Christ is not bought to be a covenant, he is not paid for. Covenants between men I know are thus, if a man has a house or land to sell, there are articles drawn up and agreed upon; and he that must have the land, must pay for it; it is not so in this covenant; but it is as in covenants that are deeds of gifts, which run thus, I will freely bestow this upon you; so God bestows his Christ freely, passing him over to men, without anything from them in consideration of this Christ which is bestowed. And this imports two things; I say, that Christ is a gift, imports two things.

First, that in the participation of Christ, God requires nothing of man; he expects nothing from man in consideration of that Christ he bestows upon him. I say, he requires nothing, he expects nothing, he will take nothing; nay, he will not give Christ unto men, except they will take him freely, without bringing any thing for him.

Secondly, this gift, Christ, being given unto men, imports that there is no vileness, no sinfulness, no kind of wretchedness of man, that can be any bar to man from having a full part and portion in this Christ; a gift implies them both. I shall open them both, as clear as may be.

First, I say, Christ is conveyed unto men as a gift; without the Father's requiring anything of them, or expecting anything from them; but only barring them from bringing, or thinking to bring anything to this end, that they may have a part or share in Christ. I shall first declare, and make clear, that it is directly contrary to the nature of a gift {considered really as a gift} to require, or expect anything in consideration of that which is given. When things are passed over to a man upon consideration, either; they are passed over by bargain and sale, or else by way of bribe. When a

man desires his cause may go well in a suit of Law, he will give the judge something; but the consideration must be, that the judge shall carry the cause on his side; this that the judge receives, is not a gift, but a bribe, because something must be done for it. When a man must have such and such lands, or such and such goods, and there is a contract, you must give me so much money, and you shall have them; these lands and goods are not gifts, when money must be paid for them.

If we must bring anything to the Father in consideration of Christ the covenant, then here is a bargain and sale between the Father and us; I will give you my Christ, but you must bring me works, to wit, broken, clean and changed hearts, and the like; this is a mere bargain and sale. In Romans 4:4, you shall find plainly and clearly, how the Apostle directly overthrows the being of a gift upon this supposition; if it could be received, that a man must bring anything to his justification, he plainly affirms, a gift ceases to be a gift when any such thing comes in. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt;" mark, I pray you, well, "to him that worketh;" that is, would you bring your humiliations, your prayers, &c., as conditions that God may perform his covenant? Do you bring anything in the world, and work any inherent righteousness? Then saith the Apostle, the reward, that is, the accomplishment of the covenant, is not reckoned of grace; if you bring works, the gift ceases to be a gift, it must be reckoned to be a debt. Either then you must lay down all works, and let them cease in the business of partaking of Christ, or else you must conclude you must not receive Christ of grace, but of debt; and the Apostle doth make it more clear, "and if by grace, {that is by gift; for grace and gift, you must understand are all one; grace is nothing but the favour of God freely, and of his own accord communicated, and if by grace,} then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." {Rom.11:6} If you bring grace unto works, or works unto grace; either the one or the other, or both, all is made void; as much as to say, these two things are inconsistent, they cannot stand together, that we should partake of Christ through grace and works both; they will not stand together; grace must stand alone, or works alone; for one

directly overthrows the other.

And, beloved, to speak freely to you of these work-mongers, those buyers of Christ, that would bring something with them to partake of Christ; what would they bring? They say they will bring a good heart, or a changed life. I ask; what prize is this you bring? Do you bring anything of your own, or that which is God's already? Suppose your hearts be never so purged and cleansed; what bring you to God? You bring that which already is his own; as much as to say, a man owes another a thousand pounds, and he will come and bring him this thousand pounds, for lands worth fifty pounds by the year. No, he must bring a thousand pounds more, if he will purchase the land; even so it is for a person to bring works for Christ, which works thou owest unto God already; no, first pay thy debt which thou owest, and then if thou hast any more, bring that unto God to purchase Christ withal. But alas, when you have done all, you are unprofitable servants; for all you have done is not yours, it was due from you before; how then can anything you do be a consideration to purchase Christ withal?

Moreover, you that will bring works, and, in consideration of them, expect a part in Christ; what are the works you bring? A whip you shall have as soon as a Christ, in regard of your works. Oh, the filthiness of all the works of men, as they work them! There is nothing but filthiness in them. "Yea doubtless, {saith Paul,} and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." {Phil.3:8,9} Therefore, as it is most presumptuous pride in men, so it is the grossest ignorance that can be to dream of anything that they have do, or can do, in the partaking of Christ; they directly overthrow the nature of a gift; hast thou but one thought once, that God will accept thee in Christ, upon consideration that thou hast performed thus and thus; this very thought directly destroys Christ, considered as a gift; for if he be a gift, then he comes without any consideration whatsoever.

7 The New Covenant Of Free Grace

I will "give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in

darkness out of the prison house.” {Is.42:6,7}

In the next place, as it is against the nature of a gift, so God doth not expect, nor will accept of anything from men in consideration of Christ; and, for this, the Scriptures are plain and clear, that the Father expects nothing in the world of men; no one qualification or spiritual disposition, before, or upon the communicating of his Son Christ unto men. I will but name some few passages to clear this to you, that I may not seem to come in my own name, in this that I have delivered.

Consider, among other passages, that in Isaiah 55:1,2, for it is plain there, as you may see, that God looks for nothing in the world of men; be they what they will, be they in the worst condition, no matter what it is, they are the men to whom Christ offers himself. “Ho, every one that thirsteth;” {saith Christ;} that is, every one that hath but a mind to come to him, every one that would take him, may have him; “come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Eat, but not buy; for it is said, “buy without money;” you may eat without price, and that which you shall eat is fatness. Mark what follows, “incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;” {vs.3;} here you see the Covenant mentioned. But what doth God require here in the Covenant? No money, no price; the Covenant runs all upon mercy; it is an everlasting Covenant indeed, and an everlasting Covenant of mercy. Now mercy is the doing a thing only and merely of gift; if a man will forgive a debtor, and ask nothing of him, then he is a merciful man; so far as men give, so far are they merciful; so far as they sell, there is no mercy in that. But here is neither money, nor price, nor any thing at all in consideration of the Covenant. {Lk.7:42}

Likewise, in Hosea 14:4, God saith by the prophet, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him;” he will love you freely, that is the term; he will ask nothing for that good he will do unto you, it shall be freely; and what is

more free than gift?

Look also into that notable place, worthy of all consideration, Ephesians, chapter 2, where the Apostle speaks most admirably sweetly to this point of giving and communicating Christ, and all that is Christ’s unto men, merely of grace, merely of gift, without consideration of anything in the world; and there you have the reason, why God will do it merely of gift, and upon no other ground or cause at all, {in vs.4,} saying, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,” {here is the great principle that gives being to all that follows} “even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved;” now mark what follows, “and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus; for by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Here you see how notably the Apostle takes off all things in the world, whereby man may imagine to move God to show kindness, and give his Christ unto them; and attributes all to the riches of God’s grace because of that “love wherewith he loved us.” Hence it is that he bestows Christ by grace; “and by this grace are we saved, and that not of ourselves, not of our works, lest any should boast.”

I will not recite many places; one more, and then I have done with this. Look into the last of the Revelations, and you shall see Christ is so a gift passed over unto men, that God looks for, asks, requires nothing of men to their partaking of him; in verse 17, “let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” No matter for bringing of anything with you; have you a mind to him? Take him freely, and know that God scorns to make a sale of his Son. If men take him as a deed of gift, well and good; if they will have him upon other terms, God never means to part with him. I tell you, could you bring angelical perfection and obedience, and present that unto the Father as a motive to him to bestow his Christ upon you; if you dare offer the most perfect righteousness in the world for Christ; I say, you shall be accursed for it. “But though we, {saith the Apostle,} or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let

him be accursed.” {Gal.1:8} Any other gospel, than salvation, and participation of Christ, by grace and free gift; for that is the doctrine he had established before, and, through the whole epistle to the Galatians, doth maintain; let such person be accursed, saith Paul. And concerning those that will preach any other doctrine, or will establish any righteousness of man, and pervert the people of God from the sincerity of the doctrine and gospel they have received; the Apostle is so eager against them, that he breaks out into this expression, “I would they were even cut off, which trouble you,” in the same Epistle, {5:12,} and upon the self-same ground we have in hand, he thus expresses himself, and why? Because they overthrew the great intent of the Lord, and those great thoughts he hath of himself; namely, that the world may see what a God of grace he is. If a man comes with works, towards the enjoyment of Christ, he overthrows the grace of God, and frustrates the great end for which God sent Christ into the world; for as you see it plainly there in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the place before mentioned, the Lord therefore comes to give Christ, to set forth “the praise of the glory of his free grace.”

Secondly, this Gift {Christ I mean} given as a Covenant, imports unto you, that as the Father looks for nothing in men to partake of Christ, so also it doth imply, there is nothing in men, though never so vile, that can debar a person from a part in this Christ. Some will not have Christ, except they can pay for him; others dare not meddle with Christ, because they are so vile and wretched creatures that they think it impossible that Christ should belong to such wretched persons as they are. You know not {saith one} what an abominable sinner I am; you look upon others, but their sins are but ordinary; but mine are of a deep dye, and I shall die in them; the rebellion of my heart, is another kind of rebellion than is in others.

Beloved, let me tell you freely from the Lord; let men deem you as they will, and make yourself as bad as you can, I tell you, from the Lord, and I will make it good, there is not that sinfulness that can be imagined in a creature, that can be able to separate or debar any of you from a part in Christ; even, while you are thus sinful, Christ may be your Christ. Nay, I go further; suppose one person, in this congregation, should not only be the vilest sinner in the world, but should have all the sins of others, besides what he himself hath

committed; if all these were laid upon the back of him, he should be a greater sinner than now he is; yet, if he should bear all the sins of others as I said, there is no bar to this person, but Christ may be his portion. Christ “bore the sins of many,” {saith the text,} but he bare them not as his own, he bare them for many. Suppose the many, that are sinners, should have all their sins translated to one in particular; still there is no more sin than Christ died for; though they be all collected together. If other men’s sins were translated upon you, and they had none, then they needed no Christ; all the need they have of Christ, were translated to you, and then the whole of Christ’s obedience should be yours. Do but observe the strain of the Gospel, and you shall find that no sin in the world can be a bar to hinder a person from having a part in this Christ that is given; look upon the condition of persons {as they are revealed in the Gospel} to whom Christ is reached out; and the consideration of their persons will plainly show to you, that there is no kind of sinfulness that can bar a person from having a part in Christ.

Look into Ezekiel, chapter 6, quite through; the person is there considered in a state of blood, of menstruousness, of vileness and greatest filthiness that can be supposed. “None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” {Ez.16:5,6,8} When “no eye could pity” such a person, or do any good to him; “I passed by thee,” {saith Christ} and “thy time was the time of love;” yea I “swore unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” Construe this in a spiritual sense and conceive of a spiritual estate of filth that is proportionable to a natural estate of filth. That very time of the vilest of our spiritual filthiness is the time of Christ’s love, when he enters into Covenant. Yea, but sure the case is altered, before Christ actually swears. No; “then washed I thee

with water; yea, I thoroughly wished away thy blood.” When? Even then when “I sware unto thee, and entered into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.” First, he did sware and then he did wash them; and not wash them, and then sware unto them, and enter into Covenant with them. First, “I entered into Covenant with thee, then washed I thee with water, and then put I jewels upon thee, &c.” The first thing he doth is that he enters into Covenant, and the people become his people, and then he takes them in hand and washes and purges them, and not before.

Consider Christ’s own expression. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” {Lk.19:10} “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” {Lk.5:32} “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” {Mt.9:12} Here still the persons are considered in the worst condition, {as some might think} rather than in the best. Our Saviour is pleased to express himself in a direct contrary way to the opinion of men. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” The poor publican that had nothing to plead for himself went away more justified than the proud Pharisee that pleaded with God; “I thank thee that I am not such an one.”

Men think righteousness brings them near to Christ; but beloved righteousness is that which puts a man away from Christ.⁴³ Stumble not at the expression, for it is the clear truth of the Gospel; not simply doing of service and duty, doth put away from Christ; but upon the doing of duty and service, to expect acceptance with Christ, or participation in Christ, this kind of righteousness is the only separation between Christ and a people; and whereas sinfulness in the world can debar a people, their righteousness may debar them as well.

I need not tell you, what I have so often mentioned, that there must be a believing in him that justifies the ungodly; {Rom.4:5,6;} what can you look for of an ungodly person? If there can be any bar in the world to hinder a man from taking Christ, you would think it should be ungodliness; it is the ground of most, and all men’s fears. But if the term ungodliness be not bad enough, consider, Christ goes further, even unto rebellion; for he hath received gifts for the rebellious. “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity

⁴³ When it is trusted to, and depended upon, and put in the room of Christ and his righteousness; or when it is brought to fit a man for Christ, and give him a right and claim to him, and his benefit. Gill.

captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” {Ps.68:18}

But some may be ready to say to me, though God be never so free in giving Christ unto men; yet they may never have a part in him, except they have hands to take and receive him. I answer, I beseech you consider, and I answer peremptorily, that though men have no hands to take Christ, yet may they receive him. I will clear this a little to you, first by illustration, or by way of similitude; a poor indigent person is speechless, he hath never a tongue; he is handless, he hath never a hand; he cannot ask with the tongue, he cannot take with the hand; if you have a mind to give, I ask, can you not give to such a person, because he hath not a tongue to speak, nor a hand to take? You may behold, and see the pitiful case of such a man, and your compassions may be stirred in you; and whereas he cannot put a garment upon his own naked back, yet you may provide raiment, and put it upon his back with your hands, as well as if he had put it on himself; and thus God deals in bestowing Christ upon men. We are dumb and cannot speak, “we know not what we should pray for as we ought,” saith the Apostle, {Rom.8:26;} but God being rich in compassion, he beholds our miserableness; his own bowels stir him up. Although there be no language in the creature to move him; yet out of these bowels of his, he will show pity and mercy to us, and reach out his Christ, to those that have no hands to receive him, no faith to believe in him. It is the Lord that puts this Christ on the back of those persons on whom he hath pity and compassion. {Is.61:10} I say, that although we have no hand, yet the Lord puts his Christ upon us; so it is not we that put him on, but the Lord that puts him upon us.

Secondly, to resolve the case more fully and clearly, observe a distinction very needful to be observed and considered; there is a twofold receiving of Christ; there is, first, a passive recipiency; and secondly, there is an active recipiency.⁴⁴

First, there is a passive receiving of Christ, and that is, so that Christ is received without any hands; but in

³¹ And an excellent distinction it is; the learned Hoornbeeck takes notice of it, and has these words concerning it; “neither do we reject some distinctions of theirs [i.e. Dr. Crisp, and others, called Antinomians] as of the reception of Christ first passive, then active.” Gill.

an active receiving of him, he is not received without hands; you will say, what is this passive receiving of Christ? I answer, a passive receiving of Christ, is just such a receiving of him, as when a froward patient takes a purge, or some bitter physic; he shuts his teeth against it, but the physician forceth his mouth open, and pours it down his throat, and so it works against his will, by the over-ruling power of one over him, that knows it is good for him. Thus I say, there is a passive recipiency, or receiving of Christ, which is the first receiving of him; when Christ comes by the gift of the Father to a person, whilst he is in the stubbornness of his own heart, being froward and cross; and the Father forces open the spirit of that man, and pours in his Son in spite of the receiver.⁴⁵ There is such a kind of recipiency mentioned in scripture. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded." {Jer.31:18,19} Mark how Ephraim {who is the representative of the church} stands affected and disposed; when God comes first to tame and break the spirit of Ephraim, God is fain to get upon Ephraim, as an horse-rider is fain to get upon an unruly horse, that was never broken; he must fetter him upon all four, that he may stand still before he get up. So God must fetter Ephraim before he can get up, before he can tame him; "I was as a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke," nothing but kicking and spurning at first; afterwards Ephraim becomes more gentle; "when I was converted, I smote upon my thigh, and was confounded;" but before, Ephraim was a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Hence it is that

⁴⁵ This is to be understood of the state and condition, in which a man is, when God comes first to work upon him, in which he is passive; and the simile made use of, of a physician forcing a man's mouth open, and pouring physic against his will, is intended to illustrate, and does illustrate, the enmity and rebellion of the heart of man against Christ and his grace; and shows how disagreeable, to the carnal mind, are the methods which God takes when he first works upon it, either by afflictive providences, or by letting the Law into the conscience, which works wrath there; and not, as D. W. suggests, in his Gospel Truth, pg. 101, as if men were said to receive Christ against their wills; for, as the Doctor after observes, when Christ has entered into the soul, and has revealed himself, and shown it his excellency and his beauty, it embraces him, and holds him fast; when his power comes upon it, it is made willing to receive him, whom, before, it had a dislike of, and an aversion to. Gill.

the entrance of Christ into a person is attributed unto the power of Christ. "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power;" the power of the Lord must overcome a person, before Christ can take a possession of him, in regard of the crossness of the spirit of man to the pleasure of Christ.

At the first, then, there may be a passive receiving of Christ, by which Christ may enter and doth enter into the spirit of man, though the soul reach not forth the hand to take him in; but rather on the contrary part, fight against him by keeping him from entering; {Acts 9:3;} but now when this Christ is poured into the spirit of a man by the power of the Lord, then he begins to work, to break, and to tame the spirit, to be at his own beck and pleasure; when Christ hath once revealed himself and made the soul to behold his beauty, and acquainted it with his excellency, then it begins to embrace him, and to bold him fast, and will not let him go.

Here comes in the second act of receiving Christ, when we, take him, perceiving that he is a friend and coming for good, and that there is no good but by him. {Micah 6:6,7} Christ is considered as given of the Father; and being given, the Father hath no regard to anything that a man can do for him, or anything he can do against him. But it may be, before I leave this, you will ask, is not unbelief a bar to have a part in Christ?

I answer, it is a bar to hinder the manifestation of Christ in the spirit; but it is not a bar to hinder one from having a part in Christ, on whom God doth bestow him. It is true, that you, nor I, can say by experience that Christ is ours, until we believe; for as long as we continue in total unbelief, we cannot conclude to our own spirits that Christ is ours; but unbelief is not simply a bar to the bestowing of Christ, to such a person; he bestows him without any regard to belief, or unbelief; if unbelief should be a bar to hinder Christ from being bestowed upon men, where is the man to whom Christ should be bestowed? There is no person under heaven considered simply as ungodly, and under the notion of ungodliness, but he is considered as an unbeliever, as well as a sinner in other respects; so that to the Father's giving of Christ, unbelief is not a bar; only to the inward satisfaction of the soul and spirit, unbelief is a bar; a soul cannot be resolved till it doth believe.

III. And so now I come to consider the third thing I proposed, namely. What it is for Christ to be given to open the blind eyes? There are two things very remarkable in it, that he is given to do this; for hence I infer, and the thing itself will clearly bear it. First, that Christ is actually passed over to a soul, and a possession of Christ is delivered unto persons, before ever their blind eyes are opened, or they come out of prison; that is, before they have any gracious qualifications whatsoever; and this is a truth that follows upon the former, that Christ himself is the first spiritual gift that the Father doth bestow upon any, before there be wrought any opening of the eyes, which is the first of all gracious qualifications wrought in a man.

Secondly, that the opening of the eyes, and bringing the prisoners out of prison, is the sole work of Christ; none doth this business but Christ alone when he is once given. The first will need a little clearing, and thereby the second will be sufficiently evidenced, being a truth of very great concern, and yet seldom seriously considered; I say, that Christ is actually given and passed over to men, and made really theirs, before ever there be any gracious qualifications put into the soul of such a man. I say, as before, observe this caution, I speak of God's giving Christ unto men, not of the manifestation of him unto a man to be his; there is, and must be faith, as I said before, for the manifestation of him to be ours; but there is no qualification wrought in the heart of any person, before Christ be actually passed over, and made his in the Covenant. Now, I say, Christ is given and passed over to such a person, before he has any gracious qualifications; I do not mean, as some do, that God did actually decree Christ, unto such and such, before he put any qualifications in them; this is a truth indeed; but I say further, that God gives actual possession of Christ, and Christ takes possession of that person, before there be any qualifications wrought in him; now Christ is given, not only to perform some common acts of God's providence, but he is given as the Covenant itself; he enters, and actually justifies a person, before any qualification be wrought in him.

Now I shall endeavour to clear this, by all possible evidence I can; as the Scripture is plain for it, in Isaiah 61:1,2,8, and so forward; there you shall see that Christ is actually given unto men, before any gracious qualifications whatsoever be wrought in them. "The

Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me," saith Christ; for they are his words, as he himself applies them, in the sermon that he preached. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." {Lk.4:18,19} Observe it, I pray you, here Christ hath a business to do in the world; which is, "to bind up the brokenhearted;" and, the Lord hath anointed him to this business. What is that anointing? The Lord hath separated him, designed him to it; and according to his designation, places him where he may do it; this is meant by anointing. Now, when a man is set apart, and sent about such a business; he must be there corporally or virtually before that is done, which he is sent to do; he is sent to do a thing, therefore he must be there where it is to be done; a man is not said to do a thing, when it is done before he come; if Christ be sent to bind up the brokenhearted, and if it be his business; certainly they are not bound up before he comes to bind them; and if he comes to bind them up, then he is present before they are bound up.

But, peradventure, you will say, by this text, here are broken hearts first, before Christ be sent to bind them up; therefore there must be broken hearts before Christ come to the soul. To this I answer, that a broken heart is to be considered in a double sense, either, first, simply for a heart undone; or, secondly, for one sensible of its own undoing. You know, men are said to be undone, and broke, when their estates are broke, and their credit cracked; and, they may be said to be broke, when they have examined their own books, and find that they are, and so seek to their creditors to make agreement; they may be considered as broken, supposing and considering what their condition is simply in itself, as they are undone in it; or else, they apprehend themselves to be undone, and so make agreement.

Now, with these two kinds of brokenness of heart considered, I answer that it is most certainly true in the first sense, that there is a broken heart, before Christ is considered as present to bind it up; that is men are really undone, before he comes to restore them; but these persons are not sensible of their own brokenness of heart, until Christ comes and makes them sensible

of it.

Therefore, if you will speak of the sense of breaking, I flatly affirm, that Christ is actually given, and is come unto the soul, before sensibleness be wrought in the soul. Mark but the Covenant as it is recited, and who is it that deals with the heart of man to take away the stoniness of it, and to give a meltingness unto it? "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, &c." {Ezek.36:26,27} "I will – I will, &c;" who is that? It is he that did obtain a more excellent ministry, "by how much also he is the Mediator of a better Covenant;" even the Mediator of this Covenant, and it is he that takes away the stony heart; and, if he breaks it, how can there be said to be a broken heart, before Christ comes to do it?

Therefore, in brief, know this, that Christ is sent unto men, as to bind up their hearts, when they are broken, so graciously to break them, when they are hard; first, he breaks them, then he binds them up; Christ is sent "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." People think by their humiliations, sorrows, mourning and obedience, and such like, to get Christ; but is plain that the very spirit of mourning is the work of Christ upon a person, and that he is present to work it too. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;" {Zech.12:10;} who was it that poured this spirit of grace and supplication upon them? Christ, who was pierced, and on whom they shall look that had pierced him. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" this is he that poured out the spirit of supplication and mourning; so, if it be Christ that was pierced, as is plain, then it is also plain that he poured out the spirit of grace, supplication, and mourning; how then can they mourn before Christ comes, when it is he, after he is come, that doth effect this very thing?

Object any qualification whatsoever, and it will appear most evident and plain, that it is Christ himself, after he is come, that works it; even faith itself, which is called the radical grace of all graces, is not given until Christ himself be given men, who works this

very faith. "Looking unto Jesus {saith the Apostle} the author and finisher of our faith." {Heb.12:2} Christ is the author; what faith can there be then till he comes to work it?

Consider Psalm 68:18 compared with Ephesians 4:8, and you shall plainly see that Christ is given unto men before there be any qualifications of any grace whatsoever in them. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious," saith the Psalmist; "thou hast given gifts unto men," saith the Apostle; put them both together and we see that Christ received for and gave gifts unto rebellious men. Consider, I pray, what gracious dispositions and qualifications are considerable in rebellious men; for as they are rebellious, there can be none considered; but Christ received for, and gave gifts to the rebellious; therefore, he is given, and accordingly gives whatsoever any person hath before he hath anything.

There are many notable arguments in Scripture most absolutely establishing this truth; that Christ is given and made over unto men before they have any qualification whatsoever. Christ is called "the head of the body, the church, and the beginning." {Col.1:18} These two metaphors illustrate and establish this truth.

First, Christ is the beginning. He that is the beginning of all things is before all things; not only in the being of nature before all things, but actually present before all things be begun. He that is the builder of the house, doth not come after it is begun to be built; but he is present at the place before a stone is laid, because he is the man that must lay it, he is the beginner of it; and if he be the beginning, whatsoever is begun, is after him that is the beginning.

Secondly, Christ is the head. This is the other metaphor, whereby is set forth, that Christ must upon necessity be in the soul, be actually passed over unto men, before they can have any gracious qualifications. A head is the fountain of all animal and sensitive spirits, and of all motion; without a head a man cannot hear, see, walk, feel, stir, nor do anything, seeing all these operations come from the head. Consider the body as headless and all the senses are absent, and without a head nothing is done. Christ is the head of his church; {so saith the Apostle;} that is, he is the fountain of all spiritual sense and motion. You may as soon conceive

that a man is able to see whilst he hath not a head; as to think, a man can have spiritual eyes, whether the eye of faith to behold Christ, or the eyes of mourning to lament one's wretchedness, before there be actually the presence and conjunction of Christ the head, unto such a body. Beloved, to think a man can have any spiritual sight before Christ be actually united to the soul, is all one, as for a man to think to see before he has eyes. The eyes are placed in the head; both the organs, faculties and spirits all are in the head. How can a man see that hath neither eyes nor spirits to feed them; which he hath not, while he hath not a head, where all these are planted. Christ must be the eye, and be present to give sight; therefore, the Scripture expressly says that Christ is given "for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, &c.;" {Is.42:6,7;} and if to open them, then they are not opened before he gives them sight.

And, thirdly, as Christ is called a Head, and a Beginning; so also Life, frequently in the Scripture. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6} Can a man be an active creature, before there be life breathed into him? The Lord, {saith the text} at the creation, breathed into man the breath of life, and so man became a living soul. He was like a stone, till he received life; but now, saith the Apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." {Gal.2:20} "By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." {I Cor.15:10} Paul was an active soul. How? By the grace of God. That is, as a body, without a soul is dead; so every person, in spiritual actions, is wholly dead, till Christ the soul of the soul be infused into him, to animate and enliven him. I shall not spend more time in urging more arguments; though I might be large to show that Christ is the first thing given unto us, before all other whatsoever. For if this light be not enough, we must wait till the Lord in his time will reveal his truth.

IV. And now in a word or two consider, who they are, to whom Christ is given to be a Covenant. All this is good news, will some say, to those unto whom it is sent. Many thousands cry out, Oh, but it is none of my portion, nor my portion, that Christ should be given as a Covenant to me.

I shall not be large in this, though some may expect it; the text will tell in part, who those are to whom Christ is given for a Covenant; to wit, the people and the Gentiles, one, as well as another. God gives Christ to men without respect of persons, to Jews and Gentiles. You shall find through the whole course of the Scripture, the persons to whom Christ is exhibited are still expressed in the most general terms; if a man would know for whom he came, it is answered, Christ came to seek and to save those that are lost; in due time, he came to die for the ungodly; and that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Scripture runs upon this strain; why then should any man come and cry, "Christ died not for me, he is not given for me." Why, art thou a convinced sinner? He was given for thee, if thou art truly saying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The king puts forth a proclamation, and in it he pardons all thieves; what mad or foolish thief will say, Oh, but the king doth not mean me, he may mean others, but not me! Why, he means thieves in general, he excepts none; why shouldest thou say, not me? If there be the name of thieves in general, without particular mentioning of some, they will come in, and take their portion. Beloved, so Christ deals with men, he is given to the people, to the Gentiles; art thou of the people? Art thou of the Gentiles? If thou art, why is he not given to thee? Nay more, it is the people and Gentiles considered as sinners?

But some will be ready to say, you know that Christ is not given to all people, and all Gentiles; for some do miscarry, and possibly I may be among them, that do miscarry; but how shall I know that I am among the number of such sinners that shall not miscarry, and that my portion is in this Christ? Beloved, here observe by the way, now we are speaking of knowing whether Christ be mine, or no, not simply of Christ's being ours, but of his manifestation, or of knowing him to be ours, how shall I know it? You will say, there are labyrinths, in which a man may walk, and by hap may chance to hit the right, in the finding of this great truth, so much searched after, how a man may know whether Christ be his or no? To lead you in a plain and sure way; the best way for any man to know whether Christ be his or no, is to consider the conveyance in which he is made over to men; see the terms of

conveyance, and according to these terms, such is the security of your title. Now the terms of conveyance {as I have often told you} are only such as in deed of gift, and a deed of gift universally exhibited and reached out. Therefore, I must tell you, there is no better way to know your portion in Christ, than upon the general tender of the gospel, to conclude absolutely that he is yours, and so, without any more ado, to take him, as tendered to you, on his word; {Is.55:1;} and this taking of him, upon a general tender, is the greatest security in the world that Christ is yours.⁴⁶ Say unto your souls {and let not this be contradicted, seeing Christ hath reached out himself to sinners as sinners;} my part is as good as any mans; set down thy rest here; question it not, but believe it; it is as good security as God can make thee; he hath promised, venture thy soul upon it, without seeking for further security. But, some will say, he doth not belong to me; why not to thee? Christ belongs to sinners, as sinners; and if there be no worse than sinfulness, rebellion, and enmity in thee, he belongs to thee, as well as to any in the world; and there is nothing at all that can give thee a certainty that he is thine, but receiving him on these terms.⁴⁷ “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” {Jn.1:11-13}

Christ receiveth sinners, as sinners; he never shut out one of all those thousands that came upon the tender of the gospel; he never put any by; “but to as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God.” Bring me any one instance

⁴⁶ This is the principal passage on which the Dutch Professor Hoornbeeck has laid the charge of holding universal redemption to the Doctor, concluding, from this general tender, or offer of Christ to all, that he held the universal satisfaction of Christ for all, and that all have an equal portion in it; from whence they might be assured Christ as theirs, and not from any condition in themselves; and, indeed the universal offer, cannot be supported without supposing universal redemption; which those, who are fond of, and yet profess particular redemption, would do well to consider. Gill.

⁴⁷ This is putting it upon a much better foot than the general tender; which is no security to any, of Christ being his; nor even general redemption itself, since all have not a portion in him, or are saved by him; but, Christ dying for the worst and chief of sinners, and his promise to receive, and his actually receiving them as such, are the best security, and on which a poor sinner, under a deep sense of sin may rely; and be encouraged to apply to Christ, and lay hold upon him as his own Saviour. See the last paragraph of the next sermon, where the Doctor mentions a better security than the general tender. Gill.

in the whole book of God, of any one that hath come to Christ, and taken him upon the tender of the gospel, and yet he hath put this person by. It is true, in a shallow matter, concerning a bodily cure, the woman comes to Christ, and at the first, he would not hear, then he calls her a dog; yet before they parted, Christ not only accepts the woman, but breaks out into admiration, “Oh woman, great is thy faith!” But, I say, in the business of partaking of Christ, show me an instance of any in all the Book of God that have ventured upon the general tender of Christ, which was rejected. {Rev.22:17} If there be no example, in all the Scripture, from whence fetch you this bitterness of your own spirits that you may not, that you dare not, close with Christ?

But, you will say to me, if this taking of Christ be the best security, how shall I know whether I believe or no? Or how shall I know whether this my taking is not a counterfeit, but a solid, substantial, real, taking of Christ.

I answer, by the reality of the thing. Do you it indeed? If you do it indeed, it is a real taking. If a man should ask you; how do you know the sun shines? The light of it shows itself; and, by its light, we know it shines. How shall I know I believe? There is a light in faith that discovers itself unto men. The soul that really closes with Christ may conclude that he doth. If you give sixpence to a poor man, and then ask him, how do you know I have given you it, and that you have it? Why, saith he, I have it in my hand, and find, and feel that I have it. So, ask your hearts this question, how do I know I believe in Christ? Do I cast my heart upon this truth? Do I receive it as one that I do believe, or do I reject it, or will not receive it? Then I do not believe; but if you sit down, and rest upon it, and receive it, and do in reality believe it; then you may absolutely conclude Christ is yours. In respect of time, I cannot amplify any further; but, I hope, for the present, this will give satisfaction. A word or two for application, and so I will conclude.

Is this a truth, as hath been by Scripture proved to you that Christ is given a Covenant to men, to open their blind eyes? Then it is plain, they begin at the wrong end of the bottom who begin to wind up at the graciousness of their own spirits, from thence to have comfort. If you begin at any other end than at Christ to get grace and comfort, you do as they do that take

the inmost end of the bottom of the thread, and begin to ravel there; so that little or no work is done, but much and many a knot, and broken ends made, and the work quite spoiled; whereas, if they began at the utmost end of the bottom, it would have run without disturbance.

Beloved, Christ is given to open men's blind eyes; go whither you will, you shall never have your eyes spiritually opened, except you go to him; Oh, what a do is here with men, or in men, with breaking their own hearts, and forsaking their sins! And whither do they run? They run to their inherent righteousness, their qualifications, their prayers, their tears, their humiliations, sorrows, reformations, universal obedience, and the like; but is this to run to free grace and free mercy in Christ? Nay, Christ, alas, is never thought of; he is clean forgotten, and wholly neglected, and not considered all this while. Here is ploughing with a wooden plough; here is a working upon a dead horse, or rather with one. What is in the heart of a man to plough up the rock of his own heart? No marvel that you sweat and toil and moil all the day long, and all lies in the same case it did; there is no strength to bring forth; because you go in your own, or the strength of the creature, and not in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know that when a pump is dry, men use not to stand labouring at it till they sweat; but they first come, and fetch a bucket of water, and pour the water into it, and then they fall to pumping, and by virtue of the water poured, there comes more water up, and by continual pumping they fetch out abundance; so your hearts are dry things, there is no sap, no moisture, no life in them; Christ must first be poured in, before you can get anything out; wherefore then do you stand labouring and tugging in vain? Oh, stay no longer, go to Christ; it is he that must break thy rocky heart, before the plough can come over it, or at least enter into it. As I told you before, so I tell you again, you must consider Christ as freely given unto you by the Father, even before you can believe.

There is a story of Ebedmelech; the black-moor in Jeremiah, {Jeremiah, chapter 38,} who by his interest and favour with the king, got leave to go to the dungeon to Jeremiah to fetch him out; he carries ropes with him, lets them down and causeth Jeremiah to put them under his arms, and round about him;

now Jeremiah by holding fast the ropes doth not pull him into the pit, but he pulls Jeremiah out of the pit to himself. I speak this by way of illustration. Christ is our Ebedmelech with the Father, the great King of Glory; his dealing prevails that he may have liberty to pluck us poor Jeremiah's out of the pit and dungeon of sin and Satan, of misery and destruction. How doth he this? He doth not first send ropes, and then come after, but goes and carries them with him; that is, Christ doth not send faith first to believers, and then comes after as drawn by it; no, but he comes and brings it with him, and he, being present, lets it down to them; and when they have it, they do not draw Christ down to them by it, but holding it fast, he draws them up to himself. So here is not faith first, and then Christ; but Christ comes first and gives faith to apprehend and lay hold upon him. Consider therefore, Christ as your Ebedmelech, who comes and reaches himself out to draw you up, and being first present, reaches out faith to you, by which you may hold; so Christ fetches you out of the pit.

Wherefore {to draw to a conclusion} remember this, as you run to Christ, so shall you prosper in everything you take in hand; all the business that Christ undertakes shall go on a-main, whilst all that the creature undertakes shall stand at a stop. Make trial, begin but with Christ; take him along with you in your entrance upon anything, and you have a mighty Counsellor to guide and direct you, for so Christ is called; and good counsel, you know, is very useful for a prosperous expedition of things. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." {Is.9:6} Again, you have a tower and refuge fully secure to retreat to in case of extremity or of over-mastership. It was once a prime piece of policy, when in combat with an enemy, to make sure of some good fort, and to maintain that; so that if the enemy be too strong, they may know whither to go to be hid and saved from the present danger; and without such a refuge they are all liable to be cut off; so do you begin with Christ; make sure of him when you enter into the field of the world; get but this fort, and you have a place of retreat upon all occasions, where there is most certain security, which the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against, for Christ is that impregnable rock; but this is not all.

Christ is also the water of life; take but Christ along

with you, and then in all your travels no sooner do you begin to faint, but there is living water at hand; you may drink of it, and your spirits shall be refreshed and revived. What shall I say more to you? It is Christ that oils the wheels of your chariots, and makes you run the ways of God's commandments? It is he that fills the sails; you must needs lie at a calm, if he be not present to blow in them. Take Christ with you, and you have the wind at command. Many a mariner would give the world to have such a privilege as to command the natural winds, and to make them blow when and which way he listeth; he would never then lie wind-bound. Beloved, you that have Christ have the wind in your fists; you may be carried to any port you will. If you have him, you shall have a swift gale, and shall sail a-main by his power. Therefore, if Christ be poured forth, and a gift unto men, and so cheap that you may have him for nothing, only receiving him, let this be your everlasting cry and song, none but Christ, none but Christ! Or rather, in the language of the Apostle, "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

8 Christian Liberty No Licentious Doctrine

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." {Jn.8:36}

Our Saviour here gives a hint to his Apostles, that they should not look to fare better than their Master. He speaks of hard usage in the world; for he came into it to fulfill a gracious and glorious ministry, bringing from the bosom of his Father the great and unsearchable love the Father had from everlasting in his thoughts towards his own dear ones; and so he takes all opportunities and advantages to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the sons of men; yet met he with much opposition. But although Christ knew full well that there were many Cavillers that laid snares to trap him in his words, and that they frequented the common assemblies where he preached, to catch something from him, whereby they might have a cause at least to upbraid him, and bring him into danger; I say, although Christ knew there were in all such assemblies some Scribes and Pharisees, and such like, yet for all this, when opportunity offered, he was graciously pleased to use much freedom of speech to them; and though some were carping and caviling at his words and his person, yet some there were to

whom the glad tidings of salvation did belong, who by his ministry received them, and so were comforted. It seems it fell out thus with Christ, in the two former chapters, and this out of which I have taken my text; for in these he was graciously pleased to hold forth the light of the glad tidings of salvation, wherein he used, as I said before, much freedom and boldness of speech, which occasioned the adversaries of the Gospel to vent their poison, and spit the venom of their malice against him. He could no sooner speak a word of grace, but presently they were upon the back of him.

These three chapters contain in them nothing else but a continued dispute between Christ and his enemies, intermingled with most admirable, sweet, and gracious expressions of him to his own people. In verse 30, after a large dispute and discourse, the Holy Ghost is pleased to tell us that many did believe in Christ, upon the words that he had spoken. Here you see a gracious effect upon some, that Christ knew before hand; upon which he took encouragement, notwithstanding all the adversaries' opposition, to be bold in speaking; and perceiving that his Gospel took effect upon some, nay, many of the people, he turns his discourse from these carpers, with whom he had so long disputed before, and begins to frame his speech to the capacity and condition of the new converts and believers; therefore, in verse 31, 32, our Saviour delivers himself to them in this manner; "If ye continue in my word," saith he, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Now, although it be apparent that Christ directs this speech of his to the new believers, yet in verse 36 the cavilers carp and cavil, whether wittingly or ignorantly I cannot say; they must needs have Christ to speak this passage unto them; and they presently, in a hot and captious way, reply to him; whereas he had said that they should be free, and the truth should make them free; that is, as many of them as did believe; they presently retorted upon him, why? "We are Abraham's seed, we were never in bondage;" how can we be made free? They might have held their tongues, Christ never meant them, he never spake to them; and though they said, "they were never in bondage," in bondage they were, and in bondage like to be. However, Christ did not speak to them, but to believers; yet they will not

leave him so, they will have a fling at him, therefore he answers their objection again. In the 33rd verse, they made use of this argument to assert their freedom; said they, “we be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” What, doth he talk of making us free? He takes off this recoil with a two-edged sword. There is a double answer to the argument they make use of. First, therefore, Christ shows what the liberty is and wherein it stands, that he speaks of. Secondly, he shows that their plea is not good, for their being Abraham’s seed was not a plea sufficient for their freedom.

First, Christ shows what true freedom is, that he thus speaks of; it is namely this “abiding in the house forever.”

Secondly, he shows that to be Abraham’s seed is not enough to make them free; for the answer of Christ is thus; “Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin; and the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever;” {vs.34,35;} as much as to say, Suppose you are Abraham’s seed, yet if you commit sin, for all this you are servants, you are in bondage to sin; and, as long as you are, you have no liberty. All freedom consists in this especially, that Christ speaks of, that to the free indeed there will be an abiding in the house forever. The Apostle, {Gal.4:21-31,} illustrates to us the nature of this freedom that Christ speaks of in this place, and indeed, sets forth the substance of it; “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” You that desire to be under the Law, what saith it? The Law speaks thus {saith he;} “Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.” These are a mystery; Agar signifies Mount-Sinai, in Arabia, which genders unto bondage. Now, Agar was the mother of Ishmael, but the seed of the promise is from above. The conclusion is this, saith the Apostle, “cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman;” but he that is free, is in the inheritance forever; the bond-woman, and her son, must not abide in the house forever, they must be cast out. Christ alludes to this, of Abraham’s casting out of Ishmael; as much as to say, there may be those of the seed of Abraham, as Ishmael was, yet be cast out, being not the seed of the promise; they may be the seed of Abraham, but being the servants of sin, there

is no abiding for them.

Now our Saviour having repelled and answered their arguments, he comes, in the words of my text, to show the rise and fountain from whence this freedom which he speaks of, springs, or takes its first beginning; “if the Son therefore make you free then are you free indeed.”

The words I have read to you are an hypothetical proposition, or a conclusion stated upon a supposition and contain in them these particulars. First, the grace itself held out, and that is freedom. “If the Son make you free.” Secondly, the original, or the cause of it; that is, the Son’s making them so, “If the Son make you free.” Thirdly, the quality of it, what kind of freedom it is; it is not a shadowy, or empty, useless freedom, but a substantial one, “then are you free indeed.” This hypothetical proposition reduced into a categorical conclusion is no more but this, they that the Son makes free, are free indeed.

Only there is one thing observable from the argument of Christ in this place that will add a word to this proposition. These Jews, that did dispute with Christ, they pretended that there was no way to full freedom, but by being born of Abraham; so their being the seed of Abraham gives them a complete freedom; now Christ takes them upon advantage; he will suppose with them in their sense, that if freedom were to be had by any outward privilege, it should be, by being Abraham’s seed; if, therefore Abraham’s freedom be no freedom, as indeed it is not, then there can be none, but by one that is above Abraham. Now, saith Christ, the Son shall make you free; as much as to say, Abraham, the freest person in the world, cannot make you free, much less can any other but the Son. So then, the proposition is this, that they alone are indeed free, who have their freedom from the Son of God; I say, they alone are free indeed, who are made free only by Christ; none in the world, nothing in the world can make free, but the Son of God.

Now, that we may suck, and be satisfied, at the breasts of consolation, {for there is the sincere milk of the word in it,} let us take briefly into our consideration these few particulars.

First, what the freedom is whereof Christ speaks in this place.

Secondly, how Christ makes free.

And if time shall serve; thirdly, who they are, that

are thus made free by Christ.

I will begin with the first. What this freedom is whereof Christ speaks in this place. For clearing whereof, note, first, that freedom and liberty are terms of one and the same signification. It is all one to say that the Son makes free, or that the Son gives liberty. Both the Greek and the Latin are promiscuously translated, either free, or men at liberty. It is true, I confess, this word liberty, hath gotten an ill name in the world, partly through the abuse of liberty, and partly through the malignity of some spirits, that strike even at the heart of Christ, through the sides of those that are Christ's; laying reproachful, ignominious and shameful names upon them of libertinism. Now, because liberty and freedom are thus brought into reproach and disgrace, the true freedom, which Christ hath purchased and given, requires some clearing, lest it perish and be lost in the rubbish of corrupt liberty; and so the people of God be jeered out of that which is their greatest portion.

I am ashamed to speak it, I would there were not occasion, that which is the very life and the sole comfort of the members of Christ Jesus, becomes such a reproach, through the malignity of the enemies of the Gospel of Christ, that the very believers themselves are almost ashamed to go under the name of that which is their greatest glory. To be called a Libertine is the most glorious title under heaven; take it for one that is truly free by Christ. To be made free by Christ, in proper construction, is no other but this, to be made a libertine by Christ; I do not say, to be made a libertine in the corrupt sense of it, but to be one in the true and proper sense of it. It is true indeed that Christ doth not give liberty unto licentiousness of life and conversation; of which we shall speak more by and by; but a real and true liberty Christ hath purchased, and given to all his members.

That we may the better understand therefore what this freedom is that Christ hath purchased and bestows upon believers; and thereby, save it from the reproach of corrupt and licentious liberty; understand, beloved, that there is a threefold liberty. First: Moral or civil. Secondly: Sensual and corrupt. Thirdly: Spiritual and divine.

First, Moral and civil liberty is that which these Jews speak of, {misinterpreting the sense of Christ} such as you used to have in your cities; when a man

hath served out his time, he is a freeman, he hath the freedom of the city, he hath liberty to trade in it; so Paul understood liberty, when he spoke with the centurion; the centurion said that he bought it with a great deal of money; but saith Paul, I was so born; I was born a Roman. {Acts 22:28} But of this liberty Christ speaks not here.

Secondly, there is a corrupt liberty that the Apostle speaks of in Galatians 5:13, for there he tells us thus, that "ye have been called unto liberty;" but, saith he, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." A licentious liberty is nothing else but this, namely, when men turn the grace of God into wantonness, and abusing the Gospel of Christ, continue in sin, that grace might abound. Unto which the Apostle affixes abhorrence; God forbid, saith he, that any man should make use of such a liberty as this. I am confident of it, and affirm boldly, there is not one man made free by Christ, that makes it his rule, namely, to be bold to commit sin with greediness, because of the redemption that is in the blood of Christ; but that Christ who hath redeemed from sin and wrath, hath also redeemed from a vain conversation; and there shall not be a making use of the grace of God, as emboldening and encouraging to break out into licentiousness. All that have this freedom purchased by Christ for them, have also the power of God in them, which keeps them that they break not out licentiously; the seed of God abides in them, that they cannot sin, as in I John 3:9, that is, they cannot sin after this fashion.⁴⁸

Thirdly, there is a spiritual liberty; for of corrupt licentiousness Christ speaks not in the text neither; but of a spiritual freedom; and that it may be clear, he speaks of a spiritual freedom here, you may plainly perceive by the words going before; for whereas these Pharisees affirmed they were not in bondage; Christ proves they were, thus; "they were the servants of sin," {saith he,} "and he that is the servant of sin, abides not in the house for ever;" as much as to say, the bondage here, was such, as consisted in being under sin; so then, Christ here means a bondage and slavery under sin; the freedom, therefore, opposite to this, must needs be a spiritual freedom.

Now it will be worth our while to enquire, first, into the nature; and, secondly, into the quality of this

⁴⁸ This paragraph as well as a multitude of others, show that the Doctor was no friend to licentiousness, and what a madness it is to charge so worthy a person with holding licentious principles. Gill.

spiritual freedom, that Christ brings with him to his own people.

First, for the nature of this freedom. The philosophers have a rule that is of very good use, for clearing of divine truths; “contraries illustrate each other.” Freedom will be most clearly, or at least more clearly apparent unto us, by considering the contrary to freedom. The contrary to freedom is bondage; if we know what the bondage is that Christ speaks of, we shall better know what the freedom is.

We will awhile consider what bondage Christ speaks of here, to which he opposeth freedom, as I said before. The bondage he speaks of is a bondage under sin. Let us briefly consider what this is. This stands in these two things. First, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the Law, by reason of its transgression; and secondly, in the privation of all comfort and contentment, by reason of the same transgression.

First, I say, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the Law, by reason of transgressing it, that is the first part of bondage under sin. A person is then properly and truly under bondage, when by reason of his transgression, he can make no escape from under the curse of the Law, but must lie down to it, and be under the torment of it, as a bond-slave, even as a slave in the Turks galleys; though this man in his slavery, works ever so hard; {for of that he shall not want, work enough he shall have;} yet, if at any time he shall chance to slip or fall, whether it be through omission, or through mere infirmity and weakness, and want of strength; all his hard labour is nothing at all considered; but, when he fails in that insupportable bondage and task, he hath his stripes and blows. This, I say, is the true state of bondage, when there is cruelty and rigor, without any regard to the impossibility to go under the task; the load and blows are laid on with weight; no crying, no promises, no excuses, no pleas, though ever so reasonable, can be heard; but, as there is a fault committed, there must be stripes inflicted. So it is with a person in spiritual bondage; a man is then under the curse of the Law, by reason of his transgression, when doing what he can, {suppose as it should be,} yet, if he fail but in one thing, that which he doth is not regarded nor considered; neither is his ability to do no more, taken notice of; but, still as he slips, so the Law lays on stripes.

There are two things mainly to be considered that

do mightily embitter the condition of a bondman who is under the curse of the Law because of his transgression. The first is this, the threatenings and menacings of the curse, incessantly following one upon the neck of another, with loud out-cries of bitterness against this soul transgressing. It is with a person in bondage to sin, under the curse of the Law for it, as it was with Job in respect of the afflictions that were upon him; one comes and brings him word that his oxen were taken away; he had no sooner done but another comes and tells him his sheep were lost; and, no sooner had he delivered his message, but another comes and tells him his camels were stolen; and no sooner had he done, but one comes and tells him his sons and daughters were slain; so one after another the messengers came thick upon him. It is just so with persons in bondage under the Law; it comes and threatens this curse; then it comes and threatens a second; and, no sooner is that ended, but it comes and threatens a third, crying out continually, Cursed, cursed, cursed. If the ears of the people were open to hear as much as the Law speaks, they would hear nothing else but a clang of curses belonging to him that is under it. As for instance, a man under the bondage of the Law for sin can hear nothing but this, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” {Gal.3:10} Beloved, there is no man, but in some respect or other, every act that he doth, hath some infirmity and failing in it; and, in that regard, the Law speaks, “Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the Law to do them.” Thou canst no sooner pass from this act to another, but as soon as thou dost perform that second act, for the failings in it, the Law cries again; “Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.” So look into Romans 2, where there is a continued pealing out the Law to those that are in bondage under it; “tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;” {vs.9;} saving, that in Romans 3:19, the Apostle tells us that this cursedness, this tribulation and anguish is pronounced by the Law only upon them that are under it; so then, it is without question that to them that are under it, tribulation, and anguish, and wrath, and vengeance, do belong.

Now it is a kind of death, a very torment to be under such continual menaces; to hear nothing but execrations; to hear nothing but curses and bitterness, nothing but indignation and wrath; Oh! What a hell is it upon earth, for a soul to receive this sentence! What bitterness is it for a malefactor that stands at the tribunal, to beat a judge, it may be, making a speech of two hours long to him, only reciting the extremity of the torment he shall endure for the crimes he hath committed! Every repetition or addition of torment, denounced and sentenced, is a kind of fiery dart, striking fresh and fresh, to the wounding of the heart. Whoever they are that are under the curse of the Law, by reason of sin, there is no voice speaks, or can be heard, by them, for the loudness of that voice, Cursed, cursed, every moment, every hour; nothing in the world but cursed.

Beloved, let me tell you, this concerns not only persons that live in all manner of licentiousness, as drunkenness, whoredom, the profanation of the Sabbath in the grossest measure; but, that I may speak plainly, this extends in a parallel line with them to the exactest, strictest, precisest person in their conversation, though the world is not able to say {as men use to say} to them, black is thine eye; nay, though thou seem to be spiritual in all thy performances; nay, and largely too, yet if thou be under the Law, in thy transgression, thou shalt hear from it, as many curses pronounced against thee, as all the profane wretches under heaven; the greatness of thy honesty and uprightness, whether in religion, or in matters of commerce and dealings with men, thy honest conversation, I say, hath the loud clangs of curses sounding in thy ears. Suppose thou art a man diligently attending the gates of the house of God, given much to prayer, fasting, mourning and weeping; yea, to great liberality, thou givest all thy goods to the poor, &c.; yet, I say, for all this thou mayest be under the curse of the Law that will pick a quarrel in the best of these performances; it will say, thus and thus, in this and that thou hast “not continued in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do then;” concerning this, thou art under the curse of it as well as another.

Secondly, there are not only menacings and threatenings as fearful knell in thine ears from the Law, while thou art in bondage under it; but also

there is no more with it than a word and a blow. The Lord doth not deal with men in this case, as he deals with his own people, holding his rod before them to give them warning for an escape; but presently upon the transgression, the threatening is put in execution speedily without mercy, laying on the back of the transgressor, terrifying and racking the soul! Oh, the soul that is awakened, that hears the menaces and feels the scourges of the Law! Oh, what torments and anguish, what tribulation and bitterness must continually affright it! This, I say, is the commission of the Law, to spare neither high nor low, rich or poor. Nay, I will go further, holy or unholy, in respect of the practice of holiness, can exempt himself from the curse of the Law. It is true, as the Apostle saith, the Law speaks life; “Do this and live;” but poor comfort is it, because it first requires such doings as are impossible to be attained; just as if a man should be condemned to die at the bar, with this promise; take all England, and remove it upon thy shoulders into the West Indies, and then thou shalt be saved from this death.⁴⁹ The judge had as good say nothing, for the thing is impossible to be done. The Law indeed, says, “Do this and live;” but where is the man that can do it, by continuing in all things without failing in one tittle thereof? He that continueth in the whole Law, and fails but in one point, is guilty of all; therefore, till you come to that perfection of fulfilling it, that you fail not in one tittle, never dream of the life that it holds out to you. If you have failed in one point, all you have done is raveled out unto the end again; all your labour is lost; you are as much under the curse as if you had done nothing at all. {Rom.3:19}

Yet further, beloved, the bondage under the Law not only stands in the cursings of it, and in the presence of all evil thereby, but also in the privation of all comfort, that men might have under this torment; I say, a privation of all comfort; for there is not a word, not a

⁴⁹ Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, pg. 14, represents this passage as a decrying of the Law; but what decrying of the Law is this, to observe the true nature and language of it, requiring that which it is impossible for fallen man to do; he himself instances in the Gospel, by way of reply, bidding a man believe a thing impossible to man’s power, he observes; and is not this as much a decrying of the Gospel? Indeed, there is this difference, the Gospel not only encourages to believe, but it is often accompanied with the power of God, enabling men to believe, whereas the Law is never attended with such power as to enable men to fulfill it; but this, he says, is extraneous to the matter in hand; but wherein it is so, is not said. See Lancaster’s *Vindication of the Gospel*. Gill.

title of comfort for the refreshment of a person under the Law, not a tittle of comfort in all the Law, from first to last. It is true, there was comfort intermingled in the promulgation of it, but the comfort is not from that properly so considered. As it contains in it a curse to the disobedient, so there is no comfort to any man that is under it, in respect of the curse it; I say, the Law is to such persons {as Micaiah was to Ahab} never speaking a word of good to them. But this is not all, for though the Law be never so rigid of itself, if it would allow and suffer others to speak a word of comfort, there were some good thing in it; but it keeps under, and shuts up, that there cannot be a word of comfort heard from any other. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." {Gal.3:23} There you shall find that the Law is not only a terror of itself to those that are under it, but it is a most rigid, severe keeper, that there cannot come in the least glimmerings of light, and comfort elsewhere; for {saith the Apostle there, of persons being under the Law} they are shut up unto, or until the faith; for he calls the Law a school-master until Christ; so that Christ himself hath not a word of comfort for them while they are under the Law; when Christ speaks anything, presently saith the Law, this is not to you; this is for others that are exempted from my government, from my dominion; there is nothing of all this for you, you have nothing to do with it.⁵⁰ I say, this is the condition of men that are kept under this bitterness of the Law, that as they transgress, the curse of it is their prison; persons kept in this estate, how do they put off the comforts of Christ from them? There is none of them belongs to me, saith such a soul; I have sinned, and all the judgments of Christ are pronounced against me, I must die. So long

⁵⁰ Mr. Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, pg. 14, cavils at this passage. He observes that by the Law, in Gal.3:23, is meant the scripture in general; which, if so, is true of the Law in particular; though not the whole scripture, but the Law part of it must certainly be intended, since part of the scripture, at least, is written for comfort; he urges, that the Apostle is speaking of the form of Moses's regimen, and of the fathers having no comfort by that means. Be it so; the same holds good of all other persons that are under the same spirit of bondage to the Law; he suggests that the Doctor in representing the Law as such a rigid keeper, that it will let none speak comfort to a man, excludes a mediator; it is certain that it does not direct to any, and whilst the soul is under the power of it, it will not suffer it to receive any comfort from Christ the Mediator, or from his Gospel, until this breaks in through the power of divine grace upon him, and delivers him from the bondage of the Law. Gill.

as you continue in this estate, the curses of the Law are as frequently pronounced against you, as there are transgressions in you. There will not be one comfort of Jesus Christ to give refreshment to your spirit; but so long as you still remain in this estate, that you will conclude you are under the curse, because of your transgressions, you will forsake all the mercies of the Gospel. This is, then, to be in bondage under the Law; namely, for a man so to have it tyrannize and domineer over him, as to make him believe that as often as he transgresses, he must expect the sentence of the curse of it to be fulfilled upon him.

Thirdly, they that are in bondage under the Law because of sin, as they are subject to this misery in respect of the privation of comfort; so the Law, it is true, asks work enough, more than any man under heaven can now perform; but will provide nothing in the world, wherewith to have things done. It requires the full tale of brick, but it gives no straw; it puts into no way where help may be had; it suffers no help to come in. Let me tell you, you that are under the curse of the Law, that is, have still the Law telling you that as you do fail, so you must have the curse; you shall find that when you do the will of God, it will exact the whole, the utmost tale of brick of you, and will give no help at all, though never so weak and unable. Get it as you can, do what you will, when the day is done, the Law requires that there be not a brick short. If you fail the least that can be in it, it is no matter, able or not able, you must have the lash, as well as those that have the greatest abilities in the world. It is a hard condition; I have opened it the more largely, that you may the better see the glory and happiness of that freedom Christ hath purchased for his people.

I will in a word give you a touch, who the persons are that are in this bondage; and then I will come to set forth the freedom itself; and, I hope it will not be tedious to hear of the freedom, when you have heard of the extreme bitterness of this bondage. Who are under this bondage? I answer, as I said before, whoever you are, that will apply still to yourselves the sentence and curse of the Law, because of transgression; you that be still arguing and pleading, if I transgress, it is but justice, and I must expect to feel the smart of the rod. I say, you that will still maintain and establish the curse, as a necessary attendant upon transgression and disobedience, and take this to be your condition

and your portion; you are the men that are under the Law, that are under the curse of it. I know, although you may think to wind yourselves out of the extremity of the curse, or from the rod of the Law, by your strictness and exactness, and grow up to perfection in your obedience; yet all your perfection of obedience shall not be able to except you from the lash, till you have attained to such, that hath not one jot or tittle of failing or deviation at all; for if you fail in one tittle, you are gone forever; for the Law, as it attends great faults, so it attends little failings too; and, if you give it power over you, when you commit great sins, it will take power to itself, to whip, to curse you for small sins too.

I will come to discover what the freedom is, from the bondage Christ speaks of here; I say, this freedom is from all this bondage under sin and the Law. First, Christ exempts men and discharges them, and acquits them from all the menaces, and threatenings, and all the bitter language that the Law pronounces against the transgressors of it. Mark well what I say, for every person made free by Christ, is freed and exempted, that the Law cannot, must not pronounce one curse against him; there is not one of all the curses in it, that belongs to such a man that is made free by Christ. This seems strange, that the Law should not dare to pronounce the curse, where sin is committed; but not so strange as true; the free-men of Christ, when they transgress the Law, as in all things they sin, yet when they sin, there is no curse, no menaces, no threatenings of the Law to be executed upon them. Should I come to instance, peradventure I should give offence to some; I would not willingly give offence to any; but the truth, as it is in Jesus, must not be concealed for fear of the anger of those that are enemies unto Christ. Let me therefore tell you, suppose a member of Christ, a free-man of his should happen to fall, not only by a failing or a slip, but also by a gross failing, a heavy failing; nay, a scandalous falling into sin.⁵¹ Christ making a person free, disannuls, frustrates and makes void every curse and sentence that is in the Law, that is against such a transgressor; {Gal.3:13;} that this member of Christ is no more under the curse when he hath transgressed, than he was before he transgressed.⁵² Thus I say, Christ

has conveyed him beyond the reach of the curse; it concerns him no more than if he had not transgressed. For the illustration of this I beseech you to consider one thing, it is familiar to you, and the case is the same with Christ's free-men; suppose there are two men, equally guilty of felony and murder, both of them come to their arraignment; one of them hath his discharge or pardon from the king, having received satisfaction in his behalf; the other hath received no discharge at all. The judge goes on to pronounce the sentence according to the Law; thou shalt go from hence to the place from whence thou camest, and from thence to the place of execution there to be hanged; now mark, these are two men equal in transgression; and therefore in themselves equally deserving the same sentence of execution; when the judge pronounces the justice of the Law upon the one transgressor, he hath not his discharge, he lies under the sentence; but the other hath his discharge, and therefore the judge speaks not a word of this sentence to him; {Jn.8:36, Rom.8:1 & 10:4;} I say again, the judge dares not speak a word of this sort to him; and when the man that is pardoned hears the sentence, he may hear it as the doom of his fellow; but he hears nothing of it concerning himself; so it is with the free-man of Christ, he may fall into the same sin that a reprobate falls into, {as Noah was once drunk, David did once commit adultery and murder,} but as this man is the free-man of Christ, the curse cannot attack him; though the Law say to the reprobate, that hath not freedom by Christ, thou shalt certainly be damned for this; yet the Law cannot say one word of this to him that is a free-man, though he commit the same fault, and be guilty of the same punishment; and the ground of all this is, that Christ hath made him free from it. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." {Rom.8:2}

Therefore, let me tell you in a word; if you be free-men of Christ, you may esteem all the curses of the Law, as no more concerning you than the laws of England concern Spain, or the laws of Turkey an

in him; for he knew what they would be when he set his love upon them; his love broke through all the corruptions of nature and sins of life in their conversion; and appears to continue the same from the strong expressions of his grace to them, notwithstanding all their backslidings. Now this does not suppose that God loves sin, nor does it give any encouragement to it; for though it cannot separate from interest in God, yet it often does from the enjoyment of him. Gill.

⁵¹ Through ignorance, weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan's temptations. Gill.

⁵² Sin often separates between God and his own people with respect to communion, but never with respect to union to him or interest

Englishman, with whom they have nothing to do.⁵³ I do not say that the Law is absolutely abolished, but it is abolished in respect of the curse of it, to every person that is a free-man of Christ; so though such a man sin, the Law hath no more to say to him than if he had not sinned. Beloved, Christ is a Sanctuary, he is a privileged place to every one of his free-men; the Law is not able to serve, or rather it is disabled from serving an arrest warrant upon the person that is walking in Christ, and keeps himself within those bounds. He that continues in Christ's word is his disciple indeed, and the truth shall make him free. {Jn.8:30,31} If you abide in Christ, and keep in Christ, no serjeant of the Law dares come in to serve a writ; no accusation of the Law can come in against you. Look what the Apostle triumphing saith; "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." {Rom.8:33,34} Mark well I pray you, Paul doth not say, that the elect never transgress; he confesses that there is transgression; but that which he triumphs in is, that though they transgress, there is nothing to be laid to their charge; no curse can come against them, nor be executed upon them; there is no tossing them in jail for their transgression.

Secondly, the free-man of Christ, as he is exempted from the curse and rod of the Law, that is become a muzzle-bound dog, he may pass and repass without the least snap, without the least bite of it; yea, though he fall, yet it cannot come at him to hurt him. {Mic.7:8} So, in the second place, the free-man of Christ is let loose to enjoy the free Spirit, as David calls it, {in Psalm 51,} or the comforting Spirit, as Christ calls it, {in John 14:26.} I say, this freedom consists in this, to have free society, and free discourse with the free Spirit of God, so that the free-man of Christ may hear all

the gracious language provided in the rich thoughts of God for him; he may hear, and that with application to himself, that his iniquities are blotted out as a cloud; that God will remember his sins no more; that they are cast into the bottom of the sea; they are laid all upon Christ; that the Lamb of God took them all away; that the blood of Christ cleanseth him from all sins. It is a marvelous freedom indeed, to have this participation of communion with this free

Spirit of Christ, to hear such comfortable language to raise up a drooping spirit, to satisfy a languishing soul.

Thirdly, the free-man of Christ hath this freedom that Christ doth all his work for him, as well as in him. He that is in bondage under the Law, as I told you before, must do everything himself, and that he doth, he must do perfectly; that is an insupportable thing, and heavy bondage for a man to have more laid upon him than his strength is able to bear. The free-man of Christ, considering that he is weak, poor, and unable to work, Christ doth all his work for him. In Isaiah 26:12, the Holy Ghost tells us that the Lord himself hath "wrought all our works in us;" and in the margin the words are rendered, "he hath done all our works for us." But, look in Romans 5:19, and you will plainly see this freedom of the free-men of Christ, that they stand righteous in the sight of God, by that which he hath done for them. Christ hath so wrought for them, that they are as righteous, as if they had done all in their own persons. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Look here, and you shall see that Christ doth all the work for his free-men, that they should do for themselves; as if a man were commanded to bring in a thousand bricks by such a day, or else to have the strapado; another man brings in all his bricks for him, while he doth not one for himself. What the other man doth for him is accepted as a full tale, even for this man, though he doth nothing himself. Even so it is with the free-men of Christ, he doth all for them that God requires of them to be done; and the righteousness of Christ stands in that manner theirs, as if they had done it themselves. "For by the obedience of one many are made righteous," not by obedience in their own person, but by the obedience of one man, Christ; even by the obedience of him alone, we stand thus righteous before God.

⁵³ This passage is most grossly misrepresented by Mr. Burgess, in his *Vindiciae Legis*, pg.13, who quotes it thus, "a man under grace hath no more to do with the Law than an Englishman hath with the laws of Spain or Turkey;" whereas the Doctor's words and sense are, that Christ's free-men should esteem the curses of the Law, not the Law itself, as no more concerning them than the laws of England concern Spain, or those of Turkey an Englishman; and to prevent any mistake, lest it should be thought that they have nothing to do with the Law in any sense, being freed from the curses of it, he adds the words that follow, which most clearly show that he meant not an abolition of the Law in all respects, but in respect of the curse of it, and that to Christ's free-men only. Gill.

But some will say, by this it seems we take away all endeavors and employment from believers, the free-men of Christ. Doth Christ do everything for them? Do they stand righteous before God in respect of what he hath done for them? Then they may sit still; they may do what they list.

I answer, will you deny this, that we are righteous with and that we are righteous with God by the Righteousness of Christ alone? Or is it by our own righteousness? Then mark what the Apostle saith, “for they” {saith he, speaking of the Jews,} “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” {Rom.10:3,4} Either you must disclaim Christ’s righteousness or you must disclaim your own; for, if the gift of God be of grace, then it is not of works, else work is no more work; and, if it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace. {Rom.11:6}

But you will say further to me; {for, except a man be a mere Papist, I am sure he cannot deny but that the righteousness by which I stand righteous before God is the righteousness Christ doth for me, and not that I do for myself;} you will ask me, I say, doth not this take off all manner of obedience and all manner of holiness? I answer, and thus much I say, it takes them off from those ends which they aim at in their obedience; namely, the end which Christ’s obedience served; as much as to say that our standing righteousness, by what Christ hath done for us, concerns us in point of justification, consolation and salvation. We have justification, our peace, our salvation, only by the righteousness that Christ hath done for us; but this doth not take away our obedience, nor our services in respect of those ends for which such are now required of believers. We have yet several ends for duties and obedience, namely, that they may glorify God and evidence our thankfulness, that they may be profitable to men, that they may be ordinances wherein to meet with God, to make good what he hath promised. So far we are called out to services and walking uprightly, sincerely, exactly, and strictly, according to the good pleasure of God; and, in regard of such ends, there is a gracious freedom that the free-men of Christ have by him; that is, so far forth as services and obedience

is expected at the free-man’s hand, for the ends that I have named, there is Christ, by his Spirit, present with those that are free-men, to help them in all such kind of services, so that “they become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” to do the will of God. Mark what the Apostle speaks; “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” {Phil.4:13} Of myself {saith he} I am able to do nothing; but with Christ, and through him that strengthens me, I am able to do all things. He that is Christ’s free-man hath always the strength of Christ present, answerable to that weight and burden of employment God calls him forth unto. “My grace {saith Christ} is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” {II Cor.12:9} As you are free-men of Christ, you may confidently rest upon it, that he “will never fail you, nor forsake you,” for when he calls you forth into employments.

But you that are under the Law, there is much required of you, and imposed upon you, but no help to be expected. You must do all by your own strength; the whole tale of brick shall be exacted of you, but no straw shall be given you. But you, that are free-men of Christ, he will help you; he will oil your wheels, fill your sails, and carry you upon eagles wings, that you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint. {Is.40:31} So then, the free-men of Christ, having him and his Spirit for their life and strength, may go infinitely beyond the exactest legalist in the world in more cheerful obedience than they can perform. He that walks in his own strength can never steer his business so well and so quickly, as he that hath the arms, the strength, and the principles of the great God of Heaven and Earth; as he that hath this great Supporter, this wise Director, this mighty Assister, to be continually by him. There is no burden, you shall bear, but, by this freedom you have him to put his own shoulder to it to bear it up.

It is wonderful to consider that Christ should groan under the burden that was laid upon him by his Father, when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And yet Paul and Silas should sing for joy, when their bodies were covered with gore blood by reason of stripes. How comes this to pass, was Paul stronger than Christ? If not, why was he so joyful, and Christ so sad? God withdrew himself from Christ, and therefore, he saith, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But the strength of Christ was present with Paul, that this very imprisonment

was a palace and recreation to him; as Christ bare all the burdens for him. Oh; were you but the free-men of Christ, and did you but know it, every affliction would be but a flea-biting; for he would bear all your duties and burdens for you; he would stand under the greatest weight that can be laid upon you, and bear it off your backs; the greatest burden should never make you stoop, because there is a sufficient strength to bear it up. There may be a heavy burden laid upon the back of a child, and yet it may with ease go under it; because there is a greater strength that bears it up, it doth not lie upon the child. So long as Christ bears up your weight it shall be easy to you. You know there is a ceremony used among us for men to carry the corpse of their friends to the grave; for fashion's sake they go under the corpse; but there are bearers appointed that bear all the weight upon their shoulders; so Christ bears all for his free-men; and this is the freedom men have by him, that if they are to bear any burdens, he comes and bears all for them; and they go as easily under them, as if they had none upon them at all.

You shall find the free-men of Christ that they have also the constant attendance of the free Spirit of Christ waiting upon them. When Christ hath made any man free, he sends his Spirit from heaven, first to acquaint the soul with all that he hath done for him; and not to bring good news and be gone again; but, after the good news is brought; he waits and attends upon this free-man in all his journeys and travels to those mansions that Christ hath prepared for him; that so in the way, if he should faint, he would refresh him with the water of life to fetch it again; and, in case it grows weak and fails, the Spirit attends to administer cordials, to revive, and to renew the strength of this man again that thus fails; and, in case it grow weary, the Spirit is sent to take it up into his arms, into his bosom; in case the way is tedious, the Spirit is sent to take off the tediousness of the way with sweet discourse, telling him what things are laid up in fulness of pleasures and glory, telling him what welcome there will be at his coming home; when there are many byways in his way, that there may be no going out of the way, he will direct him, and lead him by the hand, and never leave him, till he hath delivered him up into the hands of Christ, and carried him unto mansions in glory. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." {Ps.48:14} "Thou shalt

guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." {Ps.73:24}

Lastly, in a word, to speak of who these free-men of Christ are. No man knows them, but only those that Christ takes out of bondage. Time will not give me leave to be large here; would you have any means how you may come to be the free-men of Christ? Know this, that there is no consideration in the business of Christ, for the making of men free, but only their bondage in which they are. The sum is this, beloved; in brief, Christ doth not look that you should come forth and meet him, to mediate, or intercede, or beg, or bring a price in your hands, that you may be his free-men; but he looks upon persons as they are bound up, as helpless, as unable to will or do anything; and, for his own compassion's sake, he takes up these, when they little dream, or think they ever shall be set at liberty.

But, you will say that all shall not be freed that are in bondage; how shall I then know, that I am one of the number of Christ's free-men? I answer, "he that believeth shall be saved;" for if the Lord give but to thy spirit, now truly to believe, thou art the very man for whom Christ was sent to proclaim liberty; I say, if thou canst believe and roll thyself upon him, cleave to him, and say, "I will not let thee go;" this is security enough; Christ was sent to deliver thee; "he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast him out." I beseech you to consider; {the Lord God, in the abundant riches of his grace, give closing spirits to some of you at this time;} you that think there must be a great deal of pains by your endeavors, and on your parts, to have this freedom; but Christ doth not look for your pains; he came to save those that could not tell which way to turn themselves. And if the Scripture be true, {as most certainly it is,} if thou believest that Christ is thine, if thou believe with all thy heart, thy sins are forgiven thee; {though the very believing itself doth not entitle you in this freedom;} but, if you would know, whether you have any part in this freedom or not, believing in the Lord Christ is a sufficient manifestation. Do but catch hold of him, to have thy deliverance by him, he must forsake himself, and deny his truth, if he cast or throw thee off.

9 Men's Own Righteousness Their Grand Idol

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." {Rom.10:3}

Provident and well-wishing pilots, observing the rocks on which many ignorant and heedless passengers have split and sunk, and where they themselves have escaped but narrowly, use to set up seamarks as cautions or warnings to such as shall come after, that by other men's harms they may learn to be wary. It is the Apostle's very practice in this place; in the former part of this epistle; and especially in chapter 9, where he mightily contends for the free grace of God unto peace, life, and salvation, without works. "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 grace; as it was said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" therefore, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" I say, this is the main doctrine that he preaches from the beginning of the Epistle to the closure of chap 9.

Then he comes upon the Jews with an argument to their reproach, for he says that "the Gentiles that followed not after righteousness have attained unto righteousness," when they themselves that did follow after righteousness could not attain it; and he gives the reason why they that pressed so hard after it could not attain it; "because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law." {Rom.9:32} Why, what hurt was there in that, will some say? The Apostle answereth, that hereby "they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence;" they would have their righteousness set up to do them good, and this they sought as it were by the works of the Law.

But some men might think that the Apostle had a bitterness of spirit, or some malice against his own brethren, and that this was but the fruit of it; therefore in the beginning of this chapter, he clears himself from any such base ends in his ministry; for his part he wishes with all his heart, it may be well with them. "My heart's desire, and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved;" nay, so far as he may speak well of them, and the most he can say, he will; and he will

not conceal anything; in verse 2, he confesses, nay he bears witness to it, that "they had a zeal of God;" but yet he must not dissemble, he must deal friendly, though ever so plainly; though they had a zeal of God, "yet it was not according to knowledge."

And because he had taxed them with ignorance, here in the text; he discovers what this ignorance of theirs was; and what the fearful and desperate fruits of it were; that whereof they were ignorant was God's righteousness, "being ignorant of the righteousness of God;" the fruit of it is twofold, both very bitter, the one immediately issuing from the other.

First, this ignorance of God's righteousness put them upon a fearful mistake; for they go about, {upon this,} to "establish their own righteousness."

Secondly, and that mistake put them upon another as bad as that, if not worse; therefore they submitted not to the righteousness of God.

The proposition the words afford us is briefly this, {for we will sum up the whole verse into one head} namely that ignorance of God's righteousness puts men upon these two dangerous mischiefs, an establishing of their own righteousness, and a not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.

Men will establish their own righteousness; they will not submit to the righteousness of God, while they are ignorant of it. Beloved, they were not so easily misled, as we are apt to follow them, having gone before us; we are like sheep leaping without looking, if any leap before us; it hath been the rock of offence, a stumbling-stone from the beginning to this day, and will be to the end of the world; there will be an establishing of our own righteousness, without submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an ignorance of this righteousness.

Now, that we may take warning, and so escape the danger that they have felt the smart of already, it will be requisite we take into consideration.

First, what this righteousness of theirs and ours is, that they did, and we are apt to go about to establish. Secondly, what it is to go about to establish this our righteousness. Thirdly, what this righteousness of God is that they did not submit unto. Fourthly, what it is not to submit unto this righteousness of God. Fifthly, what this ignorance is, from whence both these fearful evils issue, the establishing of our own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God. And lastly, what the issue in the end will prove of these or

as many of these as the time will permit in their order.

To begin with the first, what is that righteousness of theirs and ours that the Apostle complains of, that being established, is a rock of offence? I am not ignorant, that the eyes of some persons are only, or most, upon a righteousness of man's own devising and contriving; such a righteousness as never came into God's thoughts; a righteousness according to the precepts and traditions of men; such a righteousness as our Saviour, {in Matt.15:9,} taxeth the Pharisees withal, who "taught for doctrines the traditions of men;" and by their own traditions, as much as in them lay, made void the commandments of God. This kind of righteousness in our time proceeds from the presumption of men, that dare put anything of their own, without warrant and commission from God, into the worship and service of God; charging things upon men as duties of religion, that God binds not men unto; for my own part, I am clear of the mind, that this kind of righteousness is far from the righteousness of God, the Apostle here speaks of; and that it is the highest presumption that a man can possibly take upon himself, to set himself so in the place of God, as not only, not to command from him, but also to command without and against him. Law-givers hold themselves then most disparaged and contemned when any inferior will take upon him to make laws without them, or against them. It will lie heavy when it shall once come to an account, not only upon the actors, but also upon those that may be the redressers, if this kind of righteousness established by some be not brought down, and laid in the dust.

But, under favour, I conceive that the Apostle aims at a more sublime righteousness, than the righteousness in the precepts of men; he speaks of such a righteousness, which some it may be are too forward to establish, who yet abhor to establish the other, we have now spoken of; the righteousness the Apostle complains of being established, is not the righteousness of man's making, but of God's own making, a righteousness according to his own will; I mean a righteousness consisting in obedience to the things that God himself hath commanded unto men; a righteousness which is a walking in all the commandments of God, though it be in a way of blamelessness; this very righteousness, I say, is that, which being established, proves a stumbling-stone,

and rock of offence to all that shall establish it.

This may seem harsh, beloved, at first, but I shall make it clear to you from the Apostle's own interpretation of himself, who best knew his own mind; that this is the righteousness he here speaks of, mark but the words immediately following the text, {chap.10:4,} "for, {saith he,} Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." To what purpose doth he bring this passage, that Christ is the end of the Law; but that by these words he might confute their vanity who think to establish their own righteousness in the fulfilling of the Law? As if he should say, you think by your keeping the Law, by your righteousness that you perform, you can attain to the end of it, that so you may obtain the grace and goodness of the Lord; but it is in vain, it is not you that can reach the end of the Law; neither doth God aim at it that you should reach it, but he hath constituted and ordained Christ to be the end of it. Therefore the righteousness of God must be the righteousness of Christ; the righteousness that God aims at is perfect, a righteousness that reaches to the very end of the Law; your righteousness can never reach to the end of it; it is Christ's alone that doth it.

And yet again, in verse 5, the Apostle clears more fully what he means by our righteousness, for there he begins to make the distinction between our righteousness and the righteousness of God, explaining what they both are; "for Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law," {that which he calls our own righteousness, in verse 4, from Moses, he calls the righteousness of the Law in verse 5;} Moses, {saith he,} describing the righteousness of the Law, saith thus, "that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." And if you will look into Leviticus 18:5, you shall there see what the righteousness of the Law is, which the Apostle speaks of in this place; and if you observe but the margin of your Bible, you shall find this very text, in verse 5, is wisely referred to that of Leviticus, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them; I am the LORD." See, the Apostle makes use of the very phrase, "he that doth them shall live through them, and in them." It is the righteousness of the Law, saith he; it is the keeping of God's statutes, and doing of God's judgments, saith Moses. By this, you may see what righteousness it is, that the Lord by the Apostle speaks of; a righteousness that consists in doing the

spiritual; is not this your end that you propound: To fast, and pray, and mourn it out; this that which must bring you a discharge of your sins; this is that which must bring you tidings that God will be pacified towards you, that God will turn away his anger from you; if you do but fast spiritually, mourn bitterly, pray zealously with strength of spirit, this is that that shall overcome God.

9 MEN'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS THEIR GRAND IDOL

statutes and judgments of the Lord.

And if you will but consider in Luke 18:11,12, the condition of the Pharisee that Christ speaks of, who went up into the temple to pray as the Publican did; in him you shall see, I say, and easily perceive, what the righteousness was, that they went about to establish; for there the Pharisee justifies himself in respect of many particular branches of the Law; "I thank thee, {saith he,} that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Mark it well, I pray, see what it is that he pleads for, as that which must prevail with God for good to him; it is his own righteousness; and what is that? It is a righteousness according to the Law; it is a righteousness of piety, of justice; "I fast twice in the week, I am no extortioner, nor unjust person, nor adulterer, &c." Now hear Christ's answer concerning this Pharisee; and you shall see what he thinks of this righteousness he speaks of; "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;" the publican went away rather justified than the Pharisee, and the reason is, because he did go in the strength of this righteousness of his, to speed with God; his expectation was from this; it was not a righteousness of his own devising and contriving; but a righteousness according to God's Law.

If you look further into Philippians chapter 3, you shall find, the Apostle speaks fully to the case in hand, instancing in himself in verses 5-9, where he gives an account of his estate, in which he was before the time of his conversion. First, he saith, he had a zeal for God, and that put him on so hot, that he persecuted the church of God, merely out of ignorance; for, saith he of himself, "I did it ignorantly;" and "concerning the righteousness of the Law {saith he} I was blameless." Mark that passage well; as all this was before conversion; afterwards he tells us, this was in the time of his ignorance, wherein he made full account that this righteousness of his was his gain; but, saith he, "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law." By all

I ask, or I beseech you rather to ask your own spirits {I mean still, you that are spiritual,} do not your hearts run out continually this way? Do they, or do they not? What then mean all the complaints of yours upon the defects of your fasting, your humiliation, self-denial, and the subduing of your corruptions? That this is that which pulls down the wrath of God upon us; is not this common among us, as long as men do not mend, there is no hope that God will? And, if every man would mend one, this is the way to redress the evil of the times? Beloved, let me deal plainly and freely with you; they that put deliverance from sin and wrath, upon the spiritual performances of that righteousness, which the Law commands them, they put that righteousness in the room and place of the righteousness of God; they make it as great an idol as can be; for they make it to be that which God's righteousness only is. I speak not against the doing of any righteousness according to the will of God revealed. Let that mouth be forever stopped, that shall be opened to blame the Law that is holy, just, and good; or shall be the means to discourse people from walking in the commandments of God blameless.⁵⁴

All that I speak is this, that it will prove a rock of offence in the end, if it be not turned from; namely, that we should expect that our own righteousness should bring down a gracious answer from God to our spirits; that when we have done our work, in effect, that must prove our mediator and messenger from God; and, as that will speak, so will we have peace, or remain in bitterness of spirit. What can the righteousness of God himself do more than this, to have power with God, to prevail over God for good to us?

Beloved, although some peradventure, may magnify performances done in a spiritual way with attributes and titles even of God's own peculiar; I mean with attributes of omnipotency and invincibleness; certainly there is no omnipotency but God himself, and the righteousness that is God's own; the best righteousness that ever any man could act, or perform in all his life, is not able to divert the least effect of sins,

⁵⁴ Is this Antinomianism? Or, can such a preacher be called an Antinomian? Gill.

or wrath, or procure or obtain the least smile of favour from God. You know, that "God is a God of purer eyes, and cannot behold iniquity;" you know, that iniquity is that which separates between God and a people; now what is the perfectest righteousness which the best man upon earth performs? Is it not full of unrighteousness and iniquity? "All our righteousness {saith the prophet Isaiah} are but as filthy rags;" and, saith the Apostle, "I account all as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness." Is there dung and filth in the best of man's righteousness; and can this righteousness have power with God, and prevail over him?

Look upon Christ himself, when he did bear the sins of many upon his own person; he himself was deserted and forsaken of God, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is Christ forsaken, when the sins of men are upon him, and shall men's persons be accepted and received in respect of such an act of theirs that carries sinfulness in the face of it? Nay, that carries a universal leprosy in the nature of it? Suppose your righteousness were a fulfilling of the whole Law of God, if you fail but in one point, that very failing in one point, makes you guilty of the breach of all the rest; and, when men stand guilty before God, shall they plead that which is full of guilt, to procure favour, mercy, or grace from him? No, no, the sacrifice of God, which is accepted of him, must be a male lamb, and a lamb without blemish; till, therefore, you can purge your righteousness, and separate all iniquity from it, know that all your righteousness in its own nature doth but separate you from God; so far is it from prevailing with him.

Surely, will some say, the righteousness that is performed according to the will of God, pleases him, and moves and melts him, and prevails with him to do this and that good to his people. I answer, too many people in the world too much stint the will of God, so much spoken of when they speak of a righteousness according to it, or a righteousness to do it; what is it? It is true indeed, righteousness done according to the will of God infinitely prevails with God; but show me the man that can perform it, a mere man without Christ? Show me a man that ever did, or ever can do this, acting righteousness according to the will of God? "Of myself," saith Paul, "I can do nothing;" "without me," saith Christ, "ye can do nothing;" nay,

the Apostle goes further, "how to perform that which is good, I find not;" whilst men conceive that the will of God consists only in the materials of righteousness; peradventure they may think theirs is according to it; but alas the materials of righteousness are but the least part of the will of God wherewith he is pleased. Now to do an act partly with the will of God and partly against it, is this to do an act according to it? To do something that God calls for at your hands in some things and to walk directly contrary to him in others; is this to do his will? Suppose for the matter, the righteousness you do, be according to the will of God, that you do the thing that he calls for of you; as for instance, you fast, and pray, and the like; do you do these things according to the will of God, because the outward act is done? The will of God extends to the manner of doing, to the disposition of the person that is to do, as well as to the matter; as in Isaiah chapter 1, were not new moons, sabbaths and solemn assemblies God's own ordinances? And was not the performance of them materially according to the will of God? Yet, nevertheless, God loathed this service of righteousness; he was weary of it, he could not bear it; there was sinfulness mixed with it. "Your hands are full of blood," saith the Lord; therefore, tough the things were materially according to his will, yet his soul abhorred them, being done amiss. "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." {Is.1:12-14}

Suppose men go further than simply doing things according to the will of God materially; they do not only the things, but do them spiritually with enlargedness of heart and affection; you fast, and you fast with bitterness of spirit, you eat bitter herbs in fasting; you mourn, and you mourn bitterly for your transgressions; you pray, and pray zealously in the heat and fervor of your spirits; now if all this be not done in faith, it is abominable; for "without faith, it is impossible to please God; he that comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him;" he that hath performed a duty, and

expects from that performance, an answer according to his mind, he doth not do it in faith; for "we must do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith the Apostle; and "when we have done all, must say, we are unprofitable servants;" and it must be Christ alone that must prevail with the Father for us; all our righteousness will prevail nothing at all with God, nor move him a jot, except it be to pull down wrath; there is not one act of righteousness that a person doth but when that is finished, there is more transgression belonging to him than before he had performed it; and there is no composition, there is no buying out of evil by good doings; the doing of good doth not make a recompense for what sin doth; we pay but our debts in doing good; so that as there is a new righteousness performed, there is still a new reckoning added to the former; by acting of righteousness, you make up a greater number of sins than before; {Rom.14:23;} so that it is only Christ from whom we must have the expectation of success, in whatsoever thing we desire.

In a word, let a man's righteousness be never so exact; yet that is not according to the will of God, which hath not God's ends, which he proposeth in the doing of righteousness; you shall find the general rule of Christ and his apostles, to be this, that what we do, we must not only do it in the name of Christ, but also to the Lord, and for the Lord; "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness;" {Lk.1:74,75;} it is not, let us serve ourselves in holiness and righteousness, but let us serve him. "For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." {I Cor.6:20} He doth not say, being bought with a price, let us now seek our own good, as if we were still our own men; as if we had now liberty to trade for our own selves; you are "not your own," and therefore not your own, because you are "bought with a price;" therefore "glorify God in your bodies and spirits." It is most certainly true, that God having provided through Christ all things appertaining to life and godliness for his people; thereby calls them off from all self-ends, and bye-respects in his services, to have only respect to him in them; he hath done all that may be done for yourselves.

But some may say, peradventure, this is a way to overthrow all righteousness at once; what, all that ever a man doth, though he doth ever so spiritually, though

ever so exactly is to no purpose and in vain? Doth a man get nothing by all the righteousness he performs? Then we had as good sit still, and do nothing at all, will some say. I answer, this is carnal reasoning indeed; look but into the ground of this argument, and it will discover nothing but the selfishness of the person that makes it; I dare be bold to say, that that man will do no righteousness, but simply for his own sake; who, if he should know beforehand, that his righteousness will get him nothing, would therefore sit still, and do nothing; I dare be bold to say, he had as good sit still indeed, and do nothing, for he serves himself, not God, and though he performs righteousness ever so exactly, if he serves himself, God will never reckon that he serves him; when self is eyed, we can never serve God; when our commodity and advantage be not in the thing, we will sit still.

But, beloved, though the righteousness we are to perform be superfluous and vain in respect of any power it hath with God; to move him to do us good, yet it is not altogether superfluous; it is most true, that all the righteousness of man cannot prevail with God to do us good; there is but one mover of God, the man Christ Jesus, who is the only and sole mediator. If you will have your own righteousness to be your mediator with God, to speak to God for you, to prevail with God for you; what is this, but to put it in the room and place of Christ? What is the mediation of Christ else, but for him to come between God and man, and be the daysman to lay his hand upon both, and at once to reconcile them? {Job 9:33} And shall your righteousness be the daysman, and lay hands upon God and man; then farewell Christ and his mediatorship; for this is the peculiar office of Christ, to be man's mediator, and advocate with the Father, to prevail with him for any good for us; so far, therefore as any person looks after his own righteousness, to bring glad tidings from God to him, so far a man establishes it in the room and place of the righteousness of God; which proceeds from the ignorance of that righteousness, and will in the bud prove a stumbling-block to men, and a rock of offence to them.

All this while I desire not to be mistaken; some, it may be, will desire to know then to what use this righteousness of ours serves, seeing it is not of power to prevail with God. "My goodness extendeth not unto

thee," saith David; not to God, but it may to men; "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." {Ps.16:3} Our righteousness is appointed for excellent uses, if we could be contented with those God hath ordained it unto.

First, it serves as a real way to manifest our thankfulness to God, for what we have already received of him. In Psalm 103, David is excellent, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Why, what is the matter David? "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Mark it well, I pray, all that is within us must be praise, and nothing but praise; and the ground is this, God pardons our sins, heals our infirmities, and supplies all our wants; in consideration of this, all that is within us should continually express his praise.

Again secondly, there is this usefulness in it, namely, that we may serve our generation; and the Apostle gives this charge, that "men study to maintain good works," because, saith he, "these things are profitable unto men;" as we may therefore do good to men, so according to our ability, and talent received, we must employ ourselves to the utmost for that end and purpose. The heathens could say, "they were not made for themselves, but for others;" therefore there is this usefulness in our righteousness, that others may receive benefit by it. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven;" that men may be drawn on to glorify God, we must shine before men in a godly conversation.

Thirdly, it is useful, as it is the ordinance of God, wherein the Lord hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good those things which before he hath promised. And this is the very end and ground of our fasting, praying, and mourning in our exigencies and extremities; not that these duties do at all prevail with God, or at all move him; for it is God that moves even these services and all the spiritualness in us in them; and therefore he moves them in us, because when we are moved by his Spirit, and according to his will come forth to meet him where he appoints, there he will pour out himself in grace and

love, according to his promise, not according to our performances. Thus, I say, this great objection may be answered easily, why we fast, and pray, and mourn in adversity, if they do us no good? I say, though they do us no good, yet we fast and pray, in that the Lord saith, come to me, meet me in this and that ordinance, and I will come with my hands full; then, and there, I will pour out that which mine own freeness hath engaged me to do for you; is it not injustice not to meet him then? We confess our sins to him, but what is the ground of forgiveness? Not our confession of sins, not our fasting, prayers, mourning and tears; but "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25}

I will draw towards the conclusion. In a word, whoever he be that is selfish in his own righteousness, and goes about to establish it in the room of Christ, laboring to procure some good unto himself thereby, and makes that righteousness do that for him, that God's righteousness should do, so making an idol of it; first, he plays the most dishonest part with God that can be. Do you profess yourselves to be the servants of God? If you be, what dishonesty is there in you, that you professing to serve him, do notwithstanding, by secret and by stealth, serve yourselves? If an apprentice should hide himself all day long, to earn and gain money for himself, might not his master justly tax him for a dishonest fellow? Why doth the master keep him, and find him, but that all he doth, he should do for him, and not for himself? Are you at God's finding, or are you at your own? Miserable are you that are at your own; are you at God's finding then, and not at your own? What is it you seek for, and would get by the righteousness you seek so eagerly after? The truth is, there is nothing to be gotten that you have not already; if you have Christ, all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. {I Cor.3:23} Are you one of Christ's? A man need not work for that which is his own already; why then do you work for that which is yours already? Are you in Christ, or are you not? Do you work to get into Christ? Alas; how long might men work out of Christ, and work themselves into hell at last? What can a man get of God by all his righteousness and works, if he hath not Christ to get it for him? Therefore all things are yours, because you are Christ's, or else you shall have nothing at all. God gives nothing of gift, and of his

dear love, but as men are in Christ, and for his sake; therefore you do but labour in vain, if you labour for that which is yet to be produced.

But to do good to others; Christ in speaking to Peter saith, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." {Lk.22:32} Let these be the ends of your services; work because good is already made sure to you, and not to make it sure; when a father settles an inheritance upon his son, he makes the deed so, that the son shall not work for the father's means; because the father hath passed over all that he hath to his son, he serves out of love, for what he hath already received, not for what is hoped for.

And as there is dishonesty in self-seeking; so, secondly, there is a foul blur cast upon God. Beloved, if you should see a servant go about the streets complaining thus, Sir, help me to a little work, I must starve except I can work for myself; what would you think of this man's master? Surely, you will say, he is a hard master, that his servant must starve, except he seek for himself, and purvey for himself; you that say in your hearts, you are undone, you must perish, you are lost, except your prayers and humbling of yourselves can get some supply; is not this a working for yourselves? Is not this plain saying, there is no trusting to God, and that we must work for ourselves, or else we shall perish?

I should come to consider the other particulars in this text; but time not permitting we will wind up all in one word of application. We now stand before the Lord, and among other mercies, we expect this great mercy, salvation; not only, salvation in heaven, but salvation from the sword; it is not, it must not be your good doings that must procure it; or your repentance, that must bring it; you must not rest upon your performances to get it; do all that God calls for when you are in his way; in this respect be doing; but as for your help look up unto the hills from whence it cometh; your help stands in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth; and, therefore, in the expectation of help; all your business must lie in this: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." {Ex.14:13}

10 A Zeal Of God Proves Not A Man A Child Of God

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." {Rom.10:2-4}

The Apostle, in the former chapter, more plainly and fully lays down the absolute freeness of the grace of God alone to peace, life, and salvation, than anywhere else; clearly showing, that merely and only for his own good pleasure-sake, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; especially in that instance of Jacob and Esau, he tells us plainly, that God hath no regard in the world unto good and evil, that might be done by either of them, but before ever they could do any such thing, it is expressly written of them, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."

And the reason, why God takes nothing into his consideration, either good or evil done by the creature as a motive to his love, the Apostle gives there, is this, "that the purpose of God might stand, according to election; not of works, but of grace;" that is, that all the world may see that the first thoughts of God, in his election, had no eye in the world unto anything that the creature might do, which should have any prevalence with him, to sway him this way, or that way; it was not the consideration of Esau, as one that would be resolute and peremptory in a way of sinfulness, that was a motive with God to reject him; nor was it the consideration of any propensity in the spirit of Jacob to yield unto calling, or of any inclination in Jacob to glorify him being called; I say, none of these considerations entered into the thoughts of God, when he established his love, even in election itself, upon Jacob; his thoughts were merely upon his own good pleasure within himself; as if he should see a whole heap of creatures together, and, as it were, {if I may so speak,} blindfold of any good the creature could have to move him; he picked out this and that, and the other, without respect of any difference between them.

Then he comes into the closure of chapter 9, to show how desperately his own brethren, after the flesh, the Jews did reject this revealed will and pleasure of God, concerning good to men; they would have something considerable in the creature, as of prevalence to move

God to do good to such, rather than such a one; this very conceit, the Apostle calls a stumbling-block, at which they fell.

Now, least he should seem to speak all this out of spite, or prejudice, or through the injuries they had done to him; therefore, that he might not thus be understood, at the beginning of this chapter he confesses, "that his heart's desire, and prayer, was that they might be saved;" he had no ill-will in the world to them; nay, he saith, "that he would be contented to be even cut off for his brethren's sake." And, after he had acquitted himself from sinister respects, he begins to declare the truth as it is in Jesus; and first he comes to tax them, and show where their error lay, and grants it lay not in any defect of zeal of, or after God; "for {saith he} I bear them record, they have a zeal of God;" if this would have served their turns, to be zealous for God himself, there was no defect in that; the Apostle will testify for them, that they were exceeding cordial and not in respect of themselves, but in respect of God himself; they had not a zeal simply for their own base ends, but had an eye to God himself; it was a zeal of God, whether you consider it as wrought by God, or as tending unto him; either way, their zeal was a zeal of God, a zeal after God. I know, that there may be a zeal wrought by God in respect of common mercy, or in respect of peculiar mercy; this was a zeal of the common mercy of God.

Thus much in effect, I have spoken heretofore upon this text; upon which I made several enquiries; as, first, what righteousness of their own this was, which they went about to establish. Secondly, what is it to establish a man's own righteousness? Which likewise I have handled in my former discourse upon this text. Notwithstanding, I shall, at this time, speak something more largely concerning the second, and so, if the time will permit, proceed unto the rest of my enquiry; but, by the way, I shall speak something concerning the zeal here mentioned by the Apostle.

Therefore, before I quit these words, give me leave to tell you that it is possible a person may have a zeal of God, and yet be far from being a believer; let that be the first observation; I ground it thus; of the Jews of whom Paul speaks, he himself "bears record, they had a zeal of God;" but, in the next words he says, "they established their own righteousness, and did not submit to the righteousness of God." A zeal of

God is not ground or evidence enough that a person is a believer or that he hath received or submitted himself to Christ. First, Beloved, because this may seem to be harsh, I beseech you to consider seriously, how undeniable and clear the position I have laid down is founded in the text itself; I say, there may be a zeal of God in an unbeliever; so the Apostle bears record of these Jews; there was "a zeal of God, yet not according to knowledge;" even when they had it, "they established their own righteousness; they did not submit to the righteousness of God." I will not dwell upon this point; all that I shall say on it, is only that I may undeceive many that are very subject to deceive themselves; and that I may take them off from a sandy foundation; and so, if it be possible, reduce them to a rock, who are apt to build upon the sand.

I know, beloved, it is cried up much in the hearts of many poor wretches; I say, cried up much, that if they have but a zeal of God in their hearts, it is enough to serve them forever; they are believers, members of Christ; and it is injurious unto the people of God, as they think, to tell them, that those that have a zeal of God in their hearts, yet, for all that, may "not submit to the righteousness of God;" but stumble at the stumbling-stone, and fall forever.

All the difficulty, I know, lies in this, what it is for persons to have a zeal of God? Or whether there be not a zeal of God in those that are believers, which is palpably discerned, from that in those that do not submit to the righteousness of God? I grant, there is a difference; but as this zeal of God hath reference to our righteousness or unto an obedience to the Law, you will hardly find a difference. A zeal of God to set up God in Christ, to give Christ the pre-eminence in all, that nothing is to be done with him, but only by Jesus Christ; to throw down everything in the world that offers to come in with Christ, to deal with the Father; I say, a zeal of God, in this kind, is not common to any person, that submits not to the righteousness of God; but to be zealous, that is to say, to be cordial, hearty, real, and that with fervency, and earnestness of spirit, towards obedience to the commandments of God, and to have an eye, in such obedience, to God himself, to seek him in it; this, I say, is a zeal of God that is common unto such as do not submit to the righteousness of God, as well as to those that do submit to it; therefore, as there is a community in this

zeal, so this is not possibly able sufficiently to clear up to persons, that because they are thus zealous, therefore they are the children of God, and have the righteousness of Christ.

These Jews, the Apostle here speaks of, {mark it well, beloved,} were exceeding vehement, even in setting up and promoting obedience to the commandments of God. I say, with an earnestness of spirit; as when they offered to stone Christ himself, {the Pharisees I mean,} it was merely out of the extremity of their zeal, and fervency of spirit, because they conceived he was a great blasphemer, and breaker of God's will, for making himself equal with God; how could they contain themselves, so long as Christ would, as they thought, usurp and presume so far as to take the incommunicable privileges and immunities of God himself? The Apostle saith of himself, and of the rest of the Jews, "if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" and, {saith he,} though I persecuted the church of God, yet "I did it ignorantly in unbelief." {I Tim. 1:13} All this results to thus much, that the mere encroaching upon God, as they understood, was that which put them on so hot, eager, and violent a revenge of God's quarrel; so that, I say, the eye may be upon God, and, for his sake, men may be exceeding zealous, earnest, and fervent for the vindication of him, for the doing of his will revealed in the Law; and yet, for all this, there may not be a submitting to the righteousness that is in God.

I apply it thus, there are many people in the world, to whom the mind of God, in the Law, is made known; we must not commit adultery, &c., simply because God commands this thing, they refrain from the evil; they go through all the commandments of God zealously; they look upon it as the will of God revealed to them, and do it for God's sake, thus imparting his own mind; they abstain and refrain from the evil they do, and perform the good, because God requires it of them; yet all this is no argument of a person's being a real member of Christ; for all this, he may not submit to the righteousness of Christ.

Now I will add something, according as I proposed, to which hath been heretofore said unto the second enquiry, namely, how, and wherein our righteousness is established instead of the righteousness of God. First, then, observe, that these Pharisees "went about to establish their own righteousness," saith the Apostle;

this righteousness they went about to establish, what was it? A righteousness according to the Law of God; "Christ is the end of the Law to everyone that believes;" as if he had said, you, in the zeal of your spirits, think to come to the end of the Law yourselves, but mistake not, if you have in your eye the expectation of comfort and peace, and rest in your spirits, from the largeness of your spirits in the performance of those duties this is enough to make you miscarry, though it be for the Lord's sake you do it. Let me tell you, that the Lord hath so established Christ, for the rest and life of men, that if they could yield angelic obedience, be perfect throughout in obedience to the whole Law of God, and not fail in one point of it; if, I say, from such perfection of obedience they would gather up their own comfort, or conclude their own salvation; these persons should be damned, as well as those that sin ever so much; for God hath established Christ, and only his righteousness to be the salvation of man; I say, only the righteousness of Christ; that if a man were ever so perfect, and in respect of that perfection, would leave the righteousness of Christ, and lean to the perfection of his own, for his peace, and salvation; that man would miscarry, and be damned.

Beloved, all I aim at is this, that you build not upon foundations that will fail you, when you come to the trial; there is {as you shall hear by and by, if time and strength permit} absolutely perfection enough in the righteousness of Christ alone, for your rest and security, that you shall not need to trust to anything you do for peace or life; this is that which God calls you to, to go forth from your own righteousness, to rest solely and only upon the righteousness of Christ, if ever you mean to have comfort in this world, and in the world to come.

You will say peradventure, this is the way to destroy all righteousness and obedience whatsoever; what, a man never jot the better, though he be ever so zealous for God, although his eye and aim be after God in his zeal; to what purpose serves all this then, will you say?

I answer, the world is grown to a miserable pass, that obedience, zeal, and seeking after God, must be of no use at all, except a man himself be a gainer by his obedience; it is now, as it was in the time of the Psalmist, {Psalm 4,} everyone will be ready to cry out; "who will show us any good?" This is the common outcry in the world; if anything in the world be proposed

to men to be done, they answer, but what shall I get by it? That is the next word presently; am I put upon such, and such an employment, saith one; but what shall I gain by it? As in those offices of employment that carry about with them a great deal of labour and expense of time, and bring no profit in to the person in the office; every man will be ready to shun such an office, nay ready to buy out such employment; this is the case of the world, in things appertaining unto God; what doth the Law call me out unto such duties and employments, such zeal and fervency, to be hot in these services and duties, and to have mine eye upon God in the performance of them, and all this do me no good? I had as good sit still and do nothing. But there are some good common-wealth's-men indeed, who you know have in respect of others prosperity, put themselves to trouble and charge, and be so far from getting, that they shall be losers by their office; and yet for the common-wealth's good, they will willingly put themselves on, when they are called out to such employments; and I must tell you, except you mind chiefly, that all the duties you perform, are for other ends and purposes than your own preferment, and to benefit yourself thereby; namely, the setting forth the praise of the glory of God's free-grace, and the serving your generation in which you live, and the study of good works because they are profitable to men; I say, except you will fall upon the performance of duties, for the common good and benefit, without having any such conceits as what shall accrue to you thereby; you are not persons yet come to have that common spirit, and dead to the old spirit, as becomes Christians.

I must tell you and that freely, there is not any duty you perform, when you have attained the highest pitch that hath any prevalency and availableness to produce any, though the least good to themselves. I say it again, there is nothing you can do, from whence you ought to expect any gain unto yourselves by doing; you ought not to seek to find in what you do, nor to think to bring Christ to yourselves by doing. "You are not your own," saith the Apostle, "you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits." Christ hath redeemed us, "that we should not henceforth live to ourselves, but to him that died for us."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ The Doctor's meaning is not, that no good is enjoyed in a way of duty; for, in the former discourse on this text, he not only observes, that our righteousness is useful, to manifest our thankfulness

The Scripture is marvelous plentiful in this, that no believer for whom Christ died, should have the least thought in his heart of promoting or advancing himself, or any end of his own by doing what he doth; and though, as people may think, here is a marvelous discouragement to persons, to do what God calls them to do, when they shall have nothing for it; I answer, when there is a spirit of ingenuity {as you know there is even in the world} they shall be industrious to glorify God, and do good to men, as if they did it for themselves; they shall do as much for good already bestowed, as if they were to procure it by their own doing.

Secondly, I answer, there can be no discouragement at all unto the performance of anything God calls for at your hands, though you get nothing in the world by what you do; I say, there is no discouragement, because you cannot propose or intend to yourselves any possible gain by duty; but that, whatever it is, that is a spur and encouragement unto it, is already freely and graciously provided for you to your hand; that all your industry could not compass and bring in, either so certainly or so plentifully as the very grace of God, before the performance of any duty, hath provided and established that good for you.

When you fall upon humiliation, fasting, prayer, weeping, and self-denial, what do you look for? In the diversity of judgment, saith one, I get this by it, prevention of many great evils hanging over my head; another saith, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, assurance of the pardon of sin, and of reconciliation with God; these things would I get by attending upon ordinances, by serving God day and night, in that way he calls me out unto; I tell you

to God, and by it we serve our generation; but it is the ordinance of God, wherein he hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good the things he has before promised; and accordingly he pours out himself in grace and love, according to his promise; but the sense is, that there is no virtue and efficacy in any duty performed to procure any good things for us or to entitle us to it; nor should we do any with this view, or expect any on such an account; but should perform duty without mercenary or selfish views, purely from a spirit of ingenuity, from a principle of love and gratitude; knowing that all good things, for time and eternity, are already provided in Christ, and are or will be bestowed on us, through him, and for his sake; and not on account of any duty of ours, which ought not to be put in the room of Christ, and made an idol of; which is the Doctor's view, in these and other expressions of the like nature. See Chauncy's "Neonomianism Unmasked," part 2, pgs. 256, 290, 291, &c., a book worthy to be read by both the friends and foes of Dr. Crisp; being a vindication of these discourses of his throughout, from the falsehood, misrepresentations, calumnies, and objections of D. W. in his Gospel Truth Stated, &c. Gill.

plainly, there is none of all these things that you do that conduce a jot towards the obtaining of any of these ends you propose to yourselves; all you do gets not a jot; nay, doth not concur in it.

You will say then, we had as good sit still, as good never whit as never the better; he that works all day, and gets nothing more than he had in the morning, had as good sit still, and do nothing. I answer, let me tell you, the prevention of evil, if there be reality of evil in it, and the obtaining of good, if there be a reality of good, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, pardon of sin, infallibility of miscarriage, the light of the countenance of God; all these, I say, which you aim at when you are encouraged to duty, are provided abundantly for you, and established firmly upon you, by the mere grace of God in before ever you perform anything whatsoever. To what purpose do men propose ends to themselves, which ends are accomplished before their proposition? Hath God settled all things pertaining to life and godliness in his Son Jesus Christ upon you for his own sake, and settled them everlastingly and unchangeably upon you; that heaven and earth shall pass away, before a tittle of the grant of God, made freely for his own sake, shall pass? I say, hath he settled all things, so that there can come nothing to make them more secure, than the grant of God himself hath made them? To what purpose then do we propose to ourselves, the gaining of that to ourselves by our labour and industry which is already become our own before we labour a jot? There are some children in the world, I know, that are very vigilant and very observing of their parents; and their end and aim is, that by such compliance their fathers may settle a good inheritance upon them; but suppose a child hath manifested to it, that his father had already passed over all his goods and land to him; and hath made a firm deed of conveyance, and cannot call it back or in; he hath passed over so much, and so firmly, he is not able to add to that, that is passed over before-hand; will such a child propose to himself, in his obedience and observance, the obtaining of that good his father hath already passed? He knows that it is passed already, and cannot be by anything he doth firmer and stronger; he serves not now to get his father's lands, but he serves to honour his father that so freely hath settled his land upon him. So I say of believers, that have the temper of Christ's true bred

children indeed; they, in the gospel of Christ, find all things that appertain to life and godliness; they find them all so passed over by God's goodness and free-grace to them, that the lions shall want, and suffer hunger, before they shall lack any thing that is good; must they now labour to gain these things as if they were in agitation, and as if they were yet referred to their good or evil walking; that as they shall walk, so they shall speed? This is to argue that God is yet to determine within himself, how to dispose of the good things that he will bestow upon his people, and that he gives good things according to their good or evil carriage; and so the goodness of God to his people must depend upon their goodness to him; and that as men's works will prevail with God, so God will pour out his bounty unto them. {Ez.36:32}

But, without respect to good or evil, as I said before, the Lord hath everlastingly established all that ever he meant to do; and no more will he do to the end of the world to any people he hath chosen in his Son. The Lord in Christ from everlasting hath set down peremptorily what he will do for you; and there are no intervening acts and carriages of yours that make any alteration in him at all to cross out what he hath written, and to put in what he had left out; he doth nothing to his people upon conditions in them, as if he referred himself still to those conditions, and suspended what he meant to do to them, till he perceived how they would carry themselves to him. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." {Eccl.3:14,15} "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." {James 1:17}

All that I aim at is this, to let people know that it is not a vain thing to yield due obedience to anything that God requires; though the Lord intend not, that by our obedience, we shall gain something, which in case of our failing, we shall miscarry of; I say, the Lord hath firmly established upon his own people every thing that concerns their peace, comfort, and good, simply and merely for his sake, without respect or regard to anything they perform; all that they are

to do, they are not to do it with any eye to their own advantage, that being already perfectly completed to their hands before they do anything; but simply with an eye to glorify God, and serve their generation, and therein to serve the Lord, and set forth the praise of the glory of his grace that hath done so abundantly for them. Oh; that men were but so far enlightened, to behold how graciously the Lord hath provided for them; that he doth not now leave himself in a kind of suspense to deal well or ill with them, as they should carry themselves well or ill to him. "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him; and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." {Job 23:13} "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." {Mal.3:6}

I know that the contrary to this rises in the hearts of men that have not yet received the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ; having this conceit, as if all the carriages of God to men were according to their carriage to him; but here is no such thing, this is but the establishing of man's own righteousness to expect the dealings of God to him, as he himself deals with God, and that, therefore, he will be righteous, that he may be happy. Oh! I beseech you, enter seriously into your own thoughts, and consider, whether or not this be not to bring back again the covenant of works, even to believers; namely, that it shall fare well or ill with them, as they obey, or disobey the Lord God. The Apostle, in this chapter, {vs.5,} doth expressly tell us what the covenant of works was. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." I pray mark it well, this is the righteousness of the Law that he himself, in the next verse, opposes to the righteousness of God, that he calls the righteousness of faith. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them; but the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." I say that the covenant of works stands upon these terms, so much doing, so much life; on the other side "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are

written in the Law to do them." {Gal.3:10} Here is the other branch of the covenant of works, so far as I fail in doing, so far must I be under the curse. Now you can look for no better than wrath and vengeance from heaven, so long as you run on in these principles, and make them the foundation of your good; so far you make yourselves liable to the covenant of works; no more good, comfort, peace, or rest, but as you can do this, and that. What is this else, but, "do this and live?"

I beseech you to enter into your own hearts concerning this particular. When you yield obedience to God, you come to church, go to prayer, and fall to fasting, weeping, mourning, self-denial, keeping the Sabbath and dealing righteously, honestly, and justly with men; what is it you aim at in all this? That God may do you good, that he may be gracious and loving to you, that he may speak peace to your spirits; then, it necessarily follows, that life is that in your eye that puts you upon that which you do, and so you do, that you may live; this is the righteousness of the Law, that righteousness which is opposed to the righteousness of faith. Now know, that there is no submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an establishing of the righteousness of the Law of Moses; namely, to do righteousness that you may live; to refrain from evil, to the end you may not be cursed; he that proposeth cursing or life, cursing if he do not do, or life if he do the will of God; he that proposeth this, is "under the Law, and not under grace."

Christ, as you hear in the next verse; "is the end of the Law for righteousness, to everyone that believes." What is that? He is the end of the curse of the Law; he is the end of the life of the Law; there is no curse to be pronounced on a believer, when he breaks the Law; there is no life to be expected by the believer upon his obedience to the Law. Christ is the end of the life and curse of the Law. Christ himself being made a curse for us, as it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." {Gal.3:13} Secondly, "our life is hid with God in Christ;" he is the life, no life but in the Son; "he that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son, hath not life," saith the Apostle. {I Jn.5:12} All this argues plainly, that all that life that is to be expected, whether it be life itself, or the conducting of things that appertain unto the comforts of it; all this is to be expected from the

Son of God, and not from any obedience to the Law. If thou, at any time, read a curse to thyself, upon any transgression of the Law, and darest receive it against thyself, in respect of that transgression, Christ is not the end of the Law to thee; namely, thy soul takes not Christ as the full curse of the Law, taking it all away, that otherwise the Law would pronounce and execute upon thy person.

Beloved, I need not apologize; you know what the Apostle speaks, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" upon which {saith the Apostle} "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." {II Cor.5:19,20} I think I need not make an apology; he that is a minister of the Gospel ought to declare and proclaim this reconciliation to you, by God's own Son Jesus Christ; peace through him, peace and atonement through his blood alone. Either we are the ministers and messengers of Christ, or the ministers of Moses; we are either the ministers of the covenant of works, or the messengers of the covenant of grace; so far as we urge upon you, as you do, you shall live, and as you do evil, you shall be accursed; so far we are the ministers of the covenant of works. But, when we come and say, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" that is, if we say that Christ bare the curse, and that you need not fear it, though you fall into sin; you may be sure that God hath reconciled you so in his Son, that your falls {being believers} shall not break peace between God and you; this peace is everlasting; it is unchangeable; God is not a friend today with his people, and falls out with them tomorrow; "whom he loves, he loves to the end;" now this is our business to draw people unto Christ. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." {Jn.13:1}

And we may do some good to let you see what advantage there is in Christ for you; for thereby you may be induced not to establish your own righteousness against him, and his. We shall sin every day; in many things we sin all; but the business we are to do, is this, to let you know, that though there be sins committed, yet there is no peace broken; because the breach of peace is satisfied in Christ; there is a reparation of the damage before the sin itself be committed. Christ had

in his eye, and so had the Father too, all the damages that should fall out to the end of the world, by his own people; and he did not pay a price for some that were present only, but he paid the damages of all that should come after, from the time of his suffering, to the end of the world; he paid the uttermost farthing for everyone at once; though, it may be, one sin is committed today, another is committed tomorrow, and the other the third day; God hath reconciled himself to you in Christ, for this sin committed today, and that which will be tomorrow, and so for all the rest to the end of your lives, they are paid for already; this is that which will make up the peace of a believer. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." {Rom.15:13} That is worth observation, beloved, the joy of a person can never be full, the peace of a man can never be complete, as long as there is suspicion; there will be quarrelling again. What saith the soul? I sin now and shall tomorrow; and when I sin, God will fall out with me, be angry with me, and turn away from me; I say, as long as there is such suspicion, there will never be fulness of peace and joy. Hence it is, that persons, till they came to receive the Gospel of Christ, were, through fear of death and wrath, subject to bondage all their life long; but, when they come to have this peace that Christ hath purchased, he having made an atonement, and given rest, in that he hath paid all the old scores at once; then they may perceive, though there be sin committed; yet, notwithstanding, God will not now fall out again with them; for he had an eye upon all these sins, when Christ suffered, and took full satisfaction of his Son for this very sin; now though I sin today, God took full satisfaction of his Son for the sins of this day; nay more, he hath acknowledged satisfaction for them all; for the LORD beheld "the travail of his soul," and was satisfied; for that which is to come, as well as that which is past; God, in Christ, hath given a full discharge.

Look upon the account, and you shall find that Christ paid and reckoned not only for sins past and present, but for sins committed to the end of days. Therefore, in Daniel 9:24, you shall find this excellent prophecy, "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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Here by seventy weeks he prophesies of the distance between the time in which he spake, and the time wherein Christ should suffer; and what should he suffer for? For the finishing transgression, and for the putting an end to sin; and for the making reconciliation, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Mark, when these seventy weeks are ended, Christ is come, then there is a finishing of transgression; there is a great deal of weight in the very word, the "finishing of transgression;" for when is a thing finished? When all is done, and nothing more needs to be done or added to it. This church was finished, when the lead was laid, and the windows glazed, and no workman had anything more to do. Now the time of Christ's suffering was the time of finishing transgression; as much as to say, Christ made an end of sin; that is, God had no more in the world to reckon with persons for sins, after Christ in that suffering of his, had paid the full price of every transgression. Beloved, if God come to reckon now with believers for sin, either he must ask something of them, or not; if not, why are they troubled? Why must they come under the rod, as it were, to make up that which is not yet paid? How doth Christ then perfect for ever them that are sanctified? {Heb.10:14} And how are they saved to the uttermost that come to God by him? {Heb.7:25} When men are saved to the utmost, there needs no more to be done; if so, you must know, that God cannot bring a new reckoning. There is not such dishonesty in any honest man in the world; he that hath taken all the debt of a surety, and given acquittance under his hand, will not come upon the principal again, a poor beggar, and tell him, "I must have something of you;" the poor man will answer him, "Sir, you have received sufficient satisfaction already of my surety;" he is not an honest man that will ask more. Christ is the Surety of a better covenant. God took Christ's bond, and he paid it; and, as he took his pay, when he received it, he acknowledged that he had received satisfaction. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." {Is.53:11} The travail of Christ gave the Father such satisfaction, that he acknowledged that he was satisfied in it; why, therefore, should he come upon you again? And if God will not come upon you again, what need you fear? It is true, as sin is contrary to the nature of

God, so we ought with all reverence to make use of the help of the Spirit to oppose all sin whatsoever; but for any hurt; which such sins shall do us, it is not possible; for Christ hath made satisfaction.⁵⁶ "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Did God wound Christ for sin? If he did, it was to some purpose, or to none; if it were to purpose, then it pleased the Father to wound him, that those that were to be wounded might not be wounded; and hath Christ saved his people from wounding, then what need we fear that we shall be wounded for our transgressions?

But if we commit sin, God will punish us. I answer, this is to make the sufferings of Christ of none effect; for, if he had not suffered, you could but be wounded; but if he was wounded for you, why do you disparage his sufferings, by this false jealousy and suspicion of yours? And besides, you will never rest in peace all the days of your life, till you go out of yourselves to the Lord Christ, and see fulness in him, and such fulness and perfection in him, that there needs no addition to what he hath done. "In him, {saith the Apostle,} dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and "we are complete in him;" and is it so? There is no fear, then, that God should look upon you as abominable, loathsome things any longer; there is inconsistency between a lovely person, and an ugly loathsome one; you are complete in Christ; now, being complete in him, you are lovely in the sight of the Father. In Ezekiel, chapter 16, the prophet tells us, for thy beauty became "perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD." {vs.14} Here is a person in blood, in a loathsome condition; but, for all this, as loathsome as he is in himself, and in his own nature; yet here is perfection of beauty, and that through the comeliness of Christ; now can the Lord abhor that which hath perfection of comeliness in it? Whosoever is in Christ hath all the comeliness of Christ upon him. Now as you look out of yourselves, and your filthiness, and look upon yourselves as you are in him; so you shall have not only rest and peace; but joy, and joy unspeakable and glorious, as in Isaiah 35:10, an excellent place; "and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and

⁵⁶ By hurt is meant the hurt of punishment, penal evil, which Christ has bore and took away from his people; so that they shall never be affected with it, he having fully satisfied for their sins. Gill.

everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Some interpret these words of the glory in heaven; but it is returning to Zion, and not returning to heaven; Zion is the church of God upon earth; they return to Zion; that is, they return to Christ in his church upon earth; they shall return with songs, and everlasting joy; and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This is not impossible, you will say; but you know many of the people of the Lord Jesus, that walk sadly and disconsolately, not having this joy and gladness. I answer, there is nothing that hinders the joy of God’s people, but their sins; these, as they conceive, stand as a separation between God and them. Oh; they stand as a cooling card in all their joys and mirth; but when they return to Zion, they shall rejoice in that they shall see, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God hath cleansed them from all sin; in that the Lamb of God hath taken away all their sins; the scapegoat having carried them away into the land of forgetfulness; in that all their transgressions are blotted out as a cloud, and God will remember their sins no more; in that they are all fair, having no spot before the Lord in them; when they shall come, by the sight of the glory of the Gospel, and the light thereof, to behold this estate that Christ hath brought them into; then all matter of sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the bitterness of it shall be taken away; and then that which was the occasion of bitterness shall vanish too.

I do not say, that he is no believer that hath not this perfectly; far be it from me to say so; there are that are believers that are weak; and there are believers that are strong in faith. The more the light and glory of the Gospel shines in the true intention of God to his people; the more shall they return to their rest, the more shall they have joy and gladness.

Why then, may not a believer say as David did, “the Lord hath been very bountiful to me, that I may return to my rest.” God hath done everything in Christ, and taken away all things that can disturb my peace and comfort.

11 God Remembers Not Our Sins

“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”

{Is. 43:25}

To have an evangelist, a day-star, to be visited in lightsome times, though it be a matter of great grace; yet is it not cause of so great admiration, as to have the sun shining in a dark night is matter of wonder; and yet there was a spiritual eye among the Jews, that was able to see {in their darkest days} a glorious sun in their firmament; this eye was this evangelist Isaiah. I rather call him an evangelist than a prophet for his bringing glad tidings of good things, tidings of exceeding great joy. The Apostle Paul himself, the great doctor of the Gentiles, and the main exalter of Christ and the grace of God in him, goes not beyond this evangelist; speaking so fully, clearly, and sweetly of the freeness of God’s love, even while persons are in the lowest and worst of conditions.

Besides all other expressions of his, this very text that I have read unto you is enough to make him an evangelist indeed; for here he evangelizes, or preaches the gladdest tidings that ever could come to the sons of men; for herein he proclaims liberty to the captives, and binds up the broken-hearted. This very expression of his is one of the greatest causes that “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;” as the same prophet hath it in chapter 35:10.

Now that we may see more fully the sweetness of marrow and of wine well refined on the lees, contained in this text; it will be of very great importance and concern to understand clearly and fully to whom, or of whom, the Lord by this prophet speaks these words. It is true, a pardon is a welcome thing to a condemned malefactor; but a pardon for this man, when another that goes to execution hath none, is so far from being a comfort to him that suffers, that it doth but augment his misery and torment.

If the Lord for his own sake blots out the iniquity of such and such, and not the iniquity of others, it is but the augmentation of the misery of that person that hath no share in it. In verse 4, the Lord mentions Jacob indeed, but, in the sequel, he makes it appear, that he intends not Jacob according to the flesh, but after the spirit; for this Jacob and Israel are that company and assembly of people, that are brought together from the ends of the earth; from the east, west, north, and south, as we have it expressed in verse 5, 6. But,

beloved, that you may see plainly who this Jacob and Israel are, observe but one expression in verse 7, “even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” “Thou that are called by my name,” saith the Lord; these are the persons whose iniquities the Lord blots out; what name is that? The name of “the Lord thy Saviour;” verse 11. Now there is no people in the world, nor the Jews themselves; that had so plain a name of their Saviour upon them, as we have that are Gentiles, that are Christians; we have the true name of Christ a Saviour upon us, Christians from Christ.

And least people should think, that when the Lord proclaims this grace in the text, of blotting out iniquity and transgression, he looks for some qualifications and dispositions that may be amiable to win so much grace from him; do but observe, I pray, {and it is very observable indeed} the two or three verses before my text; and you shall see plainly how careful the Lord is to take off all such conceits from men, all imagination of any such expectation. There must be first graciousness, they must be first well qualified, and then their iniquities shall be blotted out, so might some think; mark how the Lord takes it off; for in these two verses, he draws to the very life the qualifications and conditions of those whose iniquities he blots out; mark them well, “but thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;” and then upon these words follows the text; “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” {Is.43:22-25} Mark, the words {thy transgressions} have reference to the persons spoken of before, these who had not called upon the Lord, who had been weary of him, with transgressions that had wearied him; and transgressions, that had “made me to serve with thy sins.” So that the point from hence is this that the Lord, for his own sake, blots out the transgressions, and remembers not the sins, even of those that have not called upon him, that

have been weary of him, and wearied him, and made him serve with their transgressions.

I make no question, but that this doctrine which I have laid down, will be received of all that will but receive clear scripture; I have not added one tittle in it more than is expressed in the words themselves; and therefore I shall be the more bold to build upon such a rock as this is. That we may the better come to the words, or rather to our comfort in them, we have these particulars very observable.

First, the grace held out to these persons; and that is expressed by two phrases. First, the “Lord blots out thy transgressions.” Secondly, the Lord “will not remember thy sins.”

Secondly, besides the grace held forth, let us consider the original or fountain from whence it springs; it is “I even I {saith the Lord} the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, thy Saviour;” for so you have it expressed all along the chapter.

Thirdly, you may consider here the motive that prevails with God to extend this grace that he shows to his people, and that is a remarkable passage; the motive is not in, nor from the creature; it hath its spring and rise immediately from the Lord alone; “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions; for mine own sake I do it.”

Finally, you may consider to whom this grace is extended; “that blotteth out thy transgressions,” saith the text, and will not remember thy sins; that is, to those persons mentioned before, of which I have spoken, that have wearied him with their sins; of these briefly.

First, concerning the grace that the Lord is pleased to hold forth to his people here, namely, “the blotting out their transgressions and not remembering their sins.” First, let us consider what it is for the Lord to blot out transgressions; it is an usual phrase in the scripture, and imports much comfort in it; it is an allusion, or an allegorical expression; wherein the Lord is pleased to hold forth his love to man, after the manner of men; to set forth his carriage to men, according to theirs one to another. It is a phrase borrowed from the practice of men that keep their debt-books, wherein they enter, and record the several debts men owe them; that so, for the better helping of their memory, they may find what is due, and know what to demand and call for; I say, the Lord here speaking of “blotting

out of transgressions," hath reference to such debt-books wherein he hath recorded the several debts, or sins, which he enters as men commit them; now the blotting out is nothing else, but that, whereas there were such and such transgressions in the record of God, he draws a blot over them. And that he here hath reference to such kind of dealing, in blotting out transgressions, you may see clearly manifested unto you in Colossians 2:14, where this phrase of blotting out is explained; "and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" now, mark what follows; "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." What "the hand-writing of ordinances" there is, you may plainly perceive by the words going before, namely, "all our trespasses, and all our sins." Now the taking away of sin, is called a "blotting it out," and expressed thus, "the blotting out of the hand-writing that was against us;" because they were, as it were, written down; but the Lord hath razed and blotted them out. You are not to conceive that there are really such things with God, that he did indeed keep a book, and enter down in it all the several actions of men, and so calling men to account, will open it, and will read out the several things there written; but the phrase is only an allusion spoken for our better capacity.

And, for this cause, you shall find the Scripture frequently makes mention of such books God hath. When the seventy disciples came to Christ, rejoicing that the devils were made subject unto them, he replies, "notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." {Lk.10:20} Here is a book and the names of the disciples written in it; but, if you will mark Revelation 20:12, you will find, there is not only the book of life, but other books besides, out of which the dead, both small and great, were judged, according to their works that they had done; as if he had said, besides the book of life, there is the book of works, wherein the several actions of men are recorded, by which, at the great day, men are to be judged as they are found in them; according to the several debts that are therein, they are to receive their sentence. Mark, now, for the better apprehension of our weak capacity, the Lord hath taken up such a

kind of illustration of his dealing with men; namely, by recording our debts in books; yet, he tells us for our comfort, that, though there be such books, we need not fear; though they shall be opened, yet whatsoever was written in them, in reference to us, is all crossed and blotted out; and, when we come to account, there shall be nothing reckoned unto us as a fault. {Jude 24}

For the better illustration of this, that what comes after may be the clearer, you must understand, that, though it be true in the succession of ages, the several members of Christ do severally day after day commit now some, then more, and afterwards more transgressions; though this be actually done in succession of time, yet the all-seeing eye of the Lord looks over all, that ever should be done, from all eternity; and then, as it were with himself, writes down the several actions and transgressions of men, that afterwards should be committed; he registers them at first with himself, and this is all the book that God keeps, and all the entries of actions with him. {Ps.147:5} Now, whereas the Lord in his eternal foresight took notice of every action that you and I have done, do, or shall do hereafter; he also took notice of the nature and quality of such actions; yet, when he had done, he drew a cross over them all; for though he saw these things thus done, yet he took a course that he would be another way satisfied for everything that he could demand in respect of them; and so they should remain no longer upon the heads of those persons. As for example, suppose that a man owes, upon a bill of parcels, an hundred pounds; all these parcels are written in a book under his name upon his head; after a time a surety comes and takes all this debt, and enters it upon his own head, under his own name, he being an able man; upon this the creditor is pleased to take him for his debtor, and so transcribes every parcel of the debt, from the head of the principal debtor, unto the head of this surety. Now, after all these parcels are entered to the head of the surety, by-and-by a cross is drawn over the first head, whose debt it was before, until it was brought over unto the surety; this is the "blotting out of transgression" which the Lord here speaks of; and the sense of it is no more but this; though it is true, I know it well enough what thou hast done, and all thou hast done against me, how many and how great transgressions thou hast committed, and hereafter shall commit, though they

be all open before me, though thou art the doer of all these, and I know it, yet, saith the Lord, "I will blot out all;" that is, there is not any one of all these to be reckoned for upon thy head; but I have passed them all upon another, and he hath made to me, and I have acknowledged, full satisfaction; I have no more to say to thee.

Here then, is the sum of this grant of the free grace of God; "the blotting out of transgression." You know, beloved, the use of writing debts in a book, namely, that a creditor may turn-over at pleasure or leisure to them; and so, when he looks there, he may find what every person owes, and at discretion, may take the ground-work of his action that he lays against a person; and upon this action arrest him, and lay him up in prison, till he pays the debt. And so likewise, you know what the end of this "blotting out" is; namely, that when men come to look over their books they may skip over what was written; and, when the book is looked over, no notice shall be taken of such a man's name, who, though he was entered in it, yet all is blotted out again; and imports to us thus much to the thing in hand, that though the Lord, according to the usual manner of taking, notice of actions against men, hath his time when he will take notice of these debts, when he enters the debtor, when he will arrest and clap him up for them; yet, when he shall look over his book, he shall take no notice of such persons whose parcels are crossed out. Therefore, in Jeremiah 50:20, see how the prophet alludes to this expression, and how he explains the words, "blotting out of transgression." "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Here he seems to represent the Lord as one that begins to look over his books, to see what debts are owed unto him; as if he were making a search. Well, saith the Holy Ghost, though at such a time the sins of the people be sought for, yet there shall be none; it is true, they were all entered into the knowledge of God from all eternity, yet there shall be none; that is, though they were entered, they are blotted out again; therefore, as it is in a debt-book, though there be never so many parcels entered, entered ever so truly there, yet, when once that which was entered is blotted out, there is no more debt than if there had never been any; for all

that was ever in, is blotted out. So, though the Lord be privy to what they do, and hath recorded them in his own thoughts; yet he himself draws a blot upon them, and makes them to be nothing; whereas, before, till the blot was drawn over them, they were real debts.

And this he doth not simply in respect of forgiveness. In regard of us, it is true, it is a forgiveness, yet, in respect of him, it is not merely forgiveness; for the reason and ground of blotting out of iniquity, is, there is a second head to which these debts are translated from us, that shall pay them better than those whose first they were; so that the debt being paid, God loses nothing, forasmuch as that another hath paid all.

This is one of the most admirable pieces of grace that thirsting souls can desire, if they had all they could wish themselves. Do but think seriously upon it. Suppose a man is privy to himself of murder, felony, and treason, or what else you will; suppose he knows that it is known, and that there are many witnesses to test it; nay, suppose he knew that it were done in the eye and face of the judge himself; that he saw with his own eyes what was done, and that, when all this is done he should be drawn to his trial; alas; in what perplexity of heart would this man be? How would he quake and tremble, and be even at his wit's end. He knows it was publicly done; there is no smothering of it, but that he must justly lie under condemnation for it; the witnesses come in and swear point blank against him; and, yet, suppose, after all pleadings and bitter expectation of the sentence, the judge himself should stand up, and say, I have made search, and there is not one bill of indictment found against this man; there is not one action that may justly be laid against him, and I have nothing to say to him or against him. How will this make the heart of such a prisoner leap for joy, being so acquitted and dismissed, and having no bill found against him! Just so is our case; we have committed murder, felony, treason, rebellion, and enmity, all that can be against the Lord; we did it in the face of God, that he knows it is done; but, when we come to trial, God himself brings an ignoramus; he himself, saith, here is not one bill of indictment against him; there is nothing but what is blotted out; and the reason is, as I said, because he acknowledgeth that he hath received a full satisfaction from his Son. "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." {Job 33:24} So much for that phrase, "I am he that blotteth

out thy transgressions;" it followeth "and will not remember thy sins;" here is the ignoramus that God himself makes; though the foreman of the grand jury bring in an indictment, yet, saith God, I remember no such matter. Here is a plea against this and that man; {members of Christ, you must suppose them all this while} they are accounted for such and such sinners and transgressors, but I remember no such matter, saith the Lord.

But what is it for God not to remember the transgressions of men in this kind, will some say? I answer, beloved, here the Lord speaks after the manner of men, as he did before; books, you know, are the registers of memory or records for the help of memory rather; when a man comes to his book, to his bills and bonds, and there reads what such and such a man owes, he thereby remembers what debts are due unto him, and from whom; but if he comes to his book, and there can read nothing owing unto him from such a person; he is said not to remember it, so that memory itself fails; can this man now remember his debts that cannot find that he hath any such, that cannot read them? If a man look over his debt-book, and finds there, that though such debts were written, yet now they are so obliterated that no man can read them, and that this blotting was made not casually, but upon consideration of a sufficient satisfaction; how then can he remember these now as debts? Thus the Lord represents himself to us, he remembers not our sins; that is the transgressions of the members of Christ come not into the thoughts of God, so as now to think that such and such a man stands guilty before him of such a transgression; I say, the Lord hath not in his thought any such thing concerning any member of Christ. Beloved, you shall find it a frequent expression of the Holy Ghost, manifesting the grace of God to his own people; namely that "God doth not remember their sins." David, in Psalm 25:7, prays thus, Lord, "remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." Remember not the sins of my youth, but look into the covenant of grace, wherein God engages himself to be the God of his people; this is the closure and shutting up of it all; in Jeremiah 31:31, and so on; "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD," in these days, and at that time that "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,

and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with them, &c.;" and then the shutting up of the new covenant is in these words, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." {vs.34}

So the Apostle in Hebrews 8:12, repeats the self-same thing, repeating the covenant word for word, and ends it with the same closure, "for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And in Hebrews 10:16,17, though the Apostle abridges the covenant, and leaves out many branches of it, yet he forgets not the last clause of it, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

So it stands for a truth, the people of God are so received into the grace and favour of God, that God doth not, nay he will not remember their sins any more from the time that they are become members of Christ, and actually in covenant with him; from that time for ever more, there is not once a bringing to remembrance with God any one of their transgressions.

But some will say, this seems to be strange; what, God not remember the sins of believers? Suppose he forgives them, yet he must remember them, seeing they are committed every day so clearly and conspicuously in his sight; how is it possible he should not remember them? I answer, beloved, let flesh and blood reason and say what it will; I ask you this question, is it the Lord himself that says, he doth not remember the sins of his people? If he himself speaks it, who art thou, O man, that darest question whether he remembers them or no? Shalt thou say, he remembers their sins, when he himself saith, he will not remember them? The Apostle Paul tells us that "no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God;" {I Cor.2:11;} doth not the Spirit of God tell us this, that "he doth not remember their sins;" and can any man know the things of God better than the Spirit? Thou sayest that God remembers them, when he saith, he doth not remember them.

But some will be ready to say further, how can this possibly be, that God should know every sin that the believer commits, and the believer himself knows the

sins he commits, and yet God should not remember them?

I answer, first, suppose I could not untie this knot, or resolve this riddle to you; you must know, beloved, there are deep things of God, that none but he himself can dive into, that none but he is able to resolve; yet, though it could not be resolved, let God be true, and all the world be liars; let not the world's saying, God remembers the sins of his people prevail against his saying, "I will not remember their sins;" let sense, argument, reason, and all stoop to faith, even for the testimony of God's sake alone, though none will speak the same thing, but merely the voice God himself.

But, secondly, let us see whether we can untie this knot or no; how is it possible that the Lord should not remember their sins, seeing they are so plain to him every moment? There is one word in the text, that is not much heeded, and it is that which must resolve this great and difficult question; and that is this, "I will not remember your sins," I will not remember them as your sins, putting the emphasis upon the word your; and will not remember thy sins, or your sins. It is most certainly true that God remembers all the actions that ever men have done, do, or shall do; he remembers the nature and quality of all actions as they are; he remembers such actions, as done at such times; and he knows they are thus and thus in the nature of them; and yet so it is, that "he remembers not thy transgressions;" that is, though he remembers the things thou hast done, yet he doth not remember them as they are thine; he remembers the things, it is true, but not that they are thine; for he remembers perfectly that they are none of thine; he remembers whose they are, he himself hath passed them over, he decreed that they should become the sins of Christ; and when he passed them over to him, they ceased to be thine any longer.

You know that text in Isaiah 53:6, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and you know that place in II Corinthians 5:21, "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now I ask this question, whose are the sins that believers commit? When Christ became their sin, are they not his? And if they are his, are they any longer theirs that did commit them? II Corinthians 5:19, shows plainly, that the Lord reckons them no longer theirs, when he hath

made them once to be Christ's. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" as much as to say, I will never reckon them thine anymore; I will never impute them to thee; all that I look for in respect of thy sins, I look for at the hands of Christ; "for he was made sin for us," saith the text.

And whereas people think it strange, for as much as believers themselves do remember their sins, that God should not remember them; I answer, if any believers or members of Christ remember their sins any otherwise than God remembers them, their memory fails them, and they are mistaken in their remembrance; if when believers have sinned, they have a conceit that their sins shall be charged upon them; the truth is, they have other conceits of themselves than God hath of them; but if they will remember their sins, as he remembers them, they must remember them, and know them by the light of God's Spirit, that shall lead them into all truth. The Spirit of God will remember them of them indeed, and lay before them such and such actions, and tell them, that they have these pollutions in them, and will convince them of the abhorrency of them; but the same Spirit will remember them withal, that the Lamb of God hath taken away all these sins of theirs; and that the scape-goat hath carried them away into a land of forgetfulness; thus, I say, the Holy Ghost, as it brings their sins to their remembrance, so it will suggest to them also, to whom their sins are sent.

Beloved, it is a matter of admirable grace, full of wonder, yea, even of amazing consolation, that a poor condemned soul by Satan, nay, it may be, by his own conscience, should at last hear the Lord speak, and the last words of God himself to be this, "I remember no such thing." Now, if God himself doth not remember your transgressions, you that are the members of Christ, it is no matter who remembers them; and, therefore, as the Apostle saith in another case, so you may say with comfort in your own spirits, "but with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self." {I Cor.4:3} Beloved, he that said it will stand to it, he will never remember your sins anymore; though they be never so many and never so great, he will never call one of them to remembrance. It may be, in affliction, and when the rod of God is fallen upon thee, thy heart will be ready to raise such thoughts as these

in thee; “now God will be even with me; now shall I smart for my transgressions;” but know this, that at that instant when God brings affliction upon thee, he doth not remember any sin of thine; they are not in his thoughts; for the text saith not only of the present instant, that God doth not remember them, but of the future also; nay, of the everlasting future; “your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more.”

I beseech you, consider this one thing, you that think that God plagues and punishes you, being believers, for such and such sins of yours, and say, doth he not now remember these sins of mine? Doth he punish such and such sins in others, and take vengeance for them, and doth he not remember them? Doth he use to do things hand over head? Doth he lay his rod and his scourge upon them, and never think of the cause of it? And if these afflictions be the judgment of God for these sins, certainly God must remember them, and so know them as motives and provocations, to inflict such vengeance upon them; and if he punishes them for them, certainly he now remembers them; and what of all this? Is it a truth that God hath spoken that “your iniquities and your sins will I remember no more?” Then surely, whatsoever things befall the children of God, are not punishments for sin, nor remembrances of sin; the Lord must be true and faithful in his covenant; and therefore, if men shall cavil against this free-grace of God, yet let me request this of you, let the evidence of the Holy Ghost so prevail with your spirits, that if any creature in heaven or earth, men or angels, shall endeavour to contradict this, let them be accounted as they deserve; let all give way to this truth; if anything in the world can make it appear to the contrary, then let it go away with it; but, if the Spirit of God speaks it so clearly, that nothing can be objected against it; let not anything cause thee to live in so much darkness and uncomfortableness, as thou must do, till thou receive this grace of the Lord.

And so, beloved, I have done with the second thing. There is one thing more very considerable, and that is what the motive is, that prevails with God, that thy sins and iniquities should be blotted out, and that he should not remember them; what is it that moves him to do this? I find that the channel of men’s hearts runs usually this way; Oh! When God beholds my mourning, weeping, and reforming, and knows I am

returned unto him by true repentance, and seeth what moan I make, and what a pitiful wretch I am, when he beholds my groanings and my meltings; oh; this cannot but move him to pity me, and to pardon my sins! Oh beloved! Know the Lord hath other manner of motives to prevail with him than all the rhetoric of misery in the creature can possibly be to persuade him to this grace; I say peremptorily, it is not all the sighings, groanings, mournings, fastings, prayers, and self-denial; nor all the righteousness that men can return to God, that can prevail with him, to blot out their sins and to remember them no more; but the motive is this, “I, even I, for mine own sake do this;” and the Holy Ghost frequently expresses it in such terms, as this, {Ezek.36:32,} after he had laid down the covenant of grace, he concludes with this caution; “not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” Mark it, there is nothing in the creature that moves God to show compassion upon him; but merely for his own sake doth he this to his people.

But how is it that for his own name sake to do it? I answer, it imports two things; first, the Lord doth it for his own sake; that is, he is solely moved to it, by and from himself; and there is no creature in the world doth so much as move him to it; I say, the Lord, when he blots out the transgressions of his people, he is not so much as moved to it, and sought unto for it; there is nothing in the creature to move God to it; but simply of his own mere motion he does it; and this the Apostle expresses in abundant fulness, where, {speaking of redemption,} he tells expressly, that the Lord did all according to his own “good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” {Eph.1:9}

But some will say, you will grant this, that Christ moved God to blot out transgressions. To this I answer, that though Christ moved God to blot them out, yet this stands firm still, that we do not move him to do it.

Secondly, I answer, when we say, that Christ moves God to blot out transgression, I do not separate him from Christ; “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;” what he doth in grace to the poor creature, he doth in Christ; and he doth nothing of grace to sinners, absolutely considered in himself, abstractedly from Christ, but as in him.

But, thirdly, take Christ for Mediator, and as he is

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distinguished from the Father, and the GREAT GIVER AND HIS FREE GIFTS people for his great name's sake; he, as Mediator, did not first move God to blot out transgressions; but the motion within himself, from eternity, was the root and fountain of all; yea, even of Christ himself as Mediator; and from this fountain was he raised up to accomplish these things that first were in his breast; for Christ is the Mediator; that is, he is the means between God and us, to compose this great thing of blotting out our transgression. Now know, that the means are raised up for the bringing about the thing intended; and in nature are after the thing intended as the end; the school-men have a speech, "the end of things is always the first in intention, though it be last in execution." If a man builds a house, he first proposeth to himself to what purpose it is; it is to dwell in; the habitation is first in his thoughts, and then the structure as a means is raised afterwards to that end; so the Lord sits down, and consults with himself, how he may show himself in grace to the creature thus; the creature will sin, and I will blot out their transgressions; but how shall it be done? Well, saith God, I will send Christ into the world; he shall be born of a woman, and die for their sins, having them laid upon him, and shall purchase their redemption; now Christ is the means, he is made a Mediator; but God's determination, concerning the blotting out of transgression, was of his own motion, before there was such a thing as Christ, I mean in both his natures; and Christ, therefore came, because God had determined in his own thoughts, that such a thing should be done by him.

Secondly, God doth this for his own sake, not only of his own mere motion, but for his own end too, for himself. We are apt to think that he blots out our transgressions, that he might do good to us, that we might be made happy by it; it is true, the Lord blotted out transgressions that we might be happy, but yet this is but the subordinate end to him, and stands in subordination to a supreme and higher end; for God aims at his own glory principally; he did not therefore blot out transgressions that we might be the better for it principally; but that he might attain the thing that concerned himself in it.

And therefore, whereas the Holy Ghost speaks in the text of "blotting out transgressions for his own name sake," he adds these words to it, {fore-showing that God aimed at himself more than anything concerning the good of his creatures,} "for the LORD

because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people." {I Sam.12:22} "What wilt thou do unto thy great name;" {Jos.7:9;} if thy people should sin? He speaking of it then in that business of the men of Israel's falling before the men of Ai. The great argument of Joshua, to prevail with God, was the great name of God. "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known." {Ps.106:8} "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." {Ps.79:9} The meaning is this; the Lord blots out transgressions for his own sake, that is, he therefore blots them out that his own name and glory might be the more magnified and exalted in the world; so that for his own praise sake, he doth the great things he doth. Therefore the Apostle, in Ephesians 1:6, speaking of redemption, tells us what the great end of it was, namely, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us." {Jer.14:21}

Now you see what it is for God to blot out transgressions for his own sake; namely, that he might have the praise of the glory of his own grace in doing such marvelous things as he doth; so that you run in a vain course to think that you move God by your importunity and humbling yourselves before him; for he will not be moved with all these to blot out your transgressions; if ever, therefore, you would find a motive whereon to rest indeed satisfied that God will and doth blot them out, run to this, the free thoughts of God, and the bowels in God himself {without regard to what is in you, or done by you, to move him to do it, or to provoke him not to do it} have put him upon this great work for you.

Look into Romans, chapter 9, and you shall there see, that in this business of love, and blotting out sin, the Lord will there manifest himself in grace, while Jacob is in the womb, before ever he could sigh and groan to him; he did it then, that it might appear "not according to works, but according to the purpose of election," that it might stand altogether "not of works, but of grace;" and so, when souls partake of this grace of the blotting out of iniquity, they may cry out, as the Psalmist did in another case, "not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy

the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Let me tell you, there are secrets of God that all the learning in the world shall never attain unto; only the teaching of the Spirit of God acquaints people with them; therefore, it is a branch of the new covenant of God to those in it that "they shall be all taught of God;" and they shall no more need to say to their neighbour, "know the Lord, for they shall all know the Lord;" that is, by his own teaching, for "they shall all be taught of God." It is true, in the ministry of the Gospel, this knowledge comes usually to the people; but it is not the wisdom of man that either doth or can impart the secrets of God to this people; and these are the mysteries; the Apostle saith that he preaches unto those that are more grown and perfect; there is strong meat for those that are old, as well as milk for babes.

Now the Apostle proceeds on, namely, to show how it comes to pass that the Spirit of God, and only the Spirit of God, should impart and communicate these mysteries, when the wisdom of the world cannot possibly bolt them out; saith he, "God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." But some may say, the knowledge of these mysteries may come some other way; to take off that, in the following words, verse 11, he shows expressly, that the mystery of the Gospel can come no other way but by the Spirit of God only, as he will use instruments to himself; I say, the original of discovering the mysteries of the Gospel is not demonstration by way of argument or discourse, but the demonstration is by the Spirit of God. And the Apostle illustrates it by way of comparison, that the Spirit only is the original of the discovery of the mysteries of God; "as no man knows the things of a man, save the spirit that is in man;" so no man knows "the things of God, save the Spirit of God;" his meaning in this place is this, you have a thought in your hearts, and if you give no hint of it by external expressions, no man can conceive what you are thinking, till you shall some way evidence yourselves; now, as it is impossible for any man to dive into such a thought, so it is as impossible for all the creatures in the world to dive into the mysteries of God; but the Spirit that is of God only reveals them.

Now, in the words of my text, the Apostle begins

to draw to a conclusion of this discourse, and to sum it up to a head; for, having given this description in general, concerning the Spirit's revealing things that could not otherwise be seen or known, he concludes that it was his, and the case of others; "now we have not received, &c."

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Beloved, let me tell you, by the way, it is a matter of great consequence and establishment to know the scope and intention of the Holy Ghost in the several portions of Scripture, especially building places that contain life, peace, and joy; and, therefore, I have the more insisted upon the opening of the text; for if you take a portion of Scripture and cut it off from the dependence, you may miss the intention of the Spirit therein; for the words may sound to another sense than the drift is, except the coherence be seen and observed; this, I say, that in reading and preaching, there must be great regard had to what the Holy Ghost principally aims at in Scripture. Thus much in a way of interjection.

In the text there are three things considerable. First, what the Apostle aims at here, or the subject matter he is upon, namely, the manifestation of the things freely given of God; or to impart to us this, that there are things freely given of God to men. Secondly, he speaks of them as they may be known; "that we may know," &c. Thirdly, he shows how the knowledge of these things that are freely given of God is attained; and that he sets out, first, negatively, not by the spirit of the world; secondly, affirmatively, by the Spirit that is of God.

The proposition is this, that the things freely given us of God come to be known not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit which is of God being received. I am confident, none here will stumble at the proposition, being so naturally raised from the words of the text; I will not therefore spend time about that. There are these particulars in it worth consideration; and that you may suck and be satisfied at the breasts of consolation, consider; first, what these things are the Apostle speaks of, that are freely given of God. Secondly, what it is for these things to be given. Thirdly, what it is for them to be given freely. Fourthly, what it is to know these things that are thus freely given. Fifthly, how they are made known to us by the Spirit which is of God.

First, what these things are that are freely given us of God, for the illustration of which know first, that it is most certainly true indeed, all things whatsoever are the free gift of God to men; “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;” {Mt.5:45;} and it is the gift of God that he doth it. I will only touch one thing by the way, and be brief in it; know this, if Adam and his posterity, had stood in their innocency, had continued in the royal Law, and never offended, that very life that was annexed unto obedience, I say, that very life had been a free gift; and, therefore, if you speak of merit properly, as requiring a reward proportionally, and having equal power to the work, there could not be merit in a state of innocency; but that very life, had it come from the performance of perfect obedience, had been a gift of God. I will give you one illustration that will satisfy you fully in it; look upon all the creatures, as for instance, upon the sun, that rejoiceth as a giant to run his race; it had its law, as we had, set before it, a kind of duty the very creature performs to the Creator; if God should be bound to reward according to proportion, and so by way of merit, man’s obedience with life, why not the obedience of the sun in the firmament as well as man; the sun is a creature, as man is; as a creature, man hath the same dependence upon the Creator as the sun hath; what hinders but that the sun in the firmament should merit as well as man; seeing it performs as complete obedience in its way as man could do? Beloved, carry this for a principle everlastingly along with you, all that ever the creature partakes of, it hath from God; and so God oweth nothing to it, for that he partakes of, save that he oweth by free grant; had not God freely without motive put himself upon this, that man should have life upon his obedience, he could challenge life no more than any other creature could.

But I will not follow this, these things, in general, not being the things the Apostle principally aims at here; for though it be true, all things in general are the free gifts of God, yet here he speaks of things in a restrained way, of some special things peculiar to the beloved of the Lord; such as the Psalmist speaks of in Psalm 25:14, “the secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant;” or such things as Christ speaks of in Matthew 11:25, 26, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” The things freely given of God are the things the wise of the world cannot reach; they are hid from them; they are revealed and communicated unto babes. What are those things, you will say? I can give you but a touch; for if I dive into the depth of the things, there will be no end, I should never come to the bottom.

First of all, God gives himself, and this is such a gift as is mystery the world doth not reach, for they know not what it is; it is the greatest gift that ever God could give his people to give over himself; it contains in it the most inestimable and invaluable treasure that is in heaven or earth; for God to pass over himself in such a way of propriety, as that he hath no more command over himself, than the creature can have power over him, for that which is good for him; this, I say, is the strangest thing ever was; and yet God gives himself to his people, that is, he gives man as true a propriety in himself, as he himself hath in himself. You know, the Lord, speaking of giving himself, expresses it thus, “and I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD.” {Hos.2:19} “Thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name.” {Is.54:5} Mark what the drift of it is, a husband marrying a wife, by God’s own appointment, gives himself up to the wife; see how the Apostle expresses it, “the wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife;” {I Cor.7:4;} as much as to say, God being married to a person, he hath not that power over himself, as to deny himself, or the use of himself, to those to whom he hath given himself; the believer hath power with God, so far as God can be useful unto the person to whom he gives himself. There is as much propriety in a believer to God, as there is in a wife to her husband; this giving of himself by a deed of gift is frequently mentioned unto you in scripture, but especially in the covenant of grace; wherever this covenant is repeated, this is the burden of the song, as I may say; this is the great business, “I will be their God, {saith he,} and they shall be my people.” Here is the passing of himself over to them; and this is, I say,

one of the hidden things and mysteries that are freely given, God passeth over himself freely to us.

Secondly, God gives his son Christ, as well as he gives himself; that is a second deed of gift, giving of his Son to men; this is frequently repeated; “to us a child is born,” saith the prophet, {Isa.9:6;} “to us a Son is given,” so Isaiah 42:6, as the same prophet tells us what the Lord speaks of Christ; I will “give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” Here is a giving of Christ, you see; we are the gift of the Father to Christ, so he is the gift of the Father to us. Now in the giving of Christ there is to be considered, first, the gift of his person; secondly, the gift of all the fruits that redound from the participating of his person. First, God gives the person of Christ to men; as much as to say, God gives him to stand in the room of men, and men stand in his room. So that in the giving of Christ, God is pleased, as it were, to make a change, Christ represents our persons to the Father; we represent the person of Christ to him; all the loveliness the person of Christ hath, that is put upon us; and we are lovely with the Father, even as the Son himself. {Jn.17:23}⁵⁷ On the other part, all that hatefulness and loathsomeness in our nature is put upon Christ; he stands, as it were, the abhorred of the Father for the time, even the forsaken of the Father, as he represented our persons, bare our blame, sustained our wrath, and drank the dregs of our cup.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ This change of persons is condemned as an error by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pgs. 37, 38, but is a most glorious truth of the Gospel; and without which, it would be no Gospel, no glad tidings. It is fully expressed in II Cor.5:21, as well as in other places, and is the ground of our redemption by Christ, of his satisfaction for us, and the atonement of our sins, and the justification of our persons, and indeed of our whole salvation; so that we have reason to break out in the same exclamation as Justin Martyr did upon it, in his Epistle to Diognetus, pg. 500, “O sweet change! A work unsearchable! Benefits unexpected! That the transgression of many should be hid by one righteous person, and the righteousness of one justify many transgressors.” Gill.

⁵⁸ That is, while he bore the sins of his people, sustained the wrath of God, and was made a curse for them; nor should this seem harsh to any, especially as the Doctor has qualified it; for he does not say he stands the abhorred, but, as it were, the abhorred of the Father; though, had he said he was abhorred for a time, it is no more than the scripture says; “thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed;” {Ps.89:38;} or with thy Messiah; which words are understood of Christ, by several interpreters, ancient and modern; Christ indeed, as the Son of God was always the object of his Father’s love; and so he was in his state of humiliation, and even under his sufferings and death; {Jn.10:17;} as the celebrated Witsius observes, “Christ was represented not only under the emblem of a lamb, a foolish

Here is the gift of the person; that which is Christ’s is ours; that which is ours is his. There is an admirable expression, in II Cor.5:21; “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” It is plainly manifested, that which we were, Christ became “sin for us;” then that which Christ was, we became, that is, “the righteousness of God;” for we are made the righteousness of God in him.

Secondly, with Christ there is the gift of the fruit of him; she that hath an husband, hath all that is his. I have read an ancient deed of gift, made by one of the first kings of England, giving all from the heavens to the center of the earth; so that if there be minerals in the bowels of the earth, they are comprehended in the gift; so it is with Christ; God, in his Son, and with him, giveth all that he hath and is. All the mines in the bowels of Christ are ours; “all things are yours, for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s;” so that, whatever is Christ’s, by the gift of him, becomes the person’s to whom he is given. Consider what you can imagine Christ hath as a fruit growing from him as he is Christ, with him that fruit is given to man, namely, to his own people; as free justification from all sin; free reconciliation, with the Father; free adoption to all the glory and liberty of the sons of

God; firm peace and agreement, without any more quarrelling between God and his people; a free use of all things in a sanctified way. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.” {Rom.8:32}

Finally, {we cannot run upon these particulars at large,} the third thing given of God, is the Spirit of God. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him. “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” {Lk.11:18} There is a deed of gift of the Spirit. “I will send you another Comforter,” saith Christ, “and he shall lead you into all truth.” And as the Spirit of God is the gift of God, so the knowledge of those free gifts that are only known by the Spirit itself is the gift of God. With this Spirit, wisdom and understanding are given, and the knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel; that you shall

beast, and prone to go astray; but of a goat, lascivious, wanton, and of an ill smell; yea, of a cursed serpent, and on that account execrable and cursed of God; not for the taking of our sins upon him, which was an holy action, and most grateful to God; but for the sins which he took upon him, and for the persons of the sinners which he sustained.” Gill.

not only have these things {spoken of before} given you, but the knowledge of them all; for the sound knowledge of them is as much the gift of God as the things themselves; this is by the Spirit of God. Comfort is given by him; you shall never have rest in your spirits, but as he rocks you asleep, and gives you rest. In brief, as all things are given in Christ by his own purchase, so all things are given in him by the Spirit, by way of application and possession in particular.⁵⁹

Let us, therefore, now consider {for I must now redeem the time} what it is for these {I might have mentioned other particulars that are given} to be given of God. A deed of gift is opposed to two things; first, to sale; secondly, to loan. These things therefore are communicated by God. First, not by sale or bargain; for he doth not play the merchant; here are my wares, give me the price, and take the commodity. I beseech you take heed of such principles as these are; the covenant of Christ, as some may imagine, runs upon this strain, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" that is, I will tell you upon what terms I will be yours; come, bring this price, deliver up yourselves to me, and then I will be yours; give me the price and take it; God is no such huckster; he drives no such bargains in giving himself, and in giving Christ, and his Spirit; he makes no sale at all, for sale and deed of gift are opposite. If I buy such a thing of a man, he doth not give it me. Beloved, you must not think to bring a price to God for those things you would have of him; take heed of such conceits, that your assurance, peace, and comfort must cost you dear before you have them; for God will take no cost or price at your hands. Observe that admirable expression in Isaiah 55:1-3, for by this you shall plainly perceive that God is no huckster, he doth not keep shop, he doth not show you wares, and ask a price of you before you have them. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, {that is, that have a mind,} come ye to

the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Why money and price? There is a difference between money and price, namely, as there is a difference between money and monies-worth; your poor men, their days labour is monies-worth, and their days labour is a price; therefore, there is equality between the labour and the wages, as there is equivalence between the money and the thing bought. Now the meaning of the Holy Ghost here is that God doth not look for money, nor price, nor labour; he doth not look that men should earn their gifts before they have them; he looks not for the penny, nor for the penny's-worth; therefore, be not deceived, though in respect of Christ, God made a sale, and made him pay according to the bargain; in which regard, the Apostle saith that "we are bought with a price;" yet, in respect of us, I say, there is no sale at all. Let me tell you, there are far more Simon Magus like persons in the world than men are aware of. In Acts 8 the great sin of Simon Magus was that he thought the gift of the Holy Ghost might be bought with money; the Apostle in that chapter thunders out an execration upon him, for offering to think or speak this, and therefore he tells him plainly, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," and that he had no part nor portion in the matter. How near they follow to the heels and steps of Simon Magus that will bring their price in their hands to God, to partake of the gift of the Holy Ghost, I leave it to the wise to judge. Therefore, you that would have your part and portion in this matter, of the gift of God, know that it must cost you nothing; this derogateth not from your obedience; there is employment enough for you, and there are ends sufficient for it, though this obedience be not the price you are to bring, from whence you are to expect the gifts of God; God requires your obedience to glorify him; to be the manifestation of your thankfulness; for the good of your brethren; for the manifesting and accomplishing his gifts in the use of ordinances but that these should be a price is a gross mistake. Do not dream that your conscionable walking before God here is the thing that must commend you to him hereafter; nothing but Jesus Christ sent out of the love and bowels of the Father can possibly commend you to God. Do not think this, or that, you do, is that price from whence you are to expect the

⁵⁹ Our English divines, for I don't remember to have met with it among others, especially of the last age, and many in this, have used the word purchase, concerning the blessings of grace and glory, and other things. They indeed, come to us through the blood of the covenant, that so we may enjoy them consistent with the holiness and righteousness of God; but, strictly and properly speaking, nothing was purchased by Christ but his church; nor is any other in scripture ever said to be so; the only passage that looks like it, {Eph.1:14,} respects the people of God, the portion and possession of Christ, purchased and redeemed by him; the reason of which is, the people of God, though given to Christ, were captives in other hands, and therefore must be redeemed or brought out; whereas, the blessings of grace and glory never were. It would be better, I think, if the word was disused. Gill.

things of God, but know that these are given of him. I shall run over some heads very briefly, for I see I am much prevented.

Secondly, therefore besides sale, God's gifts are not a loan neither; this is a great consideration. The things that we have of God, as they are a gift, so they are not a loan; what we receive of him, are not lent. There is a difference between lending and giving; he that lends money, looks that it should be paid again; he that gives it, gives it forever without ever looking for it again. The things of God, as they are given, so he doth not look for them again. You know, it is a ridiculous thing to give a thing, and take it again. We count this children's play; but how many of God's children, in temptation, look upon the things that God hath given them, and yet suspect he will take them again? What is lent, men may challenge again; but, when a man gives a thing, it is injustice for him to challenge it anymore; there is the difference between lending and giving. If God gives things to men, and takes them again, he relinquisheth and frustrateth his own act; for if he takes them away, they were not given. A deed of gift and title of land by deed of gift are as firm as a title by purchase; what God hath given, he cannot call in again. I speak this to the consolation of trembling spirits; they look upon God bestowing himself, Christ, and his Spirit, and they receive what God hath given; yet their spirits tremble, and they are afraid he will take these away again from them; they commit such and such sins; therefore, surely, say they; I shall lose that I have. Remember the nature of a gift, and remember this too, that whatever God hath given, he calls it not in again. Suppose a father should deliver up and give all his lands and goods to his son, and make a real deed of gift in Law, passing it over to him, as firm as Law can make; and this son, peradventure, commits some fault afterwards; can the Father call in this deed of gift, in respect of the fault committed? Thou art a son of God, and a darling of his; it may be thou hast committed many sins; for "in many things we sin all;" doth God call in his deed? Is not this deed of gift enrolled in the word of grace, and upon record? This very enrolling is sufficient security to thee; thou canst not be dispossessed of it.

There are many that think that such preaching gives way to licentiousness; I answered it fully the last time I was among you. "I beseech you therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." {Rom.12:1} The consideration of the unchangeableness of the grace of God and his love; there is no other means in the world to keep men from sin, but this stands firm forever. As things are the gift of God, so they are unchangeable to them, to whom they are given; and the Lord give you wisdom, understanding, and his Spirit, to hold fast a truth of such infinite concern to the joy and peace of your spirits; and till you receive such unchangeable principles, whereupon the stability of your peace is founded, you will be like waves of the sea tossed to and fro with every wind of temptation; you will have every little thing raise suspicions and jealousies in your spirits. But, beloved, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" {Num.23:19} Shall God assent to a thing, and how much more shall not he make good that word that he assents to? Certainly, when men give a thing, they will not take it away, seeing the thing is given; I say, the things of God are given, and he cannot take them away; the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. There are many things of useful consideration, if time would give me leave to open them to you.

Thirdly, the things of God are not only given, but they are freely given. I must not touch upon the heads; there are these five things considerable in a free gift; I will but name them.

First, a free gift is, when a thing is given without compulsion; a man doth not properly give his purse upon the highway, when thieves force him to it; things freely given are not compulsory, but voluntary.

Secondly, things may be given, but grudgingly; they may be given with a heart reluctant against it; as many men give to the poor, to serve the necessity of the times; but it goes to their hearts to part with it; here is a gift, but it is not a free gift, because the heart is not enlarged, here is not a ready heart; but God doth not give grudgingly, he loves a cheerful giver, and doth so himself, for the Lord waits that he may be gracious. "Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you." {Isa.30:18}

Thirdly, a gift is free, and free indeed, when a thing is

given only out of the motion in, and from a man's own spirit, without any external incentive and provocation to put him upon such a gift. It is commendable, I confess, for a man to be persuaded by others to do good, but the glory of free gifts stands in the freeness of a man's own spirit without provocation. Know thus much in general, all the things we receive from God, there is no incentive, no provocation, no motive, as the original, to stir or provoke him to give them.

Let me tell you this, Christ himself is not the original motive of the gift of God; he is the instrument, or, as the scripture saith, the Mediator of our partaking of the gifts of God; the love of God in himself is the first fountain of all the gifts of God to us; nay, the very fountain of Christ himself, to compass the fruition and enjoyment of gifts, that the love of God himself had first framed, composed, and ordained for us; much less then, can any creature in the world have prevalency with God to stir up affections in him, as if he needed to be stirred up to do the good he doth; that which he doth, cometh from the motion of his own thoughts rising in himself, not being raised up by anything without himself.

Fourthly, a gift is free, when it is bountiful; such a man is free house-keeper; that is, he keeps a bountiful house; so the gifts of God are free in respect of his bounty; God doth not sow sparingly, but liberally; he giveth us freely to enjoy all things. There is plenteous redemption with him. "Let Israel hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." {Ps.130:7} There is abundance of satisfaction. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." {Ps.36:8} Here is a free God; here is freeness indeed, in that he is a bountiful God, in all that he bestows upon the sons of men; he fills the cup to the brim, pressed down, heaped up, and running over; in this manner is the bounty of God expressed. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." {Heb.7:25} "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." {Eph.3:20,21}

Fifthly and lastly, a free gift is a gift that is unconditional. God doth not propose conditions

beforehand, but gives his gifts without respect to any condition. Beloved, do not mistake; our faith and obedience are not the condition of God's gifts. That in the song of Zachariah is observable, "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." {Lk.1:74,75} Observe, this service "without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives," is not the condition of deliverance, that we might partake of it; but here is first deliverance, and then service is the fruit of it; not deliverance the fruit of service; God delivers, and then we serve; and the tenor of the Gospel in this, is contrary to the tenor of the Law; the tenor of the Law runs thus, first do, then live; the Gospel saith, first live, then do. "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." {Ez.16:6} "Then {vs.9} washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil, &c." Thus, when you consider, the frame of the Gospel runs, that there is nothing comes to men, but as a free gift of God, even Christ himself is so given; do not think that God gives Christ upon condition.

Fourthly, what it is for men to know this gift of God; there is a two-fold knowledge. In general, there is a knowledge of the thing; and secondly, a knowledge of propriety in the thing; so there is a two-fold knowledge of these things given; and the knowledge of the thing itself given is two-fold; first, it is intellectual; and secondly, practical. The intellectual knowledge is the natural understanding of the thing in a proper sense; practical knowledge is a sensible knowledge. You may distinguish them thus, as the knowledge man has of the sweetness of sugar in his understanding, and the knowledge of the sweetness of it in the taste. There is a great deal of difference between these two; for the things of God that are given, may be known intellectually in a common way, not only by the elect, but reprobate; but the people of God only know them practically, that is, they receive by degrees the sweetness of them, and God gives the taste of them more and more to them.

Secondly, there is beside the knowledge of the thing, the knowledge of propriety, which is this, when

men know the things of God, and know them as their own. It is one thing for a person to know such a woman is wise, beautiful, and rich; and it is another thing to know this wise, beautiful, and rich woman is my wife; that I have a propriety in all she is, and hath; and so, likewise, it is one thing for a woman to know that a man is a man of parts, of wealth, and honour; to know him that he is so, is one thing, and to know him that is thus wise, rich, and honorable, to be her husband, is another thing; so it is likewise in the knowledge of spiritual things; it is one thing to know God and spiritual things, another thing to know him by way of propriety, to know that he gives himself to me as mine; and so, likewise, of all the rest of the particulars that are given; as Christ and the Spirit; now all this comes not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit that is of God. This I should have showed more at large; but of this hereafter; because I fear I have already trespassed upon your patience.

13 Reconciliation By Christ Alone

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” {II Cor.5:19}

This great Apostle of the Gentiles, Saint Paul I mean, though he did not first break the ice, nor lay the first hand upon the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, to pull it down, that they might become both one in one Christ; {for Peter went before him, and was indeed the first in this business, though with great bitterness of spirit even from the rest of the Apostles themselves; who supposed that the glorious privileges of Christ were to be confined only to the nation of the Jews, as you may perceive in Acts, chapter 8 & 9; though Paul I say, was not the first;} yet, as he himself speaks in this business of publishing the grace of God in Christ to the Gentiles, he labored more abundantly than they all; of which labour of his, this chapter gives abundant testimony, especially in the beginning of verse 14, where he gives the great occasion, or motive, why he did preach Christ so clearly and freely to the Gentiles; “for the love of Christ,” {saith he,} constrains me; as if he should say, seeing that the glory of the grace of God hath so far extended itself, as that not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles, may have a portion in him, it is a pity that so much abundant grace which serves

to the magnifying of Christ so exceedingly should be concealed; Christ hath done so much for me, thinks Paul, that it were an unworthy part in me to conceal that which should make so much unto his glory; the love wherewith he hath loved me, constrains me to do the utmost {that he might have all his praise} to manifest his glory.

Therefore having thus laid down the great motive that set him on work to publish the Gospel, he takes up this resolution to do it, let it cost him what it will; {as it is like to do all that will be so exact in publishing the Gospel as he was;} yet the love of Christ did so constrain him, that he cannot keep it in; he must speak out this love of his. Thus he comes to the business in the latter end of verse 14, “if one {that is, Christ} died for all, then were all dead.”⁶⁰ The Apostle’s meaning is this, he puts the emphasis upon the word “all;” and that emphasis is not spoken simply, but relatively and comparatively; as much as to say, it is not only the Jews that have part in the death of Christ, but all have a part in it. If Christ had an eye not only on the Jews, but on the Gentiles too, in his death; then, saith he, “all were dead,” that is, all his people have a part in that death. “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” {Rev.5:9}

Now, that the Apostle here mainly intends the setting forth of the largeness of God’s grace in Christ, extending not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, verse 16, makes clear; for, saith he there, “henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” Give me leave to open the meaning of it; for I must tell you there is a great deal of mistake concerning the scope of the Apostle in these words, which makes the sense of them so obscure in the reading of them. The Apostle was once of the same mind with James, and the rest; that Christ, as he came of the flesh of Abraham, and so, according to the flesh, was of the kindred of all the Jews; they verily thought

⁶⁰ The sense of the passage is not that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom he died; and the meaning is, that if Christ died for all, then all those were dead for whom he died. Wherefore this text does not make for the doctrine of general redemption; for it should be observed, that it does not say that Christ died for all men, but for all; and so, agreeable to the Scriptures, may be understood of all the persons mentioned. Gill.

that the virtue of Christ, and redemption by him, had extended no further than to the flesh, that is, to the same flesh of which he came; they of the circumcision chide Peter, that he should offer to go outside the bounds of the Jews, to preach the Gospel to them, which they thought had no part in it; the Apostle was of this mind once; but “henceforth {saith he} know I no man after the flesh;” that is, I will never preach Christ after the flesh, as if none had share in him but those that are of the kindred of which he came; nay, saith he, “though I have known Christ thus after the flesh, henceforth I know him so no more;” where he expounds what he spoke before; as if he should say, I thought that Christ had a mind to save none but the kindred of which he came; I will know him thus no longer; I will preach the Gospel so no more; I will preach it no more to the Jews than to the Gentiles; they that are not of the flesh of Christ, have as great a portion in him as those that are of his flesh.

Hence he begins to gather up his main doctrine which he would preach to the Gentiles, and that he brings in verse 17, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;” where the emphasis lies upon “any man;” “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;” as if he should say, this is the new doctrine I will now preach to the world; not if the Jew be in Christ; but if any man in the world be in him, he is a new creature; every man in the world hath this privilege, as well as the Jews; if any man be in Christ, he shall be a new creature, as well as the Jews; and because of some obscurity in this phrase, therefore, in verse 18, the Apostle expounds his own meaning, what he intends by a new creature. Give me leave to open this place to you; for I must tell you there are some great mistakes in this point. Most men think that this phrase, new creature, is a renewed, sanctified man, so as he becomes new in his own conversation, when his life is changed; I do not deny the truth of the thing, all that are in Christ, he renews them, sanctifies them, and subdues iniquity in them; but, under favour, let me tell you, the Apostle’s meaning here by new creature is not that they are sanctified; but that they are new creatures; that is, they are reconciled unto God; this is his meaning; “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;” that is, he is brought into a new condition that he was not in before; and this new condition is that he is now reconciled unto God; whereas, before, he was an alien

and stranger to him.

But, you will say, how will it appear that the Apostle’s new creature is a person reconciled, and considered as reconciled, and not as sanctified?

I answer, this is clear by verse 18, “for all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Mark well, the main thing he drives at here is, to let the Corinthians know, and us with them, what the main ministry was which Christ had committed unto them; which was this, to publish, that “God, from whom all things are, hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;” that this was the ministry which was committed unto them.

Now, if the Apostle had spoken here of sanctification, he would have said, that the ministry committed unto him, with the rest, was a ministry of sanctification, as well as reconciliation; but the ministry God committed to him here was this, God reconciling men to himself by Jesus Christ; so that the being a new creature here, which was the ministry committed to the Apostle, is reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ. Now in verse 19, the text that I have read unto you, he begins anew to explain more particularly, what this ministry is that the Lord hath committed unto him. “To wit, {saith he,} that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” And therefore, in the next verse you shall find that he makes this so essential a business to the ministry of the Gospel, that he calls himself, and the rest, ambassadors, and ambassadors for this very purpose, namely, in Christ’s stead, to beseech people that they would be reconciled unto God; and then, in the closure of the chapter, he tells them what the fruits of this reconciliation are, and by what means we come to partake of it. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” From which words I might observe to you, as they have reference to the coherence.

First, what the great and main business of us that profess ourselves to be the ministers of Christ, ought to be in the world with men. It is to be lamented, I confess, and I would to God there were no occasion to speak of it, whilst we profess ourselves to be the ambassadors of Christ, to dispatch this great business, to beseech

men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God; we are too much the ministers of Moses, pressing and thundering the wrath of God from heaven; publishing unto men the working out their own salvation by their own works, according to the law; putting on them the performance of duties in every particular, that they may have peace and joy of spirit from it; telling them, that they must make their peace with God, by fasting, and prayer, and mourning. Is this to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God by Christ alone? This is the message of the ministers of the Gospel; and whoever he be that forsakes this message, he goes, and is not sent; he takes upon him to manage a business out of his commission; for the commission is, that we in Christ's stead should beseech men to be reconciled unto God, and that by the blood of Christ alone.

Secondly, I might note a thing, which, peradventure, puzzles the heads of many people, how you may understand those many texts of Scripture that speak so largely of the extent of the death of Christ, "he died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world;" and so, verse 14, "if one died for all then were all dead." From whence many collect the universality of redemption unto all particular persons in the world; but from this coherence you may plainly perceive, that the Apostle's main drift is not that every particular person partakes of reconciliation by Christ; he doth not speak of every particular, but in opposition to the Jews; as if he should say, you mistake yourselves, you that are of the Jews, that boast of Christ, as if there were no Christ but in yourselves; no, saith he, you are mistaken, he goes beyond you, he goes over all the world.⁶¹ And when For the clearing of this, first note,

⁶¹ The learned Hoornbeeck asserts that the Doctor from this passage, and I John 2:2, after quoted, "collects the universality of the redemption of all particular persons in the world, though John saith, {I Jn.2:2,} "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;" he doth not say ours, in reference to believers, but he saith ours, as he was naturally of the stock of Abraham; when he saith, "not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world," he doth not oppose the world unto the elect, but the world of the elect unto the Jews; and his meaning is, all the world hath a part in Christ, and in every corner of it there is a portion of Christ, as well as there is in us, who are of the seed of Abraham; and, therefore, the Apostle saith expressly that "the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith;" {Rom.4:13;} that is, not made to Abraham and to his seed after the flesh, but to his seed after the Spirit; that is, those that walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham. By this you may be able to resolve those manifold difficulties that arise from the universality of the tender of grace by Christ unto the world; the

something is to be premised as a necessary antecedent to reconciliation itself. Unto reconciliation, of necessity there must be supposed something to be done by us, occasioning a breach between God and us; administering such just cause of distaste, and of offence, as not only caused God to separate himself afar off from men, but also to prepare wrath and vengeance. Wherever there is reconciliation, it is supposed there was a breach made; and, upon the breach made, reconciliation is the bringing persons, thus at distance and difference by a breach, to become one again; and, therefore, you must know, there is no man under heaven reconciled unto God, but as he is, or was considered as walking contrary unto God; and world, I say, is opposed only unto the narrow confines of the Jews, and includes not particular persons; but this is not that I mainly drive at for the present. I come to the text itself. The substance of the main ministry of the Apostle stands in this, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In which you may observe with me.

First, the great grace, that living, lively, and heart-reviving grace the Apostle brings to light, and commends to the comforting of the hearts of God's people, and that is reconciliation with God. Secondly, note here, the original author or efficient of this reconciliation and grace, that is, God himself. Thirdly, note also, the main means by which this reconciliation is effected, and that is Christ himself alone; "God was in Christ." Fourthly, note this, the time when this reconciliation was made between God and persons in particular. The Apostle himself, though he lived so many years before us, speaks of it as a thing already past; he doth not say that God is, or will be, but he speaks in the past-perfect tense that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" it is a thing long before finished perfectly to our hands; that we may, when God hath given us eyes to behold it, see it as a thing already done, and perfected before, and not now perfecting, much less now to be begun. Fifthly, we may note the persons with whom God in Christ is reconciled, and that is the world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

The principal thing I mean to drive at is the consideration of the great grace that the Apostle brings hereto light; and that is, reconciliation with God; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." What is it {will you say} for God to be reconciled to persons? all are not partakers of that reconciliation;" in which this learned man appears to be mistaken; for the Doctor does not collect this himself, but only says, "many collect it from hence;" and he himself seems to be of a different mind by the adversative 'but' from this coherence, &c., and expressly says, the Apostle does not speak of every particular person, but in opposition to the Jews; and so, on the other text, I John 2:2, he observes, that the Apostle does not oppose the world unto the elect, but the world of the elect to the Jews; and suggests that there are some in all the world, and in every corner of it, that have a part in Christ, and are his portion; which is very far from the doctrine of general redemption; and though the Doctor sometimes uses some general phrases, when off his guard, yet I cannot think he held the doctrine of universal redemption; and this learned Professor himself, who is the only one I ever met with that charged the Doctor with it, seems to have some hesitation himself about it; for he says, {of the Doctor and those in his time called Antinomians,} "they teach some sort of universal redemption, or universal redemption in some sense." Gill.

that this contrary walking unto him hath occasioned a breach between God and him. And, therefore, you shall find, when the Apostle speaks of our being reconciled unto God, he brings still in this clause, that there were estrangement and distance, before such union and reconciliation; as in Eph.2:13, where you shall find how he brings in the previous consideration; “but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” This making nigh, or bringing together, is the reconciliation that is made with God; and the persons that are thus made nigh, before their bringing nigh, are said to be afar off; as much as to say, there is that contrariety between God and man naturally, that puts him afar off from God, and makes him remote. The Lord beholds the wicked afar off, saith the Psalmist, “though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off.” {Ps.138:6} God keeps at a distance with men, when they walk in a way giving distaste and offence unto him; and it is the business of Christ to bring them nigh again, those that were thus sometimes afar off. But the Apostle speaks more plainly in Col.1:21; “you, {saith he,} that were sometime alienated {or estranged, that is to say, from God} and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” Here he not only shows that there is a remote distance, and a kind of estrangement between God and men, before reconciliation; but he delivers the true proper ground from whence this alienation proceeds; “who were alienated in your minds by reason of your wicked works;” our wicked works are they that cause alienation and estrangement from God; “and you, that were sometime alienated,” are now reconciled by Christ; “in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.” And, therefore know, this must be laid down as a certain position, and be received of men, that in respect of themselves they are alienated and estranged persons, and the wickedness of their ways is that which causeth this alienation, and estrangement and separation from God.

But some {it may be} will object; was there ever a time that God was alienated and estranged as an enemy to those people of his, with whom he is now reconciled? Some will say, God loves his people with an everlasting love, and he never looks upon his people but with a look of love, and with a look of union.

For answer to this, give me leave to clear a mystery unto you; this seems to be a kind of paradox, that God should, from all eternity, look with eyes of love upon his people, and yet there should be a time in which there should be an alienation or enmity between God and them. For the reconciliation of this difference, you must know, it is one thing for God to recollect all future things that shall come in all the several times of the world, into one thought of his own; and it is another thing for these things to come to pass in their several times, according to their own nature. You must know, it is true, that in God’s eternal thoughts, according to the infinite vastness of his own comprehension, he did sum up, from first to last, all the occurrences and passages which in succession of time should come to pass. As for example; he had at once in his eye man in his innocency, in his fall, and in his restoration by Christ; he had in his eye man committing sin against him from time to time; and, at the same instant, had in his eye Christ dying for these sins of men, and so satisfying his own justice for their transgressions. Now, because God had all things at once in his eye, which, in respect of their actual being, are in succession of time; therefore, it comes to pass, that God, from all eternity, had everlasting love unto his own people, though in time they do those actions which, in their own nature, are enmity against God. For example; you and I are, it may be, this moment committing some sin, which is enmity to the nature of God; that sin, simply considered in its own nature, hath an estrangement in it, to separate between us and God; but though it is true, that sin committed hath, in its own nature, a power of separating; yet, as God from all eternity had the present sins we now commit, in his eye, and at the same moment had the satisfaction in his eye; from hence it comes to pass, there was not a time in which God actually stood at enmity with our persons; but, in respect of the nature of things coming successively to pass, man’s condition may be considered as a condition of enmity; and again, it may be considered as a condition of reconciliation to God. That you and I were born in sin is true, and that this our being born in sin was a state of enmity against God, is as true; that in the fulness of time Christ came into the world, and then actually did bear our sins, by which God became reconciled unto us again, is also most certainly true. There is a great distance of

time between sin committed, and that satisfaction actually made; but in respect of God's eye looking upon all things at once, there is no distance of time between that enmity which sin did produce, and that reconciliation which the blood of Christ hath wrought, to take away this enmity. I hope, though this be a high mystery, yet it will be clear to such that will but take into consideration that difference between God's own simple act of comprising all the sins of the world at once, {I mean that infinite act of God in that infinite comprehension of his,} and the succession of things in their own time and nature; this being supposed, that persons actually do that which is enmity, and that which makes a difference and separation.

Reconciliation itself briefly stands in this, namely, that whatever breach there was, or was occasioned by any act of man in it, all these breaches are quite made up, and taken away; when God is reconciled to persons, he hath no more quarrel with, nor controversy against them with whom he is reconciled; though this day, yesterday, tomorrow, and the next day, thou dost commit a sin, which, in its own nature, is enmity, and may occasion a breach between God and thee; yet, I say, if God be once reconciled, all whatever administers any quarrel or controversy between God and thee, is absolutely taken up; he hath no more to object against thee, or to hit thee in the teeth withal. Understand, I beseech you, the nature of reconciliation, and you shall find there is more in it than usually is apprehended. You know as long as men stomach one another, and, as often as they have occasion, are quarrelling one with another; all this while these persons are not reconciled indeed, though peradventure there may be some complimentary shaking of hands; if still there be snarling one at another, and stomaching one another, they are not reconciled; so I say, is God quarrelling with thy spirit? Is he still hitting thee in the teeth with such and such sins that thou committest against him? Is the bitterness of God poured upon thee? Is his wrath revealed against thee? I say, if there be this wrath of God at any time truly revealed against thee, there is not yet a reconciliation of God towards thee. In reconciliation there are no old grudgings, quarrellings and controversies; there is no hearing of them anymore; in that there are forging and forgetting, as you use to say; and all this, whatever it is with men, it is thus with God; wherever God is reconciled, he

forgives and forgets forever.

Therefore you shall find when the Lord speaks of reconciliation in the covenant, he saith, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" here is the drawing and making a person one with himself; "and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," follows it. I beseech you, observe it well, there is a great deal of matter in this expression, and this will give you rest if ever you have it. Either you must deny God is reconciled, or you must conclude he hath forgiven your transgressions, and he will remember your sins no more.

It may be you feel much corruption venting itself; though you act this and that transgression at this time, if God be reconciled to you, he doth not remember your sins you now commit. "Your sins," mark it well, because I know it is harsh to men, and contrary to sense and reason, yet it must be true, because the Lord hath spoken it; "your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more." You will say, when? I answer, when God is entered into covenant with a people; "and this shall be the covenant I will make in those days," saith the Lord, "I will sprinkle you with clean water, and your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." {Ez.36:25, Heb.10:16,17}

How can this be, you will say, is God grown so forgetful, that he takes no notice, that at this instant I sin, and cannot he remember I sin? This seems to be a mighty strange argument.

Now suppose I could not answer this; is this a truth that God saith, or no, "your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more?" If this be not a truth, then the word of God is untrue, and then farewell all the ground upon which a person ought to build; but let God be true, and every man a liar; therefore, to clear it, I say, God remembers, and knows well enough that we act this; his meaning then is, I will remember them no more, to hit you in the teeth with them; I will have no more to say to you for these transgressions you now commit; for all that he has to say against iniquity, against this present iniquity committed; he hath said it over to Christ already, when he was upon the cross; and this sin now committed was then in the remembrance of God; he took the full payment for it, and for that sin that shall be committed tomorrow, unto the end of the world, he took all the payment of Christ; therefore he will never repeat them over

to you; this is God's way, not to hit his people in covenant in the teeth, nor upbraid them with any sin they commit; this is plain in the latter end of the text, "not imputing their trespasses unto them;" as if he had said, I will never call you to an account for the sins you commit; I will never tax you for them; you shall be in mine eyes as if you did not sin; all that I mean to ask, I have it already, at the hands of my Son. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" {Is.53:11;} with the beholding of it. In Isa.27:4, you have a notable expression, "fury is not in me," saith God. You will say, how can that be; is not God angry? Doth he not pour out his wrath and vengeance? Doth not his fury burn against sin? The prophet speaks in the name of God in that place; "fury is not in me;" but if you will read the passage well, observe it, and you shall find of what time the Lord speaks this; he speaks not of the present, but of a certain time that he prophesies of. The Lord hath a vineyard, he watches over it, and waters it night and day; and this vineyard shall enlarge its borders, and shall spread itself over all the world; the meaning then is this; there is a time to come, wherein the people of the Lord, the vine of the Lord shall spread itself, not in the garden of Israel only, but all the world over; that is, the Gentiles shall be received into fellowship with God, as well as the Jews; Christ shall come, and pull down the wall of partition; and the Gospel of Christ shall be preached all the world over; then "fury shall not be in me;" when Christ hath offered up himself, and perfected forever them that are sanctified, then the Lord hath no more fury to pour out upon such as are in him; when your reconciliation is made with God; know from the first time of it till your last breath, there shall not be the least fury in God to you; for that is poured out upon Christ already, and there is not one drop of that poison to be poured out upon you. Isa.54:9, is a most admirable place; "as I have sworn {saith the Lord} that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." What; God not be wroth with, nor so much as rebuke persons? Yea, so saith the Lord, "I will not be wroth," for I have sworn unto thee, that as the waters of Noah, &c. You know the Lord made a covenant, that there should never come a flood to drown the world anymore; this covenant is firm, so as that the water shall drown all the world again before

God will be wroth with his people anymore; when is this? Look into the beginning of the chapter, and you shall see; when the Jews shall inherit the Gentiles, then it shall be.

But you will say, the Lord in that chapter saith, "in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; and therefore it seems God was wroth and angry then, when he said he would not be wroth, and with the same people.

But mark it well, there is a great mistake, as if the Lord spake all in that chapter to the same people; he distinguisheth between his present dealing with them, and with his people afterwards, when the Gentiles shall come into his fold; indeed it is true, he saith, he forsook this church as the wife of his youth, "but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer;" there was a time in which the Lord was wroth and hid his face; but there is a time when he will not only be kind, but will have mercy with everlasting kindness; that is, a kindness that hath no intervenings of wrath mixed, but that holds out, an everlasting love; and this mercy without any wrath between, should be when the people of the Jews should inherit the Gentiles; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, by Christ's taking away the wall of partition.

In brief, know this as a certain truth, God once reconciled is so forever; God is not such a changeling as to be reconciled today, and fall out tomorrow again; God when he is once become friends with a man, he is so forever; nothing shall break squares between God and him. {Rom.8:38,39}

Again, consider by what means this reconciliation is wrought, and then it will be manifest unto you that God cannot be angry, for it is by Christ; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." I ask this question, did Christ fully satisfy the indignation of God, or did he satisfy it only in part, leaving some remainders of it for the creature to come after and bear? If Christ did not fully satisfy indignation, he is but a piece of a Saviour; he did not save to the uttermost; he should be no perfect Saviour, if he did not satisfy the wrath of God to the uttermost; but if he did fully satisfy, as God himself "beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied;" then all indignation is past. Look as it is with men that are to make accounts; suppose a man should account for a hundred several

sums, these accounts are not satisfied, except he satisfy and pay every sum; if he pay ninety-nine sums, and leaves but one unpaid, the creditor is not satisfied. Either Christ hath paid all, or some must come after to pay the rest; certainly indignation never ceases till there be complete satisfaction. Either God hath satisfaction perfectly in Christ, or a believer must pay the remainder; either he hath the full of Christ, or a believer himself must satisfy. Suppose that Christ had satisfied God's indignation for all sins but one, and a believer must satisfy that one; that one is enough to damn him forever; for he cannot give satisfaction for one sin.

If Christ had satisfied for all, and had taken away the whole indignation, how can God come and pour out new indignation? And {to conclude} know this, that this perfect reconciliation, this peace with God, is not a thing now to be agitated, and controverted in heaven; as if there were an act of parliament now in hand, in hope it will pass, which must have some fear with it, lest it should miscarry; but God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Let me tell you, whoever you are that can claim a part in Christ, your reconciliation is finished to your hands; Christ is now making reconciliation in heaven for you; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;" he is not now reconciling; the thing is finished; your reconciliation is complete. God hath past it not only by vote and consent in heaven, but he hath past it upon record under his hand, in the ministry of the Gospel; we hold out to you reconciliation accomplished; we do not hold it forth as doing, or to be done with him; but it is done with him; if you do but close with it, the thing is finished for you.

14 Christ's Free Welcome To All Comers

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." {Jn.6:37}

These are the words of our Saviour; the occasion was this, he having not only a natural sympathy and compassion, but also being a spiritual physician, disperses abroad common mercies in an extraordinary manner. In the former chapter, he is plentiful in healing the sick, and curing many diseases; natural men, being sensible of such kindnesses, flocked mightily after him. And though Christ knew well

enough what they were, as you shall see by and by, yet he shuts not the bowels of compassion from them in extremity; there were many ready to faint; now, rather than they should want supply, he would work another miracle, and, with a few loaves and fishes, satisfy thousands of them, and so he doth. This people finding good cheer, they are like dogs, can scarce leave the house; bear with the expression, for they were no better, for all their flocking to Christ. I say, they were so eager to follow him, no ground should hold them. Christ takes ship, and goes over sea to Capernaum; no country is too cold for them; nay, the sea itself shall not part Christ and them; after him they will go.

Well, they come to him; and, because he had been so kind to feed them, they think they may be familiar with him; and, therefore, after their carnal fashion, begin to put questions unto him, I say, in a fleshly way; in a low fashion, they begin to argue with him, "how came he there?" Such poor silly stuff they object to him. Well, though Christ had natural compassion, yet he will not soothe them in their folly and simplicity, but deals roundly with them, and tells them plainly that they were mistaken in him, if they thought his excellency did stand in working miracles for food, for bread; he came on a higher errand, and a business of greater consequence; and, therefore, tells them plainly, it was another business he came about; their thoughts must rise higher than the loaves; "labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." He comes about eternal life, he brings that which might produce that unto them, and therefore counsels them to look after it. Well, because they are in talk, they hold it on, though to little purpose, and put another question to Christ, "what shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Naturally, men are upon doing to get; when we talk upon matters of religion, it is doing gets everything; therefore, they will be doing, that they may have something; now, though Christ doth not answer the question they made, being a silly one, yet he gives them another answer that was to the purpose; "this is the work of God, to believe in him whom he hath sent." Never look to get it by doing; look to get it from him, and not from yourselves, and your own doings. {Jn.6:26-29}

When Christ had made that answer, they began to be a little angry with him, and to put a caviling question, or a question by way of exception against

him; "what sign shewest thou {say they,} then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?" Moses gave us this bread from heaven; {speaking of manna.} What doth Christ tell them of life that he brings? What is he better than Moses? Will he give better bread than manna was? Well, {for all their heat, passion, and peevishness,} he will answer them again, "your fathers did eat manna and are dead;" here he takes them off from their great Rabbi, whom they mentioned as if he was their Christ; and also from their objection; saying, that the manna they did eat was but satisfactory for a time, there was not life in it; they that did eat it are dead; and, therefore, he comes to make application, and to show wherein he excelled Moses, and wherein that bread he brings exceeds manna, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;" {vs.35;} they ate manna, and yet were empty for all that; they drank of the rock Moses smote, and yet they were athirst again; "but he that comes to me, shall not hunger;" for I have so much as shall satisfy, there shall be no lack at all.

After Christ had made this discourse, he begins to deal plainly with them indeed, and tells them that "though they had seen, yet they believed not." It may be some discouragement to men, that labour in the vineyard of the Lord, to see small fruit of their labours; but here, you see, Christ himself took a great deal of pains with these men, and all to little purpose, or rather to no purpose at all; therefore, in verse 37, Christ comforts himself against that common discomfort which was though these men believe not, {"ye also have seen me, and believe not; vs.36;} yet, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" I shall have all that I expect; I never look for more than the Father gives me; and of those that he gives, I shall lose none; and then, afterwards, in the words of the text, he comforts those that do come; these, that would not come, he leaves, and falls to consolation for his people that do come; "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The doctrine the words afford, will be natural, it shall not vary a jot from the very words of the Holy Ghost; "he that comes to Christ, he will in no wise cast him out;" mark it well beloved, there is abundance of life in it, to those whose eyes the Lord will be pleased to open, to behold the fulness in it; I say, he that

comes to Christ, it is no matter who nor what he be, there is nothing in the world can be considered as an hindrance to his coming; if he do but come, he may be certain of this, "he shall in no wise be cast out;" there is no man under heaven, be he as vile as can possibly be imagined, if he do but come to Christ, even while he is so, shall be rejected of him, or have a repulse. Beloved, I desire the doctrine itself may be printed and stamped in your spirits.

Give me leave to speak a few words in general, before I come to particulars. I know, I may speak that which will be offence to some, but I must speak the truth of the Lord, whatever men say. I say, whatever thou art in this congregation, suppose a drunkard, a whore-master, a swearer, a blasphemer and persecutor, a madman in iniquity, couldst thou but come to Jesus Christ; I say, come, only come, it is no matter though there be no alteration in the world in thee, in that instant when thou dost come; I say, at that instant, though thou be thus vile as can be imagined, come to Christ; he is untrue if he put thee out; "in no wise, {saith he} will I cast thee out."⁶² And that I may the better

⁶² That is, no alteration visible to him, or others; none in his heart that he can observe, or take any encouragement from; nor any in his life and conversation observable to men; otherwise, there must be an alteration in him, or it is impossible for him to come to Christ, that is, believe in him; he must have grace given him to draw him, or he will never come, he cannot. [Jn.6:44-65] The desires of the soul must be towards Christ; there must be a sight of him, and of both the want and worth of him; but the sense is, that a man that has been ever so vile, even to the very instant. There are two sorts of people in the world that are given by the Father to Christ, who yet, for the present, do not actually come to him.

First, there are a sort of men in the world, elected indeed, but, for the present, are wild asses upon the mountains, snuffing up the wind, and as desperate in iniquity as the veriest reprobate under heaven; and yet there shall not be rejection of these persons when they come; I say, whenever they come, though as sinful as their skins can hold; yet when they come to Christ, they shall not be cast out; for the present indeed, they despise their birthright, they scorn the grace of God, and cast it at their heels.

But there are a second sort of people given by God to Christ that have not received him, and are not actually come to him; and yet for the present are wrought upon to be a willing people in some sort; that is, the Lord hath dealt thus far with them, fain they would close with Christ, fain they would conclude an interest and portion in him; Oh! it would be welcome to them; it would be life to them, to be certainly satisfied that his blood is their ransom, and that their sins are blotted out thereby; I say, fain they would, but they dare not yet close with Christ for their lives; they dare not set up their rest here; they dare not sit down with any such conclusion; but still there is something or other, that remains, that must be removed out of the way, before they can make this certain conclusion, Christ is theirs. Now, my principal errand is, at this time, is to this latter sort of people; a people, I say, whose hearts tell them, if it could appear clearly, that, without danger to them, they may say, Christ is their salvation, and sit down with this; if they could be satisfied with

come upon the spirits of such heavy laden persons, let us consider these three things; first, what this coming to Christ is, that is here spoken of. Secondly, what his purpose is in proposing this coming to him. Thirdly, what he means by this expression of his, "I will in no wise cast him out." I shall speak briefly of the two former, because the life of Christ's purpose lies in the last of these particulars.

First, what doth Christ mean by coming unto him? In verse 35, he will give you his mind himself, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Mark it well, he makes coming and believing, in sense, all one; for if you observe it, such as Christ deals withal they are unsatisfied and empty ones; now he satisfies the empty; and whose emptiness will he fill? Even of those that believe in him, that come to him; believing and coming therefore are all one, so that to come to Christ, is to believe in him. But we are as far to seek as we were, you will say, what is that believing on Christ?

it, rather than their lives they would have Jesus Christ, but they dare not; something or other is wanting, they dare not lay hold upon him, and it is presumption for them to sit down satisfied, Christ is theirs; this is the generation I am at present to deal with, and to declare, by the power of Jesus Christ, his clear mind to them, and by that power to pluck them out of the mire wherein for the present they stick fast that he is called, and directed to Christ, and while he can see nothing else but sin in him, he should not stay for any preparations and qualifications in him fitting him for Christ; that is till his heart is cleansed, and his life reformed, but as vile a sinner as he is, and in the view of all the notorious sins he has lived in, should go to Christ, and venture his soul on him. The design of these expressions, however offensive they may be to some, is not to encourage men in sin; nor do they suppose, that men, on coming to Christ, may, or will continue such as they have been before; for an alteration in heart and life, follows at once upon coming to Christ; by faith the heart is purified, that works by love, and is attended by the fruits of righteousness; but to show that nothing should hinder or discourage sensible sinners, though ever so vile, from immediate coming to Christ, and that nothing will hinder him from receiving such, and that such should not wait for any qualifications to fit them for him; and if they had them, should not bring them to him for that purpose; but should come as sinners, and commit their souls unto him, believing in him unto salvation. Thus Saul, in the height of his rebellion, when his heart and mouth were filled with blasphemy against Christ, and bitterness against his people, and in the full pursuit of these lusts, the Lord called him by his grace, and revealed his Son in him; Christ appeared to him; light shone around him; grace reached his heart, and brought him at once to the feet of Jesus; hence he says, "I, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious person, I obtained mercy;" on which Beza has these words, "these are the preparatory works the Apostle sets himself off with;" for nothing intervenes between his having been all this, and his obtaining mercy, as the cause of it, or as fitting him for it; and had he been guilty of adultery, drunkenness, and swearing, {crimes not greater than what he had been guilty of} he could, and no doubt would have said, I Paul, the adulterer, the drunkard, the swearer, I obtained mercy. Gill.

In John 1:12, you shall see what it is to believe on him. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Here he makes receiving and believing all one, as before he made coming and believing. The sum, in brief, is this, that coming to Christ is no more but the receiving of him for shelter and relief. A man is said to come to a strong-hold, when he enters into it for his security and safety; he doth not stand hacking and hammering, shall I, or shall I not? But danger forces him, and in he gets, the door being open, and comes to his stronghold; so a person comes to Christ; Christ opening, he slips in, and ventures himself with him, and casts himself into his arms, and he will sink or swim with him.

Beloved, whoever you are that can but come to him, be you what you will, or may be, I say, if you come to him, to venture yourselves upon the rock Christ, to sink or swim, as he will support and uphold you, counting him a refuge, to have him for your succor; he "in no wise will he cast you out."

But, secondly, to what purpose doth Christ propose coming here will some say? Beloved, I propound this the rather, because I conceive men mistake the mind of Christ concerning this coming. You must not imagine, that our motion of coming is the primary mover that gives motion to Christ to open and entertain; as if our coming did stir him up to set open, and give entrance. Christ hath not any such thought in him that we must come, and therefore will own us for his own; for it is certainly true, the very motion of our coming to Christ, is from himself, and from his coming to us, before we do so much as move. It is a common principle known to all divines, and most people; we are first acted, and then we act. First, Christ gives to us to come, and then, by his gift, we come to him; we must not imagine that by coming to Christ, he is moved and invited towards us, and is stirred up to open to us, and give entertainment to us; but his first coming to us, and living in us, stirs us up to motion. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." {Eph.2:1} Beloved, is there death till Christ quickens? Where then can there be this motion of ours, before he himself be come with his life? Where there is no life, you know there is no motion; and till the fountain of life communicates it, there can be none; therefore it is Christ that gives this coming unto men, and he having

given it, they come to him. But what is the purpose of Christ then, in speaking of coming here, as if this were a preparation or a previous condition, that there is no portion in Christ, till there be first coming?

I answer, mark the scope well, for you shall find Christ doth not intend a necessary condition, but the removal of all objections; he doth not intend to put us on doing to get him, but to take away all obstacles that may hinder us from coming to him; and the emphasis of the text doth not lie upon coming, but upon this, "in no wise will I cast them off;" as if he had said, you are poor wretches; you think I am so hard-hearted, I will cast you off, you are so sinful; but let not this trouble you; whatever sinfulness you have, that, in common apprehension, may hinder me from receiving you coming to me, for all this I will not cast you out when you come. As when a man says to a poor man, come to my house, I will give you something; he proposeth no conditions but grace to him; you shall have something, I will give you this and that.

But, I will come to the third, the main thing I intend at this time, namely, what Christ intends when he saith, "I will in no wise cast you out." Oh; the depth and unsearchable grace that is comprehended in these few words! If it might shine with its own brightness to your spirits, how would you go away leaping and rejoicing, with joy unspeakable and glorious! Why, the Lord is able to communicate to you, above all we are able to ask or think. "I will in no wise cast you out;" do but come, and nothing, I say, nothing shall stand between you and me, to put a bar to hinder an entrance to me.

There are two estates whereto this grace mentioned may belong; either that estate wherein is the breaking forth of the first light to the soul; or that estate wherein, after light is broken forth, darkness seems to come again in the place of it; and this passage of Christ hath reference to both these estates.

First, the first estate wherein light begins first to break out, the first dawning of the light of Christ. To give you an instance, and so bring the business close; suppose a person, as the Apostle does, "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" {Eph.2:1,2;} I say, suppose a person to

be in the worst condition you can imagine; single out the vilest man in the world, the notablest drunkard that ever breathed, the greatest whoremaster, and the lewdest person that can be imagined; such a person as this, and continuing to this very instant, now before the Lord, as he was before, without any change and alteration in the world until this time; suppose such a person; by this text it appears so manifest, that if the Lord do but grant, and hath but put a willingness and readiness of spirit into this man, that Christ he would have, if it might appear he might have him; if his heart do but say, I would have him, all that sinfulness, though to this instant continued in, is no bar in the world, but this man may claim his portion in Christ, and have as certain security that his portion is there, as any other man may have.⁶³ Mark well, I say, this passage, "I will in no wise cast him out;" our Saviour plainly imports, that there neither is, nor can be devised, no not by God himself, any one consideration whatsoever, which might occasion him to put off; or say nay, to any one that comes; no consideration in the world, I say, can so aggravate a man's condition, could he make it as bad as the devils themselves; yet, if there be but a coming to Christ, there can be no consideration in the highest pitch of sinfulness for him to reject, or put by a person coming to him; for, you must know, Christ is well acquainted with all the objections the heart of man {nay the devil himself} can make against the freeness of his grace, and life by him; to save labour, therefore, in this one passage, "I will in no wise cast out," Christ at once answers all the objections that could be made. And I dare be bold to maintain, in his name and stead; let a man but say, and lay down this for granted, come he would, Christ he would have rather than his life; let this be granted for a truth, I will be bold with Christ out of this passage to answer ten thousand objections, even fully to the silencing of every one that can be made, "I will in no wise cast him out;" that is, I will upon no consideration that can be imagined and conceived. I know the objections are many, and they seem to be very strong in respect of such a person to whom the Lord hath given a willingness and desire of spirit, to close with Christ, and yet, dare not do the thing; I say,

⁶³ Here you see clearly, the Doctor supposes willingness and readiness of spirit to come to Christ, put into such a sinner; which is owing to power and grace thus making willing, and such a soul will never be rejected let him be ever so vile. Gill.

they are many, and very strong; but, let them be what they will, you shall see by-and-by they come to no value in the world, there is no strength in them. Let me tell you, the Lord hath sent me, at this time, "to proclaim liberty to such captives," that are in this sad, bitter, and {to their thinking} desperate condition; liberty God hath given thee, if thou wilt come freely; nothing in the world shall hinder thee.

But let us consider the objections that may be made, and therein see what ground poor sinners may have to forsake their own mercy, and so become their own tormentors. I dare not close with Christ, {saith many a poor soul} if I sit down and close with him, being satisfied with this argument, Christ offers himself to sinners, this is presumption; why so? I am the filthiest creature that ever breathed; I should stink above ground with my sins, if you knew what a creature I am, and what an ungodly sinner I am; I am a blasphemer; I do nothing but blaspheme the God of heaven; and I blaspheme his word to persecution; my spirit is mad against the Gospel itself.

I answer, in a word, reckon up all that you can imagine, suppose the worst you can conceive, the truth of the worst, that you have not belied yourselves a jot, in proposing the abominable filthiness and loathsome baseness of your filthy condition; suppose this be imagined; what of this? Surely, as long as I am in this case, Christ cannot belong to me, there is no coming to him for me. If this be truth that you say, that such and such filthiness stands between Christ and you, that though you come, there could be no entertainment with him for you; supposing this to be true, this that Christ speaks is most certainly false; for, saith he, "I will in no wise cast you off;" that is, upon no consideration will I cast you off. You say, upon this consideration, I am so abominably vile, there will be casting off; if this you say be true, that which Christ saith, must be false; there is a point-blank contradiction between these two; and, therefore, either Christ must call in these words again, thus generally delivered, and he must put in this exception that you put in, or else his word and yours cannot agree.

You say, upon such considerations, there is no admittance; and upon such and such there is admittance; Christ saith, "I will in no wise cast you out;" notwithstanding this consideration, I will receive you, be you what you will, do but come, and for all that,

you shall be welcome. But, some will say, men must be fitted for Christ, before he will ever own them. I answer again, is there this exception put into the grant of Christ, except you be fitted for me, I will cast you out? Then you may say indeed, except you be fitted for him he will cast you out; but then, I say, how can this be true, "I will in no wise cast him out?" The words, must run thus, "him that comes to me, {if he be fitted and prepared} I will in no wise cast out;" but if he be not fitted and prepared, I will cast him out; but do they run so? Christ looks not for fitness, but people may be capable of communion with him without fitness; he takes them into communion with himself, and afterwards fits them for it, as he would have them; but, beforehand, there is no fitness; suppose what fitness you will, in expecting the grant, I say, in expecting the grant of Christ, fitness or not fitness is all one; "Come to me, I will in no wise cast you out."

Peradventure, though the text seems to be so clear, yet you will say, surely the grace of God is not so large as you seem to express it? There must be something expected and considered in the person coming, or there will be no receiving and entertaining by Christ. I answer, it were an easy thing, {if time would give leave} to show that through the whole scripture, the Lord Christ hath such a purpose to set forth the glory of the grace of his Father, as that he will have men know, that all the fitness of persons, to communicate or participate of Christ, is their desperate sinfulness; I say, nothing but sinfulness is that which is the fitness that Christ looks for in men.⁶⁴ I beseech you, peruse that passage, never to be forgotten, {Ezekiel, chapter 16,} where the Holy Ghost, in the beginning of the chapter, first states the case concerning the condition of persons; then makes the conclusion, the state being granted. Suppose your condition of sinfulness rise up to the height of the illustration there mentioned, of a child polluted in its blood; which kind of expression the Holy Ghost useth, as that which doth, of all other things in the world, most set out the loathsome nastiness, and intolerable filthiness of sin in men; "thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple

⁶⁴ Not what makes a soul lovely to Christ, but what makes Christ necessary and suitable to that. Gill.

thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born." {Ez.16:3-5} Here is the nature of the sinfulness of persons polluted in blood. There was such a filthy loathsomeness in this pollution, that it was beyond the pity of any creature; it was so abominably filthy, that there was no place for pity; nay, more, such pollution of blood there was, that did occasion casting out, as if the abiding of that person in the room any longer, would poison all the rest; and, therefore, because there could not be an enduring of that loathsomeness any longer, there must be flinging out upon the dunghill.

Suppose your sins rise to this very height, and there is such a stench of filthiness in them, that all the world should even vomit to think of that sinfulness that you have acted and committed; what of all this? Surely, you will say that there is no portion in Christ for me, as long as my case is such a case as this. Observe the strange expression of the Holy Ghost, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live;" there is a great deal of difference between saying, Live, and casting out of such persons; when no eye pitied thee, that time which was the time of thy blood, "that time was the time of love." This is strange indeed, that all the creatures in the world should turn against such a person, as should be so abominable, that men should abhor him; and yet the time of his pollution, should be Christ's time of love. Well, but you will say, Surely, before Christ will communicate himself, and give up himself to such men, for all this, the case must be altered with them; you shall see it is no such matter, but directly the contrary. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {vs.8} What strange expressions are here! Methinks your hearts cannot but be wrapped up into heaven, in admiration of them; these the Lord aggravates to the highest terms that can be imagined; setting forth the most horrible loathsomeness of the sinfulness of men; and yet that time of sinfulness, was the time of God's love; and not only so, but a time wherein God sware to and entered

into covenant with this person, and became his.

But, you will say, there was some cleansing before. You shall see the Holy Ghost in the next words makes it appear it is not so; mark the words well, "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil;" then, when I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Here was not first a washing, and then swearing, and entering into a covenant; but there was first swearing and entering into covenant, and then washing with water afterwards; here is a coming and closing with Jesus Christ, even while the state of a person is the filthiest in the world; and I tell you, beloved, either you must close with Christ for your comfort, unworthy as you are, or you must never receive him while you live. "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You that will bring righteousness with you to be received of Christ; I tell you, he came not to save such persons. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." {Rom.5:6}

But, you will say, for all this high aggravation of loathsomeness and sinfulness, my case is worse than all this that you speak of; therefore there is something in my condition, that if I come to Christ he must cast me off; here is nothing but positive filthiness; it is true, indeed, this condition is very bad, but my case rises higher; besides a positive loathsomeness in myself, I am a rebel, a sturdy enemy, I fight against God, I quarrel with him, and take up arms against him. Imagine your condition a condition of as great enmity and madness against God, as your hearts can possibly devise; what then? Sure you will say, if I be such an enemy, I must lay down arms before Christ will have to do with me, or admit me to come to him. Will a king let a cut-throat traitor, while he hath thoughts in his heart to murder him, will he let him come with a naked knife into his presence, and graciously embrace him in his arms?

For answer, still see the close of the text, observe that if this be true, that in respect of this rebelliousness in thy spirit against God, thou sayest, if I come, Christ will cast me off; these words "in no wise" cannot be true; for here is a consideration, as before, that makes, an exception, and so frustrates thy entrance to Christ, though there be coming.

Beloved, do you think it was out of the thoughts

of Christ, to wit, your enmity, and rebellion? And if he thought of it, do you think he would not have put it in? Surely he was wise enough, and knew what he said, and certainly had rebelliousness itself in his thoughts when he spoke the words, in no wise; and certainly this shall not prejudice you, but if you come to Christ, he is as much yours as if you never took up arms against him. But to clear up this truth to you more fully, look into Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." Mark it well; you say there is no dwelling for Christ with rebels, that is your position; I am a rebel, so there can be no entertainment with him for me; but, saith the text, {note it I pray,} that he received gifts for the rebellious, that "the Lord God might dwell among them." If that be not clear enough look into Romans 5:6-10, "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life;" mark the expression, it is a strange one; you must directly deny the truth of what the Apostle says if you will stand to this principle, that as long as you are enemies there is no admittance unto Christ for you; for, saith the text, "while we were enemies, we were reconciled;" not that Christ provided reconciliation for enemies, that when they be amended, they shall be saved, but during enmity itself they receive reconciliation. I do not speak this to the intent that any should conceive that God leaves persons rebellious, vile, and loathsome, as he finds them, when he closeth with them; but, I say, at that time, when the Lord closeth with persons, he closeth with them in such a state of rebellion; and if thou comest to Christ in this condition, it manifestly shall appear to thee, that he will open his bosom for thy head to rest upon, {Jn.13:25,} as well as for the most righteous person in the world, and his breast for thy mouth to suck. {Isa.66:11, 12.}⁶⁵

He shuts the door to none that comes; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." {Is.55:1} Let everyone; there is not one exempted; yet, not I, saith one, not I, saith another; but the Holy Ghost saith, "let everyone come." No man under heaven that

⁶⁵ 52 And it should be observed, that all before spoken, is said to such who are deemed sensible of their rebellion and vileness; and also under some temptations that Christ will not receive them, being so very sinful. Gill

hath a heart to come, and suck of the breasts of Christ, but the way is free for him; the fountain is set open for all sin and uncleanness; at the pool of Bethesda every impotent person might step in; at the bath the poorest man in the world may go, if he will, and step in; neither is the loathsome person in the world excluded; now Christ is that hath opened for all comers; there is no comer shall ever be cast off; I dare be bold to say, there never did miscarry any person in the world that did indeed come to him; if there did any miscarry, there is no credit to be given to the words of Christ himself.

But I see I must hasten. I come now to consider the power of this expression to persons that had the light risen to them, but think now darkness is come over them again; I mean those that have received Christ, and have believed, but something or other hath happened, that even they suspect, that if they should come to him, he would cast them off. But if the first proposition be granted, that is discussed, then much more this; "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32} "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." {Rom.5:10} If while we are without strength, Christ in due time died for the ungodly; if while we were sinners he died for us, how much more shall we be saved from wrath being reconciled! All this is to show that if Christ did not shut out persons in the worst condition, when they had no acquaintance at all with him, much less will he cast out those that he had familiarity with in former times; there is no condition in the world a believer is subject to, that may occasion the least suspicion that Christ will cast him out, if he come.

But you will say, suppose a believer falls into some scandalous sins, and notorious sins, it may be to commit murder and adultery together, as David did; surely now there is some cause of suspicion, that if he come presently to Christ after he commits these things, he will send him packing. I answer, if this be true, there must be a putting in of this exception into the text, if thou art a believer and commit such and such a sin, though thou comes to me, I will cast thee out; and if it be so, Christ must cut off that large expression of his, "I will in no wise cast thee out." You will say, this is strange doctrine; suppose a believer commit adultery

and murder, may he presently look upon Christ, and in him see a discharge of his sins, and reconciliation by him, and part in him, at that very time he commits them? Surely there must be large humiliation and confession of these sins; and there must be a long continuance in this too; he must not apply comfort presently; there must be more brokenness of heart yet, and more yet, and more yet; and this is the objection of the world.

I answer, I confess the crime is great in its kind, and, for the present, it may silence the voice of truth itself; but whatever becomes of it, that Christ may have the glory of his grace, and the glory of that fulness of redemption wrought all at once; let me tell you, believers cannot commit those sins that may give just occasion of suspicion to them, that if they come to Christ he would cast them out; let me not be mistaken in that I say; I know the enemies of the Gospel will make an evil construction of it; yet a believer, I say, cannot commit those sins that can give occasion to him to suspect, that if he come presently to Christ, he would cast him off.

But must not he confess first, and be afflicted in his soul, before he can think that he shall be received if he come?

For answer to it; I deny not, but acknowledge that when a believer sins, he must confess these sins; and the greatest end and ground of this confession is that which Joshua speaks concerning Achan, Joshua 7:19, "and Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." That is, my son, confess thy faults, and give glory to God. A believer in confession of sin gives glory to the great God of heaven and earth; and that must be the glorious end of the confession of his sin, that God may be owned, as the sole and only Saviour; except we acknowledge sin, we cannot acknowledge salvation; we cannot acknowledge any virtue in the works and sufferings of Christ; he might have saved his labour, and never come into the world; all that he did could not be acknowledged to be of worth to us, if there had not been sin from which he should save us; he that indeed confesses his sin, confesses he had perished if Christ had not died for him; nay, he confesseth, that nothing in the world, but Christ, could save him.

Secondly, I grant, a believer should be sensible of sin, that is, of the nature of it; but this is that I mainly desire to imprint upon your spirits, that he may certainly conclude, even before confession of sin, the reconciliation that is made between God and him, the interest he hath in Christ, and the love of Christ embracing him; in a word, before a believer confesses his sin, he may be as certain of the pardon of it, as after confession.⁵³ I say, there is as much ground to be confident of the pardon of sin to a believer, as soon as ever he hath committed it, though he hath not made a solemn act of confession, as to believe it after he hath performed all the humiliation in the world. What is the ground of the pardon of sin? "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake." Here is pardon, and the fountain of it is in God himself. What is it that discharges a believer? The rise of it is God's own sake; and if this be the ground of pardon, then this being held out, a believer may be assured of pardon as soon as he commits any sin, and may close with it. Pardon of sin depends upon the unchangeableness of God, and not on the stability of the creature; all the pardon in the world that any person shall enjoy, is revealed in this word of grace; and it is the most absurd thing in the world to think that the soul may fetch out a pardon anywhere, but in the word of grace. Is pardon held out in it, and held out to sinners, as they are sinners? And doth God hold out his love to persons before good or evil be done by them, that the purpose of God may stand according to election, not of works, but of grace? And doth a believer find it thus in the word of grace, and may not he rest upon it when he finds it? I beseech you consider; either Christ did not reckon with the Father for all the sins of his people one with another, when he did offer up himself, or he did; if he left out such and such a scandalous sin when he reckoned with him, then Christ did not save to the utmost all them that come to God by him; then there must come another Saviour, to reckon for that which he left out.

Well, you will say, Christ did reckon for all sin with his Father; if he did reckon with him for all, then did he pay him the full price for everyone when he died upon the cross. Then the Father being paid, satisfaction was acknowledged from his hand; he hath beheld the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied; "and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." {I Jn.1:7}

Well, doth God acknowledge full satisfaction for all sin under hand and seal? If it be so, what ground is there of suspicion that Christ will not receive you, but cast you off for such and such transgressions, rather than for such and such? If the reckoning were for all, wherefore do you make such a distinction, where God makes none? If it be made for all, one with another, and the price be paid for all, wherein comes the ground of suspicion? Hath God taken pay for all, and doth that sin, being committed, appear before him still? And must he have more than Christ hath paid? Do not entertain such base thoughts of him. There is not a sin committed this day, but it was as clear before God

53 Not that confession of sin is a needless thing; the Doctor has before observed, that when a believer sins, he must confess his sins, and points out the ends for which confession is to be made; but then he is not to consider this as the ground or cause of the forgiveness of sin; but being under a sense of sin committed, is at once to look to Christ, and deal with his blood for the pardon of it; and not stay until a solemn, formal confession is made, as if his pardon depended on that; we are to confess sin, as Aaron confessed the sins of Israel over the scape-goat; and we should confess ours over a sin-bearing Saviour, with a view to their being laid on him, and satisfied for by him; and never does a soul more ingenuously confess sin, or more kindly mourn for it, than when he has the clearest view of the free, and full forgiveness of it, by the blood of Christ. Gill from all eternity, with all the aggravation, as it is now; and, when God reckoned with Christ for the sins of believers, he took into his consideration the utmost extent of every sin, what it would rise unto, and took a price answerable to the nature and quality of them, of his Son; be they small or great, be they what they will, the price was raised by the Father upon the back and score of Christ, answerable to the transgression.

Now, hath Christ paid all to the utmost farthing? How comes God then to put in this as an exception, as if now there were something done that requires something more than what Christ hath done, before God and you can be friends?

You will say peradventure, in all this will we directly strike at all manner of meeting with God in humiliation and prayer, and fasting and confession of sins.

I answer, with the Apostle, "do we herein make void the law? God forbid! Yea, rather, we establish it." May not a person come and acknowledge his fault to his prince, after he hath received his pardon under his hand, when he is brought from the place of execution? Nay, may not he acknowledge it with melting and extreme bitterness of spirit, because he knoweth he hath a pardon? It is but a sordid and gross conceit in the heart of men to think, that there can be no humiliation for sin, except they be in despair; I say, that when Christ reveals himself to your spirits, you shall find your hearts more wrought upon with sweet meltings, relentings and breakings of spirit, when you see your sins pardoned, than in the most despairing condition you can be in. It hath been often taken notice of, of many malefactors, that though when they have come to the place of execution their hearts have been so hard that they could not shed a tear; yet, when they have heard their pardon read, and seen themselves out of danger, their hearts, that were so hard before, have melted into floods of tears; and so, I say, that heart that could not relent to see the filthy loathsomeness of sin, while he did not see his pardon, yet, after the knowledge of that, melts into tears, and hath such relenting that none in the world can have, but he that knoweth it. I say, the grace of God, which brings salvation, having appeared unto men, doth more teach them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world than all the arguments besides can persuade men, even for the glory of their God, the manifestation of their thankfulness to him, and the being fruitful unto others. {Tit.2:11-13}

We are to walk in every way that God hath chalked out unto us; but if we think our righteousness, deep humiliation, large relents of spirits, sorrow for sin, and our confession thereof, must make our way to the bowels of Christ, take heed lest you set up a false Christ. When you bring anything to Christ, you deprive him of that which is his greatest prerogative, and give it to your fasting and humiliations; it is the prerogative of Christ alone to bring you to himself. But, you will say, all the promises of pardon run with this proviso, in case men humble themselves, and do this and that, then pardon is theirs; but otherwise it is none of theirs; take heed of such doctrine. We have had Arminianism exceedingly exploded among us hitherto, and there hath been much complaint against

it; but if we conceive that God, in pardoning sin, hath an eye to confession of it, here is the doing of works for pardon of sin; and how far short this comes of Arminianism, let all the world judge.

Beloved, consider I beseech you, doth God give grace upon obedience? What power shall work such a disposition? Supposing a branch be a branch of the wild vine that is mentioned in the prophet Isaiah, such a branch as there is death in it, what shall alter the nature of that deadness in it? Must not there be an engrafting of it into the true vine? Must not the wild olive be put into the sweet olive, before it cease to be wild, and become a good branch? You must know that we are all wild vines, bringing forth fruit unto death; how shall our qualities be changed? Must we be changed first, and then being changed, come to Christ? Is not Christ, the vine, who by virtue of our union to himself doth change our corrupt and bad natures? Do you think, that a branch of the wild olive, must become a branch of the true olive before it can be put into it, and then, in regard of that, be put into it? Oh; that the order of Christ may be established with you; namely, his beginning to close with men in blood, and the power of Christ thus beginning with them, framing their spirits to himself, in such a manner that neither men, nor angels, nor any other creature, can frame any spirit for him, till he come himself. It is certain, without him you can do nothing; as he saith of himself, {Jn.15:5,} and as the Apostle confesseth of himself, {Rom.7:18,} how will you, therefore, have gracious or previous dispositions and qualifications, as you call them, before Christ can own you; when as it must be Christ, and he given, that must frame these dispositions in you?

You must, you say, have eyes to see your folly and misery, and be humbled in the sense thereof, and hearts to close with Christ, and then he will become yours. How contrary is this, to the Lord, by his prophet in Isaiah 42:6,7, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Who opens these blind eyes, but Christ, as he is given for a covenant to open them? Can men see either their own folly, or behold their need of him, or conceive the sweetness of

him, while they are stark blind? They are stark blind, till Christ, after he is given for a covenant, opens the eyes of men. To think that men have their eyes opened before they come to Christ, whereas when they come to him, he opens them, is to say, we see when we are blind.

You shall see, in Scripture, that Christ is given so freely to men, that all considerations are taken away from them, that all discouragements may be taken from a sinner, that if he come to him, and close with him, if he have a heart, he may come without bar.

To conclude; if there be any willingness in thee to close with Christ, so that fain thou wouldest close with him if thou mightest; I say, thou may'st receive all the embraces of Christ into thy arms, and receive his kisses;⁶⁶ upon thy mouth, with as much boldness, and confidence, as any believer in the world; for it is not for their sakes, for their amendments and reformation, their righteousness or holiness, that Christ hath mercy on them; but for his own sake it is that he embraces them, and manifests his love unto them.

END OF VOLUME 1 ON TO VOLUME 2

Foreword by Robert Lancaster

TO ALL THOSE THAT LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND EMBRACE THE WORD OF HIS FREE GRACE; ESPECIALLY TO THE FAITHFUL HEARERS OF THAT HEAVENLY AMBASSADOR OF CHRIST, DR. CRISP, GRACE AND PEACE BE MULTIPLIED.

As in all things {beloved brethren} the provident care of the Lord Christ is manifested towards you his people, whose eye of faith he hath opened; so especially in sending this faithful "man of God" among you, "who came in the abundance of the blessing of the gospel of Christ;" the very prints of the footsteps of the Lord's grace and favour are most conspicuous. For as the Lord foresaw, that you were to meet with more than ordinary straits and difficulties in these sad

⁶⁶ Kisses, as they are indications of, so they are incentives to love. When the truths of the Gospel come with power upon a sinner's heart, they let in, not only a great deal of light, but also a large measure of love; faith comes hereby, and that works by love, both to Christ and to his Gospel. Gill.

times; so it pleased his goodness, to afford a more than ordinary support, to establish the hearts of his people; that they might not fear to sink in, or be swallowed up by those billows that threaten continually to overflow them.

Now, there is none, I suppose, that is in any measure of truth, acquainted with the “terrors of God,” but he must needs confess, that the one thing that is necessary to effect this establishment of the soul from all distracting and distrustful cares and fears, must needs the assurance of peace and reconciliation with God. For whilst God is looked upon as an enemy, what can there be but a continual fearful looking for judgment, and fiery indignation to consume his adversaries; seeing our God is a consuming fire? {Heb.12:29} For if the estate was so dreadful, which Moses threatened to the Israelites, when he told them, “they should have just cause of fear, both day and night, because they should have no assurance of their lives;” {Deut.28:66;} how much more terrible must it needs be, when we not only carry this temporal life in our hands every moment; but also when there is no assurance, but that the pale horse, on which death rideth, hath hell following after him; {Rev.6:8;} and so there is no assurance of eternal life? This must needs be just cause, with a witness, to fear both day and night. Except therefore the soul be translated from under the dominion of the king of fears, and peace and reconciliation fully and freely manifested; the heart must needs {especially in such times as these, wherein it is continually called upon, “where is thy rest;”} be overwhelmed with horror and distraction.

That therefore the Lord’s people might have an impregnable rampart, and sure repose; that they might have a city to dwell in, whereunto “the Lord hath made salvation itself, to be for walls and bulwarks;” {Isa.26:1;} therefore hath the Lord sent the glorious word of his free grace, in the mouth of this messenger of peace among you, creating the fruit of his lips to be peace, I think I may truly say unto thousands, both of them that were afar off in profaneness, and to them that were near, in legal profession. For this free grace that is set at naught, and seldom mentioned by many builders, but with reproach; the Lord will make the chief of the corner, and lay it with joy and shouting of those that embrace it, though it should be for a stone of stumbling to the adversaries thereof.

This free grace laid forth in the redemption that is in Jesus Christ freely bestowed, is that only thing that is able to make us stand with confidence, both in all the troubles of this life, and also before the tribunal seat of God, even in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; when all the righteousness of our own works will vanish away as the morning dew; wherein the great apostle desired not to be found. {Phil.3:9} Although he had a measure of it, far above the strictest in these times; yea, there is nothing but the precious blood-shed of the Son of God that was able to deliver us from that damnation, which the best of our own works and righteousness do daily and hourly deserve. So that to think to rest here is to sleep upon the top of a mast, where every puff of wind is ready to cast a man into the bottom of the sea. And surely, notwithstanding their pretended deep humiliations, they seem never to have been truly acquainted with the terrors of God, who dare appear before him in their imperfect and therefore sinful sanctification and duties. For if the Lord God ran upon his only beloved Son like a lion, with such fury and indignation, when he was but wrapped in our iniquities, that he cried out in a most strange and lamentable manner, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Oh then, how should we dare to look upon him, or come into his presence, in our own dung and rags, covering ourselves with our own confusion as with a cloak. “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” {Lk.23:21}

But yet although in regard of our own works, even the best of them, we have just cause to lay our lips in the dust for evermore; yet, in regard of this free grace of God, being operative in his free choosing, in his free justifying and saving us, not only, not for, and in no wise according to the works of righteousness which we have done. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” {II Tim.1:9} “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” {Tit.3:5-7} There is just matter of joy and

exultation, and even of strong consolation, to them that fly unto the throne of grace; which hath been so faithfully, so evidently, and purely set forth unto you by this glorious instrument of Christ, that your hearts can testify, you were led forth by the waters of comfort, whilst others wandered in a wilderness by the waters of Marah; {Ex.15:23;} that you enjoyed a feast of fat things, whilst others sat in Egypt under their task masters, with their leeks and onions. And this the Lord was pleased to manifest unto you, that ye might not go heavily in these heavy and sad times, wherein men are at their wit's end; but that ye might lift up your heads, because the full manifestation of your redemption draweth near; that ye might with perfect boldness, even unto a triumph, not only look in the face, but trample upon the most terrible of all your enemies, sin, death, Satan, and hell itself, through the great and glorious conquest of the Captain of our salvation; for God our Father, by this grace alone, hath not only delivered us from this present evil world, but also translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, and made us freely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is true indeed, brethren, the Prince of darkness cannot but exceedingly repine and fret to see a stronger than he thus bind him, and release his prisoners, and vindicate his captives into so glorious a liberty. And therefore doth he bestir himself, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, to retain not only the profane that are destitute of the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, but especially those that have a form of godliness in strict and religious walking, who yet deny in effect the gospel of free grace, which is the power thereof, because "it is the mighty power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth." {Rom.1:16} Hence come these slanderous and calumnious imputations of Antinomianism, and Libertinism, in doctrine; and of looseness, and licentiousness in conversation; which vile slanders have been often cast, both upon this faithful witness of the Lord, and the embracers of that doctrine, whereunto we must needs answer in the Lord's words, "the LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" {Zech.3:2} And in the words of the apostle, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy

of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" {Acts 13:10}

For was he, or are we indeed Antinomians, enemies to the Law? God forbid. Nay, we never were, we never could be truly friends with it, until it pleased the Lord to discover unto us the words of this Life. The Law looked upon us as an enemy, shaking over us continually the rod of God's indignation, scourging and piercing our souls and consciences with scorpions, with menaces, with curses, with terrible and austere exactions, and that we had no strength. How then could we look upon it, but as upon a most bitter and implacable adversary? But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, who not according to works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy hath saved us. After the Lord Jesus had taken the hand-writing that was against us, and nailed it to his cross, and exhibited a full satisfaction to all that the Law could demand of us, or lay to our charge; this only was able to settle us in an everlasting peace, and reconcilment with the Law. Right reckoning, men say, makes long friends; but when the creditor and debtor not only agree in their accounts, but also the debtor is able to produce a full acquittance for the uttermost farthing that was due, there can be no breach, no jarring between them. The case is ours, {everlasting praise and thanks be rendered unto the Lord our righteousness,} our acquittance is recorded everywhere in the Word of his Grace; Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. {Rom.10:4} Wherefore we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, and delivered from the law. {Rom.7:4, 6} So that the Lord will remember our sins and iniquities no more. {Heb.10:17} For we are not under the law, but under grace; {Rom.6:14,15;} which is the most constant doctrine of that apostle; it is also sealed unto us by the blood of our Redeemer, inasmuch as the New Testament of grace is in force by the death of the Testator. {Heb.9:16,17}

But let them take heed of the just charge of Antinomianism, who when the law requireth a perfect fulfilling, and continuing in all things, {Gal.3:10,} will make it content with lame, imperfect performances; nay, it must accept the will for the deed, rather than they will be beholden for a full and free acceptance of wills and deeds, and all, unto the Beloved of the Lord, in whom the soul of the Lord is well pleased, and the

faithful are freely accepted. Is not this to frustrate and make void the very end of a bond, to make it content with some few farthings, when so many thousands were due? Let them also take heed they be not guilty of Antinomianism, who take and leave what of the law they see good; who cut off the curse, the rigor, and all the punishment of it at one blow. Surely it is not easy to separate what God hath joined without good warrant from him. The apostle affirmeth, that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under it. He saith not something, but all whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under it. So that there is never a curse in the law, which it doth not pronounce upon the head of him that is under it.

And our Saviour himself saith, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law” till all be fulfilled. {Mt.5:18} Surely the curses are as much as one jot or tittle. He that should deny unto the laws of England the power to punish such offenders as are under them, might justly be thought and called an enemy to, and a destroyer of the laws of the land. But as for us, we make not void the law through faith, but establish it; we affirm that it remaineth in its full force and power, not only of commanding, but also of exacting, of terrifying, of cursing, and punishing every son of Adam that is under it, without the abatement of the least jot or tittle. And whether this be Antinomianism or no, let the church of Christ consider, and judge by the Word of Christ.

The next imputation they cast upon this faithful minister of Christ, and upon his doctrine, and his hearers, was that of Libertinism, whereby if they mean that doctrine which Calvin charges the Libertines withal, in his book against them, we may most truly say, it never entered into the heart of this author to embrace it, much less into his mouth to publish it. And if any hold, or spread any such horrid assertions, we do utterly disclaim them, they are none of us; we are as far, or farther from them, than the severest of those that labour to fasten this imputation upon us. But if they mean by Libertinism the preaching of the free grace in Christ, {even to them that have no worthiness to procure it, no goodness or dispositions to qualify them for it,} whereby the prisoners are brought out of the prison house, and the captives set at liberty, with that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, that

we should not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, {Gal.5:1,} which neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear; {Acts 15:10;} which, in a word, is freedom from sin, which is true liberty not to sin, for then it were slavery. If any teachers in Israel call this Libertinism, then we are sorry that they whose chief or only commission is to preach this gospel of the kingdom, {which only bringeth salvation to them and their hearers, if they be saved,} to the effecting this liberty in the consciences of the people, that so they might be helpers of their joy, should so far frustrate the end of the Father’s sending his Son into the world, {described here in Luke 4:18,19, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord;”} as to cast upon it such vile, reproachful and blasphemous aspersions. But as for us, the comfort of this doctrine is our crown and portion forever; for which we cannot cease but bless the Lord night and day.

He that saith this doctrine teacheth licentiousness, we are sure he is a stranger to it, and never felt the power of it in his own heart; for can anything else effectually teach to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, but this grace of God appearing? {Tit.2:11,12} Can any man truly find and prize this pearl of the kingdom, and not sell all that was of high esteem with him before? {Matt.13:46} Is there any other reason why we love God but because he hath so freely and abundantly loved us first? {I Jn.4:19} Doth not love manifested, as truly and infallibly kindle love again, as fire kindleth fire. {Song 8:6} Nay, rather the want of the more full and pure and powerful preaching of the Free Grace of Christ is the very root and ground of the continuance, in all sensuality and profaneness, in those that are notoriously wicked. For what can men do but catch at shadows and appearances of good, such as honors, and pleasures, and profits, and transgress for a morsel of bread, whilst they know not the glory of their own durable riches and righteousness, whilst the true substance is absent or covered, whilst Christ and his benefits are seldom, and coldly, and darkly proposed? It is the true cause also of all unbelief, self-love, and slavish fear in legal professors, and

of all the evil fruits that spring from these roots of bitterness. For how can they believe, when they do not hear this Free Grace preached, but rather reviled and slandered? How can they cease from self-love, and seeking their own things, whilst they see not how infinitely, how all-sufficiently they are beloved of God their Father in Christ? And how can they be otherwise, but continually invested with slavish fear, when they are kept under by the spirit of bondage, when they may not dare for fear of presumption to be assured of God's free love, and joyfully to apply Christ and his benefits unto themselves, from whom the Spirit of Adoption cometh, whereby we cry Abba Father? Or; if this assurance be allowed, it is upon such hard and high terms, that men must bring so much goodness to Christ, before they must dare to partake of him; that if a man will deal faithfully with himself, and not make lies his refuge, by making himself better than he is; he must needs be enforced to renounce all claim unto Christ, and to live in horror and despair all his days. Yea, the chief, or only cause of the weak and inordinate walking of the professors of the gospel, is not because they have received the doctrine of free grace; {for the devil labors to make men believe;} but because they have not received it so fully, so freely, and so abundantly, as it is plentifully held forth unto them in the word of the gospel. In a word, we entreat all those that are possessed with this groundless fear, that the preaching of free grace opens a way unto licentiousness, seriously to consider how contrary the divine reason of the apostle, {Rom.6:14,} is unto all their carnal reason, when he affirmeth that the cause why sin shall not have dominion over us; that is, why we shall not run out into all licentiousness, is "because we are not under the law but under grace." The prudence and wisdom of man thinks quite contrary, that if men be not under the law, if they be not bridled, restrained, and kept in by the law, they must needs run into all uncleanness with greediness; but let God be true, and every man a liar; let the foolishness of God be wiser than men. He needs no instructor or counselor to teach him how effectually to work upon men; for he knows what is in man. {Jn.2:25}

So much for his doctrine; his life was in all things answerable to the honour and credit of the gospel, notwithstanding all those false and venomous slanders which some have made, and others have loved to hear

and disperse; who have just cause to consider that which the Holy Ghost saith, "for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." {Rev.22:15} For even before he was acquainted with the full purity of the gospel, whilst he went on in the ordinary legal way, he had an earnest desire and endeavour to glorify God, both in his life and doctrine, being adverse unto, and refusing all worldly pomp and advancements {whereunto he had an open door by the height of his parentage and friends} which others so insatiably hunted after with open mouths; and wholly dedicating himself to the preaching of the word, and to a sincere and conscientious practice of the same; so that he was altogether unblameable in his conversation, without the least tincture of any just imputation of viciousness among men; none being more and few so constant in preaching, in praying, in repeating; in performing public, family, and private exercises; in strict observation of the duties of the Lord's day; and thus much concerning his conversation in times past knew all they among whom he lived, how that in this way he profited above his equals, {as the apostle saith of himself,} "being more exceeding zealous." {Gal.1:13,14}

And after it pleased God, who had called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him more clearly; he was so far from abating any part of his zeal of glorifying the Lord, that he rather doubled it, working now out of a more effectual principle than the spirit of bondage and fear, even "the spirit of power and love, and of a sound mind;" {II Tim.1:7;} rejoicing to spend and to be spent, if he might be but serviceable to the meanest of God's people. So far was he from pride, vanity, and self-conceitedness, the very bane of these times, and so full of meekness, lowliness, and tender heartedness, that it appeared manifestly the Gospel of Christ had indeed a mighty influence, and operation upon him to the casting down of every high thought. Yea, he was so ravished with the love of Christ, and thereby with an earnest, free, and solicitous care of advancing his name, that he seemed to regard nothing besides, preaching the word freely, where there could be no expectation of advantage; and in such a way, as instead of credit, he could look for nothing but revilings and persecution, wherein some proceeded so far as not to allow him a little learning; a plain testimony they have

not gone so far in true mortification, and a vile esteem of themselves, as they would have the world believe. Human learning is a mean thing for a minister of the gospel to boast of. The great Doctor of the Gentiles laid it under his feet in comparison to the knowledge of Christ, desiring to know among God's people, "nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" yet was he not in any thing inferior to the very chiefest, though in his own esteem he was nothing. And I doubt not but there is written such a testimonial of his learning in your hearts, as few others can produce; if the Holy Ghost by the Prophet Isaiah may be judge of learning, "the Lord GOD," saith he, "hath given me the tongue of the learned," what is that, but "that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." {Is.50:4} O how many weary spirits did the Lord by his ministry revive! Surely, if this be learning, the Lord gave him no ordinary measure; and indeed his whole life was so innocent and harmless from all evil, so zealous and fervent in all goodness, that it seems to be set forth as a manifest practical argument, to confute the slanders of Satan against the most holy faith which he preached.

So after his natural strength was insensibly spent in the service of the Lord by such constant and laborious preaching, praying, repeating and studying, oftentimes whole nights, to the impairing and ruining his vital powers, it pleased the Lord to call him by his last visitation unto his eternal rest; wherein there appeared {both by the whole course of his behavior in it, but especially by those gracious words, and joyful exaltations which continually proceeded out of his mouth} such faith, such joy, such a quiet and appeased conscience, such triumph over death and hell, as made the bystanders amazed. And withal, he forgot not {considering the cunning of Satan, and the lying power of darkness} to profess before some present the steadfastness of his faith to this effect, "that as he had lived in the free grace of God through Christ, so he did with confidence and great joy, even as much as his present condition was capable of, resign his life and soul into the hands of his most dear Father." And so without the least thought of recanting or renouncing the doctrine he had preached {as some have falsely and wickedly spread abroad} after some time, with continual flowing expressions of joy, he departed this life, into the assured everlasting embraces of his

Redeemer. And now gracious Lord, who only art the Author and Finisher of our faith, be pleased more and more to enlighten the eyes, and open the mouths of all thy ministers, that they may not shun or be afraid to declare unto thy people the whole council of God, even the utter disability and nothingness of man; and withal the freeness of thy grace, the plenteousness of thy redemption, and thy salvation, to the uttermost; that the hearts of thy people may rejoice; and their joy no man may take away from them. Amen.

So prayeth, the meanest of the Servants of Christ,

Robert Lancaster

Preface by George Cokayn

TO ALL THOSE THAT LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST
JESUS

Precious Hearts; it is your honor, above many professors in the world, to seal in your sufferings the most refreshing and ennobling truths of Christ. Your life which is hid with Christ in God is that spark of glory which hath always attracted the most venomous envies of those men who make the flesh their residence. Be confident of this, that did you live in yourselves, you should live more quietly in the world; were you lower as saints, you should be higher as creatures. Never expect to build peaceably upon earth, while you lay not your foundation in the dust; the carnal mind cannot but be enmity against that which is the basis of your principles, suitable to that expression of our Saviour, "the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." {Jn.17:14} It hath ever been the policy of usurpers, to keep down those which can justly prove their decent from the royal blood, lest they and their ill-gotten glory fall together; so those that have unduly invested themselves with the title of saints, presently contend for a room in the seat of the scornful to disparage and destroy those who can clearly show their communion with a higher blood than their own; where Christ doth most sweetly and clearly reign, there the flesh will most presumptuously and cruelly tyrannize. However {saints} though it be your Father's pleasure to allot you the valley of the shadow of death for flesh to walk in, whilst your condition is in its infancy, yet know, that your glorious union with the Son of God shall be more than enough in this state to refresh and secure you;

the world may outrun you, and come first to the top of their glory; but surely in the end, the inheritance will be yours; their first shall be last, and your last shall be first. Esau out-wrestles Jacob in the womb, and comes first into the world, and according to the signification of his name, he is a great doer, a cunning hunter he was; but Jacob that comes forth last, takes the game; Esau was the first-born, but Jacob goes away possessed of the birth-right and blessing also. Thus doth your Father deal with you to make your latter end in brightness to outshine your beginning; neither will your God deny your bread here in the midst of famine; heaven rains manna in a wilderness, the rock gives water in the heat of drought. Believe it {you Gospel Christians} your Beloved shall be all to you in the want of all; that possession which he hath in you, will forever entitle you, "a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed;" he will be in you an Everlasting Head for your supply to all expenses in all conditions, when the moisture of everything below Him shall be exhausted by the creatures, which suck all they have from thence, even then, and so to eternity, shall Jesus Christ be to you in the height of his fullness. I know nothing you have that is long-lived but Jesus Christ. Earth, more grossly carnal, and the heavens more refinedly carnal, shall pass away; even the kingdom of heaven, so far as it is made up of forms and administrations, shall wither and die; but the kingdom of God within you shall never be shaken. That divine nature which hath swallowed you up shall forever satisfy you with variety of contentments. Let not therefore your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Christ; you are satisfied, that the fullness of all things dwells in God, be also convinced that Jesus Christ, by his Father's appointment, is made partaker of the same fullness; "for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell." Now, whatever Jesus Christ hath as a Mediator, you, in your measure enjoy; for it is the great ordinance of God, that all the saints should be sharers and partners with Jesus Christ; we are fellow-citizens with Him, and so interested in the immunities and privileges of the same charter with Him; that as in our first estate we had all which Adam had, so also in our second, we have all which Christ hath; why then doth paleness appear in your faces, and trembling sit upon your lips? As if in the frowns of the creature all your felicity was buried. Oh remember you are one

spirit with Him, whose presence is a constant spring, in a vision of whose glory your beauty will be always lovely. I leave it as my humble request to you, that you would not forget your resting-place; for the least ignorance of that will make you apprehend every condition full of anxiety. This was that which was the bottom of Israel's misery. "They have {saith the text} forgotten their resting-place;" {Jer.50:6;} or, their place to lie down in, as the original will bear it. If you make the creatures, or your ordinance privileges, or your duties, or your own righteousness to be your resting-places, the least disturbance in the pursuit of all, or any of these, will be very grievous and distracting; but if the Spirit enables you to remember Christ to be your rest, who is the rest of God, trouble upon any of your enjoyments below Himself will not have an uncomely influence upon you. To see a man fretting and vexing, that whilst he was riding his journey, noises did keep him waking, would evince our reason to believe that this man had forgotten that his resting-place was somewhere else; so to see you, whilst you were in your travel, discontented at that unquietness wherewith you are infested, would bring you under this suspicion, that you had forgotten your resting-place. Israel expected beds in the wilderness, when God had appointed Canaan to be their rest, and this was the ground of all their murmurings against God's dispensations. Oh that the Spirit therefore would always in the midst of sin and misery, lead you to the Rock that is higher than yourselves, or anything you esteem above yourselves. Many, as they create troubles, so also create remedies; even such, which God never sealed; many times we sin, and then endeavor to make use of sin for a cure; we break a command of God, and then call upon some duty or other fix below Christ, to make up that breach; and thus we bring a double pain and vexation upon ourselves. When a wound is made by a weapon, a contrary plaster applied, makes it more incapable of cure than it was before; so it is with all distempers in your souls, by reason of sin; if you look upon any beside the brazen Serpent, your distemper will return with double vigor upon you. But certainly, one vision of Jesus Christ will bid defiance to the stoutest of your lusts, and all the powers of darkness combined with them, and in an encounter will more than conquer them. The host of Israel was very great and well prepared for the battle, but if ever the day be

won, David must come into the field. Our fastings and prayers appear a huge host, but they will rather gaze upon than engage against an enemy, if Jesus Christ be not in the field; but the very countenance of Jesus Christ doth soon still the enemy and the avenger, and makes all the issue of sin in the soul to prove abortive. The marrow of this you have clearly laid open in the demonstration of the Spirit, in the following Sermons, which I am confident, to all that are led by the Spirit, will be a full vindication of the truth of Christ, and of the worthy Author from those base aspersions cast upon both by pride and ignorance. You shall find the sum of this Work, to be the sole exaltation of the Lord Jesus in saints and duties, and the debasing and trampling upon all flesh that shall aspire to the seat of Christ; the reviving and encouraging of drooping hearts, by presenting Christ, not themselves, in all his accomplishments to them. Now, if the world shall baptize this doctrine Antinomianism, the Lord grant that all the doctrine preached throughout the world, may deservedly be called by that name. Ye that know Christ, be not afraid, notwithstanding all the censures of the world, to read the book, and receive the truth; be assured it is not presented to thee as a bait, which is an introduction to a snare, but if the spirit of Christ accompany it, thou wilt certainly say, as Christ did, "I have meat to eat which ye know not of." I should rather cloud the work, than honor it, if I should proceed to a further commendation of it. I leave it therefore to the Spirit to make out the worth of it to the spirits of the saints, and am concluded under this faith, that all the malice and carnal wisdom of this generation shall never be able to interrupt the course of it. As for the Author, though he never was known to me, yet those writings of his which I have perused, do encourage me to believe that whilst he lived in the world, he lived in God, and now his earthly tabernacle being dissolved, he is taken up into that fullness which he only saw in part whilst he lived here; and though whilst he was upon earth, it might be his portion, with his Lord and Master, to be mocked and buffeted in the High Priest's hall, yet now sits with him in the fruition of that glory for which he was then a sufferer. What now remains, but that ye which through the Spirit have tasted the sweetness of his ministry in the same spirit, look up to our Father, and beg of him, that those who survive in the work of the gospel, may go on where he left, and in

the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, the glorious truths of Christ may be amongst the saints, as the sun in its height? And among the rest, forget not him {though unworthy to be numbered with them} who is ambitious of nothing else, but to be,

All in Christ, and nothing in self;
George Cokayn 13th April 1646

(Sermon 15-52)

15. Our Righteousness Loss And Dung

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." {Phil.3:8,9}

The main drift of this Apostle in the whole course of his ministry, is not only to set out Christ, but also to set him alone; stripping man, and all things else, stark naked; leaving not a rag to cover, or a plaster to case or heal any jot of that universal leprosy overspreading man; that Christ alone may be all in all; which, through Christ's assistance, we will endeavour to unriddle unto you; {being a riddle indeed unto too many, who think they see all in it with a glance;} ploughing with this heifer of the Apostle, I mean the text I have read unto you. Now, that you may the more clearly see the whole scope he aims at here, you must well mark the coherence, how the foregoing discourse leads him unto what he here asserts. In verse 2, he gives warning to take heed of dogs, evil workers and the concision. In verse 3, he intimates in what regard we should beware of them, namely, in not entertaining their principles, which lead to a confidence in the flesh; and for the better establishing or settling them and us in this his useful advice, he shows the vanity and simplicity of such confidence, by comparing himself with the exactest of them; verse 4, where he clears what he means by the flesh, in which we ought not to have confidence, reducing it unto two heads; external church privileges, and an answerable conformity of life according to the law; in both which, he dares challenge any of them to come near him, especially in the latter branch of the flesh; where note, that he

as well calls his zeal and blamelessness touching the righteousness which is in the law, the flesh, as the other, wherein if there were any cause of confiding, he had more than any of them, verse 4. I say, as well that as his being a circumcised Jew, and a Pharisee. Now in verse 7, he intimates indeed that he was once of their mind; to account those things {which he now finds to be but flesh} gain; but for his part, whatever they were in his eye before, he sees and so counts them but loss for Christ. In the words of my text he handles this his last assertion more fully, wherein he proposes his own happy discovery and invaluable success, as a pattern and encouragement for us to follow him. First, he demolishes and throws away all the glittering, but yet rotten materials, wherewith he had, and others still do erect a fortress of security, and palace of delight; then he declares the end of rejecting those materials, so much hissed at, not only by the world, but even by many devout ones also; namely, that he might lay a sure foundation, and build an impregnable tower that cannot be shaken; like a wise master-builder, who finding that he hath built upon the sand, with hay and stubble, pulls down all, and casts it on the dunghill, and then finds a rock, and rears a structure with tried stones from it, which will not moulder with weather-beating; so that he doth not only exhibit Christ with his righteousness, as the securest city of refuge, but also shows plainly, that all must down to the ground and be lost, and then begin anew with him only; one old rotten post left, will cause all the new building to sink.

Concerning the first business of pulling down the old house, observe, {1} what materials are they which he ruins; the Apostle expresses this in these general terms, {all things} now these things have a reference to those materials mentioned before, namely, his church privileges and legal blamelessness; but yet he speaks more largely here, than only of those; his meaning is, that he did not only cast away as dung, what he was or could do before he received Christ, but even all things whatever also he hath been able to do since he received him, though assisted thereunto by his Spirit, as Beza well observes on this place. 2. Note, what he doth with these materials; he doth not glaze them, and let them stand, nor pull them down and polish them, and then patch up a new building with old materials; no, nor yet cull out the choicest of those his glittering

works, to mingle them with Christ's, but throws all, even every jot away; he sees no worth in any, no not the best; nay, more; he sees the very best so far from service, or profit, that indeed he confesses all is loss to him; he means more than that he must lose all his cost and labour thereabout; but must also be a great loser himself thereby; nay, he goes further, and tells us, that all his works are no better materials for his spiritual building, than as if a man should build a house, and use no other materials, than the filth of a jakes or dung, though his works be blameless; for thus he saith, I count them but dung, and so he casts them all on a dunghill; that he means his own blameless works, which he thus looks on as loss and dung, is most plain by that other expression of his, "not having mine own righteousness which is of the law."

As concerning the Apostle's end of thus stripping himself naked, and casting away his own, though specious works, in general, it is to be clothed with white robes, even the garments of salvation; but more especially he declares his end to be the excellency of the knowledge, or the knowledge of the excellency of Christ; {for the knowledge itself hath no excellency but in reference to him known;} as if he should say, I could never come to know how excellent Christ Jesus the Lord is, till all I was and am, plainly appear to be loss and dung; my own righteousness was a thick film over my eyes, that I could not see Christ's worth. Another end was something more, namely, a gaining or winning of Christ, importing, that as long as his obedience was in request with him, and seemed any thing better than dung in his eye, he could never get Christ; and an end yet a little higher; the latter aimed at the present, this last at the future; namely, that he might be found {that is, at the great day of appearance} in him; as if he should say, my works being but dung, will give an ill savour at the last, and therefore I must cast them away, that I may be found in Christ, who is all and only sweetness; if my obedience come near, it will change the scent, and mar all; that this is the meaning is plain, by his own expounding of himself in the following words, "not having mine own righteousness;" from all which, observe we.

I. That all things, yea even the most blameless walking according to God's law, not only before, but after conversion, or receiving Christ, are truly counted loss and dung in a Paul's eye, and such a one will be

willing to suffer the loss thereof, as of dung.

II. Then, and not till then, a person attains to the knowledge of the excellency of Christ Jesus the Lord, gains him, is found in him, {or so minded as is expressed in the former doctrine,} not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ.

I begin with the first; and, because, at first sight, peradventure, to some, it may possibly seem harsh, pray mark how clearly and fully every tittle of it is founded on the text. First, observe how the Apostle saith expressly, that he therefore “counts all loss and dung,” that he may attain those excellencies mentioned; what need that, if he might attain these without such an estimation? Again, observe the generality of this expression, “all things,” which is more than the particulars mentioned; and further, note the time when he spake this, it was certainly after his conversion to Christ, {Phil.1:13,} for he had been in bonds for him before this; now, that which he here speaks of their loss and filthiness, is in the present tense; he delivers his mind of them as viewed at that instant; and, in special, mentions his own righteousness as part of that dung he would not be found in; and, whereas it might be objected, that he had not now received Christ as yet, because this he did to gain him; it is most plain he was in him already, by what he said before; besides, nothing is clearer than that he was converted immediately before he received and entered into his apostleship, as is plain, in Acts 9:2,3; his meaning here must needs be of fuller degrees of participation of Christ. The prophet Isaiah, such another evangelic man as Paul, comes nothing short of him in speaking of his own righteousness, and other servants of God, saying, “but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away;” he means as a menstruous cloth, {Isa.64:6,} and makes himself one of this number. Our blessed Saviour, who well knew what was in man, bids us, when we have done all things which are commanded us, to say, “we are unprofitable servants.” {Lk.17:10} For the better clearing of this truth, let us consider.

1. What it is to count all things as loss and dung. 2. What it is to suffer the loss of all things. 3. How it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, are but loss and dung in a renewed estate, and in what

respect they are so.

1. This word count hath two different significations; sometimes an opinion falsely grounded, as in that saying of the Apostle, “we are counted the offscouring of the world;” sometimes {as here} a certain determination infallibly grounded; thus doth a Paul’s eye determine, I mean a person like-minded with him, and right-sighted as he. Now this determination, or estimation of things as loss and dung, is not of some only, but of all. Many will not stick to count those things, that are directly against any precept, to be loss and dung; but this sentence must pass further, even to all civility, morality, yea, and the most exact obedience to any or all the precepts of the law; if it be possible when such obedience hath had the most assistance of the Spirit, the best aim at the right end, done after the most enlarged manner, with all other good circumstances, to the utmost height a creature can mount unto; all these things, or whatever else, the purest sanctified searcher upon earth {being mere man} can bolt forth from his heart, must be counted but as “loss and dung;” otherwise a Paul cannot say, I count all things so, if any one thing may be excepted.

But let me not be mistaken here, I do not say, that the motions themselves of the Spirit, or the enlargement of the heart as his, or the ends aimed at as prescribed, must be thus counted; but the whole work as, and when, done by a sanctified person, though so assisted by the Spirit; when such a man looks on the works so done by him, he must see nothing but mere “loss and dung.” I hope your patience will stay your thoughts and reasonings, till I can come to show for what respects it must be so.

In the meantime let us consider, what it is to count them “loss and dung.” It is worth your observation, that the Apostle does not say loss only; for, then, a man were in no worse case but to have his labour for his pains, {as the proverb is;} that is, he should lose only his pains, or the work he is about; but he saith loss, that is, by the best work that ever a mere man did, he himself is a great loser; I mean, that he forfeits life and bliss thereby on earth, and in heaven also; there is sin enough in it, {if God had nothing else but what he can pick out of the best work} to lay to his charge, to forfeit all and more, even to cast him into utter darkness; I speak in regard of the desert of such a work in itself considered; under the notion of such loss must we

look on, and account all things; and not only as loss, but as dung also, which comprehends the casualty of this loss in such works. Dung, you know, is one of the filthiest and loathsome things in the world, causing offence to those especially in whose face it is cast. All things of ours, even the best, are of this nature, nay infinitely worse, {for no created natural filth can sufficiently symbolize with spiritual;} I say, therefore, that all our righteousness, at best, is such a menstruous cloth in God's eye, and so certainly in itself; there is dung cast in his face, even in new moons, and sabbaths and solemn assemblies; {Isa.1:13;} so that his soul hates them, they are a burden to him, he cannot away with them; they send up an ill savour in his nostrils, smelling rankly of the flesh when they proceed from the purest heart; there being some flesh lusting against the spirit still; as, namely, some spiritual, or rather carnal pride and self-stroking, when a man hath done very well as he thinks; which dung is the promoter cause of the loss before-mentioned, accompanying all things of ours, even the best, which is the infallible ground-work for counting them such.

2. Let us now consider what it is to suffer the loss of all things. For clearing hereof note, that there is a double suffering loss of a thing. Passive or active; or violent and voluntary. A passive suffering of the loss of anything is when one is violently bereft of it through an overmatch; as when a man suffers the loss of his goods by thieves breaking in upon him, and overcoming him; thus shall all unbelievers suffer the loss of all things, even their good deeds as they call them, prayers, alms, &c. They shall indeed come to Christ, and say, "Lord have we not done this, and this, in thy name." {Matt.7:22,23} But their lamb-skins in which they walked shall be pulled over their ears, and Christ shall say, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." But this is not the Apostle's suffering loss, it is an active or voluntary suffering; bear with the terms, though they seem contradictory; our Saviour speaks to this effect to John the Baptist, over modestly refusing to baptize him; "suffer it to be so now;" that is, give way to it; so here the Apostle's suffering loss was a contented giving way to the loss of all he was and did. Loss, here, hath not so much reference to his person, as the things he did; though in some respect it may be understood of his person; thus, that he was contented to take shame, and even confusion of face,

to himself, for his best actions, and account himself worthy to be destroyed, and be his own judge, to pass not only the sentence of confiscation of all that he hath, but also of condemnation on his person, crying out, "Oh wretched man that I am!" And, besides this voluntary suffering such personal loss, he is willing to be stripped naked of all things, and all pleas they can afford him; so as not to have a word to speak for himself, except it be in impleading all that ever he had done, as making far more against, than for him. Such, I take it, is suffering the loss of all things.

3. I come to the next thing proposed, how it may appear that all things, even the most blameless works, and that after renovation, are but loss and dung, and in what respect they are so. Unto ingenuous spirits, a man would think that the text, and other scriptures mentioned, might be sufficiently satisfactory; but, for better illustration sake, you must first distinguish {as I touched before} between that which is the Spirit's in works after renovation, and the whole work after we have done it; and know that though the motions and assistance of the Spirit be pure, holy, and without scum in the spring, to wit, itself; yet, by that time these motions and assistance have passed through the channels of our hearts, and been mixed with our manifold corruptions in doing, even the whole work thereby becomes polluted and filthy; our filthiness alters the property of the pure motions of Christ's Spirit; let not this sound harsh, for it is no paradox that a man should defile holy things; you may know that received principle, that one circumstance amiss, mars good action, and makes it all naught.⁶⁷ St. James tells us "that whosoever fulfills {or whosoever shall keep}

67 55 This is a passage excepted to by D. W. in his Gospel Truth Stated, &c. pg.,196; it is sadly perverted by him, on which he charges the Doctor with saying, "that the greatest holiness in believers, though wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, is mere dung, rottenness, and filthiness, as in them;" whereas the Doctor is not speaking of internal sanctification of the Spirit on the heart, which is a pure work, and is all glorious within; nor can it be mixed with, or be defiled by our corruptions; but of works done after regeneration, even at the motion, and by the assistance of the Spirit of God; which motions passing through the channel of our corrupt hearts, cease to be the Spirit's, and become ours, and mingled with our corruptions are polluted; and so the works performed are as dung, and so to be accounted, and not to be gloried or trusted in; and yet, notwithstanding all this, the Doctor observes, they ought to be carefully maintained, being profitable to men; yea, that through faith in Christ the dung is extracted, and being purged by him become acceptable unto God, though not till they are renounced by us, and counted loss and dung; nay, he affirms, that the motions of the Spirit themselves, the enlargement of the heart, and right aims in working, are not to be so accounted, but the works themselves. Gill.

the whole law of God, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all;" his meaning, I take it, is this, that the least drop of our poison, in the least failing, hath such a diffusive venom, that it poisons all the good, and overspreads its filth through the whole, even as one drop of poison injected, into the rarest cordial, makes the whole, and every drop of it, mortal; so, that except the best of all our works can pass through us without the least mixture of any defect or pollution of ours, it cannot but be dung. Pour the cleanest water that is into a dunghill, and let it but run through it, and when passed through, what is it but dung itself? The Lord requiring sacrifices of the Jews, enjoins a male without blemish; though a male, yet with one blemish, the whole sacrifice was abominable, and not that one blemish only. And whereas, it may seem harsh, that even what is the Spirit's must be involved in a man's own, under the general notion of dung; know, that it once being mixed with our filth, ceaseth to be his, and becomes ours; it was his when injected, but our flesh, being like the viper's stomach, that turns the wholesomest food into poison; or like an ulcerous turnout, that turns the soundest flesh drawn thereto into rottenness; and some of this ulcerous flesh still remains in the best saints on earth, and mingles itself in the best service, and so turns the whole into its own nature; for {for the generator begets that which is like himself} that being dung, all that it diffuseth itself into must needs be like it; even as the gourds gathered from the wild vine, being mortal themselves, and put into the pot, set on for the sons of the prophets, made the whole pottage deadly. {II Kings 4:39,40} The Apostle Paul complains, that even when he would do good, evil was present with him, through the law in his members, rebelling against the law of his mind, which makes him cry out of himself bitterly against all he did, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" {Rom.7:21-24} By which he must needs mean all together, because he doth not fly to good works as a refuge against the evil, but to Christ alone as a refuge against all. "I thank God {saith he} through Jesus Christ our Lord." {vs.25} So then, in respect of the inseparable communicative poison of the ingredients of our corruptions, mingling themselves with the best righteousness of the best men, both they and that are but loss and dung, and filthy rags, and must be so accounted.

Some then may object, if it be so, we ought to refrain from doing righteousness, as from dung. I answer, it follows not; but that we must refrain from glorying in, or streaking ourselves for our righteous doings, and rather take shame to ourselves when we have done, and so glory only in the Lord. Though good works done by us are but dung in themselves, and in God's eye; yet must we be careful to maintain them, since they are profitable to men. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." {Tit.3:8} David {Ps.16:2,3} confesseth that his goodness extendeth not to God; yet for all this he refrains not, because it could extend to the Saints upon earth, and to the excellent in whom was his delight; it is no good plea, that because a man cannot be wholly clean, therefore, he will be more filthy than needs; you will not like it, that because your children cannot come from school without some dirt, in the cleanest way, that therefore they shall wallow like swine over head and ears in it.

Others will say, that God often shows his approbation of good works, which he would not do if they were all dung. I answer, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin; but as to the believer, all things are clean, so through this faith in Christ, the whole filth of our works is extracted by him; and he presenting the same purged by himself alone, they become accepted with God, {Rev.8:3,4,} but simply the works themselves as done, though never so well, are abhorred of God; and Christ never takes them to purge them, till we ourselves wholly renounce them by counting them loss and dung; and that acceptance procured by him, imports only a liking God takes to them, no efficacy at all they have with him. So you have the doctrine sufficiently cleared to you, I hope.

Now, if it be as you have heard, then {keeping within the bounds of Paul to Timothy, "not to rebuke an elder, but to entreat him as a father;"} let me have leave, who also am an elder, though unworthy, to beseech the elders with all possible meekness, that they will not magnify man's righteousness, no not when he is in Christ, above what is meet; let me obtain the favour to declare my judgment, when such righteousness of man is so exalted, and the issue of it, it is exalted above what is meet, when high things are

spoken of it in its own name, and even in reference to Christ's assistance, and a man's being in him.

1. When it is cried up with rhetorical commendation, ascribing virtue and efficacy to it in its own name; give me leave, I beseech you, whilst I open myself in this particular; man's works are thus cried up and magnified, when {for instance} his prayer, repentance, self-denial and exact blameless walking have the high titles of a kind of omnipotency to effect wonders, and are commended as most precious and incomparably excellent, not only in the eye of men, but God; as the things wherein he takes infinite pleasure, proceeding from a sanctified heart; and this whilst there is no name mentioned, but only of these righteous actions in such high praises, as if they carried such a lustre, beauty and energetical virtue in their own astute; for you know the poet's complaint, "I have made these verses, another gets the honors;" may not Christ justly take up such a complaint? All the comeliness of man's righteousness is no more but what he puts upon it, and yet the righteousness must go, he not so much as mentioned or hinted in such praise; there is verily a fault among us in this respect; if any say, that Christ is always to be supposed as principal; I answer, he should be supposed not only as the principal in these praises, but as solely deserving; for all that is praise-worthy is his alone; but why only supposed? Why deserves not he to be named as well as the righteousness? Certainly it is no good manners {to say no worse} to forget him, whilst his poorest instruments are so highly remembered; besides, how can people suppose that which they hear not of? They must go away with things as they are delivered to them; as when servants bring presents from their masters to any, they do not say, I bestow such or such a thing on you, but, my master sends it you; if he should take it on himself, he would go for an arrogant fellow; it will not salve the matter, when he is taxed for such arrogancy, to say, my master should have been supposed, when he gave no hint of him. Such kind of extolling man's righteousness is far from counting it loss and dung, as Paul doth in my text; methinks, therefore, it were comely in all extolling of it, explicitly to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of Christ.

2. Man's righteousness is exalted above what is meet, when too high things are spoken of it, being accompanied with Christ's assistance by his Spirit,

and in reference to a man's being in him, when he doth such righteousness.

May I be bold once more to clear my mind in this also; it is true indeed, whilst a believer's heart is overcast with gross vapors, and is more than ordinarily dull in hearing, is low and slow in praying, and is somewhat stiff in fasting above measure; such righteousness goes usually for loss and dung, and such it is; but if a soul gets under full sail, filled with a gale of the Spirit of Christ, when floods of meltings flow from it; if he can cry mightily, be swift to hear, greedy in sucking in divine truths, and somewhat exact in observing practical righteous means, to mourn and pray lustily, being helped by the Spirit herein; then such prayers, mournings and other divine exercises will do wonders; hereby men shall get pardon, settle spiritual, civil and natural matters with sanctified insight; such courses some think will turn away God's wrath, and reconcile him to men; but, under favour, the attributing such efficacy to righteousness, though thus assisted by Christ's Spirit is more than is meet, though Christ be explicitly owned as the author of such assistance; the righteousness so assisted, hath no efficacy at all to obtain anything of the Lord, but rather to hasten and multiply wrath, in that it multiplies sin.⁶⁸ How can sin have efficacy towards expiation of sin, and pacifying a just incensed God for it? Certainly in no

56 That is, when it is overvalued, and not renounced, as it should; but such efficacy ascribed to it, as is not in it, as to turn away the wrath of God, and obtain favour of him, to the great neglect of the righteousness of Christ; otherwise the Doctor owns it instrumentally obtains good things from and through Christ the fountain, and as it has relation to him. Gill respect! Suppose a traitor brought in to the prince by a favourite, and taught by him what to say, and how to deport himself; but the traitor mars his tale, and as he delivers it, it proves new treason; can the favourite's assistance have any ground to hope that this, his new traitorous carriage, shall pacify the king, and obtain his pardon? The case is like ours in hand; when we come to God, the Spirit perhaps puts a good tale into our mouth, but through our ill-managing of it, we

68 56 That is, when it is overvalued, and not renounced, as it should; but such efficacy ascribed to it, as is not in it, as to turn away the wrath of God, and obtain favour of him, to the great neglect of the righteousness of Christ; otherwise the Doctor owns it instrumentally obtains good things from and through Christ the fountain, and as it has relation to him. Gill.

make but new treason of it; the righteousness with which we come to God, though we bring with it the clean water of the Spirit of Christ, to wash away our old dung; yet there is such filth in the vessel of our present righteous actions, that they do but add dung to dung, instead of washing it away.

If any shall grant, that originally, or per se, the best righteousness obtains nothing, but rather charges man with a new account; but yet instrumentally, it obtains what is desired, being well qualified as before is mentioned.

I answer, if it be no more, then I heartily desire that we should always express it, that the people may clearly understand and remember, and be guided explicitly to the fountain itself, Christ alone; for certainly whilst he is suppressed, and these instruments are reached out without relation to him, who only fills them with all that runs through them, they are but mere empty pits, and dry channels, though never so curiously cut out.

The issue of such over-exalting sanctified righteousness, is that by such doting on the efficacy of it, Christ himself is shamefully neglected, and grows too much out of request. Here may I a little alter the saying, which historians tell us was heard in heaven, after the church grew into credit; *Religio peperit divitias, et filia devoravit matrem*, {Religion brought forth riches and the daughter devoured the mother;} I may as truly say, *Christus peperit iustitiam, et filia devoravit matrem*, {Christ begets righteousness in men, and the daughter destroys the mother.} Christ begets righteousness in men, and this exalted as much as in such lies that over exalt it, is made to devour Christ himself; just as if a king should promote a favourite, and then he should be so applauded for his usefulness to the subjects, that the king must be dethroned, and he crowned in his place. I beseech you, do but mark how our righteousness, so exalted, creeps up, by degrees, into Christ's throne, even to the dethroning of him.

In all exigencies and extremities, how naked is the throne of grace {understanding grace properly} left without suitors! How few followers hath Christ himself! How rarely are men sent to shelter themselves under the shadow of his wings, whilst the seat of righteousness is thronged! What earnest outcries for prayers, mournings, fastings, and such like, to help men at a dead lift! What posting to them

in extremities, as if they kept a court by themselves; for Christ is seldom heard of, at least not set up on high as to do all; and yet this righteousness is but merely his ministering servant; what the Apostle said of himself, {1 Cor.3:5,} I may as truly say of the best righteousness best assisted; what is prayer, mourning, fasting, hearing, or the like, but ministers by whom ye believed and received mercy? And if but ministers at best, shall they be greater than the Lord? Let me not be mistaken, I intend no derogation to righteousness, but to bring it into its own place; namely, to be used as that, where, according to Christ's direction, we may meet with him; from whose hands alone, we are there to expect whatever we pant after according to his will; reserving a submission to be disposed of otherwise, if he see fit.

Another issue of such exalting of man's sanctified righteousness above what is meet, is Christ's leaving persons to that little or no succor, which this can yield, being made the refuge of men.

I remember what the Lord said to his people, the Israelites, bowed down under the hands of the Philistines; "go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." {Jg.10:14} What is it but to make a god of our righteousness, when we choose it to be our refuge in time of need, and then exclude, or take no notice of Christ, "we ask and receive not, because we ask amiss;" building on fervency in prayer to obtain of God, when we should rest only on Christ, without regard to that. Doubtless all this fasting, mourning and praying in these times, which I believe no former age could parallel, prosper not so well as is expected, because the principal verb is wanting, which can only make good sense of all we say or do, Christ I mean. Were all seasoned with that salt, doubtless it would be more savoury, that is, cordially and dependingly seasoned with it; "if ye will not believe, {saith the prophet} surely ye shall not be established." {Is.7:9} Wherefore are we called Christians? The name imports that all in us should mainly savour of Christ; and that no receipt should be made or given, but Christ must be predominant in it. Sure I am, Paul was of this mind, when he said, "I desire to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." How can that physic work according to expectation, which by the apothecary's heedlessness is destitute of

that ingredient which was prescribed to do all in all? It is as if hellebore {a healing herb} should be left out of a purge, and nothing should be administered but what was prescribed for the taking of it down. Christ only is the hellebore that purgeth; prayers are but the liquor to let him down; leave Christ out, and what will all the rest do? Nay, the truth is, as in every strong purge there are some degrees of poison, which are quelled by a predominant cordial injected for that purpose; so our mournings, fastings and self-denials have poison in them, sufficient to suffocate a soul that takes them, and Christ alone is the cordial that quells such poison; let him then be left out, and judge I pray you what will be the issue. O, then, whatever else we forget in prescribing and applying receipts for our spiritual recoveries, let us be sure not to forget to put Christ into them, lest we kill instead of healing, or poison men instead of recovering them.

And for the generality of God's people, my advice to them is briefly this; when Christ is prescribed in greatest quantity, and for sole efficacy, let them beware, lest they forget or neglect to put him into their receipts; the portion is desperate when he is not predominant; and if at any time a spiritual physician prescribe any receipt, and forgets Christ therein, let them be sure to supply him themselves before they take it, though the ingredient prescribed seem never so rich and sovereign; and resolve that these of themselves have too much poison in them to be ventured on alone, and therefore will produce but loss, being dung.

The premises considered, I beseech you all to suffer a word of exhortation, take some good course to get a Paul's eye, clearly to see loss and dung in your best righteousness, even when your sails are fullest, and your flight swiftest. What course must we take {will you say} to get such an eye to see all things thus? 1. Take heed you use not false spectacles whilst you look on your righteousness; look not through men's estimation or applause of it who use to be something over-rhetorical in their praises. 2. Look not through your own deceitful hearts, which are apt to judge their own brood very fair. 3. Nor through other men's righteousness, comparing your own with theirs, whose copies, at the best, are imperfect, and therefore cannot fully represent righteousness in its complete form; but weigh it impartially in the balance of the sanctuary; try it by the authentic standard; in brief,

lay it to the pattern given in the mount. Paul saith of himself, "I was alive without the law once; {that is, I thought all was right and well, till I came to the law;} but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." {Rom.7:9} That is, this commandment showed me a world of filth I dreamed not of, by which I saw I was a dead man. But, beloved, I confess in all this I have but set a clear crystal glass before a blind eye; the law is but materially the discoverer of loss and dung in our best righteousness, containing in it the rules of it, and the aberrations from it, which is a book sealed up and illegible in respect of the spiritualness of it; and, therefore, the sole efficient of discerning loss and dung in our righteousness, is only the Lamb who only was found worthy to open the book and unseal it. {Rev.5:9} Christ alone can make a person see it; and therefore the Lord saith, {in Is.42:6,7} "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, &c."

Christ represents our best righteousness as loss and dung, two ways: 1. Directly, thus; not only showing us plainly the particulars wherein the filth consists which he doth by the law; but also by giving a right hint of it therein, whereby sin appears clearly to be out of measure sinful; this he doth by the touch of his omnipotency; this sight of failings in our righteousness, not only as failings, but also under the notion of dung, indeed is the sole work of Christ; not all the means in the world can do it; he, indeed, in the ministry of the Gospel doth it here and there; therefore the Apostle Paul, {speaking of turning men from darkness to light by the preaching of the Gospel} adds, that Christ had sent him to do it. And, therefore, as Peter and John after they had healed the lame man, seeing the people begin to gaze on them, tell them that they were mistaken, "it was Christ's name, through faith in him, that made him whole," {Acts 3:12-16,} so should all ministers and people, when they attain to a clear sight and sense of dung in the best actions, confess that it is only his name that did it, by a sole absolute power he hath over the hearts of all men. 2. Christ gives such clear sight reflexly; I mean comparatively thus, by showing that the sole all-fullness is in himself; from whence he makes a man argue thus, if all purity be in Christ, then is there none elsewhere in the creature.

16 The Two Covenants Of Grace

“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” {Heb.8:6}

This Epistle to the Hebrews, as it notably illustrates and invincibly maintains the transcendent excellences of Christ; so the Apostle, {that he might the more prevalently win the Jews,} carries the whole discourse of Christ in the way they were best acquainted with; comparing him, all along, to such things as were usual among them, and were in greatest request and of highest esteem with them; as first he compares him to angels, then to Moses, and so goes along. Now, because he knew that the priesthood among the Jews, and the privileges belonging to it were their oracle and chiefest refuge in cases of greatest moment and consequence; he mainly sets himself about this, to show the incomparable excellency of Christ’s personal Priesthood above the most glorious excellences the priesthood of the Jews had.

It is very true, as it shall appear by-and-by; that the things of greatest moment were wrapped up in the privileges of their priesthood; there they had their remission of sins, their peace of conscience, their immunities and security from danger, such as it was; so that if the Apostle could but make it good, that there was more excellency to be found in Christ than in their greatest privileges, there was great hope that he might be a minister of reconciliation to them; and for this cause you shall find, beloved, that he spends four whole chapters about nothing else but to show what transcendent excellencies were to be had from Christ himself, above the greatest privileges this most glorious ordinance of theirs could bring unto them. The 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters of this Epistle contain a comparison between Christ and the privileges his priestly office brings, with those priests, and the privileges their offices brought; and, in the comparison, most clearly show an unsearchable difference between the best of theirs, and those Christ brings, which were not before in the administration of their priesthood.

And, however, for the present, a discourse on this subject may seem impertinent, I doubt not, beloved, but, before I have done, I shall make it appear, that it is

of as great consequence to the true members of Christ as any that can be delivered, I shall endeavour, all the way as I go along, to make sure work, that I may not leave occasion of dispute or contradiction.

In chapter 7, the Apostle begins with the order of Christ’s priesthood, to show the excellencies of that above the order of their priesthood; he was a priest after the order of Melchisedec, they after the order of Aaron. In chapter 8, 9 & 10, he passes from the order, and comes to the business whereabouts their several offices were employed; and, concerning their several employments, he finds so large a difference, that although it be true, there was some remission of sins, some peace of conscience in the administration of their priestly office; yet, so far the glory of Christ’s office goes beyond theirs, that he sticks not to call their service and administration, when it was at the best, but the very shadow of Christ’s; that he doth in the words before my text, and also in chapter 10. Nay, he goes further, he finds so great a difference between them, that he doth not stick to make the business of those priests, and of Christ, two distinct covenants, one to succeed in the room of the other. Though Christ be the subject matter, in general, of both, and remission of sins the fruit of both, yet, such a vast difference is between them, that he makes them two several covenants; and the consequence of this truth is of so much moment, that, until there be a right understanding of it, there never will be any absolute settlement of peace of conscience; but there will still arise some objections to charge sin upon the soul, which it shall never be able to answer.

To come to the words of my text, they are the sum of the whole discourse through all those four chapters; here the apostle begins to make his application of the comparison. Before he had showed what was the employment of those priests of the old law; now he comes to show wherein Christ excels them; “but now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry;” &c.

There are three things considerable in the words. The apostle’s main conclusion; his application and illustration of it; and his confirmation of the truth of it.

I. The main conclusion in these words; “but now he hath obtained a more excellent ministry;” wherein there are these particulars very considerable: 1. The apostle limits the office of Christ, what it is, he calls

it a ministry. 2. He shows the quality of this office; for, though the term of ministry may seem to be somewhat coarse and low for such a one as Christ, yet, he shows, it is not sordid or mean, but an excellent ministry. 3. He proceeds to the degree of excellency of it, and that by comparing it with the ministry of the priests of the old law; it is "a more excellent ministry," that is, than theirs. 4. He shows how Christ comes by this ministry; "he hath obtained it;" and, {Hebrews 7} it is more fully expressed; he was made a priest by an oath; he was called thereunto by God. 5. Finally, he sets out the time of Christ's exercising this ministry of his, when it began to be on foot; "but now hath he obtained;" intimating, that it is such a one as comes in the place of the other, and begins when that ends.

II. The illustration of this conclusion is in the next words; "by how much he is the Mediator of a better covenant;" where you shall find the apostle explaining and opening his conclusion in these particular branches. 1. He explains what the ministry is he speaks of; for he calls it a mediator-ship; he is a minister; that is, he is a mediator. 2. He further explains this ministry, by setting forth the subject-matter about which he is employed; Christ is the mediator of a covenant. 3. He explains wherein this mediator-ship of Christ excels that of the old priests; for he said before only, it is more excellent; here he shows wherein it is, namely, "by how much he is the mediator of a better covenant." 4. He intimates to us, that there is a distinct covenant, whereof Christ is the mediator, differing from that whereof the priest was the mediator; he doth not say, he is the mediator of better things in the same covenant, but of a better covenant; a better and a worse covenant must be two several covenants; better and worse qualities may be in one and the same; but for the covenant itself to be called better than another, is a manifest argument of a double covenant; but of this more anon.

III. The apostle's confirmation of this conclusion is in the last words of the text, "which was established upon better promises;" where you may note. 1. That these covenants he speaks of have promises for their foundation; better promises in the second, argue good in the first; for the word better is comparative, and comparative unto a positive, which signifies good; promises then are the foundation of both these covenants; and this is worth the observation, when

we shall come to consider what they are. 2. He proves that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant by two arguments. 1. Though both are founded upon promises, yet that which Christ is mediator of, is founded upon better, and therefore must be a better covenant. 2. Though their covenant was founded upon promises, yet was it not established upon them, much less upon better promises; but, saith the apostle, here the covenant that Christ mediated was better, in that it was established upon better promises. They were sweet promises whereupon their covenant was confirmed, but they were not so durable; but that the covenant itself was to sink, and did sink to the ground; that was not established, it was not firm and unchangeable; but the covenant that Christ mediated is better; it is an established one, a covenant that never shall be changed or altered, as theirs was. Here are heads enough, I confess, to take up a great deal more time than is fit to trouble your patience with; I shall not presume so far upon you.

But, that I may, as near as may be, confine myself within some limits, I shall reduce the main principles of all these heads unto two things, and confine my discourse to them.

I. What those covenants are, namely, that whereof Christ himself is said to be mediator, and that other which is opposed unto it.

II. Wherein the covenant whereof Christ himself is mediator, is better than that which those priests did administer. It may be you may see some things in the resolution of these that may be some satisfaction to your spirits.

What these covenants are, and how distinct. I will not meddle with particular covenants, which God made with some special persons that came not within this compass; there are certain general covenants that God made with men; usually they are reduced to two heads; the first is commonly called the covenant of works, first made in innocency; the terms thereof are of a double nature, "do this and live;" and "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" life upon doing, a curse upon not doing; in sum, the covenant of works stands upon these terms, that in perfect obedience there should be life; at the first failing therein, no remedy, no admittance of remission of sins upon any terms in the world; Christ cannot come

in, nor be heard upon the terms of the covenant of works. There is a second general covenant, and that is usually called, a new covenant, or a covenant of grace; and this, in opposition to the other, stands only in matter of grace without works through Christ. This, as far as I can find, is generally received to be the right distribution of the covenants of God; the covenant of grace being most commonly taken for one entire covenant from first to last; now to draw it to our purpose; if this distribution be good, the issue at length must be this; seeing there are two covenants spoken of here by the apostle, which we shall make good by-and-by, they must needs be referred to that distribution of those two heads, and so the sum must be this; the covenant of grace being better than the covenant of works, Christ must be the mediator of it; and then there remains no other, whereof those priests were mediators, but that of works.

For my own part, beloved, I shall not take upon me to censure any man's judgment; only I shall desire to propose something to the consideration of the wise, who, upon deliberate advice, may see something worth their meditation; to me it seems most plain, that the opposition the apostle here makes, is not between the covenant of works and that of grace; and that he, in all this discourse, hath not the least glance upon the covenant of works at all, nor doth he meddle with it. You know, beloved, that the articles of that covenant are drawn up in the Decalogue of the moral law; and in all this discourse, from Hebrews 7:1 to the end of Hebrews 10 the apostle doth not so much as take notice of the moral law, nor hath he to do one jot with any clause of it; all the opposition here is not between Christ and Moses, but between priest and priest, office and office; Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, they priests after the order of Aaron; Christ is the minister of a perfect covenant, they of an imperfect one; now, if it were between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, then he should have gone on with the covenant of works, and the articles of that, and set them in opposition unto Christ, which he doth not.

But it may be, some will say, if there be a distinct difference between covenants, surely then they can be no other but those two of grace and works, and therefore the opposition must needs be between them.

Beloved, give me leave to answer freely, the whole

administration of that covenant, which the priests had to manage, was wholly and only matter of grace; and though it were a covenant of grace, yet it is opposed to that which Christ in his own person mediated; therefore the opposition which stands here, is not between the covenant of works, and of grace; but it is between the covenant of grace weak, imperfect, unprofitable, disannulled; and another covenant of grace that is perfect, established, and makes the corners thereunto perfect.

So that indeed, though Christ be the subject matter of the covenant of grace, whether old or new, and though there be remission of sins in both; {for I call the priests' covenant now the old, and that I will make good presently,} yet, I say, there is such a difference between these two, that they are two distinct covenants one from the other.

That it may appeal to you, that they are both covenants of grace, and yet two distinct ones also, consider briefly these particulars.

1. It is granted to all men, that in the covenant of works, there is no remission of sin, no notice of Christ; but the whole employment of the priests of the old law was altogether about remission of sins, and the exhibiting Christ in their fashion unto the people. In Numbers 15:28, {I will give you but one instance,} you shall plainly see that the administration of the priestly office had remission of sins as the main end of it. "And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him." See, the main end is administering forgiveness of sins.

And that Christ was the main subject of their ministry is plain, because the apostle saith in the verse before my text, that all that administration was but a shadow of him, and a figure for the present to represent him, as he expresses it in Hebrews 9; and the truth is, the usual gospel that all the Jews had, was in their sacrifices and priestly observations; it is true, the prophets prophesied of a glorious gospel, but mostly you shall find that the most excellent gospel they preached, was always preached with reference to the future. The prophet Jeremiah hath an excellent passage in chapter 50:20, "in those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of

Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; but mark it, it is in those days, and at that time, it shall be sought for, and not found; he doth not speak this of the present, but of future times; therefore St. Peter observes, that when they prophesied concerning the fullness of grace, they did not prophesy unto themselves but unto us, the main gospel they had was to be fetched out of those trivial observations, ceremonies, sacrifices, and gifts which they were to attend upon, whence they were to fetch their pardon through Christ. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." {I Pet.1:20}

So that it is plain, the administration of their covenant was an administration of grace, absolutely distinct from that of the covenant of works. That Christ's covenant was a covenant of grace, I will not stand to prove; I know no man questions it that professes himself a Christian; but now though these two as it appears plainly, are covenants of grace; so it shall appear as fully to you that they are two distinct covenants of grace; they are not one and the same covenant diversely administered, but they are two distinct covenants.⁶⁹

To make it good, because I know some may think much of this that I deliver, I shall desire you to receive nothing, but as the plain scripture will make it evident unto you; for this purpose first consult Hebrews 8:7. There are, if I mistake not, three arguments in those few words, to prove that they are two divers {more than one, and of various types} covenants. "For if that

⁶⁹ 57 Notwithstanding all the worthy Doctor has said, these don't appear to be two covenants essentially distinct; since he himself owns, that Christ is the subject-matter both, and remission of sins is in them both; and though called first and second, and the latter coming in the place of the former, this may be said of one form of administration of the covenant succeeding another. Mr. Lancaster, Vindication of the Gospel, thinks the controversy may be compromised by distinguishing the old covenant into the promise veiled, the same in substance with that in the new testament, and the veil itself done away; which is giving up the point, since that is no other than the ceremonial law, the outward form of administering the covenant of grace under the former dispensation, and was a shadow of good things to come by Christ, clearly revealed under the present administration; however, this is a matter of no very great importance; and the Doctor has excellently shown the difference between these two, be they called what they will; and indeed, properly speaking, the covenant of grace, as made, was before them both, even from eternity. Gill.

first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second;" where observe, that having spoken before in the text of a better covenant, whereof Christ is the minister and mediator; he saith in opposition to this, if "the first had been faultless."

Again, here you see the apostle expressly calls these the first and the second; "if the first had been faultless, there should have been no place for the second." Now that it should be affirmed of one and the same covenant, that this is the first, and that this is the second, and yet these two should be both one, is strange; "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit;" it is true, the divine essence is ONE; but consider as there are three persons, they are not one; so if you will consider anything as they are two, they are not one; now these covenants are called first and second, therefore they cannot be both one.

Again, the apostle speaks of a second coming in the place of the first; we cannot say of one and the selfsame covenant, that it comes in place of itself; when one thing comes in the place of another, these two must needs be distinct. Can you say of the one and the same thing, that it is disannulled, and that it is not; that it vanishes, and yet that it is come in the place of itself when it vanishes? In Hebrews 7:18, you shall find plainly that the apostle, speaking of the covenant under the priesthood, calls it "the commandment that went before;" and says, it was disannulled in that it was weak and unprofitable. And in Hebrews 10:9, he tells us, that "he takes away {speaking of Christ} the first, that he may establish the second;" so that here you may plainly see, that these two covenants, one is not only called first, and the other second; but the one is so the first, and the other so the second, that the first must be taken away, that the second may come in place; and that the second doth not come till the first be disannulled; but all the question will be, whether, when the apostle speaks thus of first and second, of old and new, of better and worse, of disannulling and coming in place; whether he means the covenant of grace, under which the Jews were, and under which we are in Christ, or some other.

For clearing this, I beseech you, consider what he speaks for the illustrating his own mind. In Hebrews 8:8,9, having made a distinction of better and faulty, of first and second, see how he proves what he speaks, that they are distinct. For finding fault with them, he

saith, “the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt;” {and, as Jeremiah adds, for he takes all this out of Jeremiah, chapter 31,} “although I was a husband to them;” and in the close of all, “your sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” You see the apostle, from Jeremiah, brings a direct distinction of two covenants; “I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers.” Here are two covenants; a new one, and one made with their fathers. Some may think it was the covenant of works at the promulgation of the moral law; but mark well that expression of Jeremiah, and you shall see it was the covenant of grace; “for, {saith he,} not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, although I was an husband unto them.” How can God be considered as a husband to a people under a covenant of works, which was broken by man in innocency, and so became disannulled? The covenant of works runs thus; “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law;” and, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Man had sinned before God took him by the hand to lead him out of the land of Egypt, and sin had separated man from God; how then can he be called a husband in the covenant of works? The covenant, therefore, was not a covenant of works, but such a one as the Lord became a husband in, and that must be a covenant of grace; and yet, saith he, “I will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers,” &c. In the close of this chapter, see how the apostle sums up the matter; “in that he saith a new, {saith he,} the first is waxed old, and so is ready to vanish away;” here you see again, how he makes this distinction between the covenants, old and new; one being new, is fresh; and the other, being old, is ready to vanish away. Again, consider, in Hebrews 9 he goes on, as with main strength, to make good the thing, that there are two distinct covenants; “the first covenant verily, {saith he,} had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.” What is this first covenant? The apostle reckons up all the implements of it; he speaks of their candlestick, table, and gifts, and so he goes along; but mark in verse 15,

what opposition he makes; and for this cause Christ, {saith he,} “is the mediator of the new testament.” Wherefore, upon what terms is this? In that first covenant, there was but blood of bulls and goats, which could never perfect the comers thereunto, as pertaining to the conscience; but when Christ comes with his own blood he obtained eternal redemption, and so purged the conscience from dead works; so that by this you may perceive that he makes absolute distinction between the first, which did consist in those rites, and that whereof Christ is the mediator; in a word, in Hebrews 10, he renews the distinction once more; the law consisted in burnt sacrifices, offerings, &c., “which could never make the comers thereunto perfect,” {vs.1,} but there was a remembrance of sin once every year; therefore, saith the apostle, {speaking of the Lord,} “sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,” then “said I, {that is Christ,} Lo, I come {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.” {Heb.10:1-10} If all this be not a sufficient evidence to clear this, that they are distinct covenants; and so distinct that though both be covenants of grace, yet the one must be disannulled before the other can be established, I know nothing that can be proved by scripture.

But to come to the main thing; there being two distinct covenants, let us see wherein that which Christ administered is better than that the priests did; and this will be of very great concern to the settling of spirits; the differences are marvelous; the apostle expresses them in such language, that, I dare be bold to say, if any man should utter it, and not have his warrant from him, he would go nigh to be censured.

That first covenant, though it was a covenant of grace, yet he spares not to say, that it was not faultless; that is, it was not without fault; he goes further, he saith it was unprofitable, yea, weak; nay, which is marvelous to consider, he calls the administration of that covenant, beggarly rudiments; whereas, on the other side, in the covenant Christ manages, he says, “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” {Heb.10:14} The difference then stands in these two things.

The covenant which the priests administered was a very imperfect one; that Christ manages, is most absolute, complete, and perfect. There was a necessity

of adding many things unto their covenant; but that which Christ managed, is so complete, that nothing in the world can be added to it; if any will stumble at the word faulty, you must understand, beloved, that there is a twofold faultiness in things; it may be either sinful, or imperfect; the covenant was not sinfully faulty, for it was of God's own making that cannot sin; but you will say, being so, it cannot be imperfect.

You must distinguish perfection, which is twofold; a thing may be said to be perfect, in respect of the end for which it was ordained, or to compass higher ends than it was ordained to; as for that first covenant of grace, it was not imperfect for that end that God appointed; for it did all that he purposed should be done by it; but it was imperfect to do so much as Christ himself did. This is the main thing I would prosecute, to let you see wherein the covenant that Christ managed excels the covenant which the priests managed; there are three things principally wherein they differ. I will pass by many ordinary differences.

1. Christ's covenant is better in respect of the remission of sins. 2. In respect of peace of conscience. 3. In respect of freedom from punishment and wrath as the desert of sin.

I have showed before, that some remission of sins was under the Jews' covenant of grace; I shall now endeavor to let you see wherein that was imperfect, in comparison of what Christ hath now brought by his own offering himself once for all. It may be, this may seem somewhat strange, that I should affirm, that their remission of sins was imperfect; but, beloved, the apostle speaks fully to the point, and saith expressly, that there was "remembrance of sins again every year." {Heb.10:3} But, to handle things distinctly and particularly.

I. Their remission of sins was imperfect in comparison of what Christ by his own person hath wrought; they had not in their covenant a plenary remission of all sorts of sins; they could not tell whither to go to find pardon for some.⁷⁰ This is plain in Numbers 15:28-30, where, Moses speaking of one sinning by ignorance, a she-goat being brought, there might be an atonement made for him, and the sin might be forgiven; "and the priest shall make an atonement

for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him;" here is a sacrifice for sins of ignorance, but mark what follows, "the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people;" no sacrifice for that. So again, Genesis 17:14, you shall find, that there was no sacrifice to be had for uncircumcision; "the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant;" no other remedy, no appeal to other sacrifices; here was no sparing him by any means; no sacrifice to expiate his transgression. In Exodus 31:14, also you shall see that there was no pardon to be met with for the profanation of the Sabbath, but that soul must be cut off; "every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people;" and so, whosoever ate of the sacrifice, and had uncleanness upon him, must be cut off, "but the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people." {Lev.7:20} I might instance in many other particulars; but certainly there was a variety of sins for which no sacrifice could be admitted, and consequently no pardon obtained, nor sued out for them; for pardon of sin was sued out upon those sacrifices God required.⁷¹ But now mark the difference; herein is the covenant, whereof Christ was the mediator, infinitely better than that other, in the large extent of pardon which it brought along with it. For this purpose, look into I John 1:7, where he saith, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Observe it, I pray you, "from all sin;" see the extent of it; you cannot name the sin which a person would be willing to cast off, and have a pardon for, but the blood of Christ cleanseth from it. If the Jews would have given all their estates, that they might have been admitted to bring sacrifice for such and such a sin, it could not be; "but the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

But you will say, in Hebrews 10:26, the apostle seems

⁷⁰ Not but the saints under the old testament had full forgiveness by looking to the blood and sacrifice of Christ, which cleansed from all sin then, as now, but not by legal sacrifices, or in the Mosaic administration. Gill.

⁷¹ Pardon of sin might be sued out by faith then, upon the blood and sacrifice of Christ; but not upon legal sacrifices, which for some sins were not admitted, and yet were pardoned through Christ, as David and others. Gill.

to intimate, as if there were some sins for which we can have no remission; his words are these; “for if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” Here, some may say, it seems that if a person shall happen to sin willfully, after he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there is no sacrifice for sin.

I beseech you give me leave to open to you the meaning of the apostle, and his plain drift. I find thousands of persons are mightily mistaken in it, and so the text comes to be a very fearful burden upon their spirits; but that you may understand the scope of it aright, know, that there he is closing all the former discourse, which stands mainly in these two things; that there is now one perfect sacrifice once offered by Christ himself, that perfectly doth all things to be done, and, therefore, must be offered no more; and that all the sacrifices that were to be offered, are now vanished; and, in the interim, he comes to this conclusion; now that you have received the knowledge of this truth, that all sacrifices must now cease, if you sin willfully, that is, if you will reject this truth I have delivered unto you; if you think that this one sacrifice is not enough to serve your turn, but you will look to others, there remains no more sacrifice for your sin; as if he should say, you will but deceive yourselves to look in any other way for pardon; you may think such and such services, confessions, prayers, fastings, &c., will do something towards the remission of sins; but deceive not yourselves in this, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Christ was but once offered; if you will not conclude to adhere to that one sacrifice once offered; nor have that to bring perfect remission of sins, you will certainly miscarry; there will be no other remedy, but indignation and wrath will fall upon you; everything else will fail; that is the first. I beseech you have patience, and let me but open myself, lest I leave both myself and the truth to scandal.

II. The covenant he brings, is more perfect, in that though there was remission of sins in it, and so it differs from the covenant of works; yet mark it, and you shall find, that their covenant, though it was a covenant of grace, did not administer grace, but upon antecedent conditions to be performed, before there could be any participation of the grace of it.⁷² I say, there must

be many things done first, before a pardon could be heard of; whereas, under the covenant of grace, which Christ brings, there is no antecedent condition at all; but the whole grace is communicated before ever the person doth anything towards it. In that covenant they must be at the cost of sacrifices, must bring them to the tabernacle, must confess their sins to the priest; and, {for ought I know,} in cases of extremity, must fast too, before they could obtain pardon of sin, and removal of judgment; but the covenant that Christ brings into the world himself, is such, that before ever the person could be able to do any one thing in the world that is good, the whole grace of it is made his, and we need not be at the cost of sacrifice, Christ is at that himself; we need not bring a Christ, he brings himself; we need not offer him, he offers himself; nay, our confession or sin is not antecedent to the forgiveness of it; remission doth not depend upon that, but only upon the grace of God. “I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.” {Is.65:1}

Do but mark, beloved, how the terms of the covenant of grace by Christ run; even while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ; {Rom.5:10;} there could be no good thing done before our reconciliation, when we were considered simply and only as enemies; and so in Ezekiel 16:6 & 8, “and when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live;” {vs.6;} “now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine;” {vs.8;} when? “When thou wast in thy blood;” there is no antecedent doing, before the participation of the covenant; nay, the covenant is sworn, even when in blood. The apostle, in Romans 4:5, tells us, “but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Christ considers men under no other notion but ungodly, when he confers the grace of his covenant upon them; you shall never hear, in all the old covenant, pardon bestowed, before

Christ, and were justified as freely, and saved by the free grace of God, even as we are. Gill.

⁷² That is, in the Mosaic way, or according to the administration of the covenant of grace in that way; otherwise saints then, as now, had the pardon of their sins freely, looking to the grace of God and blood of

works of bringing, and offering sacrifice; but under the covenant of grace, there is no respect of good works to the participation of it; even true faith itself is no condition of this covenant, neither is it required as an antecedent to it, or to forgiveness. True faith, indeed, is the evidence of things not seen; we know not that sin is pardoned, till we believe, because it is hid in the breast of God, or rather veiled in the gospel, under general terms, until Christ gives faith unto his people; whereby, they see their sins, as well as other believers, are forgiven; but simply to the conveyance of the pardon itself, there is nothing in the world but grace. You know, beloved, a prince sometimes looks upon a condemned person in pity, and considering him as a dying man, out of grace gives him, his pardon; and thus did the Lord by Christ in a new covenant; he looks upon such and such, as he sees good, going to execution, and merely out of pity cast upon them in this deplorable condition, sends Christ with pardon to them; not calling upon them to change their persons, to come thus and thus handsome, and then he will say something unto them; but as they are condemned malefactors, and come to execution, so he gives his pardon.

III. Though there was pardon under the old covenant, yet know, that what they had, was but by degrees and successively, as they offered sacrifice; it was not continued and successive, but it had interims and stops; in plain language, the covenant of the Jews reached out pardon of sin only so far forth as it was committed before such and such a sacrifice was offered; if a man had sinned ignorantly, till he had brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him; when he did bring it, it took away but that sin; it did not, neither could it, extend to future sins. Here presently is a succession of sin, and this must lie, till there come a second sacrifice to take away that; and when that is gone, a third sin lies again upon the heart; and that is not gone, till there comes a new sacrifice for it; and the reason the apostle saith, “there is a remembrance again of sin;” is because, “the comers thereto could not be perfect;” that is, they indeed had pardon by drops, now for one sin, then for another; it may be a week, a month’s distance between, before they could have it; and still they had it, as their sacrifice was offered; mark the inconvenience of this; so long as any sin lay upon their spirits, these were under the

burden of their own transgressions; this is the reason you have often among the Jews so many complaints; “my sins are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear;” and of the exceeding bitterness of their spirits. No marvel, beloved, they were to bear their own sins; till the sacrifice came there was no discharge; so that, in the interim, sin lay upon their consciences; but mark how the covenant that Christ brought was better than that they had. “By one sacrifice once offered, hath he perfected forever them that are sanctified;” {Heb.10:14;} as much as to say, those that are under this, are not put to these stops and interims for pardon, and are not to wait the time of the sacrifice, that so they may receive it from such a sacrifice; nor after they have some testimony of it, do they now lie under the weight of a sin new committed; but Christ did so perfectly go through the work of redemption, and taking away sin, that by one sacrifice he took it away at once forever. “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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” {Dan.9:24} Here, beloved, lies one of the chiefest comforts of the whole gospel of Christ, to see that in him, sins past, present, and to come, are all at once wrapped up in this one sacrifice of his; there is an expiation beforehand for sin that shall be committed; there is not an expectation of a future expiation; a sacrifice is already offered of value sufficient to take away the sins that afterward are committed; the value of this sacrifice went both upward and downward; upward to Adam, for the full pardon of all the sins of the elect, until Christ came; and it goes downward since he came, for the pardon of all the sins or every elect person until the end of the world; so that in consideration of sin committed since he offered himself, there is not some new thing to be done; but herein stands the perfection of what Christ did, it serves fully and completely for every purpose that could possibly happen afterwards.

There is but one particular more, and that is this, they had pardon {it is true} but as I may so say, that covenant though it did sweep, yet it left a great deal of dust behind; I mean this, though their daily and occasional sacrifices did take away sin, yet they did not take it away clean, but left some scattering of it behind,

and this is plain by this, the apostle saith, that there were in these sacrifices a remembrance of sin again every year; that is, there must be an annual sacrifice to sweep away those relics of the dust of sin, which their daily sacrifice did leave behind; so that they were glad of the coming of the yearly sacrifice to take away sin, to make a clean riddance after these sacrifices, which could not do it; when these were offered, though there was something of remission of sins, yet certainly there remained something of sin behind, and that till a year came about, or else that sacrifice once a year was in vain. Why could not their daily sacrifices do it? God would not, that they should make a clear riddance; and even that yearly sacrifice did not do it; for there must come another yearly sacrifice after that; and another after that; but now there remains no sacrifice for sin; no yearly, no daily, no occasional sacrifices for the taking away of sin. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." {Heb.9:28} "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." {I Pet.3:18}

But, you will say, will you take away all manner of duties and services under the gospel? I answer; I take not away the duty, no, by no means, but the end; there is no duty we perform that is now a sacrifice to take away sin; nothing but the blood of Christ only, takes away sin; as for the services of Christians, there are many other purposes for which they are required; as to express obedience to the will of God, the serving our generation, the setting forth the praise of the glory of God's free grace; these are the ends of our services; but to expect, by any service we do, to obtain pardon of sin is absolutely Jewish, a new sacrifice upon commission of new sins; and directly overthrows all the fullness and sufficiency of that one sacrifice, offered by Christ himself.

Secondly; the difference between these two covenants stands in quieting the conscience; this follows necessarily upon the former. As there remains something of sin in that covenant of the Jews, so there must remain something of terror and trouble upon their conscience; a tender and well enlightened conscience, always sees and feels sin where it is; if there be any, a tender conscience feels it, and the gripe and gird of it; now, in that, there were sometimes some sins upon their persons no marvel that there were pain in their consciences for sin, for the apostle

saith expressly, "that those gifts and sacrifices could not take away sin, as pertaining to the conscience;" that is, they could not take it away, that the conscience should be eased; for still there would be new sins committed that would disquiet it; hence it is that they cry, out of the bitterness of their spirits, that sin did lie upon them. But, beloved, that which Christ brought is better than this, in that "the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works;" for which cause he is called "the mediator of a new testament;" because his blood obtained a complete redemption, purged the conscience, not only from the foul acting of things, but from those sins, which, while they remain, lie as a weight to torment the spirit. Christ takes away all the sins of his people; either you must say, Christ's sacrifice doth not take away all, or that there is not a sin left, after Christ hath cleansed the conscience of a believer.

In a word, to close up all, the covenant that Christ brought was better, in regard of wrath and judgment for sin. Justice you know follows sin at the heels; where it finds sin, there it executes' justice finding sin now and then upon the Jews, under that covenant, as it met with them so gave them a lash for them; hence you have those many complaints of God's justice plaguing them always; it was justice, because there was sin, which was their own, and was charged upon themselves, till the sacrifice came, and therefore their judgment was just; but Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, in that as he hath taken away all sin, so he hath taken away all the desert of it; though it be true under the gospel, the Lord chastises his people as a father with his rod; yet he never pours out indignation and wrath as their desert; he never looks to satisfy himself with any punishment of any member of Christ; for he beheld the travail of Christ, and was satisfied with that, {Isa.53:11;} and when God is once satisfied, he will never demand another satisfaction. If Christ hath worn out the rod of wrath to the stumps, and cast it into the fire, certainly there is no more of it to be remembered; the apostle is full to this, speaking of the Jews, he saith that they were under a schoolmaster; that is, a scourge, until Christ; for so are the words in the original; "the law, {saith he,} was a schoolmaster until Christ; but when faith was come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." {Gal.3:24-25} They indeed were fit, to be scourged, because they

were in a state subject to sin, guilt, and faults, until Christ came; but when faith, that is, Christ himself was come, they were no longer under a schoolmaster; therefore, in Galatians 4:1-2, the apostle calls them heirs indeed, because at length they did attain salvation; but in respect of the weight and burden of the rod upon them, he saith, that for the present they differed nothing from servants; “the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the appointed time of the father;” that is, till Christ came; “but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.” {vs.4} I know it may be well interpreted of delivering persons in general, Jews and Gentiles, from under the slavery of sin; but doubtless the apostle hath an eye to this; namely, in respect of the imperfection of taking sin from them, they did bear indignation and wrath for so much sin as was upon them; whereas Christ takes away all wrath and indignation from us, as it is the desert of sin.

Use I. In all this you may see the glorious liberty “wherewith Christ hath made you free,” wherein stand fast, “and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” {Gal.5:1}

Use II. By keeping these truths, you shall be able to answer satisfactorily to the knottiest objections that are or can be made against the free grace of God in Christ, especially from examples and actions under the old covenant.

17 Christ The Great Paymaster Of All The Debts Of His People

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

Of all the chosen vessels to bear the name of Christ prophetically, before the children of Israel, there is none so like the apostles as this our prophet Isaiah, in respect of the solemnity of his call; as appears by comparing both together; both he and they were called by visible fire settling on them. {Isa.6:5-7; Acts 2:3,4} Doubtless, this singular likeness of their calls, foreshadowed {as indeed, in the event it proved} a singular likeness between their ministries, as if he had been singled out to be the forerunner of them. Sure, if prediction be enough to denominate him

a prophet, the glorious and precious Gospel he preached, so far beyond the accustomed stream of his times, may well admit him into the fellowship of the evangelists; scarce coming short of any of them, in holding forth the “bright morning star,” or the “sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings.” It is true, the other prophets now and then met with Christ in their perambulations; but, as they saw him at a remote distance, so they could take but, as it were, a shadow of him, and accordingly represent him to the people; but this prophet seems to prepossess the beloved disciple’s place, even the bosom of Christ; therefore you may, with one eye, easily see, by comparing him with the rest, the vast difference. But to leave comparisons, because some think them odious; how admirably he preacheth the free and full grace of God to self-willed sinners, let this chapter serve for a sample; which both Christ himself, and his apostles, took so much notice of, that, of all the prophetic passages, there is none so frequently quoted by them, as these here mentioned, which the quotations in the margin point out unto you, as you may there see. In the prophet’s entrance upon his sweet discourse of the unsearchable treasures of God’s love in Christ to his people, whispered, as it were, a secret in his ear, he seems to be at a stand; as if he could hardly tell whether to bring it to light, or hold his tongue, out of a probable suspicion he had grounded on former experience, that this kind of doctrine would be rejected. “Who hath believed our report; and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” {vs.1} Now that this may not seem to be a calumny, but on good ground, in verse 2, he gives an account of the reasons moving him to it, besides what occasioned it from former experience. He knew that the people expected great matters from Christ when he came; {as well they might;} and therefore, that his first appearance should promise much; and that if it should be in a mean low way, which would carry no likelihood of compassing great matters, he should not be believed. Now it was revealed unto him, that Christ must “grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground;” if therefore men judged according to outward appearance, {as probably they will,} it might easily be judged that his labour would be in vain, and that he should spend his strength for naught. Who expects a fair and plentiful crop in a barren heath or wilderness? What else but inconsiderable shrubs?

How can men hope better of him, who must “grow up as a root out of a dry ground?” So long as common principles of reason rule and engross conclusions, Christ appearing, as is fore-*prophesied*, will not be taken for the man he is, but rather be laughed to scorn, as indeed he was, when he did so appear; he was by not only the vulgar, but also by the great doctors, the Pharisees; afterwards the prophet more plainly expounds what he means by growing up as a root out of a dry ground. “He hath no form nor comeliness;” that is, his face will promise little or nothing, so that for lack of outward beauty, no desirableness will appear in him; hereupon, in verse 3, he changeth his suspicion into a peremptory assertion, and concludes, “he is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Yet, for all this, our prophet was in travail, and could not be at ease till he had brought forth the man child, who was to save his people from their sins; {Mt.1:21;} it seems he was in Elihu’s temper, “for I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles;” {Job 32:17-19;} for this ravishing news from heaven must out, or he must burst; speak he will, that he may be refreshed; though the most should put it from them; yet, some few, it be hoped, would gather crumbs of comfort from it; nay, be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of it; as the dawning of the light whereof breaks forth in verse 4, “surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;” where he clears up a secret objection, which, unto common principles, ariseth out of the condition he was found in; namely, how can he be the Saviour of others that cannot save himself? If God plunge him in wrath, sure he can have but little power to prevail for the deliverance of others. The answer is touched in verse 4, and more fully amplified and cleared up in verse 5. The sorrows and griefs which he sustained were not his own, but ours; it is true, he was wounded, bruised, and chastised, but not for any faults of his own, or out of any distaste God took against his person, who was his beloved Son; but “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of

our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” In verse 6, the prophet describes what those were, for which he was wounded; “all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;” now, in my text, he clears up the justice of God in wounding him “for our transgressions;” for it might be objected, that here can be no equity to punish an innocent for a delinquent; but that shows that though the delinquency be not his own act, yet the Lord laid it on him. As to the equity of laying it on him, we shall have a fair opportunity to clear it up in handling of the text; but, before I come to it, let us consider what place these words must have, in order of nature, in this discourse of the prophet. Note, that though according to the order of the word, Christ is first said to bear our sorrows, then to be wounded, and then we receive peace through his chastisements, before our iniquities are laid on him; yet it is not rare to see the precious truths of God out of order in this regard; “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling;” saith Paul, {I bring this but as one instance.} Salvation, as all know, in order of nature, and time also, follows our holy calling, yet in the words it hath precedency. It is so in this discourse; the true method of the Gospel supposes the creature’s sinfulness, as it is first laid down in this verse, which, gives the occasion of Christ’s being a Saviour; and, whereas wounds and stripes are the just wages of sin, this sinfulness of the creature must some way be on Christ, or else he might not in justice be wounded; punitive justice must first find a crime upon a man, before it can smite him; as for Christ, he himself never committed any fault, verse 9, “he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;” as the Lord himself says; therefore, it follows, that the sins of others must be charged to his account, and he must be responsible for them, before he can justly be wounded; hence, in my text, “the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Now {as in suretyship} our debt becoming his, the execution goes justly out against him, and so God can give a just account of wounding him; and he being thus wounded, that is, bearing the full indignation and wrath that our sins deserve, and so ending all the quarrel God had against us; it follows, that these wounds of his become the “chastisement of our peace;” God having hereby nothing to say against us; and seeing all is well between him and us, he doth not only lake away the

anguish, but also proceeds to make a perfect cure; “by his stripes we are healed.” And so I come to the words themselves, which are as the dawning of the day after a sad dark night; holding forth the first glimmerings of comfort to men that have lost themselves in the dark. I confess it is supernatural for a man to see the exceeding horridness of sin, he being naturally blind; but yet many attain this, who come short of reaching the gracious mind of the Lord in acquitting men from their sins {witness Cain and Judas} which is nowhere more fully revealed than in this text.

The truth is, however a careless eye may mind but little extraordinary or admirable in the words; yet I dare be bold to say, they contain well nigh the deepest mysteries of God, manifested in the flesh; even those things whereof our Saviour speaks, when he gave thanks to the Father, for “hiding them from the wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes.” I am persuaded that not any who profess themselves Christians, but will with both hands subscribe to the whole text in general without any contradiction. Oh, that the heart were steadfast in these several particulars! There is not a word in it, but hath its special weight. Satan knows full well that each is a mortal dart to pierce the very heart of his destructive principles; and therefore is very busy with wiles to sophisticate the precious truths held forth herein, and by bitter malice to poison this fountain; as by his instruments he would cozen the world with dross for gold, so would he, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, in making them believe their gold is but dross; or at least, play the thief, and foist dross into their hands instead of this gold.

But, because it is gold tried in the fire, as near as may be, we will not lose a dust of it; and for the better husbanding hereof; let us sift these particulars in the words: 1. What this is which the Holy Ghost tells us is laid on Christ, “the iniquity of us all.” 2. How this is disposed of, “the Lord hath laid it on him.” 3. At whose disposal it is, “the Lord.” 4. On whom he laid it, “him.” 5. Whose iniquities the Lord laid on him, “the iniquity of us all.” 6. When he laid it on him, for the time is past, “he hath laid it on him.” All which particulars offer to our consideration so many several most comfortable propositions; as.

I. God not only inflicted the desert of sin on Christ, in wounding him for it, but also he laid even iniquity

itself on him; I mean the iniquity of his elect.⁷³

II. God doth not connive at the iniquity of his people, as if indeed, he knew well enough it lay on them, but yet he would overlook it, and be content to suppose it on Christ, whilst it remains indeed on them; but, in express terms, the Lord hath laid them on Christ.

III. This laying of iniquity on Christ, is the sole act of the Lord himself; none, nor anything else can do it but he; Christ himself laid not the sins of his people on himself, but the Lord laid them on him. Christ is but the Mediator between God and them in this business; contentedly, indeed, stooping to the burden, when the Lord agreed, and would have it so; much less doth any act of man, whether it be repentance, or turning from his evil ways, or amendment of life, or his faith in the purest act of it, lay them on him; or hath the least hand therein.

IV. The iniquity of God’s people is no otherwise disposed by way of transfer from them, but only on Christ; none can bear or carry away iniquity from them, but he alone.

V. That which was laid on Christ, was the iniquity of us all, even of us who like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to our own way; that is, the Lord had no other consideration in his thoughts at all, but our going astray, and turning to our own way, when he laid our iniquity on Christ. He did not observe any difference, as if one man were more lovely, or likely to be more serviceable, or were more pliable to his bent than others, which might win his love and pity; but looked only on their pollution in blood, rebellion, and enmity, taking the rise of this grace of his only from within himself, even his own compassion.

VI. The Lord is not now to do this, nor is it reserved till here-after; but he hath laid them on Christ already; the act is past long before. And from hence ye may perceive, that there is not now a new thing to be done by the Lord in the transferring the sins of believers to Christ; as if, when they begin to be called out of darkness into marvelous light, just then God begins to transfer sin from them, and lay it upon Christ; so that the act of God’s laying sin upon him, is not a continued act, but what he hath done
73 “Christ was willing to become our Surety, and to answer for our sins, and to bare them imputed to him, so as to be obliged to bear the punishment of them, the wrath and curse, which, if he had not endured them, would have sunk every one or us into the pit of hell.” Romaine on the Law and Gospel, page 170, last edition. Gill.

long before. In which point, it will be considerable to find out the time when the Lord laid the iniquity of his people upon Christ; and it will be further worth consideration, seeing the Lord hath laid them, what is become of them? Where do they remain? As for the person whose sins are transferred, he is acquitted and discharged. And likewise Christ is acquitted of them too. "Hath laid" imports them both. If he hath taken them off from him, that was the committer of them, and laid them upon Christ, they are gone from him too; if they were not gone from him too, the words would have been, the Lord lays, in the present tense; but they are in the past-perfect tense, "hath laid." And this will be very clear, if you consider Hebrews 9:26-28. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Mark it well, there was a time that Christ did not appear without sin; for he bore the sins of many; but there is a second time when he shall appear, and then he shall be without sin; so that believers have no sins upon them, and Christ hath none neither.

Every of these particulars will require time to discuss them fully; yet there is not any one of them, but will give sweet consolation to the most drooping spirit under heaven. We will take them into consideration, and begin, with the first of them.

I. It is iniquity itself, even the sins themselves of those whom God intends shall reap benefit by Christ that are laid on him. Satan hath raised a foul mist to darken the glorious light of this admirable truth. At first looking on it, you may think there is no thing in it more than in other ordinary truths; but you shall find in the close, that all the comfort you can take, concerning your freedom from sin, will hang upon this point, that it is iniquity itself that is laid upon Christ. But, many are ready to think that the guilt {such as they call so} and the punishment of sin lay upon Christ indeed; but simply the very fault that men commit, that is, that the transgression itself is become the transgression of Christ, is somewhat harsh;⁷⁴ but when the text saith, "the Lord hath laid

74 But it should not seem harsh, since transgressions only become

on him the iniquity of us all;" the meaning is, that Christ himself becomes the transgressor in the room and stead of the person that had transgressed; so that in respect of the reality of being a transgressor, Christ is really the transgressor;⁷⁵ as the man that did commit it was, before he took it upon him. Beloved, mistake me not; I say not that Christ ever was, or ever could be, the actor or committer of transgression, for he never committed any; but the Lord laid iniquity upon him; and this act of God's laying it upon him, makes him as really a transgressor, as if he himself had actually committed it; and this I shall endeavour to clear by manifest scripture, that simply, without any equivocation, not in any figure, but plainly sin itself was laid upon Christ; I shall then clear some objections, and show the necessity of the thing.

Look but into Isaiah 53:11,12, for there you shall find three words all expressing this one thing, that it is sin itself, and deviations, that are laid on Christ. "He shall bear their iniquities," verse 11; "he was numbered among the transgressors, and he bare the sins of many;" verse 12; mark it well, I pray. Some have been ready to conceive that the word "iniquity" in the text is spoken figuratively; iniquity, that is, the punishment of it, was laid on him; but see how careful the Spirit of God is to take away all suspicion of a figure in the text; there are iniquity, transgression, and sin, three words, and all spoken to the same purpose, to confirm it; and it is strange, that all these three should still be understood of punishment, and not simply of sin itself without any figure; but, from hence it is clear, that the iniquity itself of the persons for whom Christ suffered

Christ's by imputation, or by being in the sinner's stead, as immediately explained; nor that not the guilt and punishment of sin only are laid on Christ, but the fault itself, since that is not to be separated from guilt; and since the Scripture is so express, that sin, or iniquity itself is laid on Christ; hence the learned Witsius observes, "I know not why some should choose to say, the guilt or punishment of our sins are transferred to Christ, rather than sins themselves as to the guilt; since this latter is said by scripture itself, whose most pure, most wise, and very emphatic speeches, to desire to soften, by I know not what milder ones of ours, shows a mind nice and squeamish, and not setting that just value upon the sacred writings due unto them." Gill.

75 Not the real actor and committer of the transgression, as is afterwards explained, but as there was a real imputation of it to him, being the Surety of his people who had transgressed; and is the true and only sense in which the Doctor is to be understood; for, as the excellent Witsius, just before quoted, says, "not so, God imputes our sins to Christ, as to judge that he committed the sins that we have committed; as to be drunk with Noah, to commit incest with Lot, or adultery with David; such a thought, so foreign from all reason, could never enter into any man in his senses, much less a Christian, and one that fears God." Gill.

is moved from a believer and transferred upon him.

All the difficulty lies in that expression, "he was numbered among the transgressors." Some will be ready to say, he was so indeed, but by whom was he numbered? The Scribes and Pharisees called him a blasphemer and a seducer; and they said, he had a devil, and was a glutton and wine-bibber; and according to the charge, they crucified him with transgressors, and so he was numbered amongst them; but God did not account him so; and though they did, it doth not therefore follow that he was so. I answer, under favour, beloved, let me tell you, that in this place Christ being numbered with the transgressors was spoken in respect of God's own accounting him among the number of transgressors; for he himself made him one at that time. Bear with the expression; for the Apostle hath one higher than this, though it may seem harsh to you. Look into II Corinthians 5:21. There you shall see that God made him more than a transgressor. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Christ was made sin for us; and there is a great deal of difference between being made sin, and being made a sinner, with any that know how the expression in the abstract goes beyond that in the concrete. I know the word may be spoken hyperbolically; not that Christ simply could be made sin, or his essence be turned into sin; but the Apostle's meaning was that no transgressor in the world was such a one as Christ was.⁷⁶ But still Christ was a transgressor, as our transgressions were laid upon him, not that he was the actor of any; and how could the Lord himself by his own act lay our transgressions and yet not number him among such as were transgressors?⁷⁷ The Apostle

⁷⁶ This is true of Christ, not as the actor of transgression as the Doctor immediately observes, but as he was made so by imputation, in which respect he was the greatest transgressor in the world; for let any man be ever so great a one, he has only his own sins on him; but Christ, though he had none of his own, yet being the Surety of his people, and standing in their place, had all their sins upon him, which he calls his own, and were innumerable, Ps.40:12, and so was, by imputation, what no sinner ever was, or could be; and this is saying no more than what divines, ancient and modern, have not scrupled to affirm. II Cor.5:21. Phrases as strong as any the Doctor has here or elsewhere; and which, though not contrary to the divine judgment concerning Christ as our Surety, nor derogatory to the perfect purity and holiness of our Lord, but are designed to express the most perfect imputation of sin to him, and the security of our salvation by him, as Witsius observes, yet I cannot but be of opinion with that same great man, that it would be better to abstain from the use of such phrases; since they are not scriptural, need much explanation, and may be offensive to tender minds. Gill.

⁷⁷ That Christ was numbered by men among transgressors is not denied;

Peter speaks very fully to this business, in I Pet.2:24. He tells us, that Christ himself "bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" he bare our sins, and it was he himself that did it, and it was on his own body; one would think that all these words need not; he might have only said, he bare them in his body; but he said more emphatically, "he himself bare our sins in his own body;" he speaks it so punctually, that all the world may see that there is no underhand, but plain dealing with God in this business; that so we may rest satisfied with it, that being made partakers of Christ, our iniquities were laid upon him; and if they ever be looked after, it should be where they are; and this is the main end why there are so many expressions in scripture, that our sins are laid upon Christ, to imply, that when any search is made for them among believers, they may know what is become of them, and so satisfy themselves about it. Do but observe that excellent expression, Jeremiah 50:20; where you will find what the great scope and end is, why the Holy Ghost takes such and so much care to let us know, that it is iniquity itself that is laid upon Christ. "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Beloved, here is a strange mystery, the world will not receive it except they receive this principle we are now upon, namely, that the iniquity itself of his people is laid upon the back of Christ. What, will some say; what no iniquity at all found in Israel, though it be searched for narrowly? No, saith the prophet, "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." Israel commits sins every day, you will say, and cannot the Lord find them? But the prophet saith that he hath laid this iniquity upon Christ, therefore it is gone, it cannot be there, and here too; it cannot be on Israel and on Christ. Suppose a thief had stolen goods, and brought them home to his house, a friend comes and takes them away, in favour to save his life;

he was called and traduced by them as a sinner, and placed between two thieves when crucified, which fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah in part, Mark 14:27,28. But then this being suffered by the Lord, shows that he was accounted so by him, and stood in the eye of justice as among, and in the place of, transgressors; and that this is the sense of the passage appears from what follows; 'and' or 'for he' bore the sins of many, as Junius and Tremellius render it; which could be no reason with men for so numbering him, who knew nothing of his bearing the sins of others; but is a reason with the Lord so to account him, since he himself laid these sins on him. Gill.

there is a privy search made for them in the house of the thief, in every corner; how can they find these stolen goods there, supposing they are carried away by his friend? They are sought for, but they are not found, because they are carried away. Even so, hence it is, that iniquities are sought for in Israel, and there is none, because they are carried away already, and laid upon Christ. I will tell you by the way, the reason why believers groan so heavily under such bitterness of spirit, disquietness and horror in their consciences; they think they find their transgressions there, and imagine that there is a sting of this poison still behind wounding them; but, beloved, if this be received as a truth, that God hath laid thy iniquities on Christ, how can they, belonging to him, be found in thy heart and conscience, if so be he hath already transferred them unto him?

Is thy conscience Christ? Either that must be Christ, or the Lord hath not laid thine iniquities upon him; or else thy heart must be freed from thy sin. I beseech you consider of it seriously; we know not what times are growing upon us, nor what may abide us; we may be cut off from the land of the living, and be in the Jews condition, subject to bondage all our lives long, through fear of death and hell; and what is the occasion and ground of it? It is to have sin lie close upon your spirits; separate sin from the soul, and it hath rest in the worst condition; being in the Jewish condition you will never have full satisfaction and settled quiet of spirit, in respect of sin, till you have received this principle, "that it is iniquity itself that the Lord hath laid on Christ." Now, when I say with the prophet, it is that itself that the Lord hath laid on him, I mean as he doth; it is the fault of the transgression itself, and to speak more fully, that very erring and straying like sheep;⁷⁸ is passed off from thee, and is laid upon Christ; to speak it more plainly, hast thou been an idolater, a blasphemmer, a despiser of God's word; a trampler upon him, a propaner of

78 The sin-offering, which was typical of Christ, is called sin itself, erring, going astray, or missing the mark, as the word signifies. See Mr. Samuel Crisp's - the Doctor's son "Christ made sin, &c." Not the guilt and punishment of sin, but the illegality and sinfulness of it were laid on Christ, and satisfied for by him; strip sin of this, and it will be an innocent thing and deserve no punishment; not could more be inflicted on Christ than in proportion to sin, or what of sin was laid upon him; and if there is anything in it, or belongs to it, not bore by him, it must be bore by the sinner himself, and upon this scheme not one of Adam's race can be save. Gill.

his name and ordinances, a despiser of government, and of thy parents; a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, a liar, a drunkard? Reckon up what thou canst against thyself; if thou hast part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of thine become actually his, and cease to be thine; and thou ceasest to be a transgressor, from that time they were laid upon him, to the last hour of thy life;⁷⁹ so that now thou art not an idolater, a persecutor, a thief, a murderer, an adulterer, or a sinful person; reckon what sin soever you commit, when as you have part in Christ, you are all that he was, and he is all that you were. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Mark it well, Christ himself is not so completely righteous, but we are as righteous as he was; nor we so completely sinful, but he became, being made sin, as completely sinful as we;⁸⁰ nay more, the righteousness that Christ hath with the Father, we are the same, for "we are made the righteousness of God;" and that very sinfulness that we were, Christ is made before God; so that here is a direct change, Christ takes our persons and condition, and stands in our stead; we take his person and condition and stand in his stead. What the Lord beheld Christ to be, that he beholds his members to be; what he beholds them to be in themselves, that he beholds Christ himself to be.

So that if you would speak of a sinner, supposing him to be a member of Christ, you must not speak of what he manifests, but of what Christ was.

If you would speak of one completely righteous, you must speak and know that Christ himself is not more righteous than he is; and that that person is not more sinful than Christ was, when he took his sins on him; so that if you will reckon well, beloved, you

79 Being Christ's by imputation; and though theirs by commission, and not Christ's; yet, being bore by him, shall not be reckoned to them, or charged upon them, or brought against them to their condemnation. Gill.
80 But by imputation; Christ having all the sins or his people laid upon him, must, in this sense, be reckoned as completely sinful as they; and they, having his righteousness put on them, must be as completely righteous as he; which is to be understood, not of his essential righteousness as God, nor of the righteousness of his office as Mediator, and the faithful discharge of that; for they are neither made gods nor mediators; but of that which he wrought out for them, in their room and stead, consisting of his active and passive obedience; of which, says Witsius, "seeing all the elect equally partake, all must needs be perfectly righteous, through the same most perfect righteousness of Christ, equally as Christ himself; since the righteousness of the elect is the very righteousness of Christ itself, only with this difference, that it is Christ's, because performed by him; ours, because imputed to us." Gill.

must always reckon yourself in another's person, and that other in yours; and until the Lord find out transgressions of Christ's own acting, he will never find one to charge upon you.

Now, we have it professed unto us that "Christ was in all like things like unto us, sin only excepted;" {Heb.2:17;} and for whatever sin you have committed, do, or shall commit, there was one sacrifice once offered by Christ, through which he hath perfected them that are sanctified; that sacrifice of his made the exchange, by virtue of which we became that which Christ was, and he became that which we were; thus The Lord laid upon him the iniquity; therefore it is observable, the words in the text are indefinitely spoken, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity;" not this or that iniquity but the whole bulk of it.

And if this seem not enough, that every transgression, first and last, great and small, one with another, are carried away at once, and laid upon Christ; mark that well, in I John 1:7, as it is as clear as the light; "for the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Note; '*All*' sin; it is an admirable word though it be never so small; not past sins only, but present sins; the person that belongs to Christ is acquitted of all transgressions, that whatever he commits, it is as if he never committed any in the world.

1. As for that objection about guilt; that the Lord lays, the guilt and punishment, but not simply the sin itself, for ought that I see, it is a simple one; for, you shall never find this distinction in all the scripture, that God laid the guilt of sin upon Christ, and not that itself; as for the guilt of sin, it is not mentioned in all the scripture, that God lays it, or that Christ bears it; nay further, to affirm, that the Lord laid upon Christ the guilt of sin, and not the sin itself, is directly contrary to scripture; for you have many testimonies affirming, that the Lord lays sin upon him; what presumption then it is for a man to say, he lays on Christ the guilt, and not the sin itself!

2. That you may have a little more light concerning this word guilt; for I know many spirits are troubled about it; for my part, I do not think as some do, that guilt differs from sin, as that which is an obligation or a binding over to the punishment of sin, rather than sin itself being past and gone; but that you may have the true nature of it opened, I will give you an

instance. When Joseph's brethren were accused for spies, it is said, they spake one to another, "we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." {Gen.42:21} What is the meaning of guilty here? Reuben expounds it in verse 22. "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear;" and therefore behold we are guilty. What is that? We sinned against the child; to be guilty, therefore, and to commit sin, is all one; they are but two words expressing the same thing; now that you may understand the word guilt better, suppose a malefactor be asked, guilty or not guilty? He answers, not guilty; what doth he mean? He means he hath not done that fact which was laid to his charge. When the jury is asked guilty or not guilty? The jury saith, guilty; what do they mean? Do they mean anything in respect of punishment? No; the jury hath nothing to do with that, but only with matter of fact; that is, whether the fact be done or not; so that to be guilty or not guilty, is to say the fact is done or not; guilt and sin are all one; where lies the difference? The guilt is upon Christ, but the sin itself is laid upon a man's own person; as much as to say, sin is laid upon Christ, but it is not laid upon him; that is just a contradiction, and whereas it is affirmed by some, that the Lord laid the punishment of sin on Christ, and not the sin, that is false; though it be true that he was wounded for our transgressions, yet it doth not follow that he did not bear them; that scripture that warrants us that the punishment was laid upon Christ, warrants us, that sin itself was laid upon him; why do we believe that the punishment was laid upon Christ, but because the Holy Ghost hath revealed it unto us? The same hath revealed to us, that sin itself is laid upon him, as well as the punishment; he that rejects the one, rejects the other.

But, to sum up all, beloved; the truth is, Satan is very cunning, and for a while, allows Christ the bearing of the guilt and punishment, that so he may take away his bearing iniquity; the truth is, if iniquity be not really transferred to Christ, there is neither guilt nor the punishment of our sins upon him. And observe these things.

1. If iniquity itself had not been laid upon Christ, it had been the extremist injustice in the world for the Lord to have bruised him. That it was the Lord's own

act, besides the Jews, is manifest; the apostles jointly concluded that they did nothing but what was by the determinate counsel and purpose of God; nay, in this 53rd of Isaiah, the Holy Ghost saith expressly, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him;" well then, the act of bruising is God's; if he himself will bruise his Son, he hath some reason for it; vindictive justice on a person of necessity implies some fault committed. The Lord complains of his own people, that they should say, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" that is men should be punished without fault; how could the Father possibly thus scourge his own Son, and yet have nothing to lay to his charge? He doth not acquit him from any sin of his own, for "he did no violence" at all; if therefore Christ had not the faults of his own members become his; and, that the Lord did thus bruise him, as having these upon him, he had been bruised for nothing.

Suppose a man should be cast into jail and arraigned, and, though there be nothing found against him, yet the judge will hang him; what justice is there in this? Beloved, if our sins be not transferred to Christ, and found upon him at the arraignment of God, he should have been found complete and absolutely innocent; and then, for the Lord to punish him when he had nothing to lay to his charge, had been injustice to him. That God therefore might be just in punishing Christ, and do no more upon him than what was deserved, he must first have the iniquity laid upon him; that is, the merit of that bruising; that there might be upon him the desert of what he did sustain.

II. Suppose Christ be bruised and our iniquities not laid to his charge, what are we the better for it? Suppose a man dies for a fault, what is this to a thief whose fault he doth not bear in his suffering? He must suffer for his own fault, till it be laid upon the person of another; and being laid upon him, this other suffers for him. Suppose a man be cast into prison for debt, and another after him; what is the casting in of the second to the first, except it be as a surety to the first; then indeed, the first may be acquitted by the imprisonment of the second; but if the second doth not lie in for the debt of the first, the first must suffer, as if the second had not suffered at all. Christ was wounded and bruised; what is that to the person whose iniquities he doth not bear?

If Christ did not suffer for your transgressions,

what is that to you if he suffered ten times more than he did? The truth is, beloved, justice, as a blood-hound, follows the scent of blood, and seizes wherever it finds it. If a deer-stealer shall cast off his garment of blood, and another that did not steal, should take it on, the blood-hound would fasten upon him that is not the thief; but, if the thief himself bears the blood of his own garment, the blood-hound will fasten on him; and so will justice do, if Christ doth not take our sins upon himself, justice will pursue us, that have our blood upon ourselves, and so consequently give us up to wrath. But, if Christ take our blood, justice will follow him, and seize upon him, as if he had been the very person acting the sin. If justice do not find the blood upon him, it never pursues him, but it pursues the person; and where this blood remains it will fasten wherever it finds it.

III. Whence should it be, in respect of the event, that the elect and reprobate differ one from the other? The difference lies in this, the elect shall be saved, and the reprobate shall be damned; the immediate cause is this, the reprobate bears his own sin, by reason of which he bears his ensuing damnation; the elect person bears not his own sin, and so there is nothing found against him, for which he should be damned. Now, suppose that Christ leaves iniquity still remaining upon him that is elected, and the sin be found upon him, as well as upon a reprobate, sin would bring the same desert that it doth, upon the reprobate. The first beginning of the difference is in this, Christ takes away the sins of the one, and leaves the sins upon the other still, and they bear the punishment in this and in the world to come. But, as for the elect, the Lord takes the iniquities of them, and translates them upon Christ, who, in that regard, bears all the wrath due to them for them; and so they become discharged from punishment both in this life and in the life to come. The truth is, wherever sin is, the justice of God will have plenary satisfaction, even for all the sins in the world, either by the sinner himself, or by some surety for him; Christ, seeing he hath taken the sins of the elect upon him, must pay the full value; and his pay must be as full as the reprobates in hell; for God will have the utmost farthing. This is the difference between an elect person and a reprobate; Christ first paid all that for them, which they, with the reprobate, should otherwise have paid in their own persons, in hell; and therefore, you can conceive no

real difference between them and you, if Christ doth not bear your sins upon himself.

A word of application, and so I will have done; and that shall be but one. If it be iniquity itself that is laid upon Christ, then beloved, see what cause you have to take up all your time to be his; that being his, and receiving the grace of God administered unto you by him, you may see what cause you have to take up the triumph of the Apostle; “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” It is a sweet song, beloved, and a song of songs indeed and there is mighty strength in the argument. Here is first a question, “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Who is it? Some will say, it is God, I fear; I fear not men, they cannot do it; but I fear God will lay something to my charge. If there be sin, it is against him; if there be any wrath, it is he that must pour it out; all that I fear is God. Nay, fear not, saith the Apostle, “it is God that justifieth,” therefore never fear that he will lay anything to thy charge. Can God say, I pronounce thee innocent and justify thee from thy sin; and will he, with the same breath say, I have this and that other sin to lay to thy charge? This would be a contradiction. If any man in the world will offer to do it, they have nothing to do in this work; it is God, and he only charges with sin; and if he doth it not, who can do it! Nay, “Christ is dead, nay rather is risen again;” as if he should have said, the Lord laid our iniquities upon him; he made him to bear the burden of all, and it sunk him to death, and he was cast into the jail for the debt; now we see him come out. Seeing God is so exact that he will have the utmost farthing, it is certain he is quit, because he is delivered; he is freed, “he is not dead, but is risen.” Oh! Beloved, how comfortably might you walk in all conditions in the world, if you did but carry this in your breast! Well, come what will, I am quit of all my sins, I stand innocent, for Christ himself hath satisfied the Father to the full for them, and he will never remember them again.

Mark but one passage of scripture, and I will conclude. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” and “made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” {II Cor.5:19,21} Mark, in the business of transferring sin to Christ, God’s order; when he will do all with Christ for men’s sins, he gives to them a

full acquittance; he cancels his bonds, so that he will have nothing in the world to show against him, so it imports. As for the world, {believers I mean,} “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” that is, he will not have a word more to say to them; he will not have a sin more to charge upon them; but, as for Christ, he shall be made sin; that is the reason why God gives them a discharge, because he hath found out one that is mighty to bear it, as you have it in Psalm 89:19, “then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty;” as if he should have said to Christ, I have a company of broken creatures; for a debt that is owing to me I could punish them forever, but I should never pay myself out of them; now I have found thee, a person able to pay; and, seeing I have found thee so, I will take it here, I will pay myself out of thee.

In Hebrews 7:22, you have a notable expression of Christ. “Wherefore,” saith the Apostle, “he is the Surety of a better testament.” God takes Christ as a surety; look as men will do, so deals God with him. A rich surety is bound for a broken debtor that is not worth a groat; what will the creditor do in this case? He will never look after the beggar; he knows there is nothing to be looked for there; he will look after the rich man; the rich man must stand to it; let him look to it, he shall pay it; and so doth God. Christ is become the Surety of a better covenant; man is a broken debtor, and Christ is a surety, one that is rich, and able to pay; therefore God will look after none but him; for this cause Christ gives his own single bond, and God is content to take it, and looks for no other payment but him. You know, when a surety becomes bound, instead of the principal, the surety is as much as the principal, after he is bound, as the principal was the debtor before; so Christ, being a surety, not only stands liable to the payment of the debt, but he actually stands the debtor, upon which ground the payment may be exacted; for, except the person be a debtor, there can be no just claim of payment; therefore the surety is a real debtor; nay, Christ being our Surety is become sole debtor; God hath not only taken him to be surety, but, upon Christ’s coming and giving his bond, he cancels the bond, that now we are as free as if we never had been bound.

18 Sin Transacted Really Upon Christ

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

I entered upon these words, not far from hence, the last Lord’s day; and because some desired further light in the truth contained in them, I thought it not amiss to communicate something more, that light may shine forth from them.

The whole chapter sets out Christ abundantly, with ravishing sweetness; in this text, and the verse before it, is contained the sum of the whole Gospel of Christ, the fountain of all the glad tidings published to the sons of men. Here the Holy Ghost tells us, how God disposes of our sins, then of the desert of them, and what the fruit of this disposing is; “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” “He was wounded for our transgressions.” The fruit is: 1. Peace by his chastisement. 2. Healing by his stripes. The words of the text are so many propositions or doctrines; there are these particulars contained in them: 1. What it is the Lord laid on Christ, “iniquity.” 2. How the Lord disposes of it, “he laid it on him.” 3. Whose iniquities he lays on him, “the iniquities of us all,” such as have gone astray. 4. When he laid them on him, the thing is past, “he hath laid,” it is already done.

We have considered the first of these particulars, “that it is iniquity itself that the Lord laid upon Christ;” not barely punishment, leaving iniquity behind; but iniquity itself is laid upon him. I cannot stand to repeat all particularly; I will, therefore, fall at once upon the second thing; viz., how the Lord disposes of this iniquity, “the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon him;” let that be the proposition, putting the emphasis upon the word ‘laid.’

If ever there be joy, peace, and rest of spirit, or thou wilt be of good cheer, as having knowledge of thy sins being forgiven, it must be fetched out of this; “the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon Christ.” Men may suppose comfort and joy, and, in the strength of their fancy, peradventure, be at some kind of rest out of some other apprehensions; but there is no solid rest to any, but as it is founded on this, that iniquity is laid upon Christ. Satan knows this well enough, and therefore he raiseth a cloud of dust {as I may say} to obscure the glorious light of the sun of righteousness shining forth in this truth. There is such

a stir to dismiss the plain genuine meaning of the Holy Ghost, that the truth is, persons scarce know where to find rest for the sole of their feet, in respect of peace, through the forgiveness of sins. And indeed, beloved, as the covenant of God is peculiar only to those that shall partake of the fulness of Christ; so none shall truly and thoroughly understand such truths as these, but those that are taught of God himself; which is one branch of the covenant, “they shall be taught of me.”

That we may the better understand what evangelical sweetness is wrapped up in this truth, let us a little consider, what this phrase imports, according to the true meaning of the Holy Ghost. A great deal of shuffling there is about it, that the spirits of men can hardly receive it, or take it in plain English, “that iniquity is laid upon Christ;” by it, men generally conceive a kind of connivance of God; as if the Lord took notice, that this, and that, and the other person indeed bear transgression, but he forbears him, and will for the present purpose, that it is upon Christ; and so by laying its iniquity upon him, it must be no more, but God will be contented to esteem and think, iniquity is upon him; while indeed, and in truth, it remains where it was, upon the man himself that committed it.

But, beloved, under favour, I must be bold to tell you, that while men seek to vindicate God one way in this kind, they extremely abuse him in another; for if this be truth, that God only counts or supposes iniquity upon Christ, whilst he knows well enough, it is yet upon this, and that person, and he himself bears it; mark what will follow; what will you call this esteem of God? Is it such an esteem and supposition that is righteous or false? Suppose a man speak of things, not according to the truth of the nature of the thing, but it is otherwise than he speaks of it; in this case, I would know whether such a speech be true or false; the truth of speech depends upon this, when that, and the thing whereof it is made, do agree together; if they agree, the speech is true; if it tends one way, and the thing itself another, it is false. Now then speeches are true or false, according to the truth of the thing spoken of; so are the thoughts and suppositions of the mind; for all these are but the work or speech of it; therefore if the mind think of things, and these be otherwise, is it a true or false thought? A true one it cannot be, because it is not consonant to the thing thought of; so

there is a mistake; but further, suppose a man know certainly beforehand, a thing is otherwise than he speaks, or than he thinks it to be, what call you this? This must be more than simply or barely a falsehood; in common acceptation this is no better than a lie; a man knows that a thing is thus and thus, yet he saith it is otherwise. Suppose, I know a man is in such a place, and I will think him in another, what is this better than a lie? Now to come to the point in hand, "the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ;" what is that? He will suppose, think, or take it for granted, that iniquity is on Christ, but he knows it is on the persons themselves still; see how God must be charged by men that run into such a strain as this; at the best they charge him with mistakes; for if he knows that the sins of men remain still upon themselves, and yet will suppose they do not, but are on Christ, is this supposition according to the true being of the thing or no? Certainly, beloved, that all-wise, all-knowing, all-searching God, hath no other thoughts of things than as they are; as he himself either makes or disposes of them, he esteems and thinks of them, so consequently of sin. If he says, "he lays, or hath laid, iniquity upon Christ," and hath discharged the believer from all iniquity; certainly God supposes and esteems things to be thus, as he hath disposed of them.

Indeed, let us not make God so childish; for if he laid iniquity on Christ, he past this real act upon him, and the thing is thus really, as he disposes of it; and therefore, in brief, this laying iniquity upon him, is such a translation of sin from those whose iniquity he lays upon him, that by it he now becomes, or did become, when they were laid, as really and truly the person that had all these sins, as those men who did commit them really and truly had them themselves. It is true, as I said before, Christ never sinned in all his life; "he did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;" but this hinders not, but that there may be on him an absolute transaction; so that by laying iniquity on him, he becomes the sole person in the behalf of all the elect, that truly hath iniquity upon him.

For the better clearing of this, give me leave to open a few expressions of scripture that speak to the same effect, and peradventure some will give better light than others.

Observe, II Cor.5:21. Having spoken of being reconciled unto believers, he tells us that, "he {that

is Christ} was made sin for us;" here is not only sin itself charged upon him, but it is expressed, how God charged it, "he was made sin;" and this word, 'made sin,' hath more in it to show the reality of sin being upon Christ, by way of transaction, than the word laid. If you read the marginal notes upon our text, you shall perceive how translators render it; the Lord, saith the margin, made all our sins to meet upon him; the text, as we read it, runs, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Now what is it for a thing to be made? Is it but a mere imaginary supposition or fancy? Doth not the word 'make' constitute the reality of the being of such a thing that is made? If you will know, what it is to be made sin more fully, look into Romans 5:19. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." What is the meaning of that being made sinners? The whole drift {as you may plainly see} of the Apostle is to compare the restoration of persons by Christ, with the fall of them by Adam. It is true, men are made sinners two ways, they are made sinners fruitfully by Adam; there is not only an universal sin cast over all mankind, but there is a fruitfulness to commit it; but the Apostle's drift in that place is to show that the personal transgression of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit, became the sin of all the men of the world, even before they themselves did either good or evil; from whence David saith, in Psalm 51:5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Now David, when he was conceived, had not himself personally sinned, neither was sin fruitful in him, to do evil himself; and yet he, even then, was made sin by the disobedience of one; now, what is this? Is it merely to be supposed or imagined to have sin? Or is not there a reality of guilt, or of sin upon men by Adam's transgression? The apostle saith expressly, "by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners;" and so it appears, that we are actual, that is to say, real sinners, by that very sin of his; that is, separate from transgressions, in our own persons; if then, a making persons sinners constitute a thing really in being, and not merely in imagination, it must follow, that Christ being made sin, or sin being laid upon him, is a real act; God really passes over sin upon him, still keeping this fact, that Christ sinned not; so that in respect of this act, not one sin of the

believer is Christ's.⁸¹ But in respect of transgression, the conveyance of it or passing accounts from one head to another, there is a reality of making Christ to be sin. When one man becomes a debtor in another's room, legally and by consent; this surety that becomes the debtor, is not barely supposed to be so, but by undertaking it, and legally having it passed upon him, he is as really and truly the debtor, as he was that was the principal before; so that there is an absolute truth and reality of God's act of passing over and laying sins upon Christ. If a judge would think such a man to be a malefactor, when in his own conscience he knows he is not, and upon his thought that he is, will actually hang him, is there any justice in such an act? If God will but suppose Christ to have sin upon him, and knows that he hath it not, but others have it upon them; and upon this supposition will execute Christ, what will you call this? As I said before, there must of necessity be a present desert upon a person, before the judge can inflict anything upon him; a fault must be found upon a man, before he may be executed legally and justly; therefore the fault must be found really upon Christ himself, before there can be an act of God's justice in wounding him.

You have another phrase expressing the same thing, Isaiah 53:11,12. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Christ did bear the sins of many. Now what is it to bear a thing? Doth a man bear a thing merely in the way of supposition? Or where there is a bearing, is there not a real weight? This I am sure of, where the Holy Ghost speaks of men's "bearing their sin" he speaks of such a thing as shall lie heavy upon men. In Leviticus you have it often expressed, "and they shall bear their iniquities;" speaking of persons that should be rejected and cast off. What is this bearing, but that sin should be found upon men,

having a weight which shall be able to crush, bow, and break them? "My soul {saith Christ} is heavy unto death;" and thus he spake before he suffered any real bodily pain. How came it to be heavy, if there were not some weight that he bore? If he did bear iniquity, and not the weight of it on him, how can his soul be heavy? Nothing is bowed down, except there be some real burden borne that should do it; so that there must therefore be sin really past upon Christ, or else he could never stoop and bow, and be so heavy loaded as he was.

There is one phrase more in John 1:29. By the way, give me leave to tell you, that whereas it is generally received, that John prepared the way of Christ, and therefore is called his fore-runner, because he went in a way of beating down and breaking in pieces; you shall find, I say, that his main business, which he is called the preparer of the way of the Lord, was, he pointed with his finger to Christ, that so people might now see him whom they expected. "Behold {saith he} the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." I say, this was his main business, to point out Christ, that people might see him now to be come; and for this very cause, he is said to "prepare the way of the Lord." What is the taking away of sin? It is worth consideration, beloved; it cannot sink into the head of any reasonable person, though he be but merely natural, that a thing should be taken away, and yet be left behind; it is a flat contradiction; if a man be to receive money at such a place, and he takes it away with him, is it left in the place where it was, when he hath taken it away? The Lamb of God, Christ, takes away the sins of the world, and doth he leave them behind him? It is a contradiction. Look in Lev.16:21,22, where you have that most admirable type of all the types of Christ mentioned, and that is the type of the scape-goat; and there you will plainly perceive what it is for iniquity to be laid upon Christ, and how far forth it concerns the believer. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." There was a goat slain, and a live

⁸¹ This clearly shows the sense in which the Doctor is always to be understood; that the sins of believers become Christ's, not only in respect of the act, as done by him, but as debts become those who are surety for others; in which, as there is a real passing of debts over to them, so there is a real passing over of sins to Christ. Gill.

one sent into the wilderness; that is, Christ dying, and Christ living. It is true, our sins are laid upon Christ dying, that satisfied for them; but the discharge of our sins, or receiving the acquittance, is from Christ alive or risen. Now as this scape-goat must have the sins of the people laid upon the head of him, and, when laid, must go into the wilderness, and carry their sins with him; just so doth Christ with the sins of believers. God lays iniquities upon him, namely, by transferring them upon him, that he takes them away, and carries them into a land of forgetfulness, into the wilderness, a land not inhabited; that is, into a place that shall not be heard of any more; therefore, the Lord, in the closure of the new covenant, shuts it up thus, “your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.” How so? He hath carried them away into a land not inhabited; he hath taken them away, and, therefore, they are not left behind upon the person whose they were, till Christ took them away; though I say, still the person or a believer daily, hourly, every moment, renews several acts, which, in their own nature, are sins; they commit such things that are not according to the revealed word of God; yet, Christ being become the “surety of a better testament,” still has taken off every transgression which arises; he died not for present and past sins only, but “for the sins of the whole world;” that is, for all the sins of all his elect people at once, both Gentiles as well as Jews even to the end of the world; he hath taken and carried them away.

There are many objections, I know, arising in the hearts of men, yea even of believers themselves, till they come to be more and more enlightened, against this reality of transacting sin upon Christ, by which the person of a believer is acquitted; some of them are gathered out of phrases of scripture; others are raised up from reason; some are maintained by common and natural sense. I shall endeavour {as clearly as possibly I may} to answer those of greatest moment, that people may be satisfied in the truth.

Against such reality of transacting sin upon Christ, there is one phrase of the apostle Paul, very much objected, and that is {imputing;} and hence, say some, God’s laying of iniquity upon Christ, is nothing else but God’s imputing sin to him. Now this word ‘imputation’ in the common understanding of people ordinarily, seems to carry something different in it from the real

act of transferring sin from a believer unto Christ; it seems to signify only a supposition or connivance. Give me leave to open this word {‘imputing’} to you; for I am confident it stumbles many a person, not understanding the true meaning of the Holy Ghost in it; and I shall endeavour to clear it to you out of scripture itself. First, that which I shall answer for the imputation of sin to Christ, is this; though I have searched the scripture as narrowly as possibly I may; yet, this I find, that throughout the whole there is not one passage of it that speaks of imputing our sins to Christ. In Romans, chapter 4, the word imputation; and that which is equivalent to it, accounting and reckoning, are seven times mentioned; and in chapter 5:13, it is mentioned again; but still where the Holy Ghost speaks of imputation, he speaks of sin not imputed, and of righteousness imputed to us; but not once of sin imputed unto Christ.⁸² So that if we put this objection off as not being the phrase of scripture, it might be a full answer.

But some will say, there is that which is equivalent to it; for if sin be not imputed unto us and righteousness is; as we partake of Christ’s righteousness, so he partakes of our sin; we partake of his righteousness by imputation, therefore he partakes of our sin by imputation. I will not contend about words; we will take it for granted, that it is consonant to scripture, that our sins are imputed unto Christ; all the difficulty lies in the true understanding of the word imputation; how shall we find it? Look into Lev.17:3,4, that will give light unto it. “What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people.” Now, beloved, mark what the

⁸² Not that the Doctor was against the imputation of sin to Christ, or thought it an unscriptural doctrine; for it is the very thing, under different phrases, he is all along, in these discourses, contending for; and he makes use of it himself; but what he militates against is, as some people understood it, as if it was a thing imaginary, which was only supposed of Christ, and not real; which sense he sets aside, and is his view in producing the objections he does; and settles the true sense of it by reckoning and accounting, which illustrates the true nature of imputation, as he after observes; and in which sense he readily allows it, as not being opposite to a real act of God in transferring sin to Christ; which is the thing his heart was set upon to prove, and to beat into the minds of men. Gill.

meaning of the word 'imputed' is; it is no more but this, as he is truly and really guilty of blood, so he shall really and truly go for a bloody man; imputation here, you see plainly, hath reference to the truth and reality of the thing; he hath shed blood, and therefore blood shall be imputed to him.

Again, look into I Sam.22:15, where you shall find Ahimelech pleading hard with Saul for his own life, and for the lives of his household. It seems Saul charged Ahimelech, that he had relieved David with victuals and arms against him; for which cause, Saul calls him forth to the end he might destroy him for it. Now mark how Ahimelech pleads for himself; "did I then begin to enquire of God for him? Be it far from me; let not the king impute anything unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father, for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more." What is the meaning of 'impute' here? First, Ahimelech acquits himself from being faulty in what Saul charged upon him; he did no such thing, he was accused of, hereupon, saith he, "let not the king impute any such thing to me;" as much as to say, let the king determine and conclude of things according as really and truly they are; and this is the meaning of the word there.

Again, look into Rom.5:13, and you shall see there again the word 'impute' is taken in the same sense; for the Apostle saith, "but sin is not imputed where there is no law." Now mark in chapter 4:15, "for where no law is, there is no transgression;" put these two together, the meaning must be this; God imputes no sin where he finds no law transgressed; that is, there is no sin in being where there is no law transgressed; and therefore, he so determines and concludes of the thing. God's determining of things according as indeed they are, is his imputing things evermore.

Look into Rom.4:3,4. There are two words that illustrate the nature of imputation, and they are these, accounting and reckoning. Now enquire and understand the real and common use of these words, to account and reckon. Suppose men are to pass an account, for that is the proper meaning of the word; to account, is to pass an account; and, upon the balance, there is so much money accounted to such a man; what is the meaning of it? Is it not that there is really so much money due to this man? And so, for the word reckoning, what is that? You know how ordinary it is for men to reckon together; for accounting and

reckoning are all one. Men cast up their accounts, and upon the casting of them up, they find this and that due; that is, they reckon that such a man oweth so much; so that understanding the course of scripture, and the common use of the phrases of reckoning and accounting; you shall find that imputing is nothing but God's determination and conclusion that he passes upon things, as really and truly they are, without imagining things to be so and so, when indeed, and in truth, they are not so.

There is a second passage of scripture that is much objected against this reality of God's passing sin upon Christ. That is in Rom.4:17, and indeed, at first glance, it seems to carry some strength with it, that there is not a reality in the act of imputation, but that God is contented to account it so; the Lord "calleth those things which be not as though they were." Some may suppose that the Holy Ghost here imports to us, that it may well stand with God, though sins are not indeed upon Christ, yet to call them so, as if they were upon him. But, beloved, give me leave to give you the true scope of the Apostle in this place; and you shall plainly perceive, that this is broken sense, wholly torn away from his true meaning in it. Mark it well, I pray; the Apostle, in the beginning of this chapter tells us of God's promise made to Abraham, recited Gen.17:5, "neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations." Now, because this promise was spoken before Abraham actually had children, and, when his body was dead in a manner, and so was not; hereupon he takes upon him to commend the faith of Abraham, that he should build upon the word of God, when there was so little likelihood of the thing; it was all one as if it were not at all; and he shows the ground whereupon he built with so much confidence, even the power of God, that makes things that are not, when he hath said the word, to be. So that the meaning of the place, is only this, though Abraham was not, that is, he was dead unto fruitfulness, yet the Lord having said, he would make him a "father of many nations," calls him as fruitful a person as he that was most so, though for the present he was not; so that, for the meaning of it, the utmost that can be made is this, that God, in respect of his power to bring to pass, when he saith the word, will call things as if they were present in being, when they are not, but in time shall be.

But what is this to the present purpose, if God did not really transfer sin to Christ, nor never meant to do it? For if he hath not done it already, he never will; I say, if he neither hath, nor will, how doth this place prove that he calls things that are not, as though they were? This is certain, beloved, though all things that ever shall be in the world, are most present to the Lord at once; for so they may be said to be, in respect of him, though, as to the things themselves, they yet are not; yet, in all the scripture, you shall never find the Lord expressing himself so; he never calls things thus and thus, when they never are, nor never shall be. If Christ has not already borne the sins of men himself, then certainly he never shall; for he is not now to do any more, to compass anything not compassed; and if neither heretofore sin hath been, nor hereafter shall be, laid upon him, how can God call that which was not, nor never shall be, as if it were?

There is, therefore, beloved, a certain transacting of sin upon Christ, so real, that, indeed, the believer, though an actor of transgression, is as absolutely and truly discharged of his sins, as if he himself had not committed them. As a debtor, when the surety hath taken the debt on him, and the debtor receives an acquittance, he is as free of the debt as if he had never run into it; so, I say, it is with believers, Christ being made "a Surety of a better testament;" and, thereby becoming really and truly the debtor instead of them; he so bears all the debt himself; that they are altogether released and discharged, as if they had never been in debt. Still, I say, this hinders not, but that there is committing of sin every day by the believer; but yet the virtue of Christ's Suretyship takes it off as soon as ever it is committed; nay, he hath a proviso, a stock in bank to satisfy for it before the commission of it.

Now, beloved, as there are many strong objections out of many passages of scripture; so, likewise, are there many strong ones, as many conceive from natural sense and reason; which, yet, being well weighed and considered, will vanish into smoke. I could willingly go on to answer these, but the time at present will not permit.

19 Sin Transacted Really Upon Christ

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

I have elsewhere {as some of you know} entered upon these words, which afford divers notable, sweet, soul-refreshing truths; every word having its weight. 1. It was iniquity that the Lord laid upon Christ. 2. The Lord hath laid this upon him. This laying of our iniquity upon Christ carries a deal of life in it; it weighs down the scale by which we mount. Now, by laying iniquity, the Holy Ghost means plainly such a taking away, and bearing of it by Christ, that the believer, whose iniquity he bears, is wholly discharged of it, as if he had never committed any at all. This laying of iniquity is not a mere supposition of God, that Christ now bears sin, while the believer in deed and truth bears it himself; but it is such a real act of God transferring the sin of a believer from him unto Christ, as when a surety stands in the room of a debtor, the debtor is by this acquitted of the debt, and the surety is as really the debtor now, as the debtor himself was before. It is true, where principal and surety are in a joint bond, the debtor lies open as well as the surety, and the surety as the debtor; but if the surety will come into the room of the debtor, he is so become the debtor, that the principal is now as free as if he had owed nothing. I use it as a demonstration, because it is the Apostle's own, "by so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament." {Heb.7:22} I cannot insist at large upon what I have formerly delivered; the sum is this, God made him to be sin, not only by way of supposition, but really; he bore the iniquities of many; he took away the sins of the believer; in all which there is a real act. And, whereas it is objected, that this word laying is expressed by the phrase of imputing, I answer, that it is not true; for, though the word impute is often used in reference to Christ; righteousness is imputed to us; our sins are not imputed unto us, saith the apostle; but, in all the scripture, you shall not find sin imputed unto Christ; and, if sin be imputed unto him, it is no more but God's determining and judging Christ to bear sin, as in deed and in truth he doth bear it. But I must hasten.

I find, beloved, that there is nothing that embitters the life of a poor tender soul so much as this one thing, that they bear still their own iniquities, which lie heavy upon them; and I think that there cannot be a better service done to the poor weak members of Christ, than to show them how they are wholly eased of this most unsupportable burden of their sins. Satan

knows, that now there is no other yoke of bondage to keep believers under, than to hold them under this principle, that their sins are not really already laid upon Christ, but that they themselves must bear some of them. I know the objections are very many, and, at first sight, seem to be very strong; but we will see how we can take them away.

Natural reason, I know, pleads mightily against laying iniquity upon Christ, taken really and properly.

1. It is against justice, saith reason that Christ, being innocent, should be charged with sin; as unjust as if you should take a true honest man, and charge him with felony, and execute him for it. I answer that it is no injustice to charge iniquity upon Christ, though he be innocent, not only because the scripture saith expressly, "that the Lord did lay iniquity upon him," though he never did violence himself, which is enough to satisfy any that will be ruled by scripture; but, I say, in reason itself, it is not injustice, though Christ be innocent, that yet he should bear iniquity; it is true, if God should take Christ, and force him to bear it, whether he would or no, it were injustice indeed; but Christ willingly offers himself to bear it, that God may have satisfaction, and a poor creature may have relief; he being thus willing to take it upon himself, it is no injustice in God to lay it upon him. Observe it in reason, and it is not injustice; you have nothing in the world more common than this; suppose a man oweth an hundred pounds, if the creditor, come to another man {suppose a father} and demand payment, and arrest him for it, and make him pay it, this is injustice indeed; but if a father come to a creditor, and say, my son is a broken man, he can pay nothing, I am rich and able to pay all, lay your debt upon me, I will undertake it; upon such a tender, is it injustice for the creditor now to charge the debt upon the father that thus offers himself? There is nothing more common, it is an usual thing for a man to seal bonds for his friend, though the debt be not his own till he hath sealed, yet then he is as truly the debtor as he that had the money; and so when the time of payment comes, the money is demanded of him, and lawfully charged upon him, because he hath made himself the debtor. So God the Father doth not take Christ as a rich man, to pay whether he will or no, but upon a joint agreement between them, Christ being contented, God takes him for a surety. "In the volume of the book it is written of

me,) to do thy will, O God." I am content, saith Christ, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." {Heb.10:7-9} Here was, I say, a joint agreement; and seeing Christ agrees to it, where is now the injustice, that the "Lord should lay iniquity upon him," when for his satisfaction, Christ was contented to do it? The apostle tells us, that it was not possible that those gifts and sacrifices that were offered before of the Jews could make those that did the service perfect. {Heb.9:9} Seeing then there was no other way to satisfy God, but Christ's own coming, and that he might be satisfied he would come, and freely tender himself, there was no injustice that he should have "iniquity laid upon him," when he was content to bear it.

2. It is further objected; saith reason, that it is a contradiction to say, Christ is innocent and yet bears iniquity. Innocence is nothing but full freedom from all crime and fault; how can Christ be said to be innocent, and yet to have fault upon him? It is a contradiction in reason. I answer, it is no contradiction to say that Christ is innocent, and yet bears fault, being laid upon him; for it is true, if these propositions were affirmed in every respect alike, it were a contradiction indeed; but it is commonly known, those things that are in their own nature contradictory, yet if they be spoken of in divers respects, are not so; Christ is innocent in respect of his own personal act; he bears fault as he stands a common person. Christ therefore is considered two ways. 1. Personally. 2. Representatively, as a common person. In respect of his own person, he is innocent; as he is a common person, he bears the fault of many.

3. Yet further, iniquity cannot be laid upon Christ, saith reason; for if he should really bear iniquity, he himself, for it, must be separated from God; and if so, how can he make those that were sometimes afar off; near? The prophet saith, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Was Christ separated from God, will you say? If he were not, how could he bear iniquity. I answer, this objection makes it most manifest, that Christ did really bear iniquity, in that it is the cause of separation from God; it is certainly true, wherever iniquity is, it separates; nay, from this I affirm, as Christ did bear it, so for that he; was separated from God; this peradventure will need some strong proof, therefore you shall have the strongest that can be given for the demonstration of it; that Christ was separated from God, it is his own

testimony, and just at that instant, when sin lay heavy upon him; I pray construe well those words of Christ, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What do you call this forsaking here? Was it not a separation between God and him? When friends, after they have gone hand in hand together, the one forsakes the other, what is that? He separates himself from him. God was here separated from Christ, or else Christ speaks untruth, for he complains and cries out, in the bitterness of his spirit; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

You will say, it may be this forsaking was but for a little moment. To this I answer, it was as long as sin was upon him; had not Christ breathed out the sins of men that were upon him, he had never seen God again; he having taken sin upon him, he must first unload himself of it, before he can be brought near to God; therefore, beloved, you shall find that passage of the Psalmist, "thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," is expounded by the Apostle of the resurrection of Christ; as if the Lord did then beget his son anew, as it were. There was a separation and a forsaking when Christ died, but at his rising there was a meeting again, a kind of renewing of his sonship with God.⁸³ "This day have I begotten thee." Therefore in Rom.8:34, the Apostle tells us that "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." What doth he infer from thence? Who shall therefore lay anything to his charge? As much as to say, till Christ himself came off from men's sins, they were in danger of being charged with sin still. It is Christ that died, made satisfaction; nay rather, that is risen again, then he comes off; and the coming off of Christ himself from the sins he bore,

⁸³ At the resurrection of Christ there was indeed a fresh declaration of his sonship; his almighty power being exerted in the raising himself. Rom.1:4. And so the begetting of Christ as a son is applied to his resurrection, Acts 13:33; as it may be, to any time, act, or instance, in which his divine power as the Son of God is displayed; but that there was any reintegration, or renewing of his sonship, or a begetting him anew as a son, cannot be safely said. Christ, indeed, during his state of humiliation was in the form of a servant, and so was considered by his Father, and his divine sonship was little seen by men; yea by some he was charged with blasphemy for asserting it, and was put to death for it; the reproach of which blasphemy was wiped off by his resurrection; but his divine Father always considered him as his Son, and more than once, in that state, declared him to be so; and Christ in his last moments commended his Spirit into the hands of God as his Father; wherefore if the Doctor's meaning is, as some take it, that he was for a time abdicated by his Father, and as it were disowned as his Son, and upon his resurrection embraced again as such, I think he must be mistaken. Gill.

was that which gives discharge unto believers, that now nothing can be laid to them; but still he is risen, is as much as to say, Christ is now come off himself, but he was not before he was risen; and by this he being secured from sin, we are secure in him.

Now let us come to some application, to see how near we can bring this home, to satisfy and bring rest to a weary laden spirit.

The use that I shall make of this point of God's laying, and the reality of passing over iniquity upon Christ, and desire every one of you to make with me, shall be this; only to press upon you a necessary and infallible inference that follows upon it; and that is this, if the Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ, then whosoever thou art to whom the Lord will be pleased to give the believing of this truth, that thine iniquity is laid upon him, that is an absolute and full discharge to thee; so that there neither is, nor can be, any for the present, or hereafter, laid to thy charge, let the person be who he will; if the Lord, I say again, give to any to believe this truth, that it is his iniquity he hath laid upon Christ, God himself cannot charge any one sin upon him.

Mark well, I beseech you, beloved, Rom.8:33, and ponder it a little, and see whether God himself can charge iniquity upon any, when once laid upon Christ. He begins with triumph, with a great deal of magnanimity of spirit. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who, may some say, he against whom the elect have transgressed? No, {saith the Apostle,} "it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" I pray mark it a little; understand rightly what it is for God to justify; to justify a person is to discharge him from such a fault, or crime, that may be objected against him. Suppose a man actually to be arraigned, it may be for twenty bills of indictment; upon the examination, of all these, peradventure nineteen of them are manifestly false, the man is clear of all of them; but the twentieth he is found guilty of, and upon examination he is found to be faulty; whether now doth the judge justify or pronounce this person just, or no, where there is one fault that can be charged upon him? He must be clear of every fault, before he can be pronounced just. When the Lord justifies any person whatsoever, his justification is pronouncing his innocence; if he be a criminal, he is not just, and if he be just, he is not criminal. To say

that a person is just, and yet to say he is now a criminal when he is just, is a contradiction; to pronounce a person just, is to pronounce him wholly innocent and clear from crime. Now then, if to justify a person, is to pronounce him clear from any crime, where is the iniquity that can be laid to thy charge, being a just person, as every believer is? Doth God now charge anything upon thy spirit? If he doth, he doth in this pronounce thee an unjust person; and if he pronounce thee unjust, he doth not justify thee; for to justify, and yet to charge with a fault, is a contradiction; so that from the time the Lord justifies any person, he charges no sin ever after that upon him; except you will say, he once justifies men, and then un-justifies them again. How many justifications must we then make in the life of a believer, if sins committed, be charged upon the spirit of the man himself? As often as sin is committed anew, there is a revocation of a former justification, and a turning of that into an un-justification of him again; for though it be generally received, that sanctification is a successive act, that is, God sanctifies us again and again, more and more; yet, that justification is an act of God at once, and the application, or giving of Christ to a person, is the justification of him. A man's justification therefore, being but one act of God, how can it be successive? How much less can it be revoked, and a justified person stand afterwards unjustified? The apostle makes it so clear, that there can be no question made against it. "It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?" As much as to say, the same God that justifies will not pass sentence of condemnation upon one that hath received the sentence of absolution already. No, you will say, God doth not condemn; but yet he will let sin be charged upon the spirit of a man; doth not he then sentence him to be unjust?

There be divers condemnations; condemnation in sentence, and in execution. Condemnation in sentence is a pronouncing of such a person guilty. You know, it is an ordinary course at the trial of a man at the bar that he is condemned when he is pronounced guilty. Now the other condemnation, which is the execution of punishment deserved for guilt, is but the effect of condemnation rather than that itself. So far as God charges fault upon a person, so far he condemns him; so, that if God should charge a man as faulty, how can you believe still that he is pronounced just by him?

I beseech you beloved, stop your ears against all

these quirks of Satan, and of your own deceived hearts by him, clamoring still to you, that sin lies yet upon you, and upon your own spirits. It is but the voice of a lying spirit in your own hearts, that saith, that you that are believers have yet sin wasting your consciences, and lying as a burden too heavy for you to bear.⁸⁴ I say, all the weight, the burden, the very sin itself is long ago laid upon Christ; and that laying of it upon him is a full discharge and a general acquittance unto thee, that there is not any one sin now to be charged upon thee. How can these two propositions stand together, thy sin is laid upon Christ, and yet lies upon thee? If God himself say it lies upon thee, and withal says, he before laid it upon Christ, how much is this better than a contradiction? But many will be ready to object, and this seems to be a very strong one.

Was not David a justified person, and did not he bear his own sin, though he was justified? "My sins are gone over my head, they are a burden too heavy for me to bear;" and so many of God's people make the like complaint; by this it seemeth, though a person be justified, though his sins be laid upon Christ, yet he himself bears the weight of them.

I answer, I am not ignorant, beloved, that this objection seems to some to be unanswerable, and no marvel, till light breaks out of darkness to clear the truth.

First, I would fain know, whether now, under the times of the Gospel, there be not many tender-hearted religious people that cry out of their own sins, and of the weight and burden of them upon their spirits, as well as David? I must tell you, all that he speaks here is from himself, and all that he spoke from himself was not truth.⁸⁵ Take that passage of his, "will the Lord cast

⁸⁴ This is a passage that is objected to, but without just cause. It is true, indeed, sin sometimes lies upon the conscience of a believer, as a burden too heavy for him to bear, as on David, and sadly wastes the conscience, that is, destroys the peace of it; but to what is this owing? To unbelief, which is no other than the voice of a lying spirit, it gives God the lie, and deceives the hearts of his people, I John 5:10, Heb.3:12; it is so when it tells believers their sins are upon themselves, and must be bore by them, though long ago, as the Doctor observes, laid on Christ with all their weight; and that the wrath of God is upon them, and they ought to suffer distress and anguish in their souls for them, though their consciences have been purged by the blood of Christ. Gill.

⁸⁵ Here a great charge is brought, but without reason; for everything that a good man says of himself, and of the dealings of God with him, is not at all times true, as he only speaks according to his present apprehension of things, through misguided conscience, and the power of unbelief, as David, Ps.31:22; and so Asaph, whom the Doctor through mistake calls David, and who himself acknowledges it was his infirmity to say what he did, Ps.77:7-10, and 73:13-15; and as the church, Is.40:27, and 49:14-

off forever; and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever; doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" "I have washed my hands in vain," saith David. Did David speak well in these passages, to charge God that he had forsaken him forever, and that he will never be gracious more, and that he had washed his hands in innocency, and in vain? Did David {I say} speak well to charge God thus? If a weak believer complain, that makes not everything a truth he complains of. David might mistake, that God should charge his sin upon him; and, it may be, he might charge his sin upon himself, without any warrant or commission from God.

But we will go a little further; suppose we grant David did indeed bear the weight of his own transgressions, and it was according to the will and pleasure of God, he having sinned, that he himself should bear it; and suppose we grant, that while, he did bear it he was a justified person, according to the covenant of grace, God made with him; yet it will not follow from hence that this instance of David should be a precedent to believers under the times of the gospel. I will clear a mystery unto you, though I have spoken elsewhere something of it; and I will clear it from the Apostle himself in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is a great deal of difference between the times of David, and of the Gospel, and that in particular of a man hearing his own sin. David was under a covenant of grace, and Christ was the substance of it; and so he had remission of sins, but with such a great difference, that the case is marvelously altered by Christ himself; it is true, when David sinned there was a sacrifice for his sin; and it is as true, there was no remission to be found, till the performance of it; "and the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him." {Num.15:28} Here is forgiveness of sins, but they must bear their sins till their sacrifice was offered; now the sin of David might lie upon himself till he had performed his sacrifice, because there was no

remission to be found till that was offered; now it is too probable that David, concealing his sin so long as he did, made no great haste to bring a sacrifice for it, and till that was offered there was no remission.

Again, suppose his particular sacrifice was offered, yet that could not make those that came to it perfect. In Hebrews 10:6 and 9:9, speaking of those sacrifices, the Apostle saith, that they were but a "figure for the present;" and that it was impossible that those gifts and sacrifices should make perfect the comers thereunto; to wit, they that did the service could not thereby be made perfect. The truth is, though there was some remission, and so consequently some peace upon the offering of those sacrifices, yet something was left behind, for which there was a yearly sacrifice to take away; even among the people of the Jews, under their covenant of grace which they had; which, though it were such a covenant; yet had not the large grants and charters that we have, now that Christ is come; though they had remission of sins, yet it was successive, and admitted of intermissions and stops; sins committed before the sacrifice was offered, were remitted by it; but no sins committed after it, had any remission by the former sacrifice, but must stay for it till another succeeded; and from hence it appears, since there was a reiterating of sin, they had always some sin or other still lying upon their persons, because there was a successive offering up of new sacrifices. David complains of bearing his own sins; the reason is this, all the sacrifice he could make use of could not make his conscience perfect; as it is plain in Hebrews 9:9, it "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;" so that though sin did lie upon David till such sacrifice took them away, yet it doth not follow under the gospel, since Christ's coming, that sin should lie any time upon the spirit of a believer in Christ. Why so; will you say? I answer, the Apostle tells us, concerning Christ himself, that he is "become the Mediator of a better covenant." Wherein better, will you say? I answer briefly, in this regard, that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" as you have it in Heb.7:25. Mark it, there is the difference; the sacrifices wherein the remission of sins was received could not make the comers thereto perfect, but Christ being come, he saves to the uttermost them that come to God by him. Look into Heb.10:14, and there you shall find wherein

16. And under a like mistake David seems to be in the passage under consideration; for it is plain he thought God was rebuking him in his wrath, and chastening him in his sore displeasure, which he deprecates; and what the Doctor afterwards observes, that there was something peculiar in his case, agreeable to the then dispensation of things, which required he should bear his sins till a sacrifice was offered, is not to be despised. Gill.

the main difference lies, "by one sacrifice," saith the Apostle, {speaking of Christ offering himself} "he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The difference is this, Christ being once come, the sacrifice of his own body had such a fulness of satisfaction in it, that there never needed any more to be done to the end of the world, for the taking away of any sin; but all manner of sins, of all believers, to the end of the world, were at once taken away by that sacrifice, and that forever.

So that now a believer is not to wait till a new sacrifice be performed, that he might be discharged from such and such a sin; but as soon as ever he hath committed it, he hath "the Lamb of God" in his eye "that takes away the sins of the world;" that hath already taken away this very sin, at this very instant committed. Beloved, consider well of it, for either Christ hath taken away all sin already, or one of these two things must needs follow; either the believer himself is to bear his own sin, or Christ is to come again, and do something more to take away that which remains behind. I say, if all sin be not taken away by what is done already, there must be somewhat more done to take it away; but, saith the apostle, in Heb.10:26, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." In vain do men now look for something else, to come to take away this and that transgression; for there remains no more sacrifice for sin; that one sacrifice did all that was ever to be done, and therefore there is no more to follow. If therefore all be done by Christ that is to be done to make perfect the comers unto him, and to save them to the uttermost; then all the sins that believers now commit, or hereafter shall commit, nay, all the sins that all the believers, to the end of the world shall commit, are already laid upon Christ, he hath nailed them to his cross. Therefore, saith the apostle, in I John 1:7, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

And whereas some may be ready to say that this passage, that the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon Christ, is not peculiar unto these times now, after Christ's coming; for it seems the prophet Isaiah did proclaim the mind of the Lord in particular, before Christ himself came in person.

To this I answer, that all the passages of the prophets concerning the fulness of grace to come by Christ, though they were spoken by them in their time; yet

had reference to future times, after Christ's coming, and had not reference, in respect of their fulness, to those times wherein they spake. For the clearing of this, I shall desire you to consult a few words that Peter hath, being most full and clear to this purpose as can be desired. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Here he speaks of the perfect fulness that comes by Christ, that is, salvation; "of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom {that is unto the prophets} it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." {I Pet.1:9-12} The Apostle says plainly that "they diligently searched" into the times wherein those things they then prophesied of should come to pass; and that they did not preach them to themselves, and that they did not administer these things unto themselves, but to us. I say therefore, still Christ was the foundation of the covenant they had, and remission of sins was a fruit of it; but their covenant took not all their sins away; some were upon them for the time, which was the cause of their complaint; but Christ now hath taken all our sins away, that we are become incomparably perfect; and not only perfect in respect of sin to be charged on us, being passed from us upon Christ, but also our very consciences are acquitted; for, saith the Apostle, speaking of the consciences of God's people under the Gospel in respect of the full discharge from sin. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." {Heb.10:22} Therefore {having spoken so largely of the remission of sins, upon which there remains no more sacrifice} we may come with boldness to the throne of grace with a true heart, and full assurance of faith. Upon what ground? Having our hearts purged or sprinkled from an evil conscience.

O let not therefore, beloved, I beseech you, any objection or objectors in the world, take you off from

standing fast in that liberty wherein Christ hath made you free, and do not again entangle yourselves with such yokes of bondage, that neither you, nor your fathers were able to bear.

If the ceremonies of the Jews were so weighty and such yokes of bondage; what are the sins of people lying upon them? Beloved, you may search and enquire into many ways to find rest to your souls while they are disquieted; but if your hearts are rightly enlightened, and really tender, all the ways in the world shall never give rest to the sole of your foot, nor the least comfort to your spirits, till you find rest upon this one principle, that the Lord hath discharged all your sins, and will remember no one sin against you; till, I say, you can behold a general release, all the whole score crossed, and God discharging you from every filthiness, there can be no rest to your spirits. Is there one sin upon you? That one sin will prove so heavy a pressure on you, that you shall never be able to endure it, especially when the Lord shall let you see what the fearful weight of any one sin is; but if you can receive this principle, that every sin you have committed, or shall commit, is cast upon the Lord Christ, and carried away; that you shall never hear again of any of them, in regard of accusation from God, or in regard of just accusation from your own spirits, then shall your souls return to their rest; but if you be not fully settled upon this principle, that the Lord hath so taken away every sin of every believer, that there is not any one sin remaining, nor any one shall remain for God to charge upon you, you can have none. Give me leave to bring in a few passages of scripture that will be so evident, that except persons will willfully resist the truth, they cannot but sit down with this resolution of spirit, that all their sins are manifestly taken from them, and they perfectly discharged of them.

In Psalm 51:7, David complains, and makes his address to God, “purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” “Wash me,” saith he, and what is the fruit of God’s washing? “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” That God, when he first enters into covenant with persons, washes them, is as clear as the light. Mark that in Ezek.16:8-10, “now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into

a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee.” I say, when God enters into covenant with his people, he washes them; and, how doth he wash them? Doth he leave some spots, blemishes, and stains behind? No; “wash me, {saith the Psalmist,} and I shall be whiter than snow.” What blots can you find upon snow itself? There is nothing clearer than snow; yea, saith the prophet, “I shall be whiter than snow.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” {Is.1:18}

Look into Cant.4:7, and see what an absolute discharge there is to everyone that is a member of Christ, and that is a present one too; for it is not for hereafter; “thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” It is not, thou shalt be all fair, or have no spot in thee; but thou art even now so; so soon as thou art my spouse, thou art fair; nay, “thou art all fair;” nay, “there is not any one spot in thee.” Is this the voice of Christ, or not? Look into Isa.43:25, and you shall see what a full discharge is given, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”

Beloved, suppose a person before a judge be arraigned for felony, and he that accuses him appeals to the judge himself, saying, do not you know that this man committed such a thing? The judge saith, I remember no such thing; now if no other evidence comes in, is not the judge’s not remembering any such thing, a sufficient discharge for him? The Lord saith, “I will not remember their sins;” how then can he charge them upon them, when he will not remember them? Shall I come and witness against a man and say, he did steal, and is guilty of theft, and yet I never remember it? The Lord doth not remember, therefore he doth not charge; nay, saith he, “I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.” Now what is it to blot out a thing? Suppose there be a deed, or a bond wherein a debt is chargeable upon a man, and every line or letter of it are blotted out; how can it be charged upon him, especially when the creditor himself hath blotted it out? Where can this be charged? “I, even I, am he {saith the Lord} that blotteth out.” If any other besides the creditor should blot out a debt, there were some

cause left of fear; but if the creditor himself shall do it, what need the debtor make any question of it? So if any creature in the world should undertake to blot out sin but God, this might not hold good; but when he himself comes and blots it out, where is any charge that can be laid upon him? He cannot recall his own act again.

In Ezek.36:25, you shall see what a full discharge is given to believers. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;" mark, what is that the Lord cleanses from? "All filthiness;" even then, when he enters into covenant, gives a new heart, becomes the God of a people, then he sprinkles with clean water, and they are clean from all their filthiness.

Look into Daniel 9:23,24, and you shall find that the Lord whispers a secret in the ears of Daniel, which he would make him know was a fruit of the greatness of his love unto him. "I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision;" or mystery. What is that secret that God will impart unto him, as the greatest expression of his love? It is this; "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city;" and what is it that follows upon these seventy weeks? Mark the words I pray; "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Neither transgression, nor sin were finished, nor iniquity come to an end, nor everlasting righteousness brought in, until the seventy weeks were ended; but upon the determination of them, then came sin to be finished. Mark the words well, iniquity then came to an end, and then came in everlasting righteousness. And Christ seems to touch upon this very prophecy, when it was accomplished upon the cross, "it is finished," saith Christ. What is the meaning? What is finished? Sin is finished; for the speech hath reference unto the prophecy of Daniel; not that his suffering, but that sin was finished; for he lay in the grave till the third day afterward, and was under death, but sin was finished according to that prophecy. Now the seventy weeks being fulfilled, what transgressions can you have upon your consciences?

Wherefore do you complain of so much of the burden of them, seeing that sin is finished? If thy present transgressions be not finished, at the seventy weeks end, by that suffering of Christ, there is no truth in that of Daniel, sin is finished; for a thing is not finished, when there remains anything to be done about it; if there remains some sins to be taken away, then sin is not finished; but at the end of seventy weeks, sin was finished by Christ, and came to an end.

I could instance in many other passages of scripture; it were infinite to name them all; and such they are, as are more worth, and more glorious, than all the treasures of the world. Any one of all these is a general discharge to every believer in the world. But you will say, do not believers commit sin now? I answer, they commit transgression, but long before they did it, it was paid for, and taken away; all the score is crossed, even from the time that Christ bore the sins of many upon the cross. It is true, the Lord leaves the sins that believers act, legible still, though crossed; as when a man hath crossed his book, one may read every particular sum, or debt, that was formerly written; and though he may read them, yet it doth not follow that they are debts, for the crossing of it take away the nature of the debt; God crossed the score when Christ died, and then it was no more debt; all our sins, as a debt, were then finished; only God will leave that, which was before a debt, fairly written still, that we may read them, and see how many there are, and what great sums they amount to; that so we might have hereby the clearer occasion, diligently to set forth the praise of the glory of that grace, that hath crossed such a score.

But some will be ready to say, yet once more, this kind of doctrine opens a wide gap to all manner of licentiousness. Licentiousness! How so? You will say, if a person know, before he hath committed his sin, that whatsoever he shall commit afterwards, are already laid upon Christ, and there is no fear he shall receive any damage by them; who will not break out into all manner of sins, that are so pleasing to men's corrupt natures, when they know they can have no hurt by them.

1. I answer, did not the Lord himself know what corrupt inferences men would draw from grace revealed, and made to appear? Is it dangerous to preach the free grace of God lest men should draw

licentious inferences from it? Where was the wisdom of God that could not conceal these truths that are so dangerous to be published? Did the Lord, and was he pleased, whatever danger might follow, to reveal the truth so graciously, and shall we say, we must mince it, or depress it, because some abuse it, and corrupt inferences are made of it.

2. I answer, if it be truth that the Lord hath revealed, that we may, and should publish it abroad unto men; then we must preach it, let the consequences be what they will. But I answer further, there is no such danger from those whom this free grace is given, that they should make such corrupt inferences. I do not deny, beloved, but that such as are rejected and given up of God, may make licentious uses of the doctrines of grace, and the fulness of pardon by Christ; but whoever said that this fulness of grace or any part thereof belongs to such that are rejected? Do now we not say that believers are the only persons on whom the Lord confers, and to whom he gives to receive it? Not that believing, in the act of it, is the efficient, or confirmation, but the manifestation of it to them, that it belongs to them; as for others that are not believers, we do not say their part is in it; it may be in it, though they be not now believers; yet we cannot for the present say they have their part in it, till they believe though they do not now believe, they may afterwards; and whenever they do, that which before was hid, appears by believing.

I draw to an end, and say again, for believers, that the revelation of the fulness of grace, and acquittance from sin, are so far from opening a gap unto licentiousness of life; that the truth is, there is nothing in the world that raises up such a glorious sanctified life, as to know the full deliverance of the soul from sin. Mark but what Zachariah saith, in Luke 1:74,75, "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." It imports thus much unto us, that the serving of God, without fear, is the fruit of a saint's deliverance from his enemies, from sin; and the more we believe that sin is already passed and carried away, the more shall we serve him without fear; therefore, Solomon speaks excellently, "the righteous are bold as a lion;" {Pv.28:1;} those that are once sure, in respect of God and their own souls, adventure upon anything

he calls them out unto; miscarry, or not miscarry, it is all one with them, for all stands right between God and them. While men know not whether their sins are passed away and themselves discharged, and that there is no danger in respect of them, how many duties that God calls them to, do they baulk; and how many sufferings for the cause of God are they ready to shrink from, before they have the assurance of the pardon of their sins? The apostle tells us, "that the grace of God," his loving-kindness and favour, "that brings salvation, hath appeared;" and what is the fruit thereof? Are we saved by grace? Then may we live as we list; as some may say? No; "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." {Tit.2:11,12} However others may turn the grace of God into wantonness, yet believers, who have received this mercy, and assurance thereof, to have all their sins cast upon Christ, cannot sin in this kind; and why not? "They are born of God, {saith St. John,} and they cannot sin, because the seed of God abides in them;" {I Jn.3:9;} or as the Apostle expresses it more fully thus, we "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." {I Pet.1:5} It is most certainly true, indeed, corrupt nature, having no bridle to restrain it from sin, but only the sour sauce that follows, take away that, corrupt nature will break out. But beloved, take the believer saved by grace, and delivered from all his sins, he hath another principle over-ruling in his spirit, and that is the seed of God in him; and this so over-rules him, that he hath not that maw {as we use to say} as he had when corrupt nature had power over him. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." {Gal.5:17}

But, you will say, then is this ground of presumption; now many thousands will run into it, upon this doctrine delivered? I answer, understand presumption well; consider what it is, and then you shall see how vain the objection is. What is it? It is no more but this, promising to myself any great thing without any good ground. If I promise myself, such a man will give me an hundred pounds, and he never said so, and I have no ground to think so, this is presumption; but, if a man engages himself to give me so much, is it

presumption in me to expect it, though I pay nothing for it? So here, if so be that the discharge from all sin at once were without any ground, it were presumption to build upon it; but if the Lord hath, as you have heard, published all this to the world, of his grace to his own people, what presumption is it to build upon so sure a foundation as the word of grace? God himself must change before this bottom, whereupon the foot of a believer stands, shall sink.

But, you will say, though there be this free grace and full discharge of sin, Christ taking sin upon himself, yet it doth not belong to licentious persons, therefore it should not be published so generally as men preach it. I answer, who is it for? Is it for the righteous, or for the wicked? "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," saith our Savior; that is, to turn and come to me. It is not for the whole, they need not the physician, but the sick. In brief, beloved, mark but the tenor of the gospel, and you shall see who they are to whom the free grace of God is tendered. "If while we were enemies, {saith Paul,} Christ died for us, how much more shall we be saved by his life?" Now, I will ask, whether is the free grace of God delivered to the enemies of Christ, considered as such, or no? "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." "Behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine;" {Ez.16:6,8;} and all this in blood, "then washed I thee with water." When? After he had sworn and entered into covenant, and spread his skirt over them. To whom beloved, doth this entrance into the free covenant belong? Why, to persons in their blood before their washing; for washing follows entering into covenant. "In due time," saith the Apostle, "Christ died for the ungodly;" and in Rom.4:5, it is expressed thus; "but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." It is the ungodly that God justifieth, and who is he? The ungodly that doth not work. "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Now, then, to whom should we preach the free grace of God, and discharge from all sin, but to

those to whom the Lord reaches it out? But you will say, doth it belong to all? I answer, it belongeth not to all, but to every ungodly man under heaven, to whom God will give to believe and receive this truth. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {Jn.1:11-13} The truth is, it is a secret in the bosom of the Lord himself, to whom the grace belongs; for "the secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." {Deut.29:29} Wherefore we are to publish it to particular persons; and to every one to whom the Lord gives to believe, this grace belongs; for, when he believes it, it is manifest to him that his full portion is in it, let his conversation be what it will before.

I speak not this to bolster any man in any manner of wickedness; for, when the Lord gives faith, he will certainly change the heart, and that will work by love; this, I say, that when God is pleased to make a person so to see his own sin and emptiness, as to reach after the grace of God in Christ, there is not a soul that believes in Christ, and reaches after him, that possibly can miscarry; "him that comes to me, I will not cast off;" no one that believeth. There is not one soul under heaven; but if the Lord gives him to come, and receive this grace, and not reject it, {let his sins be what they will} there is a present participation; nay more, there is a present manifestation to him in special, that all the grace of the Gospel is his. And so much for this time.

20 To Lay Our Sins On Christ Is The Lord's Prerogative Only {1}

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

I have made entrance formerly in some other place {as some here present peradventure know} upon the words that I have now read unto you. The whole mystery of the Gospel, in the excellency of it, is summed up in them, and in what goes immediately before; even those excellencies, which, though the prophets spake of before, yet it was revealed unto then, "that not unto themselves, but unto us these things were particularly intended," {I Pet.1:12,} concerning this

glorious gospel; the whole completeness of the people of God, from the first rise of it to the consummation of it, with all the steps and degrees to it, is comprised in this text. And lest any should boast of himself when he shall partake of the glory of this grace, the Lord is pleased to lay down a caveat in the beginning of it, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every man to his own way;" this is the best we are, and in this condition the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; that so all the world may know, even the best of men, that not for their own righteousness, doth the Lord do this to them, or for them.

But I must not dwell upon particulars, which I have formerly delivered upon this subject. I will lead you by the hand, and point out what I have passed through, that so we may make a more orderly progress. Every word in this text hath so much weight in it, that each word contains a great latitude and immenseness in it of the grace of God to us.

1. It is iniquity itself that the Lord hath laid upon Christ; not only our punishment, but our very sin.

2. And that this transaction of our sins to Christ is a real act; our sins so became Christ's that he stood the sinner in our stead, and we discharged.

3. That which remains yet to be considered is another branch, shooting out of this tree of life, for so I may call this text; and that is drawn from the efficient of this great grace of laying our iniquities upon Christ; it is the Lord himself that is the agent; he himself hath done this thing; "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." As Satan hath cast a mist over other glorious branches of the gospel, so he hath endeavored to cast very darkness itself over this truth, namely, "that this is the Lord's own act." It is true, Satan is contented to allow men general and gross notions of it, that our iniquities are disposed of by the Lord; but when there shall be a thorough searching into particulars concerning this truth, then he bestirs himself, {Jn.8:44,} even to raise contradictions against what men, in general will grant. The truth is beloved, it is hardly received of men, and very rare it is, to let the Lord himself be the sole and only agent in laying our iniquity upon Christ; and yet if it were not he alone that did it, all the creatures in the world would break their backs with heaving at iniquity to lay it upon him. And assuredly beloved, let any man take any other course in the world, putting the work of

laying iniquity upon any other, but the Lord alone, he shall never effect it, he shall never lay it upon Christ, the point therefore that I shall deliver, is briefly this. It is the Lord, it is he singly, he exclusively, he only and alone, and none but he that lays iniquity upon Christ.

There is nothing in the world can do this but the Lord. Nay, I will go further; there is nothing in the world moves, persuades, or prevails with him, to lay our iniquity upon Christ; the Lord is so alone the founder, and author, or agent in this work, that he is moved and stirred up only by himself to do it; and nothing in the world moves him to do it but himself.

For the clearing of this truth, give me leave to dive a little into it, and I shall only desire this justice at your hands, that the manifestation and evidence of scripture may carry your judgments without prejudice; I say, for the clearing of it, I shall dive into these particulars.

The Lord is so the sole agent in laying our iniquities upon Christ, that even Christ himself doth not lay them upon himself; nay, I must go yet further, the Lord himself doth so, of and from himself, without regard to any motive whereby he might be persuaded to lay our iniquities upon Christ; that Christ himself is not the first motive to the Lord to do this thing; I say again, Christ is not the mover or persuader of the Lord unto it; but the Lord merely from himself simply, as he is the Lord God, moved and prevailed with himself alone to lay our iniquities upon him. And yet, beloved, this will be no derogation to Christ at all, but will only constitute him in his own true and proper office as he is the Mediator; for according to that office we speak of him here. I say, it is not Christ himself that lays our iniquities upon himself. It is true, Christ doth many admirable things about iniquity being laid upon him; "he takes away the sins of the world; he bears the sins of many; he is made sin for us;" but you shall nowhere find, that Christ laid upon himself the sins of men; for he himself was as careful that his Father should not be robbed of his own glory, as that his people may be saved by his righteousness. All along you shall still find that Christ is so far from making this taking of iniquity his own original act, that he still acknowledges, that bearing it was not only for the pleasure of his Father, but also in subjection unto him, and in obedience to his command. Observe but that expression of Christ himself, in Heb.10:6, and you shall plainly perceive, that Christ doth not lay iniquity

upon himself, but according to the charge of his Father, he is contented to take what he layeth upon him; "in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} to do thy will, O God;" "thy law is written in my heart," saith Christ there, "a body hast thou prepared for me," thou hast fitted a body for me, thou hast bored mine "ear through with an aul &c." {Ex.21:6} Out of these expressions I will observe this to you: 1. That the main discourse of Christ here, hath reference to the taking away of the sins of men; for, in the beginning of the chapter, you shall find how the apostle hath distinguished between the weakness of the Jewish rites concerning remission of sins, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice for the perfecting of it. In these services there was a remembrance of sin every year; "because it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." For this cause Christ comes into the world; to what purpose? To do that which those sacrifices could not do, to take away sin perfectly; but by what authority came Christ? Doth he come of his own head? Doth he of himself take the sin upon himself? No, beloved, he doth not; "in the volume of the book {saith Christ} it is written of me," or as it is in the original, "in the head of the book it is written of me;" as if he had said, in thy book it is written, as a chief head or matter; remission of sins is ascribed unto me as a business committed unto me, or passed over to me.

But it may be by way of courtesy, some may say. I answer, mark well the meaning of that place where Christ saith, "thy law is in my heart;" so then it seems this book which contains this business of Christ, about the remission of sins, is a book that runs in the strain of a law upon him, or unto him; so that in the business of bearing the sins of men, Christ was so far from taking it upon himself, to lay their iniquities upon himself, that he acknowledges he was under a law in this thing; nay; secondly, see that it was the Lord's own business that Christ is sent about; for he tells us expressly, that the Lord every way furnishes him to this work, "a body hast thou prepared me," or fitted for me; and all to show that Christ is in a manner passive about the business of taking off iniquity; he doth not take it upon himself, but only bears it, being laid on by the commission, nay the hand of God himself. And therefore in Heb.5:8, the Apostle tells us expressly that

though Christ were a Son, yet "learned he obedience;" and in John 10:18, Christ saith, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," and no man can take it away from me; in which he may seem to be his own mover, and that he doth it of himself to bear the sins of men; yet afterwards he shows plainly, that he speaks this not at all in reference to his Father, but in reference to the creature; no man takes it away from him indeed, but in reference to the Father, he saith, "this commandment have I received from my Father, that I should lay down my life." That no man should take away my life, which is true indeed, but that I should lay it down; and in John 15:10, our Saviour calls out his disciples upon a service of the Lord from an argument of his own obedience; "as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love;" so if you keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love. By all which expressions you may perceive, that Christ, as he stands the Mediator and Bearer of the sins of men, stands as one looking still for his commission, when the Lord himself will lay their iniquities on him; he doth not of himself, and of his own accord, lay them on himself; and therefore the Apostle to the Hebrews, saith expressly, "no man taketh this office upon himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." {Heb.5:4} What office was that? The office of the priesthood to bear the sins of men; and he speaks of Christ himself in this place, that he did not take this upon himself; but waited till the Lord was pleased to lay the load upon him, and then he laid his shoulders under it. It is true, God's laying iniquity upon Christ was not by compulsion; but there was a voluntary agreement; it was the agreement of a son to a father, that keeps his authority and power in this business; Christ is but the Mediator; he comes between as he is chosen the umpire.

But if any shall say, though Christ doth not lay the iniquities of men upon himself, yet surely he moves and persuades the Father to lay them upon him. I answer, this is received for a general truth, that what the Lord doth about the discharge of a believer's sin, he doth all upon the motives Christ put him upon, by that prevalency that he hath with him; but, beloved, you shall find this, that in all Christ's discourse, he very frequently puts off many things from himself, and gives them to his Father; and therefore he saith expressly, that of himself he doth nothing, but as he

hears of the Father, so he speaks. {Jn.8:28} It is true, that the Lord hath given to Christ the pre-eminence in all things, as he by whom alone he works all good in the world to the sons of men; but he hath not given Christ this pre-eminence, to be the first mover of him to do that good to men that he doth; the Lord himself is the fountain of his own motives, and is moved simply, and only from himself, to do that good that he doth to the sons of men. And that it may appear plainly to you, that Christ was not the first mover of the Father to dispose of the sins of men upon himself, observe but this one thing. What was the motive that Christ himself should have such a being as he had, to wit, of Mediatorship? Was not Christ himself given unto the world to be the Saviour of men? How could he be a motive to the Father to give him a being to move him, before he himself had a being to move withal? There must therefore be a love boiling in the Father to the sons of men, that must stir him up to give Christ to be their Saviour, or else he could not have come into the world. If therefore the love of God to men was the first mover of himself to give Christ to them, how could he be the mover of the Father, that he should be given to them, since it was the good pleasure of the Father that Christ should be? It is true indeed, Christ is the mover of the Father to execute all the good pleasure of his to the sons of men; but he is not the mover of him first to love them; the thoughts of God were from himself towards men. Now, because that "mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace might kiss each other," which only Christ could compass, therefore was he sent of God into the world, to make up whatsoever might conduce to the accomplishment of his love. When God first cast his love upon men, and saw their transgressions must be satisfied for, that justice might not be violated, that mercy might not swallow up justice, nor justice might not trample upon, nor devour mercy; therefore there must be satisfaction made, that justice might have its own right; for this cause Christ was sent into the world as a medium, or means, whereby the love that God had formerly set upon the sons of men, might have its free course without interruption.

Peradventure, beloved, this discourse may seem somewhat vain and impertinent, that God himself should be his own mover to lay the iniquities of the sons of men upon the body of Christ; but now by that

which follows you shall see, that it is of great concern; for if Christ himself did not lay our iniquities upon himself, and if he did not move the Father primarily to lay them upon him, how much less could we, and anything we could do, attain to that height to lay them upon him? I know that all will be ready to grant, that Christ is greater with the Father than all the things in the world; and if any one thing were able to move him to lay the iniquities of men upon Christ, he were able to do most in this matter; if then Christ himself doth not lay our iniquities upon himself, all that we can do, or are, cannot possibly do it.

There is a great mistake {and I suppose it is out of ignorance, for lack of diving into the bottom of the Gospel} among men, I mean, among tender-hearted godly people, those that are deeply wrought upon; and a conceit it is that is deeply rooted in their spirits, that some performances of their own must lay their iniquities upon Christ. Suppose there be a sin committed, it may be more scandalous than ordinary, which peradventure to sense wounds the spirit; the question now is, what it is that must, or doth, rid such a one of the sting and guilt of this or such like transgressions committed? What discharges the soul of such a sin? Usually it is taught among us, by those who would be accounted the greatest Protestants, and haters of Popery, that the proportion of repentance, tears, sorrow, and fastings, answerable to the latitude and height of such transgressions, is that which gives ease; this takes away the burden, this lays the soul at rest and quiets it; therefore when a soul hath transgressed, if it be tender, most, or almost all the pantings of it, are after extraordinary enlargements in bitterness, heaviness, mourning, melting, and tears; these are accounted they that wash away iniquity; but, beloved, let me tell you, it is impossible that all the righteousness of men though it were more perfect than it can be, should lay one iniquity, or the least circumstance of one, upon Christ. If a man could weep his heart out, if it could melt like wax, dissolve into water, and gush out rivers of tears for sin; all this could not carry away the least dram of the filthiness of sin from such a soul unto Christ, nor unload the soul of any sin to load him with it; therefore they do but deceive themselves that ascribe the unloading and easing of their own spirits, to the greatest enlargements in any performances in the world; Christ himself

did not lay iniquity upon himself, much less can the righteousness of any man lay it upon him. Look upon the best of your righteousness, suppose the things mentioned already; suppose a spiritualness in all that righteousness, what can they do towards this, namely, unloading a man's own spirit of his sin, and the loading of Christ with it? Suppose the righteousness you perform were perfect and complete, that God himself could find no fault with it after any sin is committed; make the largest supposition that can be imagined; when all this is done, what can all this conduce to the taking away of sin already committed? Do you not owe all this righteousness to God, as you are under his command? And if you owe it, then the very payment of it is but the payment of his own debt; and how can the payment of this debt discharge for a former debt? Suppose a man oweth two hundred pounds to be paid each at six months, at two payments; if he fails in the payment of the first, and at the second day of payment pays one of the hundred pounds, every penny of it, doth this balance the account? Doth the payment of the last hundred pounds satisfy the whole debt? If he had paid the first and second hundred pounds, he had paid but what was due; can the second payment then be any satisfaction and furthermore to payment of the former debt? No, not at all! In whatever we have sinned, we have failed in the payment of that which was God's due; and when we come to perform any righteousness, that is his due too; if we had not failed in the former, this latter is God's due too, this must have been paid; and when we perform any righteousness after sins committed, suppose it were perfect and complete, this doth but satisfy its own debt, for God requires all this; and if it do but satisfy its own debt, how can it discharge a former?

Besides, beloved, how is it possible any righteousness of man can lay iniquity upon Christ, when besides what we have already said, there is new iniquity contracted against the Lord in all the righteousness that men perform? This is an odd payment of debts, by payment still to run more and more in debt; that our righteousness may acquit us of former transgressions, and yet that itself contracts new transgression to men, making it more than it was before; how can any man in ordinary sense conceive this to be any way of discharge?

But some will say, though our performances do

not lay our iniquities upon Christ, yet they prevail with God, and move him with pity towards us, and stir him up to take our iniquities off from us, and lay them upon Christ. God cannot but melt, will some say, to see the tears of his people, the bitterness of their spirits, their crying, their earnestness, and their sorrows; these cannot but prevail with him to have compassion on them.

I know this is the general conceit of too many in the world; but, beloved, let me tell you, there is nothing in all creatures in the world that hath the least prevalency with the Lord, let them do what they can. All our prayers, tears, fastings, mournings, reluctancy and fighting against our corruptions move God not a jot to lay our sins upon Christ; he is moved only from himself. If they move God, what must they move him to? If he be moved by anything from man, he is moved according to the nature of the thing that is done; if the nature of the thing produce evil effects, God must be moved to do evil to men; if good effects, if there be good in the things, they may move him to good. Now I ask, is there good or evil in anything men do? When they have sinned, they pray, confess, mourn, and fast; is there evil or good in these, looked upon in their own nature? No man can deny, but that there is abundance of iniquity in the best performances a man doth; and that "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." {Hab.1:13} That which must move God to do good, must have a goodness in itself; all the motive therefore, in the Lord is simply himself.

And that it may appear manifestly unto us, that the Lord doth not fetch motives from us, to lay our iniquities upon Christ, you shall find through the whole current of the gospel, he takes a time of laying them upon him, when all the world may see there is no possibility that any creature should move him to do it. Mark well, Rom.9:11-13, "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." Before Jacob had done either good or evil, God's love was fastened upon him, to show that evil did not move him to reject, nor good persuade him to love; while Jacob was in the womb God loved him, and what in him did move him to love him? He was conceived

and born in sin, as David confesseth of himself. What should move God to love Jacob, and to put away his transgression? That it might be according to the purpose of election, not of him that worketh, but of God that sheweth mercy. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {Ezek.6:8} Israel being now in blood, what was in him to persuade God to swear to him, and to enter into covenant with him? By blood, he means the filthiness in the creature, and such that no eye could pity it, when God first set his love upon it. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" mark the expression; there was no distance between being enemies and reconciliation; there was reconciliation even while enemies. What motive is there in an enemy, while such, to persuade reconciliation? "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," saith the text. What motive can an ungodly man use to persuade God to lay iniquity upon Christ, I say, considering him as ungodly?

But you will say, this is a way, and a highway, to destroy all performances whatsoever. What, can they do nothing? To what purpose should any man then fall upon any employment? Beloved, I am not ignorant how the apostle Paul himself was slandered, when he preached the free grace of God, simply out of his own bowels, without any motive from the creature, as if he allowed and maintained continuance in sin, and breaking out into all manner of licentiousness, because grace abounded. I believe it hath been a charge upon the ministers of the gospel, ever since his time. Oh, if ministers preach the free-grace of God, and that what he doth, he doth for his own sake, then farewell all obedience and performances; this opens a gap for all manner of idleness! Be not deceived, the Lord hath many special ends, for which he hath set up a course of uprightness of conversation in the world, though there be no stroke in them to move him to show mercy to them that walk thus uprightly; and it is but the ignorance of men to think, that holiness in conversation must presently fall to the ground, if it hath not a prevalency in it with God to do good to men. You know what the apostle saith, Eph.2:8-10, "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not

of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

A man would think that he contradicted himself; works have nothing to do in man's salvation, nor move God to save; "not of works," saith he; "but of grace;" yet "you are ordained unto good works;" these stand well together. The apostle Paul tells Titus, that men should "study good works, for these are profitable unto men;" a man thus serves his generation, while he walketh in good works, and he doth good to them among whom he lives; he serves not himself in all the good works he doth; for the Lord Christ hath fully served his turn already; either we must make our performances Christ's, or else we must disclaim them. What pride and arrogance is this! Either men will rule the roast, or else they will not abide in the house! As every man hath his office in a family, so everything in man hath its office; and good works have very necessary offices in the family, but they were never ordained to be saviors, much less to be gods. When Christ was tempted by the Pharisees about tribute, he makes this reply; "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." {Mt.22:21}

Let not the righteousness of men encroach upon God, to take his work upon itself; I tell you, beloved, we know not the evil of these vain imaginations. Should the Lord deal with you according to your own hearts that as your performances could lay your sins upon Christ, and discharge you, so you should be discharged, when would you ever do it? When {alas!} instead of laying old sins upon Christ by new performances, you do but add new sins to the old; all our righteousness is but a renovation of new transgressions; for "all our righteousnesses," he speaks of every particular, "are as filthy rags," and a menstruous cloth. {Is.64:6} Is this the way to ease a man of his sin or to get God to discharge him of it, to throw dirt anew in his face? Is this a way for a traitor to get the king's pardon, to come into his presence, and throw poison in his face again? There is not one righteous action a man performs, but he therein anew throws dirt in the face of God by it; because sin, as the Wise Man saith, "is an abomination to the Lord." Who knows the errors of his life and the multitude of

his failings in the best righteousness he doth? Man's righteousness may serve his own turn, but not God's. Though there be failing in our righteousness, it may indeed be profitable to men; but as there is, the eyes of God cannot away with it.

But you will say again, Christ makes our righteousness to be accepted and pleasing by purging away all the filth that is in it; and then it may prevail with God, to lay our iniquities upon him. I answer, it is true, Christ purges away all the filthiness, both of righteousness and unrighteousness in believers; but not that their righteousness may prevail with God to lay iniquity upon him; but that it may be accepted in him, the beloved, as services. He himself was without spot, or the least sin, yet he takes not away iniquity by laying it upon himself; and if our righteousness be made complete, by his taking away the filth of it, and putting his own perfection on it; it is not that our iniquities may be laid upon him by it, but that it may be accepted by way of service.

I should go yet one step higher, and let you know, that as it is the Lord alone that lays iniquity upon Christ, so not only all our performances are unable to do it, but even our faith itself doth not do it; for ye may easily perceive, beloved, what I drive at in all this discourse, namely, to strip the creature stark naked, leave it shiftless, and unable any way to help itself, that all the help that it receives may appear to be of the free grace of God, merely, without its concurrence in it. I say, therefore, it is not the faith of believers that lays their iniquities upon Christ. Suppose thou hast committed many sins, and they are apparent; thou wouldst be rid of them, and hear of them no more; what is the way? Works have not power to do it, you will say; but faith is able to discharge the soul from all transgressions, and lay them upon Christ. But I must tell you, though God hath given many glorious fruits and effects to fruit, and made it instrumental of much excellent and abundant consolation to his people; yet hath he not honored it with this, that it should lay iniquity on Christ, or move God to do it.

This cannot be, you will say, for the apostle Paul saith expressly, "I conclude that a man is justified by faith, and not by the works of the law;" therefore, we are justified by faith, and what is that, but to have sins laid upon Christ, and we discharged of them? I confess, it seems to be a strong place at first, where the

apostle speaks of justification by faith that consists in the taking away of sins from men; but give me leave to examine it a little, that faith encroach not upon God, and take that which is his own, and which he hath said he will not give to another. I say, it is not the faith of a believer, though ever so strong and powerful, that lays iniquity upon Christ; I shall give you a touch of it for the present; and to this purpose, it were very needful to consider, what it is for a person to be justified; for upon that depends the knowledge of the very thing "that lays iniquity on Christ." Time will not give me leave to discourse freely upon it; in short, therefore, I will only show what it is to be justified. I speak of justification before God, and of his own justification of a man; and it must, of necessity, be granted of all men, that know what justification is in common sense, that a person justified before God, is such a one, who, when God himself makes search to try him, whether he be guilty, or not guilty, of a crime, finds none upon him; and upon not finding any, he pronounces him just. Let men say what they will, it is a flat contradiction for God to say, this a just person in mine eyes, and yet I have some transgressions to charge upon him. How can God say he is just, and yet charge him with injustice done? Therefore he must be fully freed from all injustice, or God cannot pronounce him a just person.

You will say, no man under heaven can be justified; for God can charge all with transgression. I answer, God cannot. That his people have transgressed is true; but he finds, in fact, that all their transgressions are already satisfied for by his own Son, though the sins were afterwards committed; yet upon payment made beforehand, he charges not sin upon them, having charged it upon Christ already, and taken the full payment of him for it. There is no person under heaven that God pronounces just, but he therein says, I have not one sin to charge upon him. It is true, I find many crimes committed by him, but also I find that my Son hath discharged them already, and he hath given me good satisfaction for them. Now then, this being the justification of a sinner before God; how is it possible, that faith can discharge a person from all iniquity; that God himself upon strict search, should find none to be charged upon him? How can faith do it? Suppose a person had no transgression for God to find, till he believes, yet this believing brings transgression with it,

enough for God to find him guilty; that itself is sinful; “I believe, Lord, help my unbelief;” there is a mixture of unbelief in the faith of all believers; and there are many weaknesses in it; and how can that justify a person, that is not able to justify itself? Though Christ was like to us in all things, “like as we are, yet without sin;” must he himself be free from sin to justify us that he might purchase our redemption, and shall faith justify us that are not free from sin? If faith justified a person, what must justify faith? For that must have something to justify it, being not able to justify itself.

But, you will say, this is but argumentation; the apostle Paul saith “that being justified by faith, we have peace with God;” {Rom.5:1;} and since the Holy Ghost saith, “we are justified by faith,” we must not dispute against it. I will answer in brief and desire one thing of you, and that is to consult Beza upon this place; for he renders the words out of the original, “being justified by faith we have peace with God,” without any stop from the first to the last. Our translators render the words thus, “being justified by faith,” and then put a comma; but as Beza renders them, {who is accounted a most sincere renderer of the original,} he makes no stop; and, if that be true, why may not they be as well rendered thus; “being justified, by faith we have peace with God?” And so ascribe justification to Christ, as a thing done before, and let faith have reference to our peace; being justified by Christ, by faith we come to have peace with God; which stands current with the analogy of faith, and the truth of the gospel. “For it is God that justifieth.” {Rom.8:33} Justification is truly and properly the work of God himself and cannot be the work of faith.⁸⁶

But, secondly, suppose the words to run as they are commonly rendered; I answer, then are we to distinguish in faith two things; there is the act of believing, and the object on which we believe; and so the words may be understood thus, “being justified” by the righteousness of faith, or by the righteousness of Christ which we believe, “we have peace with God;” and so ascribe our justification to the object of our believing, the righteousness of Christ, and not to the act of believing. The truth is, beloved, the act of believing is a work, and as much ours, as our fear, prayer, and love are; and the apostle should contradict

himself when he saith, “we are saved by grace, through faith, not of works,” if he mean the act of faith; for he might as well have said, we are not justified by works, but we are justified by them.

Finally, to draw towards a conclusion, I answer thus; you may consider justification in a double sense, and that, according to the opinion of our divines, there is justification in heaven, and in a man’s conscience. Justification in heaven is God’s act alone; justification in the consciences of men, is the manifestation of that act of God to them, by which a man comes to know, and consequently to rejoice in it; and so you may read the words thus, “being justified by faith;” that is, through faith having the justification of God evidenced and manifested to our spirits, “we have peace with God.” And, beloved, you shall find this to be a very solid and genuine interpretation of the words, and agreeable to the Scriptures; for peace and joy are always appropriated to persons believing; as much as to say, the act of justification in heaven, though perfectly done, is yet secret in the breast of God alone, till he gives persons faith, that beholds the grace of God; that brings

the glad tidings of justification to the soul, and so it rejoices in it; therefore the apostle prays after this manner, “the Lord fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” So that it is true, we have not the comfort; we cannot say particularly to our spirits, God hath justified me, and I rejoice in this, till we believe; because faith is made by the Lord to be the “evidence of things not seen,” as in Heb.11:1. And that is the proper work that God hath given to believing, not to affect anything to the good of a man, but only to be the witness of that good to his spirit; and so give light to that which was secret before. So that still it remains, that the laying of iniquity itself, upon Christ, is the Lord’s act, and his only; our faith seeth what the Lord hath done; and, when God gives us to believe, faith manifests it to us, and so our souls come to have peace. In sum, therefore, beloved, God lays, Christ bears, and faith sees iniquity laid upon him. God, through Christ, perfect this work in us, that so, faith seeing, “we may have all joy and peace in believing.”

⁸⁶ Faith is never said to justify, nor are we justified by it as an act or work, but by the object of it, Christ, and his righteousness who is sometimes called faith. Gal.3:23,24,25. Gill.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

I find no Scripture so punctually and fully revealing the riches of the grace of God to men, as this that I have now read unto you, surpassing others depending upon it; and I find no truth more clouded, to the trouble of God’s people, than those truths that concern the grace of God to men; which hath exceedingly provoked me to improve that talent I have received, to communicate the mind of the Lord, as fully as I may, to them.

Of this truth, upon sundry occasions, I have spoken several things out of these words; each word containing a special observation by itself; every word hath its weight, and speaks admirable grace to the sons of men. God not only punishes Christ for men, but he lays the very iniquities of men upon him. The purity of God naturally can never take pleasure in a filthy vessel. Should Christ be punished over and over again for the sins of men; yet if, for all this, they lay upon themselves, God must abhor them. There can be no expectance of a smile from the face of God upon any creature in the world, till it be all fair; and this cannot be, till all spots of sin be taken from them; and this taking away of the filthiness of the creature is not a kind of supposed taking of it away, but is a real act of God; he makes Christ as very a sinner as the creature himself was.⁸⁷ “He was made sin for us.” {II Cor.5:21} The Lord laid our very iniquities themselves upon him; this is the greatest grace the soul can have comfort in, in this life, that iniquity is done away; and therefore, it concerns all that hear such admirable tidings, to know from whence it comes, who undertakes this great work, to discharge a poor sinner, and to lay all its iniquities on Christ. Had all the creatures in the world undertaken, with all their strength, to lay them on him, it would have broke the back of them all, so much as to lift at sin to lay it upon him; therefore the grace of the Lord is evident in this, that it is he himself that laid iniquity upon him. No undertaken in heaven or earth could have brought this great work to pass, but the Lord alone. It is strange, that Christ should be enabled to undertake so much as he did; yet God did not oblige him to take and lay our iniquities

upon himself, Christ learned obedience in this, and waited the pleasure of his Father to lay iniquity upon him, and doth not lay it on himself. “I came not to do my own will {saith he,} but the will of him that sent me.” Nay, Christ was not the first motive to it; but the thoughts of God’s own love towards poor creatures were the motives to himself to give him to bear the sins; and if Christ himself doth not lay iniquity upon himself, much less doth the righteousness of man lay it on him. It is not all the prayers, the tears, the fasting, the repentance, though ever so perfect and complete, that lays any one iniquity upon Christ; it is the Lord alone that does it; nay, none of these performances have the least moving power in them to persuade him to it; the Lord moves himself to do it; all our services are for other purposes; they have no prevalency with him at all, no, our faith itself lays not our iniquities on Christ; but, as I said, the Lord lays, Christ bears, our faith doth but see and make evident that, in time, which before was hid and not seen.

We cannot amplify the particulars so largely as necessity requires; I must proceed to what remains behind. Now, beloved, I shall show you clearly, I hope, that it is not to be imagined, that any thing in the world can possibly lay iniquity upon Christ, but only the Lord himself; for the clearing of which I desire to take some specialties into consideration.

1. None in the world hath any thing to do with iniquity, to dispose of it, but only the Lord; and therefore none can lay it upon Christ, but only he. For the better clearing of which, you must understand, that iniquity, or sin {as in I John 3:4,} “is the transgression of the law;” for where there is no law, there no transgression, as the apostle Paul speaks; the meaning is this, transgression is a swerving or going astray from the pleasure of God revealed in his law; nothing is transgression, but what is against him, and his mind revealed to men; and whereas in a subordination there may be transgression against men, one against another; yet all such transgression hath its denomination, not as man’s, but as God’s will is transgressed. As for instance, “thou shalt not commit adultery;” in the breach of this, here is a transgression of a man against a man; for one man to commit adultery with another man’s wife is an offence against her husband; yet this were not properly a transgression, if it were not a transgression of the law of God made against it;

⁸⁷ That is, by imputation, which is a real act of God, and by which all the sins of the sinner are put upon Christ, so that he, standing in his stead, is reckoned in the eye of justice as what the sinner himself is. Gill.

“for where there is no law, there is no transgression.” To come to the purpose in hand, transgression is only against God; for which cause, David, though he committed adultery with Uriah’s wife, and slew him with the sword of his enemy, and therein transgressed against those persons; yet David riseth to the fountain of transgression, and so to the true nature of it, when he confesseth, “against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight.” {Ps.51:4}

And you shall find, when Samuel had been set up to be judge over Israel, and the people began to despise and reject him, because they would have a king, as other people had; there was a sinning against Samuel in subordination; yet the Lord saith, “they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me.” {I Sam.8:7}

They sinned against God principally, and Samuel subordinately, because they sinned against God’s ordinance; Samuel being substituted by God over them.

If sin then be against God, against whom it is committed, then it is only in his power to dispose of it at his pleasure. Suppose a man owe a debt to another, it is not in the power of a third party to dispose of this debt as he pleaseth, but in the creditor himself only; if a creditor should arrest a debtor, and make him pay, or lie by it himself, it is not in the power of any other to take surety in the stead of this debtor; the creditor may take a surety if he will, and it is at his pleasure, whether a surety shall stand, or be accepted, or no. Every transgression of a man is a debt to the Lord; and, as it is a debt to him, so it is only in his power, and at his pleasure, to dispose of it; whether or not, persons shall lie by it till they have paid the utmost farthing themselves; or whether he will take a surety to stand in their room, and pay the debt for them. From hence are these words, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” {Rom.9:15,18} As much as to say, I will take a surety for as many as I list, and none for as many as I please; such and such, I will take a surety for; and therefore you shall find, that in this business of laying iniquity upon Christ, he goes under the notion of a mediator; Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, or testament; as much as to say, Christ himself will not take upon him, to dispose of the sins committed

against the Father; he indeed mediates with him; he is contented, if the Father please to make him a surety, he will see him paid. A mediator is one that comes between men to over-rule them if possible; so Christ deals with the Father, he will become the Surety of a better covenant or testament; and accordingly, be the Surety for such as God seeth good, and no other; and the rest they shall, they must lie by it. And therefore you shall see, that for so many as God is contented, Christ should be their surety; he is so far from disposing of their sins upon himself, that though he paid the utmost farthing, and the Father was fully satisfied with it; yet he acknowledged for all that, that this very suretyship of his, instead of others, was an act of grace, and an act of grace to himself. “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” How was it a gift? Did not Christ pay well for them? Did not he lay down the price of his blood, a satisfactory price? Yea, he did; yet, “thou gavest them me,” saith Christ. How so, will you say? I answer, God might have chosen whether Christ should have come to offer satisfaction, or whether he would accept of it made by him the Surety; in that he would accept of a price, there was a gift.

2. It must only be the Lord’s work to dispose of the sins of men, to lay them on Christ; nothing else could do it; none but the Lord could qualify and fit Christ to bear the sins of men; none but he alone could do it. Suppose it were in the power of the creature to lay the iniquity of men up on Christ, what could this avail, except Christ, when it is laid upon him, should become able to bear it, and not sink under it, when it was laid upon him? Therefore none could lay it with effect, but God alone. There are two things that are exceeding necessary, that iniquities might be laid beneficially upon him, and all the world could do neither of them.

I. That he should have a body, wherein to bear iniquity.

II. Having a body, that he should be steeled above natural strength; that that body prepared, should not sink under such a weight.

Now this is the Lord’s own work; nay, all the world could never reach it but he, to furnish Christ with both these; and you shall find both of them intimated in one expression, in Heb.10:5; “wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;” they are both intimated in these words, “a body

hast thou prepared me;" where you shall find that it is the Lord himself that furnishes him with this body.

There must be a body, that he might come to do the will of God. "A body hast thou prepared me;" that I should do thy will, O God! That is, do it in a body. And secondly note, that this body is not an ordinary one, but prepared; therefore in the margin it is, "a body hast thou fitted me;" as a man fits a case to a thing to be put into it; that builds a house, a fit habitation for himself to dwell in; or a fort for some to be fortified in it, he prepares it accordingly; so, "a body hast thou prepared for me;" that is, a body hast thou fitted for me, and steeled it, that it may be of more than natural strength to bear the sins of men. The divine nature is incapable of bearing transgression, therefore there must be a body given and prepared, that may be subject to bear; and this body, because the weight of sin is infinite, and enough to press an ordinary one into hell, must be steeled with an infinite strength above nature, that it may stand steadfastly under it, and firm to the work; therefore the Psalmist tells us, "then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty." {Ps.89:19} It is not an ordinary body, that this help must be laid upon, but must be mighty; therefore Christ tells us, in John 3:34, that he himself had received the Spirit, not by measure; there was more strength given to him, than ordinary strength, that is common to the creature.

Now, beloved, except any creature in the world could thus furnish Christ, and steel him that he might not sink, to what purpose should any lay iniquity upon him; and therefore in Isa.42:1-6, you shall find, that he doth not only call us out to behold his servant whom he hath chosen, but he tells us, how he disposes of him, that he may be for our use. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him;" I "will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." I have kept thee, as well as given thee; the Father must help Christ in this work, as well as give him; there must be furnishing with abilities to the employment, as well as a calling forth to it; to what purpose is it to call a multitude of people to resist a common enemy? What use will they be of except they be furnished with arms, and all things fitting for the service they are called out unto? If iniquity be laid upon Christ, and he not furnished to bear it, to what purpose is it?

He will shrink under the burden, and we perish in his sinking. It is not of small consequence, therefore, to know that the Lord hath laid iniquity upon him.

3. None but the Lord alone can lay iniquity upon Christ; in that, none but he hath so much power over, and interest in Christ, to prevail with him to be content to bear it; all the world could never have won Christ to put his shoulders to undergo such a burden, but only the power of the Lord prevailed with him. Beloved, it is not such a light weight, to be under the weight of all the sins of all the elect at once, that Christ should make so light of it, as to take it upon himself. This one complaint of Christ may resolve us of the weight of transgression that was upon him; "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and he sweat drops of blood as water, because of that agony his soul was in, by reason of sin that was then upon him; and it made him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So heavy was it upon him. Who in the world ever had, hath, or ever shall have, so much interest in Christ, to prevail with him to take the sins of his people upon himself, if they could lay them upon him? Though the elect of God reap an unsearchable fruit from hence, yet it is not they, nor their ease, which is the prime motive which prevailed with Christ to bear them; but that which chiefly prevailed with him, was the pleasuring of his Father. Christ knew well enough how hot the heart of God was set upon this, that the iniquities of men should be borne by him, and carried away from them, and they discharged; now, for the pleasuring of him, he was content to do it; and you shall find much of Christ's discourse, and of the prophets that spake of him, tending to this; that the eye of Christ was principally upon the pleasuring of his Father in bearing the sins of men. In Isa.53:10,11,12, three times you shall find it expressed, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;" "he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" and "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Still you see the eye of Christ was upon the satisfying of his Father, and pleasuring of him in that he did; that his pleasure should prosper in the work, therefore the hand of Christ takes it; that the Father be satisfied with this, he is content to be in travail in his soul, and to bear iniquity; in that it pleased the Lord to bruise him, therefore was he content to be broken. All the world could never prevail with Christ to undergo it,

had it not been that he might give his Father content. It is worth your observation, what is recorded in Heb.10:5,6,7; mark it well, I pray; for when Christ comes into the world, he saith, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} to do thy will, O God." Observe his motive to come into the world, namely, to do that which burnt offerings and sacrifices could not do. "There was a remembrance of sin {saith the apostle} every year," since the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; therefore the Lord was not pleased and contented with burnt-offerings and sacrifices; upon this, saith Christ, "Lo, I come;" as if he had said, seeing they cannot give thee content, that thou mayest have pleasure, lo, I come to do the work thoroughly, that thou mayest be satisfied.

4. None but the Lord could lay iniquity upon Christ, because, none but he could give him a fit and proportional reward for bearing it. It is fit that every one should have consideration for the work he doth; and it is most certain, Christ in undertaking to bear the sins of his people, hath an eye to a proportional consideration for it; now none but the Lord could give him it; therefore, none else could win him to lay iniquity upon him. In Heb.12:2, it is plain that Christ had an eye to some good consideration. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Christ did not only suffer, but also despised the shame that sin brought upon him; for he being made sin, became also a shame, and he despised that; and what was that which moved him to it? It was joy; and what was that joy? Christ sits at the right hand of God his Father; and who could thus reward Christ but the Lord? And, beloved, you shall find that God, when he puts him on to bear the sins of men, he proposes rewards to him for his encouragement. In Psa.2:6-8, where he speaks of anointing of Christ to be his "king upon my holy hill of Zion." "Ask of me, {saith he,} and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Here is that which God will give to Christ, and wherefore doth he make this deed of gift to him, but that it may be

a reward to him for his sufferings, and so encourage him to the work? And for this purpose, let us consider that passage in Phil.2:6-11; "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Mark what follows, "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here you see expressly, how the Lord rewards him for this very thing, that he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," while "he thought it no robbery to be equal with God."

And indeed, beloved, no marvel that the Lord will propose such a reward to Christ, to make him satisfaction for the taking upon him the sins of men; for consider men as they were to bear their own transgressions themselves, and as some are yet to bear them; alas! What payment was the Lord likely to have! Payment like that of broken debtors; he must have given time, to all eternity, before he could have his debt paid; whereas Christ, coming into the world, makes round, present, and ready payment; he pays all at once; and is not this a good reparation? When as a debtor is broke, and the creditor has to stay many years for his money, and take it by piece-meal too, would it not be thank-worthy for one to come now, and pay down the full sum upon the nail, ready money? When Christ came into the world he paid down all at once; God hath all from him {as they say} in ready cash. From hence there is a translation of the debt from us, broken debtors, to one that is mighty; he bears the burden, and pays the debt for us; the Lord is satisfied to his content, and he requites him for it. Now if all that we ever did, or can do, be not a requital of him, how can we expect that we should lay our iniquities upon Christ?

Now for application. If it be the Lord himself that lays our iniquities upon Christ, it is but meet and right that he should have "the praise of the glory of his own grace;" and that nothing in the world should go away with the praise of it from him. I remember a complaint

of the poet, who it seems, had made some verses that carried some credit with them, and some falsifier had taken it upon himself; "I have made the verses, and another hath the honour of them; as the bee makes honey, and another hath the fruit of it." Beloved, it may be the just complaint of the Lord to the sons of men; I have laid the iniquities of you all upon Christ, and every thing almost runs away with the honour of it; as if something else did ease you of the burden of them, and I am neglected. Now so long as you have these vain conceits in you, that any thing you do becomes your ease, and the lightening of the burden of your sins, they will go away with the praise that is due to God. To whomsoever we apprehend ourselves beholding, as we say, for such a courtesy, such a one shall go away with the praise of it. I remember how Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, Saul's son, came to David with the stolen goods of his master, and pretended that it was his own courtesy to David that he had brought so many mules, and a large quantity of provision; David asked for his master, he belies his master, and tells him that he abides at Jerusalem, hoping that Israel would set the crown upon his head; but mark it well, whilst that David is convinced that Ziba is he that hath done him a courtesy, he shall go away with the glory of it, and Mephibosheth shall be neglected; and David gives all the land of Mephibosheth to Ziba upon this mistake, and so he carried away all the praise of the courtesy from Mephibosheth. {II Sam.16:1-2} And so it is most true, beloved, as long as we reckon our own holy duties, repentance, and enlargement in prayer, &c., as the bringers of refreshment to our spirits, and the un-loaders of our hearts from our transgressions, that are the burden of the soul; so long these are exalted above measure. Hence these strange epithets and expressions are fixed to them. Oh; the omnipotency of repentance; and of meeting with God in fasting and humiliation! Oh; the prevalency of tears to wash away sin! They supposing that these ease us of the weight of sin, go away with the glory. Oh! Who is omnipotent but the God of heaven! What washes away the sins of men but the blood of Christ? Shall we give the glory to Ziba that is due to Mephibosheth alone? In II Sam.19:24 &c., you shall hear how Mephibosheth makes his apology for himself, and pleads his sincerity to the king, and declares how his servant had abused him; and then David restored half his lands again to

him; but yet Ziba must share with him still.

Oh! beloved, I desire you to deal more equally with God; let him have all the praise; let not Ziba and Mephibosheth divide the land; let not your performances share with God in the praise of his grace, in laying iniquities upon Christ.

It is God alone that lays your iniquities upon Christ, and your performances cozen you, while they tell you, that they ease you of your burden, and lay it upon him. Oh; turn them out, and let them not share with the Lord in the praise due to his name!

It was the sin of the Jews, when they had gotten a prey, they presently thought it was their own nets and drags that got it; and therefore {saith the prophet} that they sacrificed to their own nets, and offered incense to their own drags. Beloved, you will incense to your performances, as long as you go to them to be your deliverers. The deliverance from the weight of your sin, is not from the virtue of anything that you do; it is the Lord alone that lays iniquity upon Christ; and, therefore, let him alone carry away the praise and glory of it; let nothing rob him of it. In paradise the Lord made a large grant to the sons of men in Adam; "of all the trees in the garden thou shalt eat, save only the tree of knowledge of good and evil." The Lord reserved that one tree to himself; and but that one; he gave him of his bounty to eat of every one besides; and yet such was his itching inclination, that of all others, fain would he be meddling there, till he brought ruin on his own head. In the gospel, all our grants are large. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." {I Cor.3:21-23} "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32} Nay more, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." {Heb.8:10} The Lord thinks not much to give his Son, nor himself, to his people; but there is but one thing he keeps to himself. "I am the LORD; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another." {Is.42:8} "I will not give my glory unto another." {Is.48:11} "For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." {Ex.34:14} All that the Lord reserves to himself is but "the praise and glory of his own grace." Oh! Pilfer not that from God, which, when you have it, will do you

no good in the world! And seeing he will have only this, do not grudge it him. It is not out of niggardliness that God keeps this to himself, for in Isa.42:6,7, you shall find that he is bountiful enough, for all that; "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison," and that will do us more good; and, that he may do us good, his own Son shall be given for a covenant; but "my glory, that shall not be given to another," as it follows presently after in the 8th verse. Oh; therefore, let not your performances, be they ever so exact, aspire so high, as to usurp that glory that is due to the Lord alone!

But some will be ready to say, though our performances do not lay our iniquities upon Christ, and therefore, ought not to have the glory of it; yet, surely, the Lord requires these duties, that he may lay our iniquities upon Christ, and so honour our services as the motives by which he is pleased to lay them upon him.

Do not mistake, beloved, performances are not only not the principal efficient, but they are not so much as the instruments, or means, of laying the iniquities of men upon Christ; nay, not as motives; and it is a gross mistake, {I would the truth might shine more clear, that I might undeceive men;} that men run away with vain imaginations, that the renewing of faith and repentance is a new laying of iniquities upon Christ; or that the Lord anew lays it on him, when we renew these duties; I say, this is a gross mistake; for God doth not lay iniquity upon Christ upon the performance of them; nay, these have no stroke in it. I would fain know this one thing, Christ being now in heaven, whether he now, before the throne of his Father, actually bears the iniquities of men? Doth Christ stand as a sinner before the face of God in glory? Certainly no unclean thing shall enter into the heavenly Jerusalem; and if, upon the renewing our repentance and faith, our sins that we commit are carried from us, and laid upon him in heaven, then he stands besmeared with the sins of men as in heaven, in glory. One sin is committed at this instant by the believer, another at that, and another at a third; and so, from the first moment, to the end of the world, there is a continual succession of acts of sin by believers. Well, what do men do? They

believe and repent; and what do these do? When men believe and repent, {you say,} they lay iniquity upon Christ, and then it is upon him.

How can it possibly enter into the heart of any man, that he that is set down in glory with the Father, having done his work, finished transgression, and put an end to sin, by one sacrifice upon the cross, should yet still bear the iniquities of men upon him, before him?

Besides, beloved, I beseech you consider this one thing, if Christ hath iniquity laid upon him now, and hereafter, as men believe and repent, what course must he take to rid himself of it? If there be iniquity upon him, there must be a way for him to rid himself of it, and it must be taken off most certainly; but when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, he, by one offering, did so perfect the work, that he sits down, {saith the Apostle in Heb.10:12,} forever at the right hand of God; and there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sin. Without shedding of blood, there is no remission. {Heb.9:22} Wherever sin is found, there must be shedding of blood, or else there is no remission; and if sin be laid upon Christ, there must be a new shedding of blood before it can be taken away.

And therefore you must consider, that this laying of sin upon Christ, is a business that God hath done long ago, and not now to be done; for the text saith not that God lays, or will lay, iniquity upon him; but hath laid it on him; therefore, saith the apostle in Heb.9:28, "so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Christ himself must appear without sin, that he might have power to prevail with the Lord; and it is observable, that while sin lay upon him, and he was forced to bear it, he himself was forsaken of the Father.

In Daniel 9:24, "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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Mark, I pray ye, these "seventy weeks" were expired when Christ was upon the cross, then sin was finished, and therefore Christ said, "it is finished." Therefore, the laying of iniquity upon Christ, is not a new thing, now to be done; neither is it your faith and repentance that lay it upon

him, but it is a thing done long ago. Therefore cast off gross conceit, as if God did daily lay your sins upon Christ, as you daily renew your faith and repentance.

But what do they then serve for, will you say?

I answer, they serve for this purpose; the Lord is pleased when he hath freely, and of his own accord, pardoned the sins of men, having laid them upon Christ, to reveal himself in this his grace, and manifest to them that which he hath done long before, when they meet with him in prayer, fasting, and ordinances; he is pleased to manifest in them to us, what he hath already done, and not that they are yet to be done, much less that these things do them.

Well, is it the Lord that lays iniquity upon Christ? Then behold matter of admirable consolation; none in the world like this, the Lord hath laid it; and if anything else had, but he alone, men were undone forever. God is unchangeable. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." {Mal.3:6} That which the Lord doth is forever, not to be revoked and altered again; that which the creature doth is changeable, but God changes not.

But I must hasten. In the last place, is it then the Lord that lays iniquity upon Christ; then take it off from him who dare, and bring it back again to the poor soul, from whom the Lord hath taken it, and laid it upon him. Who art thou that darest to dispute against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of one lump a vessel of honor, and another of dishonor? If the Lord is pleased of his good will and free grace, to make thee a vessel unto honor, by purging thee thoroughly from sin, and laying it upon Christ, wilt thou dispute with God, and say thy iniquities are not laid upon him?

In Genesis, chapter 48, Joseph brings his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob his father, to be blessed by him before he died; he brings Manasseh, and sets on Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim on his left hand; but Jacob, when he began to bless them, changed his hand, and put his left hand upon Manasseh the eldest, and his right hand upon Ephraim the youngest. Mark, what saith Joseph then? "Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head;" yea, "I know it, {saith Jacob,} my son, I know it." That is not the purpose, for Manasseh "shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

{vs.18,19} Joseph would needs correct his father, thinking he did not prudently in that he did, and that his hand was not placed right, and therefore he would be mending it. Just so we judge of God's proceedings in the dispensation of his grace to men; we think that he deals imprudently, when he lays his right hand of mercy upon the head of a notorious sinner, an enemy; and his left hand of severity upon an elder brother, a sincere man, one that walks uprightly. Not so, my father, say men, that is a wicked man, a notorious sinner; this is an honest, righteous, and godly man; this is the elder, lay thy right hand of grace upon him; I know very well, {saith God,} what they are; it is my pleasure; the youngest shall have the blessing, and the eldest go without it. You are righteous in your generation, {saith Christ,} but the publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, and yourselves shall be shut out. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." {Mt.21:31} Beloved, let the Lord lay his hand where he please, and let him dispose of iniquity as he seeth good, and lay whose sins he please upon Christ. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." {Rom.5:10} Let no man therefore look upon human prudence, nor discourse according to reason; but let us look upon the act of God in dispensing of his grace, as he who is wisdom itself, orders it; and know that he which cannot err, disposeth of iniquity, and layeth it upon Christ; and whom he blesseth, is, and shall be blessed.

I may speak of the act of God in laying men's sins upon Christ once passed, and set forth the unchangeableness of it, by that act of Isaac blessing Jacob, though Jacob got the blessing by deceit from his father, making him to believe, that he was his eldest son; and Esau coming in afterwards for the blessing, saith Isaac, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." Shall Isaac, a man, stand to what he hath done, though gotten from him by a mere cheat; and shall the Lord change in what he hath done; having laid iniquity upon Christ, shall he take it off again? "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" {Num.23:19} And therefore, beloved, you may take up that glorious challenge of the apostle in Romans, chapter 8. "Who shall lay anything to the

charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." {vs.33,34} There is the ground of all; so say to you, to your spirits, who shall call me to account for my sins? Who shall lay them to my charge? Who will make me bear them on my own back? It is God himself hath taken them off, and discharged me. "It is God that justifieth me;" if man had justified me, he might have been mistaken; had he pronounced me innocent, I might have borne my sins still. "Christ died, or is rather risen again;" wherefore, who shall lay anything to our charge? And so you may trample over all the accusations of Satan upon this very consideration, that God "hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

22 Our Sins Already Laid On Christ

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

The last day, as you may remember, we took notice of the author of this grace of laying iniquity upon Christ. That it is the Lord's own act; none but he laid it on him; Christ took not the office of priesthood upon himself, but as he was called of God. The office of his priesthood was the bearing of sin; that was the prime business of the high priest to represent all the people, and to enter into the holy of holies to bear their sins before the Lord. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." {Heb.5:4} Therefore the apostle saith expressly, the Lord spake thus, I have said, "thou art a priest forever" that was his call; and for the confirmation of it he established it by an oath, "the Lord hath sworn, thou art a priest forever." {Heb.7:21} And if Christ himself takes not upon him to dispose of the sins of men, much less is it in the power of any mere creature. It is not in the power of any righteousness we do, though ever so complete, no nor of our faith, to lay iniquity upon Christ. The lord lays, Christ bears, and faith beholds this iniquity thus laid by him, and borne by Christ; and so the soul receives comfort upon the apprehension of it. None but the Lord can possibly lay iniquity upon Christ, because none hath to do with the disposing of it but he. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, {saith

David,} and done evil in thy sight;" yet he had sinned against Uriah and his wife; but properly the sin was against God, as that sin was a transgression of his law. If the debt be God's, who hath power to dispose of it, either to take it off the principal, or transfer it to a surety, but he that is the creditor? What hath any man to do with another man's debt?

Again, none but the Lord can dispose of iniquity, because none hath so much interest in Christ as he hath; it is a burden of a heavy weight, and he must have great interest that can prevail with him to bear it. Though it is true, we, the sons of men partake of abundance of comfort in the discharge of sin by Christ; yet his primary intention in bearing it, was not the salvation of man, but the satisfaction of his Father. "Lo, I come, to do thy will." {Heb.10:9} "Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." {Jn.4:34} "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." {Jn.17:4} Still the eye of Christ ran upon the pleasuring of his Father; this is that which made him so hearty in bearing sin, "the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." {Is.53:10}

Again, none could fit Christ to bear sin but the Lord, therefore none else could lay it on him; a body he must have, or he could not bear sin; the God-head cannot bear sin; "and a body," saith Christ, "hast thou prepared me;" {Heb.10:5;} all the world could not prepare a fit body to bear sin for Christ; a body natural is but weak; and too weak to bear itself up under such a weight. A body there must be that is supernatural, steeled and supported; and this also is the mere work of the Lord. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold;" saith he, God must uphold him; "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him." "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." {Is.42:1,6}

Finally, none but the Lord could requite Christ for such a service as this; it is fit he should have his pay for his pains; the Lord tells him plainly, that upon the terms of bearing iniquity, let him ask of him, and he shall receive the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. {Ps.2:8} Nay, he saith, because he was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is

above every name.” {Phil.2:8,9}

It should therefore serve to put the people of God upon the admiration of the great love of God, {seeing it is only the LORD that laid iniquity upon Christ,} to give unto him the praise of the glory of his grace. Oh, let nothing go away with that, seeing none but the Lord doth the thing!

And to this end, beloved, the Lord must open your eyes that you may see it; it is he alone that doth it; but till you see it, whatever you may think of yourselves, you will sacrifice to nets and drags instead of him; if righteousness seem to be the easing of burdens in spirit, then that shall, and will be exalted above measure; from whence proceed these strange expressions, oh, the omnipotency of fasting, prayer, and repentance! What is this but to give the glory of the Lord to our services, as if they discharged us of our sins, when it is he only that discharges us of them? But I must hasten.

There is another observable passage in these words, more observable indeed than heeded by most; and that is to be taken from the circumstance of time, when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ; for the text saith, “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Satan knows well enough of what great consequence this circumstance of time is, both to the manifestation of the glory of God’s grace, and to the establishment of the comforts of his people; and therefore he hath raised a foul dust to misguide poor wretches, that they may not lay hold upon it, and the comfort that will flow from it. The text saith not, the Lord doth, or will lay, iniquity on him; much less that the time is over, and he will not now do it.

Satan is very busy with tender, ignorant hearts, either to persuade them that the work is now a doing, or hereafter shall be done, but not yet done, or the time is over-slipped; it might have been done, if men had not neglected the opportunity; but now that it is too late; it is never to be done.

The last of these hath troubled the hearts of many people; whence come these expressions; I have neglected the day of my visitation, saith one; I had the opportunity, the presence of the Spirit of God; my fear is, that was the day of God’s grace to me, but I have let it slip; and now there is no more hope left for me; but, beloved, let the evident word of the Lord himself be your guide, and know, that everything that is spoken, contrary to the mind of the Lord revealed

in it, is but the natural fruit of the father of lies, who is a liar from the beginning. The Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ; hath he done it already, and is it now to be done? Nay, hath he done it, and doth he revoke it, and will not suffer it to be done? The point then briefly is this.

This gracious act of the Lord’s laying iniquity upon Christ is not now, or hereafter to be done, much less a thing he never wills to be done, but it is a thing he hath already done.

Every school-boy will be able to tell you, that this expression “hath laid” imports the time past, the word being in the past-perfect tense; it is not in the present tense, the Lord layeth; nor in the future tense, the Lord will lay; but in the past-perfect tense, the Lord hath done it; it is an act past. I remember what was said unto that resolute king; “let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.” {I Kg.20:11} Beloved, you know that when armies go out, there are tremblings of heart, what the success may be, till the fight be over; but when the victory is gotten, then there is joy, the thing is done. When a poor prisoner lies in prison condemned, though he have friends to beg his pardon; while that is in agitation, and not actually done, he is in suspense, between fear and hope, and restless in spirit; but when the act of grace is once past, and the king’s hand and seal to it, the thing is done, then his spirit comes to have rest; even so the rest of your spirits will lie in this, not that a thing is in writing; or that there are previous acts to be done to produce this act of laying iniquity upon Christ; but that the thing is dispatched to your hands before; you may see it at this instant done and finished; though the Lord in himself be unchangeable, yet our unbelieving hearts are suspicious of it, and we are ready to cry, “a bird in the hand, is worth two in the bush.” Now to condescend to the weakness of men, he is pleased, not that the bird should be in the bush, but in our hands; not that he should have his mercies within himself, but he passes them over, and gives the possession of them to us, that so we may be the securer in them.

I doubt not, beloved, but by this time, the truth is cleared to you, and that you find abundance of establishment in it so cleared; therefore we shall endeavour to let you know {as fully as possibly we may} when it was, that the Lord laid iniquity upon

Christ.

But before we fall upon that particular, there is one caution I shall recommend to your consideration, as very necessary to be considered, for the avoiding of confusion; which is this, that you carefully distinguish between the Lord's sole and only act of laying iniquity upon Christ, and the believer's act of applying this grace. We are now upon the former consideration, the Lord's sole and only act without the creature, in laying iniquity upon Christ.

I find, beloved, that too many poor wretches, out of ignorance, not understanding distinctly the course of God's proceedings with men, are apt to confound God's sole act of laying, and the believer's act of applying together, as if they were both one; as if our sins were laid upon Christ, only when we believe; and as if that were the only thing, whereby they are laid upon him; but it is certain, that these are distinct acts. I hope I shall not need to trouble myself, or you, much, to make it appear that they are; the agent acting, and the instrument manifesting, are different. Though the Lord gives men to believe; yet the putting forth of that act is man's, by the power of the Lord; as for the laying of iniquity itself upon Christ, this is solely the Lord's own act; our application doth but introduce the knowledge of that which the Lord hath done before, and so we come to have the comfort. Now it is true, indeed, that in respect of the application of this grace to ourselves, the laying of iniquity upon Christ, may be considered either present or future; that is, at this present instant, a person may believe this grace of God, and so here is now an application of it; and possibly one, that doth not for the present believe, and apply it to himself, may believe, and in that respect, the applying it, may be future; but for the act itself, of laying iniquity upon Christ, that is the Lord's, and is neither present, nor future, but was before, and is already past and gone.

The truth is, it is not possible that any person can truly believe that his iniquities are laid upon Christ, except there be a previous act of the Lord's laying them on him; as the Lord's act of laying must go before our act of applying it to ourselves. It is not possible for any man to act anything, but there must be an object in being, about which it is conversant. Suppose a man believes that his sins are laid upon Christ, I would fain know, whether his believing be true or false; if he

believe indeed, he hath a foundation for this faith of his, and what is that? He hath a grant from the Lord which is the very being of his faith; a grant, I say, he finds out, that is a stirring up of his believing; now suppose I am to believe the forgiveness of my sins, what must be the ground of this my believing? The Lord must make his grant to me, and finding that, I have ground to believe it; then whenever this grant was made, the thing that I am to believe, was done in respect of God's act; now we can find no grant, but as the Lord reveals the same in the word of his grace to us; when, therefore, that which is the foundation of my faith was made, then the act of God was made to me, which I apply to myself.

If the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ, has being, at the same instant men believe, then the grant which men believe, hath its first being then; so all grants, upon which men are to believe, must be new and immediate revelations, or they must be founded in the word of grace; if they be founded in that, then they were there before we believed; and if they were there before we believed, then the Lord, for his part, had passed over all that he intends to pass over. Doth he pass over anything anew to men, besides what is in the word of grace? Then that must be by a new revelation; and who can resolve of that?

The word, and that alone, is sufficient to make the man of God perfect, and fit for every good work. The mind of God is wholly contained in this word; and therefore it must needs be a mistake in the minds of people, that God then begins to pass over such an act to them, that their iniquity is laid upon Christ, upon their believing; I say, believing follows, and gathers its ground from what God has done already.

I have heard some argue, that God lays iniquity upon Christ, just then when men believe; because the act, and the object about which it is conversant, are relatives, and therefore are in nature together; and are both as the Son and the Father; the Father is no sooner a Father, but the Son is a Son.

But, beloved, here is a mistake; it is not faith that gives being to this act, or grant, that our iniquities should be laid upon Christ, it is the Lord alone that gives being to it, and it is his act; so that it is true, iniquity is not laid upon Christ, till he lays it; but it follows not, that it was not laid upon him, till our act of believing goes along with it; because that doth not give

being to it, but is only a manifestation of that, which was before. This then is carefully to be premised, and observed; namely, the difference between the Lord's act of laying iniquity upon Christ, and the act of a believer, to apply that grace; concerning the latter, it is present to some, and future to others as men believe; but the act of laying iniquity upon Christ is solely the Lord's, and was done before, and is not to be done.

Now let us come to consider, when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ; he hath done it, it is past; but when did he do it, will you say? For the opening of this truth, there are some specialties to be considered, as, {1} that the Lord laid iniquities upon Christ, by way of obligation; {2} by way of execution; {3} by way of his own application thereof to his people; for, as you shall hear, we must distinguish between God's application of this grace, and their application of it; this we shall speak to afterwards.

We come now to consider, when the Lord laid iniquities upon Christ, and for that you must know: 1. That the Lord laid them upon Christ, by way of obligation; I mean thus, he did then lay iniquity upon Christ, when he obliged himself to it. You know when a man once enters into bond, though peradventure the day of payment may be some months, or years, after the bond is sealed; yet when he enters into bond, he delivers that as his act and deed; at the first instant of the sealing of the bond, then is the thing done; other specialties, it may be, are cancelled, and the whole debt remains according to the tenor of the bond. So when the Lord entered into bond, he tied himself to lay iniquity upon Christ; then was his act and deed; then were all the specialties cancelled, as they were charged upon us; and when was that? It was from all eternity; I say, God tied himself irrevocably then to lay iniquity upon Christ, even from all eternity; then he did it in his own determinate counsel; I mean, when in his own council, he determined it should be done. God's determination and resolution, that Christ should bear the sins of men, were the act of God's laying them upon him; and though, unhappily to this church, the everlasting decree, and the doctrine of God's election of men, hath been, and is still, suppressed as a dangerous truth; yet you must know beloved, that the foundation of all the gracious acts of God, was laid in this decree of election; the Lord sat down, as a man may speak with reverence, by himself, and drew

out a draught of all the particular passages, especially concerning his own people, how he would order and dispose everything in its season; and, in this eternal council, he set down his fiat, that it should be so; and this fiat of the Lord, from all eternity, did make the thing itself an irrevocable act. You know, that the royal assent makes an act, and it is a real statute; councils having contrived before, that which it yields unto. Now it may be, that that which royal assent makes an act, may not be of present use; that is, people may not have present occasion of such an act; suppose it be an act of grace; yet notwithstanding, from the first instant of that assent, it hath as much force in it, as when occasion of use cometh, which is derived from it; so also the act of laying of iniquity upon Christ, that, that gives being to it, as an act, and so gives life to it, is the royal assent of God. When God first set his assent that iniquity should be borne by Christ, this made it an act as firm, good, and true, as ever will be. When a man hath occasion to make use of a statute of grace, there is no addition of force, added to it, when it is sued out for use; it hath no more virtue in itself, than at the first instant, when the royal assent was put to it; and when we, in time, by the grace of the Lord, make application of this, that our iniquities are laid upon Christ; this application of ours, gives not any being at all unto the thing; the grant, that had as much strength and force in it; at the first assenting to it, as it hath when it is applied, or as ever it will have. Now beloved, this is certain, that the royal assent is a binding act, even from the very instant of it. Kings, when they give it to an act of grace, are not only bound to make it good, when any person sues it out, but they themselves are bound at that instant, when they passed it, that they cannot revoke it. The Lord, it is true, was free in himself how to dispose of the sins of men; but when he had contrived for his own glory's sake, and his people's good, that their iniquities should be transacted to Christ, this counsel, though secret within his own breast, obliged him forever to the thing. The Lord is unchangeable. "I am God, and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob, are not consumed." {Mal.3:6} Now beloved, should there be any time in which the Lord should not lay iniquity upon Christ, after his former assent to it, how could he be unchangeable? He did assent then, now he will not; is not this changeableness? So that the whole truth, faithfulness, and uprightness of God, is tied to

make good the everlasting laying of iniquity upon Christ, by virtue of this act of his own assent to it.

2. As there was a secret obligation upon God, which was from all eternity, to lay iniquity upon Christ; so there is a public and manifest tie upon him, when he openly, in the face of his people, and to them binds himself even to their apprehensions, that they see that he is obliged to it; then did the Lord lay the iniquity of his people upon Christ openly, when he did openly bind himself by covenant to do it; and that he did from the first moment they were in any transgression whatsoever. When Adam, as a common person, had sinned for himself and his whole posterity, the Lord bound himself by promise and covenant, to secure his people from such transgression by his Son Christ. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; {speaking to the serpent of the woman; that is, Eve;} it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." {Gen.3:15} As if he had said, thou hast got a great catch by getting the sons of men under thy clutches, as thy prey; thou hast bruised his heel by reason of transgression; but the seed of the woman shall break thine head; the head, that is the seat of principality; therefore, they that have the principality are called heads in scripture. Now, saith the text, "he shall break thine head;" that is, that, wherein consisteth thy chiefest strength, shall be bruised and broken to pieces; because that, wherein the strength or headship lieth, shall be taken away from thee; the seed of the woman shall take away sin, wherein the headship of Satan lieth. Now, as soon as the Lord had published this to men, he was under bond, that iniquity should be borne by Christ.

Now you are not to conceive that this publication of God's grace is the first act of it by him, he having acted it in his councils long before; therefore the apostles being met together, on occasion of persecution, began to pray, and in prayer had this clause, they have done {speaking of their cruelty to Christ} "to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." {Acts 4:28} By which it plainly appears, that the act is not passed really in being in the publication of it; which is but an issue flowing from this first spring, from whence it derived its original; namely, the determinate council of the Lord. It was upon record in heaven before; now, upon occasion, the record is taken out and published. As I said before, it is royal

assent, which gives being to an act of grace; it is not the publication of it in print, and making it known to the world, that gives being to it a jot; indeed that gives people the comfort of it, but royal assent gives being to the thing; publication doth not give so much as confirmation to it; only it gives settlement of spirit to the staggering hearts of people, that know not what to do, nor where to set the sole of their feet for rest, till they have this grace published; and then venture themselves upon it when published.

Concerning the laying of iniquity upon Christ, he doth not make a new act; all that he doth is but the publication and manifestation of it; not that the Lord is bound now, and not before, but that we might know he is bound, and have the stronger consolation. In Eph.1:4, the apostle speaks expressly and fully touching God's eternal act, that gives being to this grace of laying iniquity upon Christ; and also, that, by which persons reap the fruit of it, when they come to know it; he saith, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," and afterwards he tells us, this reaches to the "forgiveness of our sins." There you shall find, that though the Lord was pleased to publish this grace, concerning the laying of iniquities on Christ, yet it hath not its beginning then, but "before the foundation of the world was laid." In brief, you must know, that though sin in creatures was not actually in being from all eternity; nay, though Christ, as having a body prepared, was not himself in being from eternity; yet the omnipresent eye of God, that forecasts things with himself, that afterwards should come to pass, had every particular person in his thoughts from all eternity, that should come in all after time, and before him they appeared, as if they had been actually existing then; and he had not only their persons, but in this omnipresent eye of his, he had every such transgression, that by every such person as his own, should from the first to the last of their being, be committed; he had all this at once in his eye. And having this platform before him, as if all were then in being, he sets down his own act of royal assent, that for every such transgression that should be committed at such and such a time, by such and such persons, he would accept of Christ whom he would fit to bear their transgressions; and, that from eternity to eternity, the Lord reckons all things as he had then and there set them down. We actually commit sin

today, yesterday, and so shall again tomorrow; in the eternal councils of God, the very sin of this day, of yesterday, and tomorrow, were all open in the eyes of God; the Lord, from all eternity, looking upon these transgressions, assented to this, that Christ, for whom he would prepare a body, should indeed, in time, actually bear them all; but, in God's own account they must be reckoned as borne from all eternity by Christ, by way of obligation. Christ "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." {Rev.13:8} Thus you see how the Lord, by way of obligation, lays the iniquities of his people upon Christ, and when he did thus lay them on him.

2. The Lord did lay the iniquities of his people upon Christ by way of execution; I mean thus, he laid iniquity upon him, as he did, in time, serve the execution upon him; as I told you before, a man makes himself actually a debtor, when he first enters into bond, and he goeth all that time for a debtor, from the sealing of the bond; but the debt is properly laid upon him when an execution is served upon him, and he is caused to make good the bond, and pay the debt; now is he actually called to account. The Lord, from all eternity, reckoned Christ to be the bearer of the transgression of his people; but in time he served the execution upon him.

Now it would be questioned when it was, that the Lord did this; that is, when he actually and really charged sin upon him?

For the understanding of this, you must know that there is a twofold serving the execution upon Christ; for it may be considered either virtual, or actual, and real. The execution is served upon Christ in the virtue of it, from the first instant that ever there was a transgression committed; and not only when first committed, and from thence to the time of his suffering, but also afterwards, from the time he suffered, to the end of the world. You must of necessity admit of this distinction between the virtual and actual serving of the execution upon Christ; and the ground of it is this, that though the Lord took Christ for paymaster for all the sins in the world that the elect would be guilty of; yet he was pleased to give him a long day of payment; the debt indeed run on from the fall of Adam, and so continued, and will continue to the end of the world; but Christ was not to come into the world till the fulness of time. "But when the fulness of the time

was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." {Gal.4:4,5} Therefore, it must follow, that either there could be no discharge from the time of the first commission of sin, till Christ appeared in the flesh; or, that before the actual payment that Christ made, there was the virtue of having iniquity upon him; by which there was a discharge given before he had actually paid the debt.

To clear the point a little to you, consider, a man sends his son to the university, to such a tutor, who knows he is a rich man, and therefore, he saith, I will agree with you thus; I will teach your son so many years, and, at three years' end, you shall pay all the arrear for the time past; and whatsoever it will come to for three years more. Now the father, according to the agreement made, comes at one time, and reckons for all that is past for the tutorage of his son, and lays down that all at once; and, for the time to come, saith he, there is so much more, I will pay all them too, and make but one payment of all. So it is with Christ, he takes upon himself to discharge all the transgressions of those to whom it is given to believe; the Lord takes Christ for it, he knows he is one that is mighty, and is contented therefore to lay his help upon him; now the time runs on from the first sin committed, till the fulness of time that he comes; here is no payment all this while, no not of a farthing; yet God still discharges men of their sins; he discharged Abraham, Isaac, and David, and all the rest of the Fathers; and blessed they were in that their iniquities were forgiven, and their sins were covered. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." {Ps.32:1} Here God acquits these believers under the Old Testament, but where is the payment? All this while he hath no satisfaction yet; why, he depends on Christ for satisfaction when the day of payment comes; and so satisfaction is made virtually before it be done by Christ actually; and so for after-times; Christ came in the fulness of time, and reckoned with the Father, and he hath so much of him for all that is past, and as much for after-times to the end of the world; saith Christ to the Father, here is so much for every one of mine, that they have run out for the time that is past; and here is so much for every one of them that shall come after; they will commit so many sins in time to

come; here is so much for all that they shall commit.

Now there was a pitched time wherein God served execution actually upon him; and that was when God forsook this Son of his; when he called him forth, and charged sin upon him, and laid load upon load on him, as the desert of transgressions.⁸⁸ Beloved, you know what our Saviour saith himself, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now was the execution served, and God charged the payment upon him, when he said, I am heavy unto death; Father, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here was the time of payment, and of satisfying God. This was the very time of the end of seventy weeks, wherein there was an end put to sin, and the finishing of transgression; and you must know this, beloved, that, in this laying iniquity upon Christ by way of execution, there was the matter of the greatest trust in the world, between God the Father and his Son Christ. It had been a toilsome thing to Christ to pay every debt, one after another, as it was taken up; and therefore, to save all this trouble, God was contented all should be paid at once; and likewise that Christ should do all in equality of time; not pay all at first, nor at last, but in the middle time; as if a man were to take up wares at several times, some at the beginning of the year, and some at the end of it, and pay all his money at the middle of it; so was it between God and his Son; something was to be paid at the beginning of the world; and something at the end of it; now to make an equality, Christ pays all at the middle time, or some good time before the end; and God is content to trust him from the beginning until the fulness of time; and he did so trust him, that he discharged all the sins of the elect before payment, as if already done. At the fulness of time, Christ comes and pays all for the time past, and so dischargeth that

⁸⁸ This is charged as an error by D. W. in his Gospel-Truth, &c. pg. 28, that the time when our sins were actually laid on Christ was when he was nailed to the cross; but the Doctor does not say, that this was the first time sin was charged upon him, and he bore it; for he after observes, that God charged it upon him in the garden, when he was heavy unto death, and said, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me;" though, when he was offered upon the cross as a sacrifice for sin, was more properly and precisely the time when sin was charged and laid upon him, and he bore it. The apostle says, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," Heb.9:28; so that it was when he was offered up, that sin was laid upon him, and he bore it; yea, he was offered up, that it might be done, and appear to be done. The apostle Peter is still more express for this; "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" I Pet.2:24; hence it appears that it was upon the cross that sin was charged, and the load was laid, and there borne. Gill.

trust of God the Father upon him; and moreover pays to the full for all the sins that should be committed afterwards; so that now the Son trusts the Father, that he will reckon right with him, and deal justly with him. The price is fully paid into the hands of the Father, for all the elect to the end of the world, at that instant that Christ suffered; yet the value of this price is to be made out many hundreds of years after; wherein the Father is to give out unto man the worth of that Christ paid, even to the end of the world, as if he had not been paid before.

So that, in brief, look upon the execution, or rather serving of the execution, that is, the actual laying iniquity upon Christ; this was done at that instant when he was upon the cross, and God nailed the sins of men to it; and from that time there was not one sin to be reckoned either to believers, who are the members of Christ, or to himself; he having then made perfect satisfaction, and upon it given out to the world, "it is finished." What was finished? The payment of the price so long looked for. The utmost farthing is now laid down, therefore the prophet Isaiah, in his 53rd chapter, saith expressly, that when the Lord beheld the travail of his soul, he was then satisfied; when the work of the Lord was in the hand of Christ; that is, when he was actually managing the business of bearing the weight of sin; then the pleasure of the Lord prospered on him; then the work went on with such success in his hand, that it prospered; then came this issue of his labour, that he obtained his Father's pleasure that he aimed at; when the thing comes into the hands of Christ, then the pleasure of the Lord goeth on.

There yet remains one thing very considerable, and that is the application of this grace to particular persons, and the time when the Lord comes to this man, and to that woman, and calls out persons particularly, and applies it to them, as the grace of this person individually, "thy iniquity is laid upon Christ." This requires more time to open it, than now we have; and therefore in the afternoon we shall have opportunity elsewhere.

23 Our Sins Already Laid On Christ

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

I have elsewhere made some progress in these words; which indeed contain in them the fulness of the mystery of free-grace. It is iniquity itself, as well as the punishment of it, that the Lord laid upon Christ; for he bare the sins of many, as well being wounded for them. This is a real transaction; Christ stands as very a sinner in God's eye, as the reprobate, though not as the actor of sin; yet as he was the surety, the debt became as really his, as it was the principal's before it became the surety's; and this translation of our iniquities from us unto Christ, is the sole and only act of the Lord himself; for none but he could lay iniquity on him.

The fourth thing considerable in the words is that "the Lord hath done it already." It is not, the Lord doth lay, or will lay, iniquity upon Christ; but he hath laid it upon him; the business is not to be done now. Thou hast, peradventure, this day committed this, and that, and the other sin; yet the Lord is not now to lay it upon Christ; for it is done long ago.

We have entered upon this point elsewhere this morning; and here I briefly propose to you this, for the better clearing of the time, when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ; and I will leave it with you as a caution to distinguish between the Lord's act of laying iniquity, and the believer's act of applying this grace to himself. When we believe our iniquities are laid on Christ, is one time; when God lays them, is another. God, long before we believed, laid them upon Christ; and, when we believe, the foundation of it is an ancient grant that we find upon record, enacted and entered long ago. Faith hath a word of truth, if it be true faith, whereupon it builds; it looks not for present revelation of things not extant before, but takes them as it finds them upon record, when the record is first entered; nay, when the act was first made, from whence it was entered, then was the grant; then God did his part in laying iniquity upon Christ; and we, in time, by the grace of the Lord given to us, believe, find out his ancient grant, which now at believing, becomes apparent, and so comes our application. Application at present, or may be hereafter; but the laying iniquity itself, an act passed long before by God.

For the better understanding of God's laying iniquity upon Christ, when he did it, there are these three things considerable.

1. The Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ by way of obligation; {2;} by way of execution; {3;} by way of

application of this benefit to us.

1. God's act of having iniquity upon Christ by way of obligation; so he laid it upon him, as soon as ever he was bound to it; a bond is a man's act and deed before payment. As soon as ever God bound himself, the iniquity was laid upon Christ; for he had forfeited his own faithfulness, if he had not fulfilled it. Now the time wherein he thus laid it on Christ, was from all eternity. Royal assent gives being to any act of grace. Before there could be any believing of this grace, God's assent, by his determinate counsel, {Acts 4:28,} gave being to it.

2. Then there was the laying iniquity on Christ by way of execution; Christ from all eternity stood engaged to answer all the sins of the elect, but God gives him a long day of payment. There is a twofold laying iniquity upon Christ by way of execution, the one virtual, the other real and actual. The virtual laying iniquity on Christ was long before payment, but the other at it. Abraham sinning, his sins were laid on Christ; God laid his execution upon him, for the sins of Abraham; and yet, notwithstanding, Christ was not actually called to account, where observe, that here was but a virtual execution served upon Christ, not the actual; the real and actual way of execution is, or rather was, when Christ actually stood out, and had the load of sin pressing him down, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now sin actually lay upon him; "your iniquities {saith the prophet} have separated you and your God." When iniquity came once to separate, then was it actually laid upon Christ; he himself was separated from his Father, and then did he bear iniquity; then was he called to account for it; but I hasten.

3. There is one thing more very considerable, that is, the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ, by way of application; I mean, when it is that the Lord singles out this and that, and the other person now present, and takes your very sins you have committed, and shall hereafter, and lays them upon him. Concerning the elect in general, as they were in the eye of the Lord, before they had a real existence, so all their iniquities were laid upon Christ from eternity; but it must needs be granted, beloved, that the particular application of this grace to persons, that the Lord hath laid my, and thy iniquities upon Christ individually, must needs be in time. Before a man is in being, there cannot be

a personal application of the grace of God unto him; God cannot apply his grace to nothing. Though in his eye he may apprehend a person as being, though not actually, and so reckon Christ as a sinner, instead of him, when he be; yet to say to such as one by name, thy iniquities are laid upon Christ; and the Lord reckons thee in person, as such as one who hath not one iniquity he can charge upon thee, this is done in time. Now it will be worth the while, to know when the Lord singles out particular persons, and when this grace of laying this man's iniquities upon Christ, is appropriated by him to him; for you must know, that there is a twofold appropriation of God's grace of laying iniquity upon Christ. There is God's application, and man's application; God's application is, when he himself says from heaven, that he loves this very person; and that his iniquities are carried away by Christ. Man's application is, when God gives to him to believe and by this act to be persuaded that he hath done it. We are yet upon the first kind of application, when the Lord himself applies to such a particular person, that his iniquities are laid upon Christ.

In the clearing of this, beloved, I must tell you, I dare not confine myself to the judgment of any man under heaven; nor pin my faith upon any man's sleeve; to conceive such a thing truth, because such men speak it; and therefore I shall desire you, if you be sincere, and mean that the word of the Lord shall be your guide, to resolve you in such comfortable truths, to mind not so much what I, or any man say, as what the Lord himself saith; and according to the clearness of the Lord in his own word, so set you up your rest.

And that you may be the better resolved of this truth, so much inquired into, when the Lord laid my, and thy iniquities upon his Son Christ; know that he laid the iniquities of every elect person two ways upon him; {1;} secretly; and {2;} manifestly and openly. In the secret application of this grace unto a man, he hath a full discharge; and in the manifestation hereof, in the second way of application, he hath the comfort of it.

As concerning the Lord's secret applying unto a person, the grace of laying his iniquity upon Christ; I shall desire you, beloved, what you may see in one view, both him, the Lord did this, and the time when he doth it. It is a secret thing, for a time, to those for whom he doth it. Look into Rom.9:10-13, a place very

well worth your consideration, that hath been much canvassed; yet, for all this, I see the evidence of the Spirit of the Lord is not so fully seen as possibly it might be. The apostle there tells us, of the admirable free grace of God, and how that the Lord in showing mercy, intends that it may appear to all the world, that what he doth, is merely and solely of grace, and for his own sake; and for the illustration of it, he bringeth in an example of Rebecca and her sons, Jacob and Esau, saying, "when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 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." Mark the words well, I pray you. Out of this passage, I shall note these particulars to you. First, you have here expressed the Lord's declaring himself personally and individually to the one, Jacob, I mean, that he loved him; there was a love from eternity to him, as he was among the rest, in the election of grace; but mark it well beloved, till there was a single individual person, as Jacob, the Lord did not say, "Jacob have I loved;" therefore, you shall see, here is a personal singling out of Jacob by name, distinct from any other whatsoever, and a love pronounced to him, "Jacob have I loved."

Then consider next, what kind of love this was, that the Lord here pronounces on Jacob; it is a love that is opposed to the hatred, wherewith he hated Esau; now what kind of hatred was that? You know the hatred of Esau, was a hatred of rejection; the love of Jacob, then, was a love of acceptance; a love, wherewith he received him as one of his own. Now then consider, when the Lord first began personally to fasten this his love, the love of his justification; the text saith, "when they were not yet born, neither had done good or evil, that the purpose of God might stand, according to election, not of works, but of grace, it is said, Jacob have I loved;" as much as to say, the Lord did not tarry some space of time after Jacob had a being till he called him, and then pronounced love unto him, as if there had been no love to him till he was called; but before he came into the world, while he was yet in the womb; nay, when he was first conceived, the Lord pronounced, "Jacob have I loved;" and yet this was a secret, that there was any such thing as love to him; he

being yet in the womb, and not capable to understand that God did thus love him; so that it is plain, there is a secret passing over of the grace of God, into the possession of a particular person, before he can know it; and this hath its being in the very conception, as soon as he hath any being.

From whence I gather this conclusion, that God applies or appropriates, unto his elect, his grace of discharge from all iniquity, and his love, at the very instant that such a person hath a being in the world.

I am not ignorant, how men differ in their judgments about God's first applying his grace unto the sons of his election; for some think that God never applies pardon of sins to them till they be called and manifestly converted, but this cannot be; Jacob could not be called in the womb, but he was beloved in it, with such a love, as was opposed to the hatred of Esau. And others affirm, that the Lord first appropriates justification to persons when they are baptized, and not before; this cannot be neither; for {whereas circumcision had the place of baptism} Jacob was declared manifestly to be beloved before circumcision; and in Rom.4:10, the apostle {speaking of Abraham's faith} saith expressly, that the Lord justified him not being in circumcision, but in uncircumcision; then the Lord singled him out, and possessed him of his own grace before ever he was circumcised.

Let me tell you, beloved, I conceive people are much mistaken, and exceedingly trouble their own spirits in vain, about the time when the Lord should give them their possession of this grace of laying their iniquities upon Christ. It is thought by some, that in case such a person should happen to die before God call him to grace, and give to him to believe, that he had been damned; and that elect persons are in a damnable estate, in the time they walk in excess of riot, before they are called. Let me speak freely to you; and, in so doing, tell you, that the Lord hath no more to lay to the charge of an elect person, yet in the height of iniquity, and in the excess of riot, and committing all the abominations that can be committed; I say, even then, when an elect person runs such a course, the Lord hath no more to lay to his charge, than he hath to lay to the charge of a believer; nay, he hath no more to lay to the charge of such a person, than he hath to lay to the charge of a saint triumphant in

glory.⁸⁹ It is true, such an one, not called, is never able to know individually of himself, that he is one that God hath nothing to charge upon him; because, till calling, God gives not unto men to believe, and it is only believing that is evidence to men of things not seen. Things that are not seen, are hidden, and shall not be known; I mean, the things of God's love shall not be known to particular men, till they believe; but, considering their real condition, the Lord hath not one sin to charge upon an elect person, from the first moment of conception, till the last minute of his life; there is not so much as original sin to be laid on him; and the ground is, the Lord hath laid it on Christ already. When did he lay sins on him? When he paid the full price for them. Now, suppose this person, uncalled commits iniquity and that this is charged upon him; seeing that his iniquities are laid upon Christ already, how comes it to pass they are charged upon him again? How come they to be translated from Christ again, and laid upon him? Once they were laid upon Christ it must be confessed that "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" {I Jn.1:7;} and that "by one sacrifice he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." {Heb.10:14} Was there, by one act of Christ, the expiation of sins, and all at once, that are committed from the beginning of the world to the end of it? How comes it to pass that this and that sin should be charged upon the elect, when they were laid upon Christ long before? He did, by that one act of his, expiate all our sins, or he did not. If he did

89 Not that the sins of God's elect, in a state of unregeneracy, are not sins; or, that they are not guilty of sin; nor that they are not deserving of the wrath of God, for they are "children of wrath even as others;" or that they are not under the same sentence of condemnation; but then, as the elect of God, as they are redeemed by Christ, and as he has had their sins laid upon him, and made full satisfaction for them, as full as for the saints in heaven, no more charge can be brought against them by the justice of God, than against these; nor is it possible that they should come into a state of actual condemnation and death, or suffer the vindictive wrath and justice of God. It should be observed, that this is said in opposition to some, who thought elect persons in a damnable state, before calling; that judgment is come upon them to condemnation sentimentally, as they are considered in Adam, and transgressors of the law, is owned; and that their sins are deserving of eternal damnation will be granted; but that there is a possibility of their being damned, must be denied; or the election of God would not stand sure; redemption, by Christ, would be in vain, and his satisfaction must be void; they are as secure from damnation before calling, as after, though they have not the knowledge, sense, and comfort of it until they believe. The Doctor says not, that a man, living and dying in such a state shall be saved; but that an elect person shall be saved, who shall believe, be changed in heart and life. See the Doctor's own answer, to the charge against him for these words, in his Sermon on Canticles 4:7. Gill.

not expiate them fully, then he did not “save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;” but, if he did, then all iniquity is vanished and gone; he extracted it out, as some plaister of excellent virtue, extracts out the venom of a plague-sore; so Christ, by once offering up himself, took away all the sins of the elect at once.

Therefore, beloved, I cannot see what the instant of time may be wherein the Lord hath not yet taken the sins of such an elect person, and laid them upon Christ; suppose the distance of time between birth and baptism, which is the nearest time any man comes to; now, before baptism, where lie these iniquities? An elect person is conceived in sin, as David was, what becomes of it? Where lies it? Doth it lie upon him now? Then was it not laid upon Christ before, and so his blood hath not cleansed from all sin; he hath not borne all the transgressions of his people; he hath not perfected forever them that are sanctified by one sacrifice upon the cross. He that hath one sin lying upon him, is not perfect till that be taken from him; but saith the apostle, “by one sacrifice he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified;” but it seems by this, that he hath not perfected them; here is a middle time, or some time wherein such a person is not perfect; for there is no perfection while there is sin; and if there be sin upon persons, how can such be perfect? Therefore know, beloved, to your abundant comfort, that every elect vessel of God from the first instant of his being, is as pure in the eyes of God from the charge of sin as he shall be in glory; no more sin shall be reckoned to him now, than he shall have in heaven. The saints in heaven, how came they to be pure and holy, but only thus, Christ bare their iniquities for them, and paid the price of their transgressions? For if they had gone to heaven, and he had not borne them, they must have carried them with them; their purity is, that he bore their iniquities, and how did he bear the iniquities of a saint in heaven? It is all one with his bearing the sins of an elect person in the womb; the scripture makes no such difference, that he bore the sins of the one more, and otherwise than the sins of the other; but he equally perfected all the elect at once. The saints in heaven were no sooner perfected, than the elect child in the womb, save that there is a distance of time between the first being of the one, and of the other; for as those now in glory had their first purity in the womb, so every elect person now receives his there.

Beloved, I should be loth to put any new and strange things into the minds of men, that are not fully consonant to the mind of God recorded in the scripture; but I see not how it can be avoided, but that Christ’s sacrifice must be an imperfect one, and that it sanctified by halves, and degrees, and so he must do something more than he hath done, except there be a complete purging away of sin all at one instant. Surely, Christ must do something anew, if something yet remain to be done; if there be any one sin in the world, concerning the elect, to be taken away, he must come down again upon the earth to take it away; if there be but a farthing behind, he must come down again and pay it, before ever they be perfectly acquitted; but Christ left nothing behind him imperfect; and herein the apostle shows the difference between Christ’s priesthood and that after the order of Aaron; speaking of Aaron’s, he saith, “there is a remembrance of sin again every year;” for that their sacrifices could not make the comers thereto perfect, and therefore they were fain to reiterate them; but when Christ came, he offered himself up once for all, and then “sat down at the right hand of God;” surely Christ should have had no leisure to sit down, if any business of his were to be done; and if there be a remembrance of sin again, there must be a new sacrifice, to take away those sins whereof there is a remembrance; so that if you suppose any elect person, at any time, to have sin not yet taken away, Christ must come again upon the earth, and offer himself up again; for “without shedding of blood, there is no remission.” Christ must come to shed his blood again, if there be new sins to be remitted that were not remitted before.

Beloved, this may be of use to you in some respect, in behalf of your children; suppose they die in the womb, as you have many abortives; the case of such a child is the same, and as good as is the estate of a person that hath determined to the most evident calling as ever man was called by; for Jacob was beloved when Rebecca conceived him, while yet he was in the womb; and the Lord appropriates and applies to such a person that grace of his, the laying of his iniquity upon Christ.

I deny not but that the scripture speaks of a time of regeneration; but I desire you will understand, according to the mind of the Holy Ghost, what this time is that is spoken of. I know, it is the time of calling, but

this is no prejudice at all to the applying of the grace of God, even from the womb. Take this regeneration for the act of conversion, and that is done in time, and it will amount to this; that though God secretly gives over the right and title of his own grace to a person in the womb, yet he doth not make it known to him till he hath it, till such time as he calls him. In Gal.4:1-5, the apostle, having spoken of the difference between the law and the gospel, that during the time of being under the law, they were under schoolmasters, tutors, and governors, saith, when “faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster;” {vs.25;} then he follows that with a fresh allegory, and makes use of the similitude of an heir, and a child under age. “Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Wherein I observe these two particulars:

1. That there is an heirship during childhood itself; “the heir as long as he is a child,” saith the apostle.

2. That there is this heirship when there is no difference between being a son and a servant; “while he is a child, he differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.” He is an heir, though there be no difference between him and a servant, during his childhood; what is the reason there is no difference during that? “He is,” saith the apostle, “under tutors and governors;” and so how doth he apply this? “Even so we, when we were children were in bondage under the rudiments of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, he sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;” as if he had said, there is a time when a person is an heir under age; and there is a time when he comes to enjoy that whereof he is an heir, and differs from a servant manifestly, as indeed in nature he doth, and did before. A child is an heir, if the first born, as soon as ever born; nay, when he is first conceived in the womb. Suppose a man die estated in a great deal of land, leaving his wife but a month gone with child, he leaves his child as

heir; yet for all this, there is a long time in the womb, and also of education, in which this child is used as a servant; there is no difference appears, he hath no more in possession than a servant, yet this child is still an heir; and so it is with all believers; the elect of God are the heirs of God; and as they are, so the first being of them puts them into the right of inheritance; he that is an heir born, is an heir the first moment he is conceived; so that either you must allow, that there is a time when an elect person is not an heir, or you must confess, that there is no time but such a one is a child of God; and as such, is purged from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; purged, I mean, by way of imputation, in the reckoning and account of God; though sins be committed afterwards in respect of which there may be, for a time no difference between the life of an heir, and the life of a servant; yet as this person is an heir of all, so none of this iniquity is reckoned to this person, nor ever shall be, in this life, nor in the life to come, though for the time he doth not know it.

But some may be ready to object, how is it possible, that from the first instant of an elect person’s being, all his sins should be reckoned as laid upon Christ, even from that instant? Can a sin be laid upon Christ before sin is existent? Can sin be laid upon Christ before sin is committed?

I answer, sin is laid upon Christ before it is; and it is no absurdity in reason itself to say so; for you know that it is possible a man may buy out trespasses before he doth them; suppose a man is addicted to hawking and hunting, and must trespass upon his neighbor’s ground; he may lay down a good large sum at once, that shall countervail all the trespasses that shall be done afterwards. Beloved, shall any man say that there was no trespass borne, paid, and satisfied by Christ, because there was none acted? What then shall become of all the elect that have been in the world since Christ’s coming, if there be not a real serving of sin upon him, and satisfaction made by him, before sin be committed? What will become of the sins of the apostles, and of the people of God since then? All their sins were committed since the reckoning was made; and if of particular persons in the church, why not so of every particular elect person by himself? If you shall have no more sins laid upon Christ, or reckoned to him, but what were committed before Christ made payment, there will be none of our sins found to be

laid upon him, for all the sins we have committed, have been committed since Christ suffered.

Some object and say that Christ puts us upon our prayer, and in prayer that God would forgive us our trespasses; and so how can our iniquities be laid upon Christ already, when we are to pray that God would forgive them to us? It is a vain thing for us to pray to God to forgive them, when they were long ago forgiven. I answer, they were reckoned to Christ long before we pray for the forgiveness of them, and yet we do well in praying for it. We have a common answer known to all, as there is a twofold forgiveness of sins, a forgiveness of sins in heaven, and in the consciences of men. Forgiveness of sins in heaven is that which is acted by God alone; forgiveness of sins in the consciences of men is the manifestation of his former act. So then to pray for it, is no more but to pray that God would manifest to us that he hath forgiven our sins; and that it may be clear that he hath forgiven them, before we pray for it; and that prayer is grounded upon God's act before-hand made.

Consider this one thing; I would ask this of you, you that pray for forgiveness of your sins; do you pray in faith, or not? If not, mark what the apostle James saith; {chap.1:6,7} "let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Beloved, your prayers stink in the nostrils of God, if you do not pray in faith. Well, you pray in faith, you will say; if you do, if you pray for the forgiveness of sin in faith, what is the ground of your faith? If you believe, you have a ground for it; you will say, the grant and word of God is the ground of it. Well, if that be the ground of your believing, then the grant hath a being before your faith, and so consequently before your prayer is made. As for example, God promised forgiveness of sins; now sin was forgiven by him as soon as ever he made the grant and record; at that instant, it was made, sin was forgiven, and God did his part in pardoning the transgressions of his people. Well then, if you pray in faith that your sins are forgiven, upon this ground, because God hath made this grant, and you find it upon record; then it seems your sins were forgiven you before your prayer was made. You will say, God hath granted this before, and now you pray to God that he would make good that to you which

he hath granted before. Beloved, what is this more than to make that evident to you, and to give you the knowledge of that which he hath before granted, that you may have the comfort of it?

In brief, when people pray for any grace that God hath passed over to men, all their prayer is that he would make them perceive that he hath done that for them in special; so that all our prayers get no new thing of God that he hath not done before; only he is pleased when people pray to him according to his own mind, to meet with them in that ordinance, and then to manifest to them what secretly he had done before for them.

To conclude. If so, here is a word of admirable comfort to poor souls in that bitter suspense they usually are; thou art in a wavering condition; I know not {sayest thou} whether God hath laid mine iniquities upon Christ or no; I hope well, that Christ is at work with the Father for me; I hope I shall hear well from him. Beloved, your suspense may fall to the ground; your business is done to your hand already; there is not one gone about to do it in heaven for you now, as if it were in the power and pleasure of God to grant or not to grant; observe the saying of the apostle, in Rom.10:6,7, &c., that you may have the greater consolation that God intends to you settledness of spirit, that the pardon of sin is so firm that you need no more look after it with fear or doubting; where he follows his former discourse, having largely disputed upon the freeness of God's grace, he begins to draw towards a conclusion; for he tells us there, expressly that "the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Before you shall find the apostle speaking of the establishing our own righteousness, and neglecting the righteousness of God; and here he comes, in the closure, to show what this righteousness of God is; he presseth so much upon men, and chargeth them with the neglect of; and it is as if he should say, You think, you must take a great deal of pains, by your own righteousness, to obtain the pardon of your sins, and what would you have? You will, you must, climb up

higher, and go down steps to do it; but, saith he, the righteousness of faith runs in another strain; there will be not clambering up to heaven to fetch Christ down, nor going down to hell to fetch him up; there is no such thing to be done, nor required of you; he is come already, therefore you may save all your pains, care, and fear; Christ is in your mouths and in your hearts; he is in you and with you, already; as if he had said, You may well save all your fears, cares, and doubts of your condition, whether Christ hath obtained grace with the Father on your behalf in this point, or no; know that the work is done and finished to your hand; the pardon is come down from heaven already. You know what distraction and trouble must needs be in the heart of a malefactor condemned to die, as long as his pardon is in agitation, when he hath a friend gone to court to get it for him; he is now in hope that his friend will procure it; he is by-and-by full of fear lest his business should miscarry, and he be executed; but when the pardon is sealed, and he knoweth it is done, when it is brought to him, and he hath it in his hand, then his heart leaps within him, and he hath no joy till then. I tell you, beloved, Christ is not now gone to heaven to get a pardon, but he hath got one under seal already; it is in your hands, and in your mouths, and at your doors; it is with you, and in you; iniquity is laid on Christ already.

Well, hath he done it, and shall he change? Will he not be as good as his word? Heaven and earth shall pass, but not one word that he hath spoken shall fall to the ground. When Jacob had got the blessing, by deceit, from his father, yet, saith he, "I have blessed him, and he is blest, and shall be blessed;" I have said it, and I will stand to it. Shall Isaac, a man, stand to what he did in blessing, though out of a mistake; and shall the God of heaven and earth, that did such an act of blessing, by laying iniquities upon Christ, not upon mistake, but upon determinate counsel, go from his word? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." This is like the law of the Medes and Persians that shall never be disannulled; it is enacted and passed under hand and seal, that he hath laid on Christ the iniquities of us all.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

Every word in this text, as I have showed before, carries a special emphasis in it, and contains a peculiar privilege of evangelic glory. We have observed already out of it. 1. That it is iniquity itself that is charged upon Christ, as well as the punishment of it; Christ did not bear only indignation, but was clad with sin; "he was made sin for us," said the apostle; and there is no possible way in the world for persons to be discharged of their sins, but by Christ, bearing sin itself.

2. This iniquity was really laid upon him; Christ was as really the bearer of the sins of God's people, as a surety is really the debtor, when he willingly puts himself in the room of the principal; insomuch, that God cannot expect the debt anywhere, but of him. Christ gives his bond, and by that, makes himself the debtor; God accepts of this, and upon it discharges the poor sinners themselves; and if he will have payment, he must have it, where he himself hath laid the debt. {II Cor.5:19-21}

3. It is the Lord that hath laid iniquity on him; which is the greatest burden in the world, and might have sunk us forever in the gulph of misery, if Christ had not put his shoulders under it.

4. None can dispose of iniquity to the comfort and safety of the people of the Lord, but he himself. Beloved, do not mistake yourselves any longer; you do but beat the air, whilst you think your prayers, tears, mourning and fasting can lay it on Christ, it is the Lord alone. Your duties, indeed, are appointed for excellent uses, but never for this, to lay iniquity upon Christ; it is the Lord alone that does it.

5. The Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ; this is one of the comfortablest truths you can hear, or have published unto you, the transaction of sin from you to Christ is not a business now to be done, as if God were upon terms and conditions with you; I will lay your iniquities upon Christ, if you will do thus and thus. The text saith not, that the Lord will lay upon him; and yet if it did, it imports not, that he requires conditions and performances of you; but it saith, he hath laid iniquity, it is done already; your pardon is not only enacted in heaven, but it is also sealed upon earth. It is worth your observation, that which the apostle speaks in Rom.10:6-8. In the beginning of

the chapter, he taxeth those froward Jews, enemies to their own peace, with the establishing of their own righteousness, or rather going about to do it, and submit not to the righteousness of God; and what is that righteousness? "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead? But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." The meaning is that the gospel is not now so remote from us, that we must mount up to heaven, to fetch it down, or go down into the bottom to fetch it up, but it is within thy heart, and in thy mouth; it is come down from heaven to thee; it is not reserved there for thy fetching of it; he hath done it.

I have mentioned this again to you that you may see what comfort is in this, namely, that the Lord hath done it. It said to the king of Syria, "let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." It is the day of victory, that is the day of comfort, joy and gladness; the days before it comes, are days of fear and doubting; but when it is attained there is rejoicing. When a prisoner is condemned to die, and a friend gone to court to get his pardon, all the while it is agitating, his heart is full of tremblings, fears, and achings; but when his friend hath brought a pardon, under hand and seal, and delivered it into his hand, then he leaps and rejoices; so all the fear and bitterness of your spirits proceed from hence, namely, oh it is yet to be done! I am afraid it may miscarry; nay, it is nigh you, in your hearts, and in your mouths; it is come to you, the Lord hath done it to your hand.

But, when did the Lord do this? From eternity, in respect of obligation; but in respect of execution, when Christ was upon the cross; in respect of applying of it to particular persons, while children are in the womb, before ever they have done good or evil. There is great diversity or judgment about this; God applies pardon of sin, say some, at the time of conversion, and persons remain in a state of wrath until then. Others rise higher; God applies it in baptism, say they; but beloved, the Lord loves his people with an everlasting love; there is not a moment of time in which iniquity is transacted back again from Christ, and remains upon a particular person. Take one unbaptized, supposing him elect, and a child of God,

for whom Christ died, where are his sins? In sin he was conceived and brought into the world; where are these sins? Are they upon Christ, or upon himself, before baptism? If they were laid upon Christ, when he suffered for them; how came they back again from him? Who was the scape-goat that carried away the sins laid upon him, into a land of forgetfulness; how came they back again? If they came not back again, being laid upon Christ, then, even before baptism, the elect are discharged from sin, as other persons whose sins Christ took away.

I pass to a sixth consideration in the text, and indeed it is the basis that bears up the whole structure and frame of the gospel, putting the emphasis on the word "Him." "The Lord hath laid on Him, the iniquity of us all." It is of infinite concern, as much as life and salvation is worth, that he, who bore the iniquities of men, should have a back strong and broad enough to stand upright, and not be sunk under them. While the pillars stood firm upon which the house stood, where the princes of the Philistines met to make sport with Sampson, they were all safe; but when they sunk, the house fell, and great was the fall of it, and they all perished in it. This discharge of sin is the security of persons from wrath; if the pillars that bear it should possibly sink, all were utterly lost and come to nothing. The apostle Paul, pleading concerning the resurrection of Christ in I Cor.15:17, saith, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins;" so if it be not Christ, on whom iniquity was laid, you are yet in your sins, and your faith is vain. Sureties are the comfort of imprisoned debtors, and yet not all, but only able ones. Let a person bring twenty to be surety for him, to his creditor; if they be all as very beggars himself, he is but where he was before, and he is not a jot the better; but let him bring one able surety, that the creditor can trust, that will pay the debt, then hath he joy and comfort. Beloved, if you had ten thousand sureties to stand for you before God, yet if they be beggars, like yourselves, there is no comfort in them. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD," saith one, "and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" {Mic.6:6,7} No, they are

not able to make satisfaction. So beloved, they are all beggars that we can bring; shall I bring one man to stand for another, or for myself? No man can make an agreement for his brother, nor redeem his own soul; it will cost more to redeem it, and therefore, he must leave it forever. But, saith the text, "the Lord laid it on him;" here is a word of comfort. "Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." {Ps.89:19} But, who is this "Him" on whom iniquity is laid? Everyone will suppose, the prophet takes for granted it is Christ; and so it is; but beloved, in truth of such concern as this, it is not good to go altogether upon trust, and to receive things, because everyone receives them, but to have a sure foundation for them. Strength of consolation hath not the voice of the people, but the word of life, for its security; and therefore, it is good to see for certain, that this "Him" here, is Christ, and no other. The prophet speaks darkly, while he speaks of him that bears iniquity; the clearest expression he hath is in verse 2, for there he calls him "a root out of a dry ground;" and all along through the rest of the chapter, it is but He, and Him, and His. And indeed, it is usual with the prophets, personally to point out Christ darkly; insomuch, that the weak-sighted, or rather the envious or malignant Rabbis, as much as possibly they could, cast a mist before every truth that spake of Christ; applying them still to this, or that worthy man, among those people, as to David, or Solomon, or Hezekiah, or such like. But the prophet, or rather the Lord, by the prophet, in this place, gives such lively characters of Christ, that they themselves were compelled to yield to the truth, that he meant him alone in this chapter. But we need not the testimony of man, {much less fear any opposition of theirs,} to testify that it is Christ, whom the Holy Ghost means by him, that is here spoken of. Observe the margin or your bibles, and you shall find in all the evangelical passages of the prophets, none come near this chapter in being applied to Christ, nor so many quotations by Christ, and his apostles, taken out of any other. To give you a hint in one or two places; iniquity was laid upon him that was "despised and rejected of men;" and "we esteemed him not." But who is this that was thus rejected of men, and not esteemed? Christ applies this passage to himself in Mark 9:12. The margin of

my text refers you to that place, and that refers you to this again, "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," &c. Who was this? Of all the prophets, I find Daniel most privileged to speak most plainly concerning him that bears our iniquities; the Lord meant to tell Daniel a secret, that shall be an intimation of the exceeding largeness of his love to him; the secret is this. "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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy;" {Dan.9:24;} and afterwards he tells us, that at the end of so many weeks "shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself." {vs.26} Here you may see plainly who it is that was wounded to death for transgression, it was the Messiah, that is, Christ. Look in I Pet.2:21-24, the apostle runs over the most material passages of this very chapter, applying them by name to Christ; "Christ also suffered for us," saith he; {vs.21;} this answers to that "He was wounded for our transgressions." Christ "was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;" he was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb," and "so he openeth not his mouth." {Is.53:7} This answers to that, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." {I Pet.2:22,23} "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls;" {I Pet.2:24,25;} which answers to that in Isaiah, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6} "Himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and here "the Lord laid the iniquities of us all on him;" naming Christ in particular, as the person who in his own body bare our sins. Christ then, it is clear, is he on whom the Lord laid our iniquities. Christ, who is that? A man would think it strange, that in a Christian congregation there needs this A. B. C. to be taught to people, as to who Christ is? Moses unveiled, say some; and if that be true, I am sure

Moses' veil will obscure Christ; and I doubt there is so much of Moses in the minds and preaching of men, that Christ is quite forgotten among them. It is worth the while beloved, to know what this Christ is that was to bear iniquity; he must be something else than the common apprehension of men is of him, to do this, to bare our sins. The prophet tells us that he is Emmanuel, and the Holy Ghost in Matt.1.23, expounds it, "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Christ is such a "Him" who is God and man; nay more, he is God and man so united, that both make but one person; and this one is he that bears our iniquities. Christ is so one, as that the several properties of each nature do not reserve themselves solely to themselves, but communicate them to the whole. The divine properties of Christ's Godhead are not so inseparable to it, but the virtue thereof is communicated unto his human nature; and the virtue of the Divine Nature of Christ, is that which makes Christ of steel, as I may so speak; not to bow or bend under the heaviest weight that can possibly be laid upon him.

The Godhead, it is true, is incapable to bear iniquity, and the human nature is as incapable of bearing it to any purpose. Should iniquity be laid upon the human nature, and the divine nature not support it, it would have sunk under sin, as a mere human creature. Christ "was made in the likeness of sinful flesh;" in respect of flesh it was the same, in respect of sin he was like it. He did not sin, yet he bore it, by the imputation of it, upon him; what now could this mere creature do; and how could it be strengthened enough to bear that weight that would crush a mere creature to dust and powder? But now, if the humanity bear sin, and the divinity bears it up in suffering, this gives such infinite validity to the obedience of Christ, both active and passive, that it becomes effectual to the purging away of sin. Take a dark illustration of it. The body of a man bears a burden, the soul is incapable of it, but it keeps up the body from sinking under it; set a dead man on his legs, and lay a small weight upon his shoulders, he sinks under the burden and that falls upon him. What makes the living man stand to it, and carry it away? It is the soul in him that strengthens the body, and bears it up to stand under it, and bear it away. So the divine nature is a kind of soul to the humanity, consisting of soul and body, and is the form and strength of both; for

the soul of Christ's human nature is not as the soul in man, giving being to the man, as is well observed; that is, as a form giving being and strength to the person of Christ; for in us the reasonable soul gives life and being to us, but in Christ the Godhead gives life to the reasonable soul of Christ; for, as the philosophers say, there are three souls, the vegetative in plants, the sensitive in brutes, and the reasonable soul in man; yet in man the reasonable soul is from and hath the other two virtually in itself; thus the soul gives life to us; the Godhead gives life to Christ, and so all the sufficiency to bear iniquity proceeds from that. Now beloved, when we consider Christ, we are not to conceive as if he were in all respects distinct from God, as usually we are apt to imagine; we conceive otherwise when we hear Christ did such a thing, than we do when we hear God did such a thing; but Christ is the one God assuming human nature; and God in it manages those things that concern the welfare of his people.

The main thing I drive at, at this time, concerning this point of laying iniquity upon Christ, is to show what special ends and purposes the Lord hath in singling out him alone to bear iniquity. Though the Lord is pleased at all times to work strange wonders, yet never did God do such a wonderful thing, to the amazement of the creature, as this one thing, to lay iniquity upon Christ. Sin is the hate-fullest thing in the world to God; where it is found, a toad is not so odious unto man, as that person is in the sight of God; for though the Lord professeth he doth not afflict willingly, yet it agrees with his nature; but sin is most horrible and abominable; nay, the only abhorred thing in the world to God; that God should make Christ a beggar in the world, and the scorn of it, and make him suffer the most shameful, nay, the most accursed death, the death of the cross, is much; yet all this may agree with the nature of God; but, that he should make Christ to be sin, is out of the reach of all the creatures in the world to apprehend how he should do it, and yet retain his love and respect to him.

Surely beloved, a work of such an extraordinary nature as this is, to lay iniquity upon Christ, must needs have suitable ends. You will laugh at that man that will build a famous structure to keep a kennel of dogs in; to be at such cost for base ends. The end of things is always the rule and line by which they are measured; the end is always first in intention, though

last in execution; and being first in intention, is that which all things conduce unto. A man makes a mold to cast a vessel, or a piece of ordnance; he hath the form of it in his head, and according to that he casts it, and fits his molds, and suits all his materials. God hath special ends in his heart, for which he lays iniquity upon Christ; and certainly the thing itself must answer the end, and the end must be answerable to that, for God doth all things in weight and measure, and proportion.

And the truth is beloved, there are admirable ends, every way answering that miraculous work of the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ; I shall instance in particulars, and therein show how marvelously the Lord sees himself out to the world by it; in nothing did he ever show himself, as in this thing. The ends are many, I shall show you some of the chief, by God's assistance.

1. The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, that so he may lay help upon one that is mighty. "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." {Ps.89:19}

2. That Christ might satisfy his great longing, which he had lost, if iniquity had not been laid upon him. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" {Lk.12:50}

3. That he himself might be fully satisfied to his own content, and be at rest. God himself if I may so speak, had not been at rest within himself, if iniquity had not been laid upon Christ; nothing else could have satisfied him, that he might sit down in the enjoyment of himself as he would. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." {Heb.10:12}

4. That he might show to the world, especially to his own people, the exceeding horrid loathsomeness of sin, and the inconceivable measure of sinfulness that is in it; as there is nothing that ever the Lord did, or the wit of man can do, could set out the abominableness of sin, as this one thing, the laying of iniquity upon Christ.

5. That he might commend that unsearchable love of his to the sons of men; with a witness, as I may say, God herein declares his love to man; many and sundry ways indeed he manifests it; as "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth

rain on the just and on the unjust;" {Mt.5:45;} but all other ways of manifestation of the love of God to men, come infinitely short of this expression of his, laying iniquity upon Christ. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." {Jn.15:13} "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." {Rom.5:10} But if this were a commendation of his love, what a commendation of it is here expressed, that he should not only die for enemies, but bear that very enmity itself upon him? That Christ should bear our sins is more by far than the former.

6. That he might make a clean people; a people clean and fair enough for himself to take pleasure in. There is no way in the world to make them so, that God might delight in them, but the laying iniquity upon Christ; this was the way to make them all fair and lovely, without, any spot; or wrinkle. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." {Eph.5:27}

7. That the people of Christ might have strong consolation; there is but weak consolation in everything in the world, but in this one truth {the Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ} that people can shed tears, pray, fast, and mourn, affords but weak consolation to this; for here is the fulness of it. That "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." {Heb.6:18}

8. That his people might serve him the more freely, less interruptedly, and more zealously. There are many promises, as encouragements, to call out the people of God to serve him; but there is none takes off the soul from all kind of terror and slavish fear, but this, that the Lord hath laid our iniquity upon Christ.

9. That at the appointed time of the Father, his people might enjoy the purchased inheritance, and the promised possession. There is no possession of the glory laid up for the saints in light, but by laying iniquity upon Christ; no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of heaven. When we attain to the height of sanctification, we remain yet unclean, for there is pollution in the best of it. When we die, suppose we are more holy in life than any that went before us; yet there is not so much holiness of life in us, but that there

remains still some uncleanness, and un-mortification of life in thoughts and practice, some deadness and indisposition in our hearts and affections to holiness; and, with this un-holiness, we lie down in the dust, if all our uncleanness were not laid upon Christ, that so we might enter into rest, as perfect and complete in him.

These are admirable ends! All the joys and comfort of believers, have their basis in these jointly, nay, in these severally and apart being all of them full of sweetness, and wine refined upon the lees.

The Lord laid the iniquities of men upon Christ, to the end to lay help upon one that is mighty. You know beloved, what our Saviour taxeth that foolish man with, that began to build, but could not finish; and, for the prevention of such folly, advises them to whom he spake, first, to sit down and consider what it would cost them; not like a forward person that goes out to war with an enemy, not considering his own, or the strength of his enemy; that is like the man that began to build, and could not finish. {Lk.14:28-31} God is more wise than to begin thus, and let the work sink under his hands; his full purpose was, and is, to save that which was lost, and gather together the dispersed; now had he gone any other way to work, as it appears to us, he had miscarried. Had not the Lord prepared Christ a body, and fitted it to suffer for us, we had lain still in our sins; it lay, therefore, upon his honour and credit, that seeing he would save sinners, he should go that way wherein he might go through his plan, and that was to lay iniquity upon Christ. And, that this was the only way, you shall find expressly, in Isa.28:16, a notable prophecy concerning Christ; there the Lord is manifesting that his main purpose was, in the great business of saving men from their sins, to find out such a one that there might be some rest to him, and that he might not fail in it. "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Mark how the Lord presses, as I may so speak, by gradations, the stability of the way found out for the saving of men from sin. "I lay in Zion, for a foundation;" a foundation, what is that? Foundations, you know, are the bottoms of buildings that must bear up the weight of the whole structure, though never so heavy; that is the property of a foundation. Now, saith he, "for a foundation, I lay in Zion a stone." You know

what our Saviour saith, in Matt.7:26,27. "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it." Here was a sinking foundation; and so all sinks, because the foundation falls; but mark, saith God, "I will lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone;" a rock that will not sink, nor yield, but stand firm. So that you see the foundation upon which our sins, the heaviest things in the world, are laid, is a stone; that is, Christ that will not sink; but, he saith, not only that he is a stone, but he is also a tried stone. You know that probatum est, {it is proven,} written to a thing, gives abundance of worth to it. Armor of proof is precious, and is highly esteemed; that armor that is shot against, and yet not pierced, is tried, and hath probatum est upon it; so Christ is made of the Lord the foundation to bear all our iniquities, as he was proved and tried; he was tried by God, by man, by devils, by the godly, and in all he proved a tried stone that will not fail. He was tried by God, by his council in heaven, and with the weight of his wrath upon him on earth, when he suffered; you see that the Lord not only set men upon him, but planted his own cannons against him; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet Christ stands fast, "it is finished," saith he; "Father, I have done the work that thou hadst given me to do." You see that the cannons of God's wrath could not beat through him. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" {Rom.8:33-35} These could not break through this rock; he stands sure in all their batteries; he is a tried stone. He was tried by man too; and when all men tried, yet still he was a stone, and a tried stone. The godly tried him, he never fails, nor forsakes them; "the LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower;" {Ps.18:2;} saith David; he found him so, and in Ps.46:3, "therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;" I will not be moved,

I will lie down in rest and be quiet. “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” {Ps.46:10}

You that are oppressed in your spirits, in respect of the weight of sin, you apply to yourselves; if you would but try Christ, and acknowledge him the bearer of your transgressions, you should have sweet rest, and settlement to your spirits. “Son, be of good cheer;” saith Christ, “thy sins are forgiven thee?” They that try Christ shall find themselves of good cheer; for they find by his bearing their iniquities, that nothing can pierce them. He that hath a shield of steel, and a proved one too, all the darts that come upon it, do not any more offend, pierce, or wound that person’s breast, than if there were no darts in the world shot against it. Just such a shield is Christ; and, because of this, was he singled out to bear iniquity; and to this purpose, that he might bear off all the violence, that all the wicked men in the world can do, put together; all the forces they can use, or raise against Christ, to trample down his honour, and lay it with the ground, what becomes of it all? “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.” {Is.54:17} We that have experience of it; there is not one weapon this day, to your knowledge, that hath prospered against Christ, nor shall any hereafter. Christ is all steel, all marble; and if there be a stone that cannot be pierced, he is that. It is Christ that bears thy iniquities, that is such one; and if he had not been such a one, God had been disappointed in his purpose. God’s people are called sheep, as the devil is too subtle for them; the world is cunning, and they would soon be ensnared; but God hath chosen out a mighty one, one infinitely wise, to find out all the plots of his enemies, and to turn all their cunning into folly.

The devil, and the world, have tried him; all the elect have tried him, and death too; and all that could be done against him came to nothing; that all might see, what a mighty champion God had to save poor sinners, that trust in, and rest, upon him. The Lord laid iniquity on such a mighty one, that every one that lifts up the heel, may dash against the stones, and kick against the pricks, rather to hurt themselves, than the people of God.

Oh, beloved, that you could but behold the firmness of this rock, upon whom your iniquities are laid; it is not the storm of a temptation against you, that shall make you fall; nor the blustering of divine wrath breaking forth, for the ungodliness of the world, that shall make you shake and tremble; the house that is built upon the sand indeed, shall be beaten down, when these storms beat and blow; but the house built upon the rock, stands as firm, as if there never were a blast at all.

We should consider; the other particular ends and purposes of God’s laying iniquity upon Christ; and they are all of them so full of marrow and fatness, that it is pity to cast them aside, and not taste and eat abundantly of them. I should therefore proceed to the opening of the rest of them; some of which I shall speak of in the afternoon.

25 The Justice Of God Satisfied By Christ Alone

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

Every word in this text, as I have often told you, hath special weight. It is iniquity that is laid on Christ, as well as the punishment of iniquity. “He was made sin for us.” Sin is a debt, Christ is a surety; the debt of sin as he is a surety, is as really his, though not his own contracted, as if he had really contracted it himself; his own by imputation; so far his own, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” II Cor.5:19}

And it is the Lord that laid our iniquities upon him; it is too much presumption to give the glory of it unto any creature; it is God’s glory alone; nothing of man, in man, or from man does it, but the Lord himself.

And the Lord hath done it; it is not now to be done; it is past, he hath laid iniquity. Also, observe out of the words, this, that we are now to come unto; “that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Had our sins been disposed of anywhere else, but on him, they had recoiled back upon us again; none can bear iniquity, to carry it into the land of forgetfulness, but the scape-goat, Christ. It is Christ alone, on whom the iniquities of believers are laid for their discharge.

This proposition that our iniquities are laid on Christ is the basis that upholds all the consolation

revealed in this chapter.

The main thing, I shall insist upon, will be to consider, what answerable ends the Lord might have in this most admirable work, of laying iniquity upon Christ; there is no work that administers matter of astonishment, and puts the reason and judgments of men, so much to a nonplus, as this one work of laying men's sins upon Christ; it must needs then have suitable ends; being but a means to conduce to higher purposes.

1. One great end of laying iniquity upon Christ, is, that the "Lord might lay help upon one that is mighty;" that so seeing he hath undertaken to discharge the poor believer from iniquity, he might go through the work, and not leave it by halves. Had iniquity been laid anywhere, but on Christ, the work of taking it away had been left unfinished, so far as it appears to us; it is not conceivable to any man under heaven, how iniquity should be carried away, but by the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." But I will proceed; there are many other remarkable uses and ends, for which the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ.

2. That the LORD might have the satisfaction and reparation of the injury done unto him, to his full content. It cannot be imagined, by all the wits in the world, how the justice of God violated, should be so satisfied, as in laying iniquity upon Christ. When Adam sinned, and by that act involved himself, and his whole posterity, into a state of transgression; nay, into a constant course of enmity and rebellion against God; by which justice was extremely violated, and the Divine Majesty insufferably affronted; it concerned God, for the maintenance of the honour of justice, to take order for the reparation of the violation, and affront of it. God could as soon cease to be, as not to take order, that justice violated, should be satisfied. You have an ordinary rule that "whatever is in God, is God himself;" and so let justice be once torn from the Divine Nature, and it ceases to be. In this regard, I say, it concerns God, to repair his justice in the largest way of satisfaction, that might answer it to the full; and yet, nevertheless, though the Lord was resolved, that justice should not be violated; for it is a certain position with God that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot and tittle of God's word shall fall to the ground;" much less a jot or tittle {if I may so speak} of his essence shall fall; yet, I say, though the

Lord would have justice, even to the utmost satisfied; it was at the same instant, and everlastingly in his thought, that some few of those creatures that had thus violated it, should not sink under that reparation that it stood upon. Now here comes in a business, that no wisdom, but the infinite wisdom of God, could possibly either conceive, or contrive, to wit, a way of reconciliation of his justice and mercy; in the saving of such creatures, justice should be fully repaired, and yet the creature, violating justice, be saved, is a riddle that none but God himself could ever untie. These two things therefore being jointly settled in the thoughts of God himself, he casts about with himself, how he might maintain and manifest both, without the prejudice of either.

The Psalmist saith, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." {Ps.85:10} Here is the agreement between both. The Lord knew well, that if the creatures violating justice, were themselves to make satisfaction to it, they must sink and perish, and be undone for ever; there was like to be nothing but ruin, and that eternal; and this payment would be very slow, and destructive to the creature, therefore God liked it not.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks expressly that the Lord desired not the death of a sinner. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" {Ez.33:11} I will not stand to discourse nicely, as if there were any difference between the desire and will in God; for I know there is none; but in respect of the manifestation of the mind of God to us, we may conceive, that the Lord, for the satisfying of justice, will rather have the creature destroyed, than the continual violation of it should be without reparation; yet this cannot be called pleasure or delight, that he hath in this thing; but for the prevention of the violation of his justice, he is contented, the creatures should some of them perish. "I desire not the death of a sinner;" it is not the delight I have, I take no pleasure in the thing.

I say, therefore, seeing it is the pleasure of God, that some of his creatures should not perish, and yet justice violated should be repaid too; he casts about with himself, how these two things might stand together, and not one jar against the other; for this purpose, it

pleased the Lord at the first, to propound to himself, and so to publish his mind to his people, concerning a way of reparation, by some present payment, in the blood of bulls and goats, and other sacrifices; upon the heads of which, as you have it in Lev.1:4, those that offer the sacrifices, were to lay their hands, and so there was a manifestation of atonement; in this, God had some content, for that time; but the full pleasure of the Lord, was not answered in this way of reparation; no, not though Jesus Christ himself, was shadowed out under those sacrifices; yet the Lord saw not that fulness of content to himself in this obscure way; and therefore, he finds out a better, and a more contenting way to himself; and what was that, you will say? Look in Heb.10:1-10, and you shall there find, how the apostle fully shows, that the Lord was not to the utmost so satisfied, as he would be, in that first way; and, also, what way he sets up to give himself full content, and that gives direct answer to the thing in hand. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not," {saith Christ,} "in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure;" mark but this phrase and expression well; which plainly shows the way that God then took, to repay his own justice in the blood of bulls and goats; though for the time it gave him some, yet not that full content, such as he could take full pleasure.

But some will be ready to say, that when the apostle spake thus of sacrifices and burnt offerings, he meant those simply considered, without respect unto Christ whom they typified.

To this I answer, that not only in the sacrifices, simply considered in themselves, without Christ, God took no pleasure, is his meaning, but under favour, he goeth further; for, if you mark the opposition well, you shall find it is not made between them considered as types of Christ, and considered simply, and abstractedly from him their substance; but the opposition is made between the whole service, as it then was, and the new way that Christ, when he came in the flesh, brought into the world to please God with; therefore saith Christ, immediately after, because thou hast no pleasure in them, "Lo, I come" {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} it is my delight "to do thy will, O God;" and in that he saith, "Lo, I come," "he taketh away the first that he might establish the second." So that you see he makes the

difference between this way that God took to satisfy himself then, and the way in which he was satisfied when Christ came in person, wherein he, by once offering up himself, perfected for ever them that are sanctified; {vs.10;} the way in which Christ comes to give God satisfaction, is, by his personal offering up of himself a sacrifice; though Christ was darkly apprehended under those sacrifices of bulls and goats, yet God did not take so full pleasure in them, as he did in Christ once offering up himself; and therefore he saith, after he had once offered up himself, "he sat down at the right hand of God." {vs.12} It is therefore Christ's personal bearing of iniquity upon the cross, once for all, that gives unto the Lord full pleasure and content; and hence you shall find in the same epistle, when the Lord had before established the priesthood, after the order of Aaron, and that administration of service that was among them, the apostle declares that he changed it; and the reason of this change he also shows in Heb.10:1; because, "for the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." There being a necessity of remembering sin again every year; so that this was but a lingering payment by piece-meals, as I may so say, I mean in respect of the manifestation of the mind of God. Indeed such a full way of payment God hath in his secret thoughts in Christ, as that he was then fully satisfied and contented in them; but he did not manifest himself in those sacrifices, and in that administration, to have such complete payment all at once, as when Christ came into the world; therefore as the priesthood was changed, so Christ, being made a priest, after the order of Melchisedec, God liked his payment so well, that he swears, that notwithstanding Aaron's order, "thou art a priest for ever." I say again, the Lord took such full content in Christ's personal bearing iniquity, that now he seeth, that there is no way in the world to give himself satisfaction, or could be devised, like this way; and for this cause, the former priesthood being changed, he saith, nay, he swears, "thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;" so that by this you may perceive, how abundantly the Lord found himself satisfied in his mind in this, that iniquity is laid upon his own Son; no way in the world would have done but this.

If any man should undertake to agree for his brother, he could not give God content; no man can redeem his brother; it costs so much to redeem a soul, he must leave it for ever. It is not the fruit of the body that can answer for the sin of the soul, that cannot give God content; though a man could establish an innocent, nay, an angelic righteousness, yet this could not satisfy God to his content; it is this, "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God," that gives him full content, Christ's own coming to bear iniquity.

It may be you will say, what did Christ come for, when he saith, "Lo, I come?" I answer, it is plain he came to be in the room of those sacrifices that went before; and why did he come in their room, it may be further demanded? God could not take full pleasure in them; therefore he came to give satisfaction in their place.

Now, what was the office, you will say, of the priest in offering sacrifice? It was, by that offering them; atonement might be pronounced by the priest upon the people, they laying their hands upon the head of the beast.

Now the business of Christ's coming for the pleasing of his Father, was to bear the sins of his people, which those sacrifices bore, {Christ being typified under them,} but imperfectly in regard of that full satisfaction he gave; for there is none like this. In Prov.8:30, observe how Christ, under the name of Wisdom, declares the Lord's pleasure in him. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;" as if God could not look upon anything as his delight, but only his Son. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." {Mt.3:17}

Yea, may some say, as he was the Son of God, he was daily his delight; wherefore, in verse 31, you shall see in what respect he was so; for he saith immediately after, "my delights were with the sons of men." Here Christ seems to apply the delight that his Father took in him, unto this condition, as his delight was with the sons of men; and wherein doth Christ express it more than in this, in that whereas they were sunk in sin and misery, it was his delight to recover them, and bring them to shore with safety, that would have been drowned, except he had laid hold of them, and took them out; and hence in Isaiah 53:11,12, the Lord expresses himself wherein he taketh his greatest

satisfaction. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" what was that? Certainly the bearing of the iniquities of all his elect upon himself, on his own body on the tree. The hand of God was just, and could not but be so; it could not smite but where it found a fault; the transaction of the iniquities of men on Christ, by way of Suretyship, drew the stripes of the Lord upon him, and so "he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord," saith the same prophet, "shall prosper in his hands." What was in the hands of Christ, that the Lord saith should prosper? This was the main thing, the taking away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist testifieth; for this was the very office of him, and the glory of his ministry, to point out with his finger unto Christ, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." {Jn.1:29} This was the chief business of Christ which "prospered in his hands;" the handy-work of Christ is done with such effect and fruit, that the pleasure of the Lord prospered; so far as that prospered, the pleasure of the Lord prospered and is fulfilled.

This is of infinite concern to us, that our iniquities be laid upon such a back, that God may take full satisfaction to himself; if any man conceive that the coming of Christ into the world, proclaims a mitigation of divine justice, I think they are much mistaken; Christ came not to abolish the law, much less to take anything away of the Divine Essence of God himself.

That Christ should make the justice of God more remiss, is to rob God; and the pleasure of the Lord could not prosper in the hands of such as should rob him of that which is so near and dear unto him; therefore the mitigation of Divine Justice was not the business of Christ, which prospering pleased God; but in that the back of Christ was made strong and broad enough to bear the weight of vindictive justice, therefore the pleasure of the Lord prospered. "A body hast thou prepared me;" that is, the Lord fitted and steeled Christ to be able in bearing of iniquity, that he might fetch his full stroke, and take out the full payment that justice itself could require of him; and this infinitely concerns us, that Christ is the person on whom iniquity is laid, whereby justice is satisfied to the full; for certainly, if our Surety had not given to the Lord that full content he desired, woe had been

to every one of us; for so much of divine justice as was not satisfied upon the back of Christ, the Lord would have looked for upon our own. This is certain, that eparation must be had; so that had not Christ suffered; had it not been that God acknowledged himself that he had all the satisfaction he looked for, or could desire, he had come upon every person where anything was left behind unsatisfied. Now all the creatures under heaven, put them together, could not give God perfect satisfaction for sin; there would have been something behind, that the elect could never reach unto; and in what a sad condition then should they have been, when God should have come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them, which he might do; nay, which he would have done, if he had not taken full satisfaction upon Christ. Had not he worn out the rod of vengeance to the stumps, the remainder should have been upon our backs, and that would have pierced us with an everlasting sting. Certainly there is not the least sin, but deserves all the punishment of this, and of the world to come; and if Christ did not give God full satisfaction for both, he did for neither; and it could not have been said of him that the LORD "beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied," if there had remained anything to be done after Christ had done his work.

Beloved, it was the happiest day that ever came, and the gladdest tidings ever heard, that "mercy and truth met together, and that righteousness and peace kissed each other;" for if God in his infinite wisdom had not brought it thus to pass by the sufferings of his Son, all the world should have sunk and perished for ever; for before these glorious attributes of God should have grated and jarred one against another.

3. As the laying of iniquity upon Christ was that which gave God full satisfaction, when nothing else could do it; so he did it, to save Christ's longing. The truth is, beloved, as Christ studied nothing more than to give his Father content, so he again desired nothing more than to give his Son content, and to answer him in that he most affected and desired. It is true that poor sinners are saved by Christ, but that is a subordinate thing; Christ's main aim is at giving his Father content. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." {Jn.17:4} And in another place, "and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should

lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." {Jn.6:39} In that Christ "took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him." The eye of Christ was upon the pleasing of his Father, and to give him consent; as the glory of God is the chiefest end of all things, the same was the chief end in Christ's eye, in procuring the salvation of his people.

The Lord delights in his Son; "I was daily his delight," saith Christ. {Prov.8:30} He took delight in nothing so much as in him; now what is the fruit, the consequence of it? "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always;" saith he, John 11:42. There is nothing he desires, cost what it will, but the Father will give it him, and part with for his sake. Now what is it that he desires of the Father above all things? "My delights were with the sons of men." {Prov.8:31} Observe the universality of the expression; he saith, not only some, but "all" my delight was with them; I care for nothing else but that they might do well; let it therefore cost what it will, so that the sons of men miscarry not, I shall have my heart's desire. Take away these from Christ, and you take away the delight of his soul. If God could, or would not, give Christ the sons of men, he must cross his mind; but now, rather than that should be crossed, Christ must bear iniquity, forasmuch as there was no other way to save poor lost miserable man. It is true, the bearing of iniquity itself, simply considered, is no desirable thing; and therefore of itself, it could not be the object of Christ's longing, nor desirable unto him, but as it served for a further end, and conduced to advance that which he took most delight in; so, for that, he desired and longed to bear it. And, for the proof of this, you shall find many expressions of scripture, by which it will appear that there is nothing in the world Christ hath thirsted after so much as to bear the sins of men, and the wrath of God that is due to them. In Psalm 19:5, the Psalmist speaks literally indeed of the sun in the firmament, but mystically of Christ, that it goeth forth "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." Christ is the sun of righteousness; the sun hastes not more to dispel the corrupt vapours and fogs that are settled upon the earth, and to exhale them up towards itself from it,

that so it may be clear and wholesome, than Christ hastened, nay, eagerly longed to exhale those noxious and corrupt vapours of sinfulness and wrath due to his own people, that they may be a peculiar people, all fair before God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, as in Eph.5:27. No strong man is more hot and eager to a combat, wherein he hopes to work deliverance for those that are captives, than Christ is to fight the battle of the poor captives of the Lord, that they may be redeemed from bondage. Christ "hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." {Ps.68:18} Such gifts had Christ and that for the rebellious, even when they were no better; such as the leading captivity captive, delighting as a strong man to run his race. There is no man more eager to run a race to win the goal, than Christ was to obtain this one thing, to deliver man from the bondage of sin and misery. In Psalm 40:8, the Psalmist hath this expression, when Christ had said, "Lo I come," presently he adds, "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is written in my heart;" or, as it is in the margin, "it is written in the midst of my bowels;" as much as to say, the bowels of Christ do yearn within him, to come in the room of a burnt-sacrifice, to bear the sins of the people; "it is written as a law in my heart; it is my great delight."

In Luke 12:50, you shall find how mightily the heart of Christ was set upon it to bear the iniquity of his people; "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" What was this baptism? It was nothing else but Christ's bearing our sins upon the cross, as Peter expresses it, in I Pet.2:24, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."

This was the thing Christ so much longed for, and was so much straitened in his spirit about, that he could not be at rest till it was accomplished; and, in Luke 22:15, you shall further see, how he was set upon it, "and he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." The Passover, you know, was nothing else but the paschal lamb slain and eaten, and a type of Christ, and his bearing and suffering for sin; Christ is that paschal lamb, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Now, "with desire I have desired to eat" it, saith

Christ; what is that he means? That his heart was so eager of being the paschal lamb, and to bear iniquity, that he could hardly stay, but must be acting it in every type; he had such a mind to bear the sins of his people, that, for the sake of it, he desires with desire to act the thing in the type of it. The phrase expresses largeness of bowels, that he could not contain himself.

Now, beloved, what thing else in all the world, could satisfy the longing of Christ, but having the thing that his heart was act upon? When women long, how do you satisfy them? They long for one thing, do you give them another? Nay, that will not give them content; you must give them the thing they long for. This was the longing of Christ to bear the sins of his people, to come in the room of burnt-sacrifices. Now how could this longing of his be satisfied, but by having the thing his heart desired?

This is a thing which infinitely concerns every soul that would have joy unspeakable and glorious founded upon a rock that cannot be shaken, that Christ did long for this thing. Certainly it cost the Father such a price, to make Christ an offering for sin, that if he himself had not had a mighty mind to it, he could not have pressed him, nor have yielded to give his own dear and only Son, and deliver him up for us all. Oh! What a task was he put unto! It went to the heart of him {as I may so say} to do it. What thing in heaven or earth could have ever moved him to do it, but only the longing of Christ, his own willingness? You see how God advances the renown of Abraham, in that he spared not his only son, but yielded him up in the integrity of his heart, that was so dear unto him; therefore, saith he, "in blessing I will bless thee, &c." Certainly God could not part with anything in the world that went so near to his heart, as his Son Christ, much more his forsaking of him, as he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God saith elsewhere of him, "thou art my beloved Son, I am well pleased with thee."

{Matt.3:17} And yet now to forsake this beloved Son, how near must this needs touch his heart? Now what could move the Father to this strange, this unparalleled act of his, but the extreme eagerness of Christ? And what moved Christ to this, but that he well knew, that if he had not suffered, his poor little flock should have been for ever drowned; he had for ever lost that which the Father had given him,

and they had perished; this made him long to bear iniquity, and his longing made the Father willing that he should bear it.

You that are fathers can apprehend what a thing it is, to have your child's throat cut, especially you that have but one son, how near would it go to your heart! But to have his throat cut, and that for the saving of a varlet that would have cut yours, if it had been in his power, is not this example beyond your reach? God did this for you; and this is not all, he was not only contented to let Christ suffer, but was himself a spectator, and beheld him suffering, and saw the tragedy acted; and this was not all neither, but he had his own hands in it; there was his determinate council upon it; nay, more, there was actually the hand of God himself upon him; he did not only put him into, and leave him in the hands of miscreants and devils, to revile and blaspheme him, but takes him up himself and scourge him with the rod of his own indignation.

Oh! What should thus turn the bowels of God, to break out so upon his dear Son Christ, to beat and bruise him as he did, but his own longing! Oh, it is of infinite concern unto us, that the bowels of Christ were unto such a work; for the weight of it would have been so heavy, and the task so great, that without some vehement incentive, he could never have brooked it; so tedious it was that you know what he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" if he had not had a longing, the bitterness of the cup would have made him flinch from the thing; but his heart was so set upon it, that he overlooks all this, and will go perfectly through the work.

You know how the eagerness of a man in a business that he delights in makes him overlook discouragements in it that will make others give it over. It is said of Jacob, though he served seven years under Laban, and that with rigour, for Rachel, "yet he thought it but a little time;" and why was that? Because he loved her! Love breaks through all difficulties; so then the heart of Christ being so set upon the thing, that iniquity should be laid upon him, therefore it was done, or else Christ should have lost his longing.

4. The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, to the end that he might show to the world, especially to his own people the most abominable loathsomeness and filthiness of sin. Beloved, it is but a mistake in the minds of some people, that the preaching of the

gospel of Christ, Christ's bearing the iniquities of his people, is a way to lessen the apprehension of the ugliness of sin. I dare be bold to say, all the rhetoric in the world, setting out all the aggravations of sin, and thundering out all the threatenings and curses of the law, with all the terrors of God's wrath for it; nay, the execution of the terrible wrath of God, all at once, upon all the creatures in the world, could not, would not, so discover the abominable loathsomeness and filthiness of sin in the sight of God, as this one act of God's laying iniquity upon his Son. If the entire world should sustain iniquity, and thereby all the wrath of God at once, the Lord should lay his wrath but upon mere creatures, when all that were done; but when he lays iniquity upon his Son, and spends his entire wrath upon him, this shows an extreme bitterness of the heart of God against sin. If a man meet with a Spaniard, or any he is at open enmity with, and smite, or slay him, there would not hereby appear such indignation against this enemy, as if this man should take his own son, and go near to cut his throat, for committing some act against his pleasure. A man will beat his servant for a fault, when his son for the same shall go free, and there shall be no notice taken of it; but if at another time you shall find his spirit so stirred up, that he lays about him, and is ready to brain his child, if he comes near him; this shows the depth of indignation that is raised in him, and the greatness of the fault in his eye, that stirred it up. Now, beloved, when the Lord should be moved, that he doth not only fall foul upon all the creatures, but upon his own Son, and becomes the executioner of him, and delivers up his soul for sin; what an expression of wrath against sin is here? A mild and meek master when he is provoked to beat his servant, and to turn him out of doors, it signifies the fault to be great; but when the son cannot be spared, but must be forsaken, this must be a fault that nothing else can take off the edge of spirit against it; and I say, the smarting of the Son of God's love, especially in such a manner as he did, certainly shows the extremity of the indignation of God against sin.

Therefore beloved, if ever you would come to see the evil of sin, that it may be a bridle to restrain you from it; when profit and pleasure, or any such thing come in, and would tempt you to sin, look upon Christ, and see that God would not spare him a stroke; and all this for thy sake, lest thou should perish under

this vengeance; and wilt not thou fear to commit that sin, that cost so many blows to his dearest Son? There are many other admirable reasons, wherefore God laid iniquity upon his Son; but I cannot speak further of them now.

26 The Loathsomeness Of Sin, And The Immenseness Of Love Discovered

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

We have passed through many excellent things that this precious text affords us; we are come to consider the rock of our salvation, the mighty one, upon whom the Lord hath laid this help, who is set up as a corner stone, to bear up, without sinking, so heavy a weight as “the iniquity of us all.”

I have showed you, that it was none but Christ; the main thing I have propounded, to be considered from the singling out of Christ himself, to bear our iniquities, is this, namely, to find out what the proportional ends of the Lord may be unto such an unparalleled action as this; as it is the greatest work that ever he did, so it hath the greatest ends that ever he aimed at. Expert workmen level their works, frame their materials, according to the business for which they are to serve; they make the molds fit for the vessels to be cast in them. If men therefore are so wise, as to order things in their weight and measure, how much more the great God of heaven and earth.

There are sundry admirable ends and purposes the Lord aims at, in laying iniquity upon Christ; and, as he aimed at such ends in the thing, so he excellently accomplishes them, to the great content of himself, and comfort of his people.

1. He laid iniquity upon Christ, “that he might lay help upon one that is mighty.”

2. That he might be satisfied to his own content; all the world could never have contented God; no, not the dissolution and annihilation of it, only Christ bearing the iniquities of men; which otherwise should have brought the dissolution and destruction of themselves, and of the world. “As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner;” but as concerning Christ bearing of iniquity, the pleasure of the Lord prospered in that.

3. The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, to give Christ his own longing. “I was daily his delight, and my delights are with the sons of men.” Take away the sons of men from Christ, and you take away his delight; take away that from a man, in which his delight is, and you take away all his comfort; if God should not give Christ the sons of men, he should cross his delight; now, rather than do this, seeing the sons of men cannot be given to Christ, but he must be made sin for them; iniquity shall be laid upon him. Christ hath a mighty strong heart, even to this very thing, when he saith, “Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God;” that is, that will which burnt offerings and sacrifices could not do, the taking away of sin; “I delight to do thy will, O God;” saith he; that is, to bear the sins of men; to come in the room of those sacrifices, and do their business. “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you;” that is, the paschal lamb, which was nothing but a type of his bearing the sins of men, being “the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.”

4. The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ that he might represent to the life the hideousness and abominable loathsomeness of sin to the whole world. Of this I shall speak something more than the last time would permit. There is no way wherein sin will appear so out of measure hateful to God, as by laying it upon Christ. You know, beloved, that Haman, that great courtier, when he had received an affront from Mordecai, at once to make his own greatness known, and the heinousness of the crime, as he conceived in this affront, thought it was but too poor a satisfaction to have the life of that single man; and therefore he devises, and accordingly proceeds in his device, to have all the nation of the Jews cut off at once for such a fact. The greater the suffering is for a crime, the more it manifests to the world the greatness and detestableness of it. You know there is none in the world, nay, all the world together, nothing so dear in the eyes of God, as his Son; and if it had been possible that sin could have been connived at, it would have been upon his Son, being his only by imputation. A fond father may possibly wink at a fault in a son, which he will not pass by in a slave; but when a father falls foul upon a dear child, upon whom a fault is found, and the fire of indignation restrains his affection, this

argues the extremity of the rage of the father, and the heinousness of the crime that incenses it. When Jonathan had so transgressed the commandment of Saul, that he said, "though it be Jonathan my beloved Son, he shall surely die for it;" this showed the extreme rage in the heart of Saul, and the apprehension of a heinous fact not to be borne with. When the Lord will lay iniquity upon Christ, and, when he finds it upon him, if he himself shall not escape; nay, if there shall not so much as be a mitigation of wrath, though the crime be upon him, no otherwise than only as a surety; this shows that iniquity is of such a loathsome stench in the nostrils of God, that it is impossible he should have any partiality or remissness wherever it is to be found. The more easily a crime is passed over, the less it is in the eye of him by whom it is passed over; but when a fault shall not be spared, no, not on the back of an only son, this sin is out of measure sinful. I dare be bold to say, as I said before, that all the rhetorical aggravations of sin, whether in respect of the filthiness of it, or of the wrath that attends it, or the miseries that proceed from it, come short of this one aggravation of it; the Lord hath laid iniquity upon his own Son.

It is true, sin is aggravated much, as you see in Isaiah 1:11,12; "to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me; saith the LORD. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" Here are expressions to aggravate sin in respect of the filthiness of it, exceedingly, that it makes all our prayers and sacrifices loathsome in his presence; but mark it, beloved, when all these expressions shall but only reflect upon the person of a mere creature; {God cannot away with it, his soul hateth it, in me and in thee, that are but men and women;} they are nothing so much as when these shall reflect upon his own Son; he cannot away with it in his Son, it is as abominable to him on Christ himself; this expression ariseth higher than all the aggravations in the world besides. Suppose that God forsakes all the sons of men for sin, this aggravates not so much the hatred of God against sin, as to forsake his own Son, as he complains; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "My soul is heavy unto death." When God laid iniquity upon Christ, he forsakes not the world, but his own Son,

for sin; therefore it must be an exceeding abominable thing. The truth is, God singled out Christ to bear the sins of men, for this purpose, because his back is strong enough to bear all the indignation of God at once, the creature is too weak to do, and vindicate divine justice against sin; the creatures cannot pay God but by piece-meal, and yet could never have made full payment; therefore the extremity of God's indignation against sin, cannot express itself in the latitude of it upon them; for it would have beat them to dust, and yet not be satisfied. A little fire today, and a little more tomorrow, burning continually, is something; but when all that fire, that would burn many years, should be set together to burn in a moment of time, it must needs have more of the fierceness of fire in it, than if it had burnt by several parts. The fierceness of God's indignation being all at once upon the back of Christ; I say, all that fierceness, that should have been protracted to eternity upon the offending creature, all that flame of wrath being contracted at once upon Christ for the sins of men, infinitely more expresses the greatness of the indignation of the Lord, than if it had lain upon all mankind to all eternity. The torments of hell we conceive infinite, have indeed a beginning, but they have no end, they are lengthened out to run in a parallel line with eternity itself; but now, suppose that all this torment should be contracted, and equivalently contained in the limits of one minute of time, and all this wrath to have broken out at one clap; had not there been more fierceness of wrath thus breaking out all at once, than being protracted to eternity? Even such were the sufferings of Christ for the elect upon the cross in that short time; they equivalently contained all that torment and wrath that should have lain upon them to all eternity. If he had not suffered for them at that instant upon the cross, they themselves had suffered for ever and ever. Oh beloved, this infinitely aggravates the most abominable loathsomeness and hatefulness of sin; and therefore what the church complains of in Lam.1:12, is as true, nay, more true of Christ himself. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by; behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?" It was the day of his fierce anger indeed; never was there such fierce anger, as that when Christ "bare our sins on his own body on the tree." Take notice therefore, I pray

you, that, as I told you before, it is a most abominable slander that is now cast upon the gospel of free-grace, to say, that the preaching of this doctrine extenuates sin in the eyes of men, and causeth such an over-cast upon the filthiness of it, that it must needs appear less filthy to men than it otherwise would. I say, there is no minister in the world, that is able to set out the abominable filthiness of sin, and the bitterness of God's wrath expressed against it; nothing can set it out so much as this, that our iniquities are laid upon Christ.

It is true indeed, the Lord's laying of iniquity upon Christ gives rest to the hearts of poor believers; seeing their sins are transacted from them, and so consequently the desert of them, that they feel none of the smart of the rod, nor the mischief of sin, Christ bearing their sins, and thereby their punishment for them; yet, though sin be transacted from believers, and they freed from that wrath it, in its own nature, deserves; yet it doth, and will, appear far more in its ugly shape and own nature upon the back of Christ, than if it remained upon the person himself that hath committed it.

5. As God's laying of iniquity upon Christ sets forth the filthiness of sin, so it serves to commend to his church the most immense and incomprehensible love that ever he showed or expressed in all the world. The quintessence, as I may so speak, of God's love is mightily set forth in it.

Indeed, the Lord hath abundantly manifested his love to mankind in those privileges mentioned in Psalm 8:4, "What is man, {said David,} that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Here is a love David could not conclude how great it was, and therefore he expresses it by an expostulation, "what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" Now, wherein is this love manifested? "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour; thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Here is love, to make man the Lord of the rest of the creatures; but yet there is a greater love than this, when man had most shamefully revolted, in all equity and reason as we conceive, God should have singled out other creatures, and not rebels, as men were, to be the objects of his love; but, though man, and only he, deserved wrath,

yet he singled him out, and he must be his greatest delight, and more near and dear unto him, than he was before.

Now, if you do but consider what it cost God to make man partaker of all that goodness a creature can be made capable of; the love of God will be exceedingly aggravated, and the excellency of it shine with a more dazzling brightness. If God had given or parted with that for man that should cost him nothing, there had wanted that particular to aggravate his love, though otherwise it might be exceedingly great, and our happiness no less; but, beloved, when he shall be at so much charge, as to part with him that is so dear unto him, the Son of his love, in whom his soul delighteth; and when, to make man partaker of all that love, he was content to pay so dear, that his only Son should be made an offering for sin, and be made subject unto death, even the most accursed death of the cross, that they that be afar off might be made nigh; that God, I say, should part with his own Son, and that upon such hard terms of a bitter and an accursed death; this sets out his love in an inconceivable manner, beyond parallel, nay, beyond the reach of finite capacities.

The apostle, {endeavoring to set out this love of God to men} tells us, that no man can be found that hath laid down his life for a righteous man; for a good man, {saith he,} peradventure some men may dare to die; but herein hath God commended his love to us, that "while we were yet sinners; Christ died for us." {Rom.5:7,8} Here is a commendation of love indeed, beyond all that ever the world expressed; "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." {Jn.15:13} But, if you consider, what friend this is that Christ laid down his life for, you will say indeed, no greater love than this can there be, for that friend was an enemy, till that life was laid down; this, I say, is admirable love, upon which the apostle, in Rom.8:32, speaks excellently, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" As if he had said, what simplicity is it for any man to think, that any should be so precious in the eyes of God, for the manifestation of his love, as his Son; or that anything should be too dear to bestow upon us, seeing he did not stick to give him? As other things are but toys in comparison of his Son, so the gift of his Son, especially to die for man, was a most high expression

of love; yet it is a far higher expression of it, that Christ should bear the sins of man, than that he should be given to die for them; for, for Christ to die for them, comes far short of his bearing their sins. Affliction is not contrary to the nature of God; God can smile upon persons, when they are under the greatest contempt that may be; he can delight, and please himself with them in that condition; but where he charges any sin, he abhors. And some may think it strange, that such a poor sinful thing as man, should have such gladness of spirit in the midst of tribulations, as Paul and Silas, to sing for joy in prison. It is a wonderful thing that sinful men should have such gladness of heart when under afflictions; and yet that the innocent Son of God should be in such distress. What is the reason of it? Had not Christ more power to bear the rod, than poor weak man? Why then was not he as joyful under afflictions as weak frail man? He was so faint, as to sweat drops of blood, and to roar in the anguish of his soul, and cry out in the bitterness of his spirit; whereas poor sinning man leaps for joy, and sings for gladness of heart, as our martyrs have done in the fire. The reason is this, they that thus sang for joy, had the discharge of all their sins; they saw that God in Christ was reconciled, and imputed no transgressions unto them. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" {Prov.18:14} If sin lie as a sting wounding the spirit of a man, this is insupportable; none can go away under it lightly and merrily; but if it be taken away, the spirit of man may be sustained. They that had such joy and gladness, their sins were done away. "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}

But you will say, while everyone that lives godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, how shall they obtain such joy and gladness?

They are the ransomed of the Lord. What is that? they are ransomed from their sins; a Saviour is come that saves them from them; so that they may be full of joy, though they meet with tribulations; but, as for Christ, the Lord is pleased to lay iniquity upon him, though he take it from them. And as Christ did bear their iniquities, so he was fain to stoop; his spirit was wounded more than others, that did not suffer for sin

as he did, and had nothing like the strength that he had.

This now must needs commend the love of God to men, that while they, who deserved wrath, are in rest and peace, Christ not only bears their afflictions, but their very sins; that God should not only expose his Son to the rod, but put him into a posture of wrath; for putting him into a posture of bearing sin, must needs put him into a posture of bearing wrath; this heightens the love. It is a great and high expression of love to adopt a stranger, and make him co-heir with an only son. If one that hath but one son, and that a beloved son, do this, he shall be a mirror to the world; if he take in a stranger, a thief and murderer, to divide the inheritance between his son and him. But beloved, for God not only to take in traitors and thieves, to be co-heirs with his own Son; but also lay the felony, murders, and treasons of such, upon him, and execute him for this, that they may be the sons of God; this, I say, is astonishing love, whereunto there is never a parallel in all the world. Had not the Lord laid iniquity upon his Son, making him, as it were, abhorred for a time, this love of his to men, in the utmost extent of it, had never been expressed.

The dearer the things are that a man will bestow upon his friend, the greater is his love to him. When David would express his love towards God, though Araunah the Jebusite, offered him all things gratis for sacrifice, yet he answered, I will not "offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing;" {II Sam.24:24;} hence he showed his love to God, in that he did not stick to be at charge for him; so the more the Lord is at cost, and charge for his people, the more his love appears unto them. Now, what charge could he be at greater, to show his love to them, than to lay iniquity itself upon Christ? If a man were able to convert his body and soul into the nature of a toad, or any vile thing, to save a galley-slave from hanging; he cannot express so much love in it, as the Lord expressed in making his Son to be sin for us. Every creature of God is good; toads and poison, that make the heart of a man to rise and loath them so much, as they are creatures of God, are good; but sin, as it is no creature of God, so there is nothing ugly and loathsome but that in his eyes. Now that God should clothe his Son with that which is so abominable in his eye, to save sinners, that could not be saved but

by his being made sin for them; this commends the love of God to be rare and admirable, that it cannot be fathomed, the depth thereof being bottomless and unsearchable.

The love of God in making his Son to be sin that you may be sons, as it is expressed to you in the word of grace, that you may the more easily behold the riches and excellency of it; so he is also pleased to set it out in his feast of fat things, the Lord's supper; there you may see the riches of it, and behold in this visible gospel, in breaking the bread, this Son broken for you, and in pouring out the wine, the shedding of his blood and life for you; all which is there held forth; and the Lord himself takes notice of such the apparent and proper excellency of his own love in giving Christ to be sin, that in the gospel, though there be no other feast, yet he would have this feast to be as a testimony of it; therefore he saith, "do it in remembrance of me;" and that "it shows the death of Christ till he come," saith the apostle. It is so great, that it never must be forgotten; this is the prime end of the Lord's supper, the Lord looked principally at this, in instituting this last supper, even the keeping in remembrance the death of his Son. You shall find it so, that seeing it is so great a love, that there is none like it, there should be a feasting to the commemoration of it; that so the greatness of it may be fastened in our hearts, and we may be so much the more to the glory of that grace that did not disdain to lay our iniquities upon his only Son, that we might be discharged from them. To him therefore be the praise.

27 The Blood Of Christ Alone Cleanseth Our Sins

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

To pass by things formerly delivered, the present subject in hand is, the Lord hath laid our iniquities upon him, he hath singled out Christ above all the world, to lay them on him. The main thing that we are to consider upon this is to declare what ends there may be answerable to such an unparalleled work as this. Of all that ever the Lord did, there was never such a marvellous work as this done by him, as to make Christ the sin of men; it was the greatest work he ever did, and therefore, certainly, hath the greatest ends.

1. He laid our iniquities upon Christ, as I have

showed you, that so he might lay help upon one that is mighty.

2. To the end he might satisfy himself to his own content.

3. That he might satisfy Christ's great longings.

4. To show unto the world, especially his own people, the exceeding horrid loathsomeness of sin.

5. That he might commend to his people the unsearchableness of his love. There are other remarkable and useful ends, for which the Lord did this; as, that he might purify and cleanse his own people, in such a manner, that they may be comely and amiable in his eye; that he might take pleasure in them, and show the fondness {if I may so speak} of his love unto them, and make them his very familiar and bosom friends.

I beseech you, consider it well, it is impossible that any creature, and man especially, should have such beauty and comeliness in him, that God should take delight in him, but by laying of their iniquities upon Christ. "He putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" {Job 15:15,16}

Seeing then there is in man such filthiness, how can God take pleasure in him, whilst he is thus abominable? Now it is by iniquity he is become thus filthy, loathsome, and abominable; till sin, therefore, be taken away, he cannot appear clean and comely; this is further evidenced in Eph.5:25-27. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish;" that is, he gave himself in the room of it, to stand in its place and stead; he gave himself to be sin for it, to be that which the church was before of itself; but what was his end that he drove at in all this? Namely, "to present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

So that the end of Christ's becoming sin, and bearing the sins of men, was to make them, who by nature were filthy, clean and pure, without spot or wrinkle. Had the Lord laid the iniquities of his own people any where but upon Christ alone, his church would still

have remained filthy; none else could have so cleansed them, but that still there would have remained some spot; they should not have been completely holy and without blame. Beloved, it is a vain conceit, and smells too much of exalting in the creature, to think that God hath laid the iniquities of his people upon their performances, that they should take them away from them, and wash out the filthiness they are besmeared with, and so make them lovely in God's sight. As for such as are of this opinion, I must tell them, that it is an accursed sin, and exceeding derogatory to God's glory and redemption by Jesus Christ. Suppose a man hath committed a sin; to get himself cleared, say some, let him go and humble himself, fast, pray, mourn, weep, and repent, and then he shall have a discharge presently; but let me speak freely unto you, all your performances, fastings, prayers, and tears, are never able to present you without spot or wrinkle before God; but when all is done, there will be spots and wrinkles still; there will be some sin lying upon the conscience that hath strength and life in it; nay, if I should say, there will be more spots and wrinkles than there were before, I should but say the truth. Suppose a man's face were full of spots of dirt, and this man should go to a nasty channel to wash his face with dirty water; will his face be cleaner, after he hath so washed? Will it not rather be more dirty than it was? Surely, none can imagine that thereby it will become altogether clean; nay, will it not be made altogether filthy with such filthy water?

But some may be ready to say, why will you call the righteousness of men, their performances, prayers, tears, fastings, and mournings, but channel-water to wash away sins?

I answer, beloved, I may, I will call them so; the prophet Isaiah calls them worse, in Isa.64:6, "but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The prophet makes no exception at all; he doth not say that some, but all our righteousnesses; take it in the largest extent, be it what it will, it is no matter what it is, it is no better than a menstruous cloth; the best righteousness, meaning not only the prayers, tears, fastings and performances of wicked men, men that are not renewed and sanctified, are filthy and menstruous things; but our righteousness, the righteousness of the

best of us, yea, even of the prophet himself; nay, all our righteousnesses are filthy, and full of the highest kind of filthiness.

Also that which the apostle speaks, Phil.3:6, is full to this purpose, where he saith expressly of himself, "that concerning the righteousness of the law he was blameless;" but mark what follows immediately; "but, {saith he,} what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

But it may be objected by some, that he here speaks of his blamelessness before his calling, and not of his righteousness after it, and therefore this text serves not the purpose.

But mark what he saith afterwards, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." {vs.8} Where he speaks of the esteem he had of his own righteousness, even after his conversion; he accounted that to be but dung, and desired not to be found in it; for herein he comprehendeth everything, save only the righteousness of God by faith.

Mistake me not, beloved, it is not our tears and humiliation that can fetch out one, even the least stain in the heart of any person; the best tears in the world are but muddy, and full of sinfulness; for if there be no filthiness in your tears, then there is no need of Christ; but if there be filthiness in them, then how can that which is filthy make clean from filthiness?

Beloved, mistake me not, I do not absolutely say, that tears, considered in their own nature, are filthy; but that as they are shed by us, there is so much filthiness in them as to besmear a clean face; and, if so, then certainly they are not able to wash and make clean a dirty one. Suppose thou hast sinned, and also hast sighed and poured out thy soul in tears before the Lord, thereby to be cleansed of thy sin; I ask thee this question, is there not more filthiness added to thy former sin; and is not there need of something to wash away the sinfulness of these tears? But suppose there might be some tears that have not pollution in them, yet in all this thou hast done but thy duty; herein thou deserves nothing at all at God's hands for the taking

away of former sins.

But, beloved, there is so much filthiness in the best of tears, that if thou wast clear from the charge of any sin before; if thou hadst done thy duty without making any addition to former sins, yet the very failing in thy tears is enough to undo thee for ever, and to make thee loathsome and hateful in the eyes of God; so far are they from making thee clean from sin; so that if the Lord should have laid iniquity upon performances, to be carried away by them, instead of making the performers clean, they would have made them but more filthy than they were before. No, no, beloved, it is only "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which cleanseth us from all sin." {I Jn.1:7} I say, in the sight of God, that we might be presented clean and spotless before him. The Lord hath set open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness for you to wash in, and be purged from them, even the blood of his Son; and there is no other that can do it.

It was the mistake of Naaman the Syrian, when he thought that the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were as useful, and had as much virtue in them to cleanse the leprosy, and take it away, as the waters of Jordan. {II Kings 5:11,12} That which God hath given a cleansing and purifying nature unto, to cleanse a leprous soul from sin, is nothing else but the blood of Christ.

When a man seeth another labouring by fasting, and prayer, and tears, one would think that that should make him clean; but all the tears in the world are not able to do it. God hath not appointed our services and performances, our fasting, prayers, and tears, to make clean the heart, he hath appointed and ordained the waters of the sanctuary, the blood of Christ alone, to do it; and nothing else but that can do it. "Now ye are clean {saith our Saviour to his disciples} through the word which I have spoken unto you." {Jn.15:3} What word was that which he speaking, made them clean? It was this, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25} This is that which must make a person perfect before the Lord, the blood of Christ believed on. This was that the apostle desired to be found in, namely, Christ, not having his own righteousness upon him; well knowing there was no other way to become clean and accepted of God. In Is.1:16, the Lord proposes this course to his people.

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Where note, first, there must be washing made, a making clean, before there can be coming to God; there can be no communion with him until a soul be cleansed; and whereas, many are apt to think their own performances will wash and make them clean, it is but a vain conceit; for {saith God} "I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." {Ez.36:25-27} This is the tenure of the New Covenant, so that there shall be no more any ground of difference, nor breach between you and me. Again, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25} But how doth he this? Only, as I said before, by the blood of Jesus Christ, as you have it in that observable place, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." "Behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk." {Ez.16:6, 8-10} It is therefore a high presumption for the creature to take that upon himself, which is peculiar to God; he only cleanseth men, and that only by the blood of Christ; it is that which makes them clean and pure in his sight. It is a thing of infinite concern to us that God should lay our iniquity upon Christ, to make us a clean people for himself; for he is of infinite purity, that he

cannot endure that person where the least spot of sin is found; he must for ever loath and detest him. It is the mistake of some that God should bear with some, and not with other sins; this is to alter, and to destroy his justice, and so him, himself, to maintain that he bears with the sins of infirmity, small and trivial, but not with scandalous sins. God abhors infirmities, as well as enormities; and if Christ by his blood doth not cleanse a man as well from the one, as the other, they will cause God to spew such a person out of his mouth. David saith, "for thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity." {Ps.5:4,5} There cannot be any "communion between light and darkness." {II Cor.6:14} If there be darkness in men, there cannot be communion with God, the Father of lights; if there be the least sin in men in his sight, un-discharged, there can be no coming to him, nor thinking of him with comfort, until that be taken away by Christ; and therefore in Hos.14:2, you see what course the church takes, that she may be delightful in the eyes of God, "take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously;" mark it well, there must be a taking away of all iniquity, before there can be a receiving graciously. And then, from this occasion, is offered, what follows, the calves of the lips, that is, the praising of the name of the Lord; "so will we render the calves of our lips." The church doth not take upon herself the business of taking away iniquity, but commits it to the Lord; so that cleansing of the soul from sin, is only his work, and he must take all our iniquities from us, before he delights in us, that we may be received graciously, be dandled upon his knees. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded;" and then "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." {James 4:8}

There is no coming near to God, while sin is in the hearts and hands of men; there is no drawing nigh of him to us, so long as there is any filthiness upon us. Now beloved, would you be a clean people, that the Lord may delight in to have fellowship, and make his abode with? Know that you can never be made thus clean by your own doings; it is the blood of Christ must do it. It is true indeed, that doth not take away the actual inhabitation, and doing of sin in this life, but it takes away the filthiness of it out of God's sight; so that, though we sin, the filthiness of it is taken away

by it from God's eye, that he delights in us. Christ's bearing iniquity carries away all the distastefulness of sin; he hath taken away everything in it, that might occasion discontent between God and us, and by this means God comes to take pleasure in us. In regard of the filthiness of our sin, we should have been far from God, {as we are considered in our natural estate without him,} had not Christ taken and washed it away in his blood. Christ's coming into the world, would have been in vain, if not to take away sinfulness itself. Sin, where it is, is the most loathsome thing to the Lord that can be, and makes the person so; but the coming of Christ into the world, and bearing of sin, carries away all loathsomeness of it in men, and by this means the Lord comes to have pleasure in them; which he could never have done, if there had remained any of the loathsomeness of sin in them.

Now nothing takes it away, but the blood of Christ, that we may see herein the exceeding displeasure of God against it. The truth is, beloved, the breath of man stinks so abominably in the nostrils of God, that he cannot abide him; wherefore our Saviour hath provided so great a quantity of incense that takes away the evil scent of sin, and the Lord's displeasure. It is in this case with him, as it is with a mother sometimes; when she washes the face of her children; if the face of the child be washed, she will kiss it; but if it be dirty, she will not touch it; so if the face of a person be clean washed from sin, the Lord will kiss him; but if not, there is no coming near him. In Mal.4:2, the prophet tells us of the Sun of Righteousness that shall arise with healing in his wings. You know that it is only the sun in the firmament, that makes the air, in which we live, clean and purges it from fogs, and draws up to itself those gross and noxious vapours, and so makes it pure and wholesome for man to take pleasure in living in it. In the night and winter, the air is full of thick mists and gross vapours, which ascend up out of the earth, but when the sun ariseth, it draws them away. Certainly beloved, this is true spiritually of the Sun of Righteousness, and none but he; he exhales the impurity in which men live, and pollute themselves, and so takes away the sins of the world; only Christ can draw away the noxious vapours, the filth of sin, that men may have communion with the Lord, and live graciously and comfortably one with another, and not infect or be noisome to, or offend one another.

None but the Sun of Righteousness can draw the corrupt vapours out of our hearts, that God himself may not be offended with us, but come near unto us, and delight in us; and till then, he will not, nor have any fellowship with us. It is said that God knoweth the wicked afar off. {Psalm 138:6} As it is with those that are infected with the plague, men will not come near them, be in the place where they are, or in the air where they breathe; so man being infected with the plague of sin, must be purged, and made clean and pure, that so God may not be offended with him, but may take so much pleasure in him, as to come near unto him, as Christ said to the spouse, "thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee;" mark the fruit of it, "thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." {Song 4:7-9}

When the people of God are all fair, and without spot, then God falls in love with them, I mean, in the expression of it; and the church saith, "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." {Song.1:2} All proceeds from hence, the church is all fair, and without spot, having no imperfection nor blemish at all in her; which can only come unto her by the comeliness of her husband.

Now do but consider seriously, and weigh in your thoughts, what a privilege of privileges this is, that iniquity is laid upon Christ. If anything else should have been set about this work, it would have left scatterings, nay all, or more behind; but Christ carries it away clean, "the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." {Jn.1:29} Christ, as I have often told you, is that scapegoat that carries them away into a land of forgetfulness, insomuch that God himself shall not remember them anymore. "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." {Jer.50:20} Christ carries them so away, that they are gone, and no notice taken of them.

God laid our iniquities upon Christ that his people might have strong consolation, and their hearts might not faint, nor be discouraged. Consider this especially, this very day, this fearful time; this is that which must lift up our hearts and heads in this very day of extremity, when people are at their wits end.

Whatever becomes of your outward carcasses, yet here is joy unspeakable and glorious, there is peace for you in Christ; this is that to which only is ascribed fulness of joy in scripture. Look into Isaiah 35:10, "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." I hope the Lord will, in this time of extremity, fasten this truth upon your spirits. I will give you a hint of the consolation that is hidden in this text; it may be, you may not apprehend it at first sight. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs, and with joy upon their heads;" consider what kind of joy it is, "everlasting joy;" joy that shall not fade, nor die; it shall have no end, ebbing and flowing; it may have of itself, but it shall never be abolished, nor vanish away; contrary to all other joys besides. In them there is an interruption, they are not everlasting; no other joys are of continuance; but the ransomed of the Lord shall have everlasting joy, that is, joy without mixture; sorrow there may be, but there shall be no occasion of sorrow any more.

But it may be you will object and say, who are these, and when shall it be? It will be in heaven, it cannot be here upon earth. Nay, but mark the time when the Lord says this joy shall be, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion with joy." There can be no joy till a man be the ransomed of the Lord. Suppose an inhabitant of this city is taken captive in the Turks gallies, he cannot return home, nor be joyful till he be ransomed, till the money for his ransom be paid down. Now the joy of God's people flows from hence, namely, the ransom that Christ hath paid down for them. You know what a ransom is, it is nothing else but when a person comes and lays down a sum of money to redeem one from under bondage, {under which he that is to be ransomed lives,} and gives full satisfaction to him, by whom he is thus held; and when the payment is made, and satisfaction given, the person is set at liberty. This it is to be ransomed; in this condition we were all of us slaves, and held in bondage under sin, hell, wrath, and the justice of God. Now Christ hath set us at liberty; we are the ransomed of the Lord for whom Christ hath satisfied God, and given him full content. God holds us no longer prisoners, he having borne our sins; and carried them away. Thus then are we discharged by Christ, and redeemed from bondage,

and brought unto Zion; and therefore, even now, we may return with songs, and with everlasting joy upon our heads. This Zion is not heaven, but the church of God upon earth; the truth is, as soon as the price is paid, men may begin to have fulness of joy; thereby they come to be discharged of all their debts; they are set at liberty, and then when God hath by his Spirit, given them to believe this, and by faith to see this in particular concerning themselves, then they return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. In Luke 2:10,11, you find the Lord sends an angel from heaven, on purpose, to disconsolate shepherds, upon this admirable message; and “the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Why, what is that, that should be such ground of joy unto them? “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Thus the words run, “a Saviour,” what is that? The Holy Ghost expounds it in Matt.1:21, “and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” So then this is glad tidings, when people can hear that Christ is come to save them from their sins; therefore, when our Saviour would cheer the poor man that came to him to be cured, though he did not come for, nor expect such glad tidings from him, yet Christ well knew what would most raise his heart, and therefore he applies that, as the best of cheer of all unto him; he saith not, “Be of good cheer,” for I will heal the infirmities of thy body; but “thy sins are forgiven thee.” {Matt.9:2} And indeed, this is that, that joys the hearts of the people of God.

So, Acts 13:38, 39. “Be it known unto you, {saith the apostle,} men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Well, what was the issue and fruit of all this? Mark it well, beloved; though the Jews grudged at this doctrine; and opposed it with might, yet in verse 48, you shall see how welcome this message was to the Gentiles. “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

You see the believing Gentiles received these tidings with gladness, and were filled with joy at the hearing of this doctrine; namely, the discharge of their

sins, that they were not imputed unto them, but fully forgiven them.

Now brethren, look upon the present time, you may see what sadness fills the hearts and faces of men, even of God’s own people; their lives are this day, as it were, in their hands; they are ready to sink, their spirits are ready to fail them; they look every hour when they shall be cut off by the sword; what bitterness is this wherein they are! What now will stay up? What, the hope that our lives and estates shall be spared? No, there is no certainty of that; but here is that which will do it, when all is lost and gone, and the worst is come, Christ hath all mine iniquity laid upon him; here is that which will fill your hearts with joy when other joys forsake you. God, in Christ, is become my friend; he is at peace with me, reconciled, and will be good unto me; and still you shalt have ground to say, “however it be, yet God is good to Israel, to them that are of a pure heart;” that is, have their hearts purified by the blood of Christ. You shall never have joy of heart and settledness of spirit, {especially in times of extremity,} but in this one truth, that God himself is reconciled unto you, that your sins are all blotted out, that you are the beloved of the Lord, that he hath not one sin to charge upon you, and that he will not deal in wrath with you. There is no bitterness of spirit, nor cause of any, in the worst afflictions and calamities that can come upon a person, if sin be taken away.

It is sin and only sin that makes affliction bitter and heavy to men; take away sin, and afflictions are flea-bitings; you will rejoice in them, trample on them, see the love of God embracing you in them, and carrying you through them. Look upon the apostles and disciples of our Lord, and consider how they underwent their afflictions and the carriage of their spirits in them; when Paul and Silas were whipped and covered with their own blood, and ready to perish with their stripes, yet they were filled with joy, and sang in prison. Why so; {may some say;} surely the reason was this, they saw the Lord, he smiled upon them, and embraced them in his arms, their sins being taken away from between God and them; and hence was their joy, else their afflictions would have sunk and swallowed them up.

O; beloved, come life, come death, if Christ be yours, if your iniquities be laid upon him, it is well with you; both life and death will be gain unto you;

even death itself shall turn to your advantage. Observe the resolution of Paul, who being assured that Christ was his, "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." {Phil.1:21} Neither life nor death could come amiss to him; it is no matter which, for whether I live or die, I am the Lord's; therefore, if death come, it shall be welcome, and if life be still spared, it shall be welcome. Upon this consideration, that Christ was his, in another place he saith, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him;" and therefore, he desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, that so he might have the full fruition of him, and enjoy the nearest communion with him. What is the reason that children tremble to come into the presence of their father, but because they are afraid to be beaten, thinking their father is displeased with them? If they knew that he were satisfied for all the faults that they had done, they would come cheerfully into his presence; even so a person will never come cheerfully into the presence of the Lord, till he knows he is pleased with him, and that his iniquities {that make variance} are taken away, and laid upon Christ. This is joy unspeakable and glorious!

The Lord hath laid the iniquities of his people upon Christ, that they may be able to serve the Lord more sincerely and freely, and more uninterruptedly and cheerfully.

{1} The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, that we might serve him with more sincerity; men commonly think the consideration of this to be the highway to make men careless in serving God; but there is no better way to draw men's spirits forth unto upright, sincere, and single-hearted service, than this. You know this principle is grounded in the heart of all men, that charity begins at home; every man seeks to serve himself first, and then, at leisure, he will serve another. As long as you apprehend your own turn is not yet served, your care shall be to serve yourselves; there will be no service done to God; he shall have none of you, but so far as therein you may serve yourselves, God must wait till your own turns be served. For example, suppose that you fast, pray, and mourn, or do any other religions service; if you apprehend your own turns are not yet served, there will be altogether a selfishness in the performance of these duties; selfish ends and motives shall be the loadstones, and they

shall draw up your spirits in them. When you labour by fasting, prayer, and seeking the Lord to prevail with him to take away his displeasure and wrath, and such judgments that are upon us, or hang over our heads, and to procure such good unto us, do you serve God or no? Do you not serve yourselves? Nay, you serve not God, but yourselves; when only yourselves put you upon the performance of the duty.

But you will say, my sins trouble me, I must fast and pray, to get them pardoned; except I repent, mourn, and humble myself I shall die in them; therefore I must repent, mourn, and do this and that to put away sins, "before I am gone from hence, and be no more seen;" that I may have my discharge from them.

I answer; beloved, it is true, that as long as men think that their sins are upon themselves, they cannot be at rest, but still the consideration of them must needs draw them out on these services, till some way be sought out to clear themselves of them. Where is now that sincerity and singleness of heart that a man ought to have, in the service of the Lord? If he could but once be resolved that all this business is already dispatched to his hands, then all this selfishness would quickly die; if he could but once receive this, that Christ hath so disposed of all his sins, and made an end of all transgression, that there need not be tears, prayers, fastings, and mournings to cleanse it away; then the doing of duties, for this end, would quickly end; then your end in them would be the glorifying of God; you would serve him sincerely, and see that your prayers, tears, fastings, and performances, were not appointed to rob him of his service, by serving yourselves, and Christ of his glory, by putting your services in the place of his, which only taketh away sin; but only to glorify God, and to show forth his goodness, from whom we expect these things, and to make use of them only as ordinances wherein the Lord hath promised to manifest himself to us; but while men eye themselves, and their own good in duties, they are their own servants; they cannot be said to serve God in them; but, when a man knoweth that the Lord hath perfectly saved him from his sins, then he is for God's glory, and his eye is upon that in all he doth; then he is the Lord's servant, and not his own, as saith the apostle, "for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

{Rom.14:8}

If, in duties, there be self-ends, you only live to yourselves, not to God at all in them. Now, you would never live to yourselves, if you did but see all finished by Christ, that there can be nothing added to what he hath done for your perfect good and happiness; you would then mind nothing else, but to set forth the glory of that grace that hath so freely saved you; and show unto the world that you are the servants of the Lord, and at his beck, and that you are directly for him in all you do; it is only this that puts men upon sincere service.

{2} The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ that we might serve him more uninterruptedly. What is it which causeth men to make so many stops in performance of duties? One while the soul is upon the wing in it, another while it is like a stock. The ground is this; one while he is persuaded his iniquities are forgiven him, and this makes him run with enthusiasm; another time he is in fears and doubts, his spirit is troubled; he fears his sins lie still upon him, and that he shall be called to account for them; he looks upon God as wrathful and displeased with him for them; now he is bound up, he cannot stir one foot; but because he conceives that God frowns upon him, he dares not come near him. Now beloved, what an interruption is here in duty, while it goes thus with him? But if he had this assurance, that all his iniquities are laid upon Christ, and he discharged for ever, he would go on without let or stop, then though sin be committed through infirmity, yet if he be once persuaded, that God will not charge it; and though he be under afflictions, yet he fears no punishment; nor can affliction come upon him, as the desert of sin, seeing he knows it was all laid upon Christ; then he goeth on constantly and cheerfully; for he that hath Christ once, hath him as a buckler to bear off indignation; though he commits such and such a sin, he lies upon Christ as such, that can defend off every blow, that none of this sin, or the desert of it, wounds and hurts him; so that he shall be as able to work, in duties, as ever he was before sin was committed; he is strong and active, and ready to all that God calls him unto, as before. So far as he can find every stroke of God, for his sins, did light upon Christ, so far he shall be fresh, run, and make haste; and hence it comes to pass, that "they that trust in the Lord, shall mount upon wings like eagles, shall run

and not be weary, walk and not faint;" because there is nothing, now remains to tire and weary them, to wound and take off their spirits and their strength.

{3} The consideration of iniquity being laid upon Christ, enlarges the spirit in service; he that hath the strength of the Lord to serve by, can serve without fear; he is more able, and doth things far better than he that hath his own strength only. If Christ is yours, God is yours, all things are yours, and his power is yours, engaged to your help. Oh; then, what a mighty strength must you have, in comparison of those that walk in their own strength, and do duty by it! But if you be not resolved that your iniquities are laid upon Christ, you cannot be resolved that he is yours; and then you cannot go forth in his strength; and then how weak must you needs be in all your services, when you have but your own strength to carry you on! No Spirit, God, nor Christ, to assist you! But when you have him, his Spirit, and power, how mightily shall your spirits be eased in prayer, and in all duties of religion! How strong are you in the Lord, and the power of his might, to resist the devil and all temptations! But, if the strength of Christ be wanting, alas; how exceeding weak are we to contend against such mighty enemies that we are continually exercised with! How unable to resist the least temptation! Now, if your iniquities be laid upon Christ, then his strength is yours, and, through that interest you have in him, you may boldly and cheerfully go on in the power of his might.

The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ that at the appointed time of the Father, the people of the Lord might enjoy the promised inheritance. Beloved, there is no soul under heaven, shall see it; there is no entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, the inheritance of the saints in light, but by laying our iniquities upon Christ; this is a certain truth; heaven and earth shall pass away, before it shall be nullified; that "no unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." {Rev.21:27}

Beloved, you must not expect to live a moment in this world, wherein some sin will not be committed by you; and what can take it away, but it being laid upon Christ? Let me tell you, that if God had not laid the iniquities of men upon Christ, never a soul had entered into heaven; none could have confidence at death, that they should enter there; for there is no refuge to fly to, no hope of drawing near to the everlasting kingdom,

till the Lord Jesus Christ cleanse you thoroughly from all sin and filthiness, and so you appear before God perfect in holiness; it is his white raiment that makes persons worthy to walk with him in light; wherefore the Lord counsels the church of Laodicea, to buy of him white raiment, that her nakedness might not appear in the sight of God himself. It is true, indeed, the Lord is pleased to make mention of the good things that his people have done, at the day of judgment, "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; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink, &c." {Matt.25:34, 35} But observe, not any of all this gives entrance into everlasting glory, no, not in any one clause; though he makes mention of what good things the people of God did here, yet this kingdom is not attributed unto that good, no, not so much as prepared for it; for before you had done any good at all, the kingdom was prepared, not for the good you should do, but of the Father's good will and pleasure, from the beginning; before ever thou wast born, and couldest do anything, he provided a mansion for thee, only out of mere grace and loving kindness; now, beloved, all this considered should stir you up to cry out as the martyr did, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

Oh, forget everything that seems worthy in you, or done by you; and let all your triumphing and glorying be in the free grace of God, in Christ, and look upon yourselves only in that and all things coming to you, receive as flowing from that fountain only; and if you have more ability than others in doing, let it not come into your thoughts as an inducement to think better of yourselves, as if you were more accepted of God, or pleasing in his sight. Are you sinful, in respect of the prevalency of corruptions? Are the temptations of Satan mighty? Think not that you are worse or less than others; for iniquity shall not part Christ and thee, if thou be once joined to him. Be not discouraged, Christ is more ready to receive thee, than thou art to fly to him; come to him, therefore, and cast your conditions upon him; for the greatest of sinners, usually, are the persons that partake of the greatest mercies; publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while the Zealots and Pharisees are shut out. If you once close with the Lord, in the freeness of his grace, and

cast your souls upon this rock of your salvation, the Lord Christ, you are past all danger; venture thy soul therefore upon him; he himself shall miscarry, when thy soul shall miscarry that is committed unto him.

28 Christ Is Ours Before We Have Gracious Qualifications

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

You have heard before, beloved, many notable evangelical truths thrust together in a narrow room, in these few words; the chief mysteries of the gospel being set together, as thick as possibly they can stand in this compass.

1. It is iniquity that the Lord hath laid upon Christ.
 2. Our iniquity. 3. It was the Lord himself that did it.
 4. He hath done it already, as it is not now to be done.
 5. It was laid upon Christ, and none other; it was the most marvelous work that ever the Lord did, that he should not only wound him for sin, but make him sin itself; and indeed, he could not compass his own great ends, except he had laid it on him; and all the world would have sunk under it, save Christ only. Had God laid the creature as a foundation to bear the weight of sin, it would have been dashed to pieces under it, and then the word of God must have fallen to the ground; he should but have built castles in the air, to lay the weight of sin upon the creature; therefore he must have a rock, a foundation of stone, that let the weight be what it will, it may be able to bear it; and that for all those nine ends which we have formerly insisted upon.

There remains one considerable and remarkable truth, and that which indeed those, whose spirits are any whit enlightened, thirst most to be resolved and satisfied in; and that is, whose iniquities they are, that the Lord hath laid upon Christ.

All this while, you will say, here is but a general discourse of the iniquities of men being laid upon Christ, what is that to me? Many men's iniquities may be laid upon him, and I never the better, if mine be not. When a reprieve comes to a jail, what is this to such or such a thief that hath no interest in it? He dies as if there were none at all; so people's spirits, who out of self-love, hearing of a gracious grant, look what share they have in it, are presently asking, as the

disciples in another case, "Lord, is it I?" or, "is it I?" Are mine iniquities laid upon Christ? Now this text will give us some hint, whereby men may know they have a share in this matter. I know this is commonly the greatest outcry in the world; I fear this is not my case, that mine iniquities are all laid upon Christ; therefore, beloved, I think it would be labour well worth the time, if it were possible, to clear to particular persons, how they might conclude to themselves from this text; for here may be gathered a strong conclusion of their own portion in this grant, or grace. Beloved, though it be the greatest query any heart {once made sensible of its own condition} can make, how they may know their own interest in this grace of God; yet, there is nothing wherein persons remain so unsettled, as in this question; how may I be assured my part lies here? The apostle speaks of the "full assurance of faith," and of "coming to the throne of grace with boldness." I am afraid that gross heart-clogging doctrine, that men cannot be assured of their own salvation, is too much to be found in the world; not one man among a thousand can say, all my iniquities are laid upon Christ; it will be therefore an admirable piece of work, most acceptable to the church and children of God, and a thing bringing most glory to God, and comfort to his people, to undeceive them, who by reason of mistaking the way of their own interest, after a long labour after it, are further to seek of the knowledge of it, than when they first began.

As I conceive, that wherewith so many stumble, when they first enter into this great case, whether they have interest in this grace, or not, lieth in the trial of their estate; they lay down a ground work, supposing it to be undeniable, which indeed, is a deceiving of persons in their search; namely, that there must be found in them, who have propriety in this grace by Christ, some previous dispositions and qualifications of spirit, as integrity, sound repentance, conversion, and other fruits of sanctification. Now they lay it down for a position with themselves, that till they can find themselves sanctified, and those graces of sanctification, by which they try themselves, in themselves, they conclude, none of this grace of Christ belongs to them; so that they fall upon some graces, such as they call out to themselves, and then they try whether they have them in them, and what proportion they find them in them; and if their hearts

do not answer to these they have set before them, they presently conclude, that no grace of Christ belongs to them.

Now, beloved, my heart's desire is, that in this great business, wherein so great comfort of God's people consist, men may be built upon clear and proper grounds; that so they being undeceived, may find out the way which the Lord useth whenever he giveth satisfaction to his people, of their interest in Christ.

You may find it as the Lord hath chalked it out to you; and this, I am sure, a man may dare to lay hold upon his own proper portion in this grace and grant of the Lord, not only whenever the Lord is pleased to hold it out, but also upon those terms he holds it out, if you will call them so. Sure, I say, as the conditions are by which they may claim interest in Christ, those being granted and found, the soul may close with the grace of God. Now all the difficulty lieth in this, whether the Lord propounds to men, that there shall be no part in Christ, nor grace by him, till they find their spirits, souls, and bodies, sanctified throughout; or whether the Lord holds out the grant of pardon of sin, without such previous qualifications, or no; there lieth the greatest scruple in this particular.

I doubt not but to ingenuous spirits, I shall make it clear, that the grace of laying iniquity upon Christ, is applicable by forgiveness of sins, to persons before ever there be the least measure of sanctification in works at all; and being applied by the Lord's own grant, there may be safety and security in applying the same by faith, without regard or respect, to sanctification, in any measure whatsoever.

But you will say, peradventure, the text seems to make against it, rather than for it; for it saith, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all;" from whence you will argue thus; "us" doth take in the prophet himself, with the rest of whom he spake; and the prophet was renewed and sanctified when he spake thus, and so may all the rest be, of whom he spake, and that therefore, this grace of laying iniquity upon Christ, is applied unto persons when they are sanctified.

For answer to this, though the prophet speaks of himself as one interested in this; yet it will be clear, {whether he were sanctified, or no, it is not material,} that he had no reference to himself as a sanctified person; namely, that this grace was applied to him as

such.

That this may be clear to you, note the foregoing words; for there you see, that he is so far from having regard to sanctification of spirit, before laying of iniquities upon Christ, that he takes into consideration no other condition but the most wretched, sinful, and forlorn estate, creatures can be brought into; mark the words well, "All we, {there he brings in himself,} like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." Now the question is, whose iniquities they are, that are laid upon Christ; the text saith, "the iniquities of us." Who are the us? It is us "that like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way." Now what is it for sheep to go astray? Sheep, you know, are then straggling, when they are from their shepherd; it is not being now in one pasture, and then in another, that argues a sheep's going astray; for if the shepherd be with them in this pasture now, and in another tomorrow, still they are not gone astray. Sheep are then astray, when they are from their shepherd, and those pastures that he hath appointed for them; so that for men to go astray, is to go from God their shepherd. "The Lord is my shepherd," saith David, Psalm 23:1. Mark now, the iniquities of these persons are laid upon Christ, who strayed in that they departed from the living God; now what renewed qualifications can be possibly imagined to be in a man, that is departed from God? "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." {Jer.2:13} There is a departing from God, a great evil it is indeed; and you shall see there is an impossibility of believing when there is such a departing from the living God. "Take heed, {saith the apostle,} lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." {Heb.3:12} It is most certainly true that there is an evil heart of unbelief, while there is a departing from God. Faith, you know, is the first of all gifts God bestows upon a soul, and all other graces, as they call them, follow that faith that Christ gives to men; so that, if there be not a believing, there can be no graces of sanctification at all. But while men are departing from the living God, there remains in them an evil heart of unbelief; and yet though there be a departing from God, and straying like lost sheep,

the iniquities of these persons, considered as departed from God, are laid upon Christ. "We turned every one to his own way." Here he sets out fully, the self-willedness and extravagancies of persons; what is it for a man to turn to his own way, but to proceed on, in his purpose alone, without regard to what God saith to him? The Israelites, when they lived without a king, "every man did that which seemed good in his own eyes." This then is the true meaning of the word, {turned to his own way,} that men do what is good in their own eyes; and yet it is the iniquities of these men, that have thus turned to their own ways, which the Lord hath laid upon Christ. From whence I lay down this conclusion, that this grace of the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ, is certainly applied unto persons, even while they are departed from the living God, are lost sheep, are turned every one to their own ways, before they have amended them.

And because this is a truth that is so hardly received, seeming to give such way to looseness, as some most unjustly and wickedly calumniate the truth; seeing it finds so little favour, though it contains so many great and inestimable comforts; I shall endeavour, through the Spirit of Christ, to bring such manifest scriptures, and so undeniable, to clear the truth of it, that he must fight against his own knowledge that opposeth it; namely, that the laying of iniquity of any person upon Christ, is before they can find the least degree of gracious qualifications, or sanctification wrought in them; and therefore it is a most fearful injury unto a man's self, and a forsaking a man's own mercy to conclude, that there is no grace for me, because I cannot find such and such things in me, as universal obedience, sanctification, and the like.

You shall plainly see when grace is applied unto persons, and of what conditions, by that of the psalmist, "thou hast ascended on high, {it is spoken of Christ, for so the apostle explains it,} thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." {Ps.68:18} Mark well, "even for the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them." Who is that them? "The rebellious;" and how comes the Lord God to dwell amongst them? "Thou hast received gifts for them." But beloved, this you must know, that there is no evil dwells with God; he stands fully off, and separate from all iniquity. "Your iniquities, {saith the

prophet,} separate between you and your God;” there must be a taking away of iniquity, before there can be a receiving graciously, as you have it. “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.” {Hos.14:1,2} As long as there is iniquity to be charged upon any person, there is no receiving graciously; but the Lord stands afar off, there is no dwelling of God with wickedness; therefore, seeing he cannot dwell with men where iniquity is, Christ received gifts for men that he might dwell among the rebellious. Now this seems to be a paradox, and indeed all the doctrines of the gospel are paradoxes to carnal men. How can these words stand together, that the Lord dwells among rebellious persons, and yet cannot dwell with wickedness? Is there not wickedness in rebellion? I answer, beloved, there is wickedness in rebellion, in the nature of it; but, saith the text, “thou hast received gifts,” that the Lord God may dwell among such rebellious ones; as much as to say; though this, or that person, actually rebel from time to time, yet for all this, Christ hath so received gifts of the Father, that the loathsomeness and hatefulness of this rebellion is laid upon the back of Christ; he bears the sin, as well as the blame and shame of that iniquity and rebellion; so that though this or that person do act it, yet all the hatefulness thereof is laid upon Christ, and God satisfied himself in him; and that is the only reason why it comes to pass that God can dwell with them that act the thing, because all the filthiness and hatefulness of it is transacted from them upon Christ.⁹⁰ But for

90 Not that the sins of God’s elect, in a state of unregeneracy, are not sins; or, that they are not guilty of sin; nor that they are not deserving of the wrath of God, for they are “children of wrath even as others;” or that they are not under the same sentence of condemnation; but then, as the elect of God, as they are redeemed by Christ, and as he has had their sins laid upon him, and made full satisfaction for them, as full as for the saints in heaven, no more charge can be brought against them by the justice of God, than against these; nor is it possible that they should come into a state of actual condemnation and death, or suffer the vindictive wrath and justice of God. It should be observed, that this is said in opposition to some, who thought elect persons in a damnable state, before calling; that judgment is come upon them to condemnation sententially, as they are considered in Adam, and transgressors of the law, is owned; and that their sins are deserving of eternal damnation will be granted; but that there is a possibility of their being damned, must be denied; or the election of God would not stand sure; redemption, by Christ, would be in vain, and his satisfaction must be void; they are as secure from damnation before calling, as after, though they have not the knowledge, sense, and comfort of it until they believe. The Doctor says

the person himself, you see plainly he is considered here in no other condition, but as an actor of rebellion itself; and the Lord is come to dwell with him, even while he is a rebellious person. Now I would fain know, what previous qualification, renovation and sanctification, can possibly be supposed, or imagined, in persons considered only as rebels; for here persons are considered under no other notion. The Holy Ghost doth not say, that the Lord takes rebellious persons, and fits, and prepares them by sanctification, and then, when they are fitted, he will come and dwell with them; but even then, without any intermission, even while they are rebellions, Christ hath received gifts for them, that the Lord God may dwell among them.

And if this be not clear enough, look into that golden passage, never enough to be repeated, and resorted unto, for the sweetness lying in it, namely, Ezek.16:3-10. Consider there, I pray you, of what case or condition the Lord speaks of that people; “thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all; none eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.” Mark what kind of filthiness the Lord expresses this to be; namely, such as no eye could pity the person that was defiled with it, to do any of these things to it; his filthiness was such that made all to abhor him, as not so much as to come near, and do any good to him. Here was his estate; now what did the Lord do in that condition? “When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live;” not when I saw thee washed from thy blood, cleansed and fitted for me by repentance, and newness of life, &c., then, I had pity on thee; no, but “when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, then I said unto thee, live.” There was not the least distance of time between the pollution, and the life the Lord communicated.

But some will say, where the Lord gives sanctification, there he gives life, and then he gives

not, that a man, living and dying in such a state shall be saved; but that an elect shall be saved, who shall believe, be changed in heart and life. See the Doctor’s own answer, to the charge against him for these words, in his Sermon on Canticles 4:7. Gill.

Christ, and there fixes his love, doth he not?

No, saith the prophet, but “the time of thy blood was the time of my love.” And what doth God do in this time? “I spread my skirt over thee;” even then in the time of blood; for what need were there of a skirt to cover, if there were no filthiness to be covered? So that you see the time of love was a time of blood. He doth not take away this blood by sanctification, and new qualifications and dispositions; but he takes it away from his own sight and charge first; and this he calls the spreading of a skirt over this person thus polluted. And is this all? No, he goeth further, “I spread my skirt over thee, and I sware unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee.” Mark how completely a person is possessed of all the privileges of Christ, the very covenant itself established upon him, and God is become his own, and all this in the time of blood. And how doth it appear, that he is actually, and really become God’s own, even at this time? From these words, “thy time was the time of love;” but it may be out of doubt, if you mark what follows, that there is no ground for men to think there should be sanctification, when God first enters into covenant; “I swore unto thee, and thou becamest mine; then washed I thee with water, and thoroughly washed away thy blood.” What, when there was something going before of sanctification, some previous qualification? No, no; but there was first entering into covenant, and God’s becoming their God, and then washing with water. With what water? The water of sanctification or justification? You will say, it may be, {as is generally conceived,} of sanctification; to me it seems, to be the washing of justification by the blood of Christ; for, saith the text, “I washed thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood.” Now we know that the best sanctification in the world doth not perfectly cleanse a person, therefore it must be washing of justification; but suppose it be the washing of sanctification, it is most plain that this is a fruit of a person’s interest in Christ, and follows his being actually in him, and doth not go before. “Then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood, and then I put ornaments upon thee,” as it follows; this is, after I had sworn unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee.

To clear this further, look into Isaiah 42:6, and you plainly see, that a person hath not only part in Christ, but possession of him, and all his privileges,

by imputation, before there be the least measure of sanctification. The words are these; “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, &c.” Here is a deed of gift; here, you see, Christ is made over to be the covenant of persons, even the covenant of God’s giving over himself. And what is that covenant? “I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.” This is the substance of the covenant; Christ is this covenant, and he himself is given over to men; as much as to say, in Christ I will become thy God; in him I will remember thy sins no more; this have I given in him to you. But when doth the Lord pass over this to men? When they are first renewed? When they first believe? Have they the knowledge of God, and of themselves, before he makes this deed of gift over to them? Mark what follows, and you shall see all the qualifications of sanctification must not only follow Christ given, but they are the very work of Christ himself, after he is given; “I will give thee for a covenant, to open the blind eyes;” see that the opening of the blind eyes of men, and the bringing of prisoners out of prison, is the main end for which Christ was given by God to be a covenant to men; and Christ himself is the means by which that end may be compassed.

Now, you know beloved, that though the end of things be first in intention, yet it is the last in execution; this being the end for which Christ was given to open blind eyes; and he, as the covenant, being the means by which they should be opened; it must follow, that the means must be existing, and present, to do the thing, before the things can be done by them. If a workman is to build a house, he must be prepared before the house can be built by him; you cannot build a house and the workman come afterwards; but he comes first, and then he builds the house. It is the Lord that sanctifies his people, opens their eyes, unshackles them, and brings them out of the bonds of sin, to run and not be weary, and to walk and not faint, in the way of God’s commandments; but God doth not renew and sanctify men, and then give Christ to them, being sanctified; but he gives Christ, and he being given, and present first, then he sanctifies them.

What qualifications can you find in blind and shackled persons, bound up under the bonds of Satan, even dead in trespasses and sins; seeing the first work that the Lord works upon any person, is to open the eyes to see him, and themselves? Now Christ must be present, because he is given to do the thing, before it can be done; all the world cannot do it without him, whether it be the opening of the eye of faith, or knowledge. If it be the eye of faith, Christ is said to be “the author and finisher” of it; and he must come and open the eyes of men to believe, before they can believe. If it be the eye of knowledge, we “must all be taught of God,” as we are in covenant with him, before ever we shall come to know God; for that is one part of his covenant, when he gives himself to be the God of people, and when he will remember their sins no more.

Our Saviour speaks as plainly himself as all the texts in scripture can, when he would point out to the Jews, for whom he died and became sin; “I came to save that which was lost.” What qualifications, I pray you, can you find in a lost person? He may be lost, you will say, but he may be renewed and sanctified for all that? No, saith Christ, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;” the meaning is, if a man will be holy, righteous, and sanctified, and will come to me afterwards; I came not to call such as are righteous already, but such as are not, even sinners. The apostle speaks the same in the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters to the Romans; namely, that the Lord gives Christ, and a portion in him, without regard to anything that a man doth. In the latter end of the third chapter, he disputed, at large, against all manner of works added to, or present with, a person to be justified, and then draws to a peremptory conclusion; “therefore I conclude, that a person is justified without the deeds of the law;” whereby he doth not only exclude any righteousness of ours, from having any operative power to concur in the laying of iniquity upon Christ, but excludes all manner of works men can do, to be present, and existent in persons, when God justifies them. He doth not mean only that he is justified without the concurrence of them to justification, but even without the being of them, and presence, in the person so to be justified; there is nothing to be done by man as a preparation to his justification. This he makes more plain in the next

verse; for he tells us there, that the circumcised and uncircumcised are both one with God in justifying them; it is no matter to him what they be, he justifieth the uncircumcision as well as the circumcision.

But you will say, what is it for a person to be considered as uncircumcised? Circumcision, you know, was the first act of God manifesting himself to the people of the Jews, by which he invited them into his church; and a person uncircumcised is considered as altogether in the estate in which he was born by nature. Now if circumcision itself be not a requisite to justification, then certainly, there is no foregoing work to come in; this being the first that is done; but the apostle makes it more plain in the beginning of the fourth chapter; for he tells us expressly, “if a man be justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God;” and again, “if it be of works, the reward is not of grace, but of debt.” You, whoever you are, that require previous works sanctification, or anything else, to come and show itself in you, that so you may apply the justification of Christ to you; do you not now bring in works, as that which must give you rest? If you bring them in to have such efficacy in them, that they must be there, or you can have no justification; is not here justification by works, and must you not account it a debt? When I am thus and thus qualified, then Christ must be mine; is not there a bringing something to God, that you may have your interest sealed? Is not there a bringing of works to him, to commend you to him?

But observe the words following, “not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” Mark, this is that which the apostle beats at namely, to show the dispositions and qualifications of men in their justification. God, saith he, justifieth men, not as they are working men, but as they are ungodly men; whoever thou art that wilt be a working person, and, as thou art one, wilt apply thy justification, know this, the apostle saith it is, “not to him that worketh.” Whosoever it be that will apply this justification, interest in Christ, and pardon of sin aright, must look upon himself, not as a working, but as an ungodly person; then he shall apply to himself as God applies it. God applies it to the ungodly; and if thou wilt apply it as he applies it, and no otherwise, thou must apply it to a person considered as such, and no otherwise.

I will establish this truth somewhat further, for I know it is flung at, and will find great opposition. Look into Rom.5:6-10, for there you shall see it expressly delivered by the apostle, who strikes it stark dead; namely, that holding the contrary to this, that we are justified, considered as godly, is absolutely false; "for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Where are your qualifications, while there is no strength? These stand in performances, in being able to do this and that; but men are considered here; as being without strength, and Christ died for them as such, and not only so, but as they were ungodly and sinners; "if while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" Christ considered us as sinners, in the condition of sin, and in no other state, and in this consideration, laid down his life on our behalf. In verse 10, he speaks more to the purpose; in the former, but privatively, being only considered as ungodly, that is, persons void of godliness; but here, positively, as they were enemies; so saith he, "for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Mark this place, beloved, I dare be bold to say, this text shall be able to answer all the objections of thy heart, if thou hast but a heart given thee, so much as to look after Christ, to have him, if thou might; even all that thy heart can raise against thee, from the consideration of thy own vileness, or wickedness of heart and life. "While we were enemies &c." What qualifications can this person have, considered in no other condition but in a state of enmity, and of fighting against God? Whoever thou art, doth thy heart tell thee, that when the word of God comes home to thee, and thou flieth in the face of the minister, yea, of God himself, thy heart, rising against him? Yet notwithstanding all this, here may be reconciliation for thee. Yea, you will say, when once tamed; no, saith the text, "while we were enemies, we were actually, reconciled;" not were reconcilable, or capable of reconciliation; or when amended, and had laid down our weapons, we should be reconciled; but in the state of enmity we were reconciled.

Now put all these together, and they amount to thus much, and that is enough. Wouldest thou know that thou art interested in this privilege and grace; of laying iniquity upon Christ? What hinders thee that thou canst not take thy share and portion in it? Oh; thou sayest, thou art a wicked wretch, thou hast no

heart to any godliness in the world; suppose this to be true, I say, even while thou art going astray, and turnest to thy own ways, thy iniquities are laid on Christ; you will say, this cannot be surely. Beloved, I answer, I would fain know what it is that can make void the truth of it; there is no scripture can contradict what I have said, except it contradicts itself, which is impossible.

But all this while you will say, this doth not satisfy me, that I am one of them that have share in this grace of having my iniquities laid upon Christ; for there are many ungodly persons that yet never had any part in Christ, nor never shall.

Beloved, let me tell you, the secrets of the Lord are with himself; only the names of particular persons are written in the book of life; but they are not written in the word, and works of the law; but what hinders, but that thou mayest have as good a portion in him, as heart can wish, being considered in thyself merely ungodly? I will put this case; there comes forth an act of general pardon to all thieves and murderers; it is made to all that will come and take their share; now I ask this question, suppose a person be a thief, and a traitor, what need his name in particular be mentioned in this pardon? May he not assume as certainly his own particular interest in that general grant, as if he were specified by name? All thieves that will, may come in, as well as if their names were written particularly in the proclamation. Again, it is as sufficient for the satisfaction of a man, the general tender of free grace and pardon of sin to all sinners, as if his name in particular were set down in that tender. If all thieves without exception, have a pardon tendered, and I know I am a thief, this is enough for me; I may know, I may be sure, that I am therein pardoned, as well as any other. Beloved, the Lord's grant of laying iniquity upon Christ, is as much as a grant of a general pardon to all thieves and traitors, and as generally and freely exhibited as that can be; for it runs in this tenor, "and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." {Rev.22:17} Now hath the Lord given thee a heart to come, that thou wouldest fain have Christ if thou durst, fain thou wouldest that all thy iniquities should be taken from thee to be laid upon him. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy

power.” {Psa.110:3} Beloved, the Lord saith expressly unto you, “every one that will, let him come;” have you but a mind to come and take him, your coming and taking is your security. Christ is a liar, {with all reverence be it spoken,} if he turn off any that come to him. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” {Jn.6:37} Doest thou come to Christ, and doth he cast thee off? He denies himself then; for he saith, “I will in no wise cast thee off.” And thus much may be sufficient to assure thee, that notwithstanding any sinfulness which thou findest in thyself, thou mayest boldly come unto Christ, and commit thyself unto him, as to an all-sufficient Saviour.

29 Inherent Qualifications Are Doubtful Evidences For Heaven

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

The iniquity that was laid upon Christ is the iniquity of us all; that is the last point proposed; and there are two things mainly considerable in it.

1. Whose iniquities they are that the Lord laid upon Christ.

2. How particular persons may come to know whether their iniquities are laid on him. The former were dispatched, the last day; the iniquities that the Lord laid upon Christ, were not the iniquities of the righteous, but of sinners; the iniquities of such, “who like sheep have gone astray, and turned everyone to their own way.” This I have showed at large, and abundantly cleared it; there is no sinfulness in which a person stands, that can possibly be a bar to the discharge of him, from such sins, and the charging of Christ with them; but I must not dwell upon things I have already delivered. I come to the second particular; how particular persons may come to know certainly concerning their own estate; whether or not, the grace intended, and held out in this text, concerns them; and whether the Lord means them in special, when he said that “he laid on Christ the iniquities of us all.” If any man fall upon the trial of a title, he must produce his evidences, that it may be clear; and these must be of that nature, that they are not dubious and litigious; that may rather administer more and greater

controversies, than put an end to the question in hand.

There are many disputes in the world, and the arguments brought to put an end to them; commonly makes them greater than before; and it is certainly true in the present case. When there arise disputes in the hearts of the people, to resolve this question, whether they are discharged of their sins or no; they produce such and such evidences, and try the strength of them with such eagerness, that the question is farther off from being resolved, than before the dispute began. He that will clear his title to the interest he hath in this grant of God, must make use of those evidences that God hath given for that very purpose and they that shall make use of another, will but make a greater controversy in their own spirits, and more doubtfulness than there was before. I know that among tender consciences, there is nothing pursued with so much vehemence of spirit, earnestness and zeal of affection, as to attain to know certainly they have a part and portion in this grace. Oh; think they, if we could but be once satisfied of this, that our iniquities were all done away in Christ, we have what our hearts could desire. Beloved, it is to be considered, in so great a pursuit, and such earnestness of spirit to attain the end, why there is so little satisfaction to the spirits of men; scarce one of a thousand that makes the search, whether they have an interest in this grace, can attain to a final resolution; but, after they have searched, there remains some rub or other, that they are unsatisfied for the time; some mistake certainly there must be, either in the ground, or conclusion, or inference of the dispute; either they lay down arguments that have no strength in them, or if they have, they do not draw right inferences and conclusions from them. In all resolutions concerning a case of conscience; there is always a syllogism, a natural one I mean; for the case still goes thus, he that would be certain that his portion is in this grace, must first take the argument from the word itself; then he must draw his assumption from what he finds in himself, agreeing with the word, and so deduce his conclusion from them both, after this manner; he that is thus and thus, his sins are forgiven him; but I am thus and thus, therefore my sins are forgiven me.

Now, beloved, either we lay down a false foundation, or at least one that cannot be cleared; or else we make a corrupt assumption from thence, so that we cannot gather a certain conclusion. I conceive, therefore, that

it might be a welcome business, if it were possible, to draw forth such evidences as are without all exception; but, before this can be done, there must be a taking away of the common mistakes of men; I shall therefore, beloved, endeavour these two things.

First; to show where the mistake lieth, that this question is so rarely resolved; and then show what it is that will resolve it satisfactorily.

When persons are eager upon the satisfaction of their own spirits, concerning their interest in this grace of pardon and discharge from sin; I find that usually in the entrance on this trial, and search, they run immediately to some qualifications in themselves, and fruits of sanctification; which must make up the conclusion for them, or else they will not, they dare not, make their conclusion to their own comfort. I mean briefly and plainly thus; the common way of people is to try themselves by signs and marks, drawn from their sanctification and performances; and as these will make up the conclusion they desire, so they sit down satisfied with their condition; but nothing makes up their conclusion, but premises taken from their sanctification. How litigious and doubtful a course this is, to resolve the spirits of men, I doubt not but I shall make very clear to you, by and by, and therein show how much men are mistaken, and how far wide they are from the conclusion they desire; while no other premises shall serve the turn, but what their own sanctification, qualifications and dispositions can afford.

But to come more closely to the business, give me leave, beloved, to take into consideration, and so to propose to you the weakness of the most remarkable signs, by which people use to try themselves, I shall pass by those that are of less consequence, and instance in those that are usual, and most pressed upon, as building marks.

It is well known that this is one of the most remarkable signs, by which a person must know his portion in the grace of God through Christ, namely, universal obedience; when any man goes to examine, am I a child of God? Are my sins forgiven, and if they be, then I have universal obedience; and then follows the search, have I it, or no? If the heart saith, I have, then all is well; if it says, no, it is then conceived presumption to conclude a portion in Christ. This is the common way of trial. How weak this mark of

universal obedience is to resolve a soul concerning his portion in the grace of God, I shall make clear to you; for certainly it cannot resolve the question as men would have it.

1. There is no person under heaven, believer or unbeliever, that hath universal obedience; and therefore it should be a mark, without which there can be no certainty of interest in Christ, no person under heaven can have assurance of interest in him.

2. I shall make it appear to you, that suppose there be such an universal obedience as men aim at, yet that is not enough to satisfy of interest in Christ.

There is no such thing in the heart and practice of man under heaven, as universal obedience, especially taking it as most do. When men stand upon it, to try themselves by this, what is it? There is one expression that will make it appear, what they mean by it; for you find the way of trial runs thus; one leak, think they, is enough, to sink a ship; one dead fly to putrefy a whole box of ointment; one drop of poison, though in a cup of the sweetest wine, to suffocate the life of him that drinks it. Now mark their inference from hence; in case there be one leak in me, this will sink me forever; one dead fly in me, this will putrefy all good things in me; and if but one drop of poison in me, it will choke me quite. Now, I beseech you, mark, if this be a sign, by which a man can come to know whether he be in Christ; let me see the man that dares say there is not one leak in him; not one dead fly in the precious box of grace that he saith is in his heart; not one drop of poison in his wine of obedience? If there be any of these, where is this universal obedience? The truth indeed is that universal obedience takes in all manner of obedience whatsoever; that which is universal, takes in all particulars; for universality is nothing else but a concurrence of all particulars met together. Either then there must be a complete obedience to the whole law, without failing in one jot or tittle, or else there is not; there cannot be universal obedience.

But some will say, we do not mean, by universal obedience, an exact performance of every tittle of the law, for that we know no man can reach unto; but the mark we try ourselves by, is an universal purpose of heart unto obedience, or the purpose of heart to yield universal obedience; and this a man must try himself by, and must find in himself, or else he cannot make up this conclusion, that he hath a portion in the grace

of God by Christ. If he have a full purpose and respect of heart to all God's commandments; if he can find it so, then it is well; but if he cannot, then all is naught.

Let us take universal obedience in this sense, for a full purpose of heart to obey the whole will of God, though there be not ability to perform everything whereunto there is such a purpose. If this be the mark you try yourselves by, then I would fain know whether by full purpose of heart, you understand a constant purpose of heart, or else by fits, and at sometimes. If any say, they try themselves by the purpose of their hearts at such and such times, and confess that there is not a constancy of it; then let me tell you, such purposes of heart that are taken notice of at such and such times, cannot be signs of a man's having interest in Christ. You know the wickedest men in the world have their good moods and resolutions sometimes, and from the heart indeed. Take a man upon his sick bed, and tell him of his former course of life, and of God's grace, and he will say, if God restore him to his health, he will lead a better life than he hath done; and his heart is not feigned in what he saith; he speaks all this from his heart, and really intends it. Now, if a purpose of heart by fits, be a mark and sign of a man's interest in Christ, it may be so to a man that hath no portion in him at all; and so can be no certain mark or evidence to those that desire to try themselves by it.

But if they say this purpose of heart, to yield obedience to all God's commandments, is a constant purpose of heart, and that it is always set toward them; and God can read the inclination of their hearts to him and his service, to be constant, though to perform the same be not present always with them; well, if you mean this, then let me tell you, there is no person under heaven, able to say truly from an unfeigned heart, that he hath a constant purpose and inclination to the whole will of God; and I appeal to the spirits of every one of you, that go this way to work; is there a constant inclination in your spirits to the whole will of God always? "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" {I Sam.15:14} I ask, beloved, whether this stands with such a constant purpose and inclination, to have untoward risings of heart, repining and murmuring thoughts against many truths, of the will of God revealed? Sometimes you are present in the house of the Lord, attending

upon the manifestation of his will; it is his will that you should do so and so; is there always an inclination of heart to this particular service? Doth it stand with a constant inclination of heart to it, to be weary of it, to be indisposed to it, and to have contradiction in your spirits against it? Now whose hearts are not privy to a world of this indisposition, crossness, drawing back, and pulling in the shoulders from such and such services as God calls us out unto? Take crosses and afflictions, for example, they are the fruits of the love of God; the Lord hath declared that they shall bring forth the "peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." {Heb.12:11} Are your hearts inclined, and are the constant purposes of your spirits to this pleasure of God? Do you "count it all joy" when ye fall into them; as James directs? {James 1:2} How comes it to pass then that there should be so much reluctance and opposition of spirit to the will of God, if the constant purpose and inclination of the heart were towards it? Now, beloved, mark it well, do but compare this indisposition of the spirit to this will of God, with the disposition of the spirit to it; you shall find by your own experience mostly, there is a real indisposition, rather than a real affection to the thing. How then can this be called a constant inclination of heart to the whole will of God, when, in most things, there is an averseness of spirit to it?

But to take up the business, that it may be without all contradiction; suppose we grant a person hath a constant purpose and inclination of heart to the whole will of God; nay, reaches the very practice of the will of God, according to that purpose of heart. Suppose upon search and trial of universal obedience, you are able to find, not only that your hearts are to all the commandments of God; but that you walk in them all, even blameless. You will say, this is a good mark, a man may rest satisfied with this; that is, conclude thereby that he hath a portion in the grace of God. But give me leave to deal plainly and truly with your spirits. I must tell you, if it be found thus with you, both in respect of purpose and practice, yet this very sign is not sufficient to clear to you, that there is a portion in Christ, in respect of it. For that cannot be a mark to a person that he hath part in Christ, that is common to wicked, as well as good men. Can any man say, I know I have eyes to see, and hands that have motion in them, and because I am so, I know that I am a child

of God? Do not the most wicked men in the world see with their eyes, and move with their hands? If this be a mark, why may not they know themselves to be in Christ, as well as a believer? But you will say, the case is not alike, there is no wicked man that can attain to universal obedience; if they may in purpose of heart, yet certainly not in practice. To understand the truth of this, look in Phil.3:6, where you will find the apostle make a narration of the condition of his life while he was a Pharisee, and a persecutor of the church of God, and the frame of it; after he was called home to Christ. In the description of his condition, he tells us what sect he was of, namely; a Pharisee, men that were the most strict and austere of all others; and among other things, saith he, “concerning zeal, I persecuted the church of God, and touching the righteousness of the law, I was blameless;” that is that which I would have you observe, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless.

Now, I would fain know of any man, what difference there is between that universal obedience to the whole will of God, which they look after, and a blamelessness of life touching the law? He that sins, and fails over and over again, of knowledge, is this man a blameless man in his life? Certainly beloved, the apostle walked exceeding exactly, and he doth not say simply he was blameless as to those among whom he lived; for they, perhaps, might not judge of righteousness according to the law, but according to their own esteem; but, saith he, “touching the righteousness of the law, I was blameless;” that is, a righteousness according to the revealed will of God, in which I was thus blameless. Now if this be a mark or a sign, that a man hath interest in Christ; namely, being righteous in his conversation, then Paul, while a persecutor of the church, had a mark and sign that he was in Christ. But consider, though he clears himself, as a man walking blamelessly before his conversion; yet he was so far from thinking this blamelessness according to the righteousness of the law, to be a sign of his interest in Christ, that he abhors it, is ashamed of it, and accounts it very dung. It is true, while he was in his Pharisaism, he accounted this blamelessness of his according to the law his exceeding gain. Oh; thought he, this will bear me out, it shall certainly be well with me; herein he accounted it gain; but, saith he, those “things were gain to me, those I counted loss

for Christ.” Observe it well, he is so far from making it a mark, or sign of interest in Christ, that he accounts it but loss. “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” {vs.8} Though he found a righteousness according to the law in himself, yet he doth not treasure it up as a precious thing to comfort his heart, and as a certain mark to rest upon; but, and in respect of satisfying it, he counts it as dung, and casts it away; and will not be found in it; but only in the righteousness of God by faith.

How can any man imagine that that should be a mark, that Paul, after conversion, esteemed but as dung? Surely, marks and evidences of interest in Christ, must be of better price; marks that will bring comfort, may justly be more precious in the eyes of men after conversion, than dung; therefore, for ought I can see, let a man find ever so exact obedience to all the commandments of God, he cannot assure himself, from thence, that he hath portion in Christ.

But some will say, universal obedience of itself, indeed, is not a sufficient sign; some may go very far in it, and yet come short of Christianity, but there must be added to it sincerity, and singleness of heart; for if I walk according to the commandments of God, and do it in sincerity and singleness of heart, I may sit down by this as a good mark, and be satisfied therewith.

But, I answer, that if sincerity and singleness of heart be made a mark and sign of interest in Christ, at last it will fail a person as well as universal obedience. This is strange, you will say; what, is not sincerity, and singleness of heart, a mark of interest in Christ? I answer, no; whosoever builds upon it may deceive himself; I will make it good thus.

1. He that deals ingenuously with his own spirit, shall find that there is not this sincerity in his heart that he builds upon.

2. If he have this sincerity, it is not enough to give him such a certain conclusion of the goodness of his estate, that it will not fail.

No man under heaven can find that sincerity in his heart that may comfort him. He that will try himself by sincerity and singleness of heart, must understand what it is, or else he will try himself by that which he knows not; and there will be a trying of a hidden thing,

by that which is more hidden. You must know then, what sincerity is, before it can speak peace to you upon trial. Now, how will you know what it is? Mark how the apostle makes it clear in Eph.6:5,6, speaking there of servants obeying their masters, he counsels them to obey them, “not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, as unto Christ.” Well, from this passage I conclude, singleness of heart is such a disposition of spirit, as that whatsoever we do in word or deed, we do it unto Christ, or we do it for the Lord’s sake. So far as we do anything, and our hearts have bye-ends in them, so far there is a defect of sincerity and singleness of heart. “If thine eye be single, {saith our Saviour,} thy whole body is full of light.” Singleness of eyes there is opposite to squint-eyes. A squint-eye looks two ways at once; a single eye looks fore-right, and is pitched only upon such an object; it doth not look upon divers things together, distant from each other, much less contrary one to the other. A single heart doth what it doth for the Lord’s sake, and to the Lord himself. Now, if this be sincerity, to have the Lord always in our eyes, in what we do, where is that sincerity of heart that may speak peace and comfort to the spirits of men? Beloved, look into your ordinary practice, whether it be so in your exercises of religion, or works of justice and mercy, do you all for and to the Lord? When you live, do you live to the Lord? When you eat and drink, do you all to his glory? Is there not much self mixed in your performances? When you pray, what is the loadstone in your prayers? What is that which makes you pray? Such an exigent puts you on it, preservation from danger, therefore you cry mightily; for you say, if the Lord help not, I perish. Here is praying for a man’s self, not to glorify God, or, at least, more praying for one than the other.

Again, if in times of trouble and war, the clouds are great, and ready to break, and therefore we sigh, mourn, fast, and weep, what is the eye upon all this while? Upon self altogether, or for the most part, that we may escape this wrath, that vengeance, and the other affliction; that we may be delivered from that mischief, and this growing evil. Now these are the great things in our eye in what we do; all this while, now, do we this as unto the Lord, or for the Lord at all? It was his complaint against the Jews, when they fasted, and took a great deal of pains, “have ye fasted at all unto me?” No, beloved, they fasted unto themselves; so do

you fast at all to the Lord when you fast? And is the Lord altogether the end of your fasting? Is not yourself the main thing you aim at in it? How can this stand with singleness of heart to him, when he is neglected; and a man’s self is altogether in his eye in what he doth? Where is that sincerity and singleness of heart, where there is so much self in all that is performed?

But to come more close; suppose this sincerity is to be found, and your hearts, upon search, will tell you, that you have been to the Lord, and for his sake, in what you have done; God and his glory have been the sensible loadstone that have drawn you forth to this and that employment; yet, for all this, such sincerity is no mark or sign by which you ought to conclude your portion and interest in Christ. Look into Rom.10:1-4, for you shall see it is as clear as the day, that this sincerity, or doing things for the Lord’s sake, is not a mark by which persons can conclude a portion in Christ; nay, more, it is a qualification, that those that are enemies of Christ, have had, in a great measure, in themselves; and can that be a mark of my being a child of God, and a member of Christ, that may be found in an enemy to him? Mark the words, the apostle, speaking there of his brethren the Jews, saith, that “his heart’s desire and prayer to God was that they might be saved;” and withal, he “bears them record that they have a zeal of God.” There was a sincerity aiming not at bye-ends, but at the glory of God. And further, mark wherein this was expressed, and about what it was conversant; it was not exercised in a false way, but in obedience to the will of God. “For, {saith he,} they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Observe it well, here is a zeal, that is, an earnestness of spirit, and this zeal was after God; so, then, it was a zeal wherein they sought God and his glory, not in an indirect way, nor in a corrupt way of their own devising; but in the righteousness according to the law of God himself; for so much is intimated, when it is said, that “Christ is the end of the law;” and yet, for all this, saith the apostle, though they had this zeal of God, according to the will of God, in his law, they “submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God;” so then, there may be a singleness of heart to the Lord, and for his glory, and

a walking in obedience to his will revealed in his law, and no portion in Christ, but a withstanding, and not submitting to his righteousness. Men do but puzzle themselves while they go about to satisfy their own spirits, by such marks and signs; that if they will but deal faithfully with themselves, will never resolve the case fully, to give true and grounded rest unto their souls.

One thing more I will commend to you, and that is a mark, the greatest of all, and which seems to have the greatest strength of all others, and that from the testimony of the apostle himself; wherewith many souls are extremely puzzled in examining themselves by, and very much troubled in making up their conclusion. Surely, it is a good mark, {will some say,} that we may know we are God's children, if we love the brethren; for, saith the apostle, {I Jn.3:14,} "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Will you say that a man cannot be resolved that he is a child of God by this mark?

For an answer to this, first, I shall desire you well to mark the scope of the apostle in that place. In the words before the text, he tells the brethren how the world esteemed of them, what account it had of them; "Marvel not, my brethren, though the world hate you;" but, in this verse, he endeavors to comfort them against the dis-esteem it had of them, and how doth he do it? "We know, {saith he,} that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren;" as much as if he had said, whatever the world judgeth of us, our judgment one of another is, that we are God's children; and the ground of it is this, we perceive one from another, that there is a love one to another; so that it seems plain to me, that the apostle here endeavors to satisfy persons how they are made known one to another, that they are the people of God, not how they are to know themselves; this seems rather to be a mark, how my brother may know me, than by which I should know myself; the text doth not say, by this I may know that I am passed from death to life. But, let us take it for granted, that every particular person finding the love of the brethren in himself, by this may know himself to be the child of God. You shall find how exceedingly a soul must be puzzled in this way, before it can clear the case that it belongs to Christ by it. For, if you will try yourself by this you must know what it is to love the brethren. And, secondly, that they

are the brethren you love.

You must understand what it is to love the brethren; for you can never know that you love them, till you know what it is to love them; and when you do know it, and examine yourselves by it, and deal faithfully with yourselves, then you will say, Oh, what a labyrinth is this I am in! How shall I get out of it? If you will examine yourselves by this love, let the Spirit of God be your teacher and director. {I Cor.13:1-8} If you will try your hearts by your love to the brethren, bring them to the particulars the apostle mentions there; and I doubt your hearts will be at a stand many times about them. The apostle expresses himself {as the word is rendered by our translators in the English bible} by the word charity, but the word, in the original, is love; and there he at large describes the nature of love to the brethren, by many particulars that set it out effectually. "Charity {or love, saith he} suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Now consider the sum of these things, love "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Wherever, there is the love of the brethren, there are all these particulars. Come now to these in your examination; bring your hearts to these. Is there no envying at all towards the brethren? No thinking evil of any of them? No seeking myself, or my own good, in my love to them? Is there a bearing all things for their sakes? Is there no being puffed up, or vaunting above them? Is there no thinking better of myself than of them? This is the love of the brethren, as the apostle plainly declares; and, if you examine yourselves by this love, do you not find those great defects, and imperfections, that must be taken away, before you can resolve the case in hand, by this love to them? So that a soul must attain to a mighty high measure of sanctification and victory over itself, before it can reach to this, to say, "I do love the brethren." Now, to put yourselves {poor, weak things} upon this mark, which is one of the nearest to perfection; except you can make this manifest, you must not dare to take your part in Christ; what is this, but to tie knots to yourselves, whereby you fasten yourselves with fetters of continual doubting?

But, suppose you find all this love in yourselves,

you must not only love the brethren, but you must know they are the brethren whom you love; for if you bear this love to mankind as such, this is no evidence of your being in Christ; for the publicans and harlots love one another; therefore you must know they are brethren that you love, or else this is no mark at all, that you have a portion in Christ. The wickedest man hath as good a mark as this; but do you know they are brethren you love? You know the brotherhood consists of being united unto Christ; this is an invisible thing, none can know it but God only. No man can say that such a one is a brother; "as no man knows the things of man, save the spirit of man that is in him;" so no man knows the things of another, especially the spiritual condition of another, but God. {I Cor.2:11}

But, you will say, though I am not certain that he is a brother, yet I love him under the notion of a brother. Well beloved, suppose this then; if this be a sign that a man is a child of God, because he knoweth he loveth such an one, he apprehends to be a brother; then many may have signs and marks they have received Christ, when the truth is, it is no such matter.

Look on the Papists; do not they love the brethren? You will say, no, they are not brethren they love, and therefore their love is nothing. It is true, they are mistaken, they are not brethren; but yet, I say, that is nothing to the purpose, they love them under the notion of brethren, which you conceive to be sufficient; do not they love one another under that notion, and hate us as enemies to God and the gospel? Therefore, though they are mistaken, yet because they love one another as brethren, and under that notion; according to this rule, I say, this may be an argument sufficient, and a sign whereby they may know their interest in Christ.

But, let me tell you, while men love persons, under the notion of brethren, commonly they love them that are not, and hate them that are. Take all sects, they will love their own as brethren, and hate all others as not. For example, there are two sorts of people, one that hold up their heads by the righteousness of the law, and expect salvation according to their obedience to it; with them they are brethren that so adhere to the law, and are enemies to all those that stand for the free grace of God, and the true righteousness of God, which is by faith. Suppose you love those persons as brethren that run after Moses and the law, for their

peace and satisfaction of spirit, and despise those that are in the free grace of God, and rest upon the promises of the gospel, though they see themselves full of sin; which of these are brethren? Surely, according to the meaning of the apostle, they have passed from death to life that believe. "He that believeth shall be saved." These are the brethren, do you love these men? Oh; there are many that go by signs and marks that cannot endure them; they go with them under the name of libertines, and not brethren.⁹¹

Well, to draw to a conclusion, whoever you are, that go by signs and marks, drawn from sanctification, you will be puzzled, if you deal faithfully with your own spirits, though you attain to ever so great a height of it.

And yet all this while, let me not be mistaken; there are censorious spirits, if we do but take off the fruits of sanctification, from those great businesses the Lord never ordained them unto, presently they conclude; here is nothing but striking at sanctification, and flinging at obedience towards God; I say, therefore beloved, mistake not; sanctification of men is as much the will of God, as salvation and glory hereafter, for, "this is the will of God, even our sanctification." {I Thes.4:3} I say also, the Lord never calls persons to salvation by Christ, but he also sanctifies them in some measure, they go still together; and I would they were cut off from the Israel of God, that take occasion to the flesh, from the liberty of the grace of God, whereto they are called; but still I say, though the Lord calls men, and sanctifies them, yet he gives them some better evidences, whereby he will satisfy their spirits, to sit down and have more peace and comfort of heart, than all the evidences of sanctification in the world can give unto them.

Some evidences there are, that will determine the question so clearly, that there shall not remain any

⁹¹ Though there are many useful observations made by the Doctor, on love of the brethren, yet I cannot agree with him in his sense of I John 3:14, for it does not seem to respect the knowledge saints have of other persons, but of themselves; "we know" not that other persons, other saints, but we, ourselves, "have passed from death to life, because we, [ourselves, and not others,] love the brethren;" and which grace being a fruit of the Spirit, and so peculiar to a man that is born again, as that it cannot be in an unregenerate man, who though he may love saints, as men, on natural and civil accounts, can never love them as children of God, and brethren of Christ; and, therefore, must be an evidence of passing from death to life; at least, in some degree, though it may not come up to the revealing and receiving evidences, the spirit and faith, of which, it must be owned, are the principal ones. See my exposition of I John 3:14. And besides, if by it we may know that others have passed from death to life, why not know this of ourselves by it? Gill.

just scruple; and then I do not deny but that when the Spirit of the Lord, and the faith of a believer, shall speak what they can say, and have fully resolved the question, the fruits of the Spirit in the believer, may come in as handmaids to bear witness to the thing; yet so that the other two give a sufficient resolution to the question. These are the two great witnesses from heaven, that speak home and fully to the question in hand, and give peace and satisfaction to the spirit of man; I mean, that it is the Spirit of Christ, and the faith of a believer only, that immediately call the soul, and testify to it of its interest in Christ, and so give sufficient evidence to it. The next opportunity I will speak, God willing, more fully to these two things.

30 The Revealing Evidence Of The Spirit Of Christ

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

The last point was this, that it is the iniquity of every one of us that the Lord hath laid upon Christ; us, that “like sheep have gone astray, and turned everyone to his own way.”

But, because there ariseth such a great scruple out of these general expressions, namely, how I and you shall know in particular to ourselves, that we are included in this; therefore we come to consider, whether a person, or rather how a person, may know certainly his, or her iniquities, are in particular laid upon Christ. The reason of this great query was, that though the Holy Ghost speaks of such as go astray, and turn to their own ways, that their iniquities are laid upon Christ; yet say some, and that truly, it is not everyone that goeth astray, and turneth to his own way, it is but some of these that have their iniquities laid upon Christ; and, saith the poor fainting spirit, I may be one of those that go astray, and turn to their own ways, that are set aside, and not one of those that shall share in this mercy. And therefore I would know, whether I am one of those that shall partake of this grace, and not one of those that are rejected. I know this is a great scruple among tender consciences, thirsting after nothing more than to be satisfied, and have the case cleared, that there be no place for any more objections, that they, in particular, have a portion in this grace.

For resolution of this, I told you some evidences there are to resolve this case, yet a great mistake there is in some, for the clearing of it. This, I then said, and say again, that signs, and marks, drawn from the fruits of sanctification, are at best very litigious and doubtful evidences to resolve a spirit; and let the most sanctified person, but consider the manifold frailties and wanderings, in the best work that ever he did, and he shall have occasion to suspect that very work, as not able to speak peace unto him.

Universal obedience, sincerity of heart, and love to the brethren, are three special marks I took in task, and showed how far a soul will be to seek of certain resolutions from these, when they are thoroughly examined. I shall not repeat particulars again; I will add a word in general, and so close this matter.

Beloved, whoever you are that will examine yourselves by the fruits of sanctification, that are properly the righteousness of man after or according to the law; I dare be bold to say, there is no one fruit of it, let it be sincerity, hatred of sin, love to the brethren, or what it will, if it speaks as the Lord hath given it to speak, that can speak peace to a soul. My ground is that which is delivered by the apostle, Gal.3:10, “the law, {saith he} is not of faith;” but its voice is, “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, &c.” Now, I beseech you, come home a little; this being the voice of the law, and consequently of everything that is done, or rather not done, according to it, how can anything we do, except it be done according to this rule exactly, speak peace? Take it in what sign or mark you will; let it be in what kind of obedience you can imagine, I ask, and I pray you ask yourselves this question, whether have you continued in all things written in the law to do them, in that particular? I say, have you performed everything in that particular you examine yourselves by? No, you will say, there have been failings in some things; now, I ask, what this can say to you that shall be the rule of your trial, as it stands full of failings and imperfections, can this speak peace? Then it speaks directly otherwise than the Lord hath given it to speak; that whatever a person doth, if there be not a continuance in all things written in the law to do them, the voice is cursing, “Cursed is every one, &c.”

How then can it secure a man, and resolve him that he hath interest in Christ, is a child of God, that saith,

cursed art thou till thou continue in all things requisite to such particulars that are the rule of thy examination? Now the law can deliver no other voice but this; until it meet with continuance in all things. Hence it is that, in Gal.4:23,24, the apostle distinguishes between the spiritual and natural seed of Abraham; the latter sort he compares to Agar, which is mount Sinai in Arabia, and this, saith he, “gendereth unto bondage;” the former are the children of Abraham according to the promise; as much as to say, persons born to the law, that have no other rule to walk by, and to try their estates by, are thereby brought into bondage.

The apostle, Heb.2:15, tells us that Christ came to “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” His meaning is, that the Jews, by the discipline they were under, had for the usual evidence of their peace, a conformity to the law, or a righteousness according to that; this was their ordinary way; and so, till Christ came to reveal himself in the grace of the gospel, they had nothing to resolve their spirits, for satisfaction concerning their condition, but the law, and so were still subject to bondage through fear of death; as much as to say, he that hath nothing else to speak peace to him, but his own righteousness, that is so far from delivering him from this fear of death, that it keeps him in bondage all his life long under it, whilst he walks by such a rule for his peace; I say not, while he walks by such a rule for his conversation; mistake me not, but while he walks by such a rule for his peace; and the reason is, because the best sanctification, in regard of the imperfections of it, is not able to speak peace to the soul, because it pronounces directly a curse. And therefore, beloved, though I will not say but that there may be comfort in some sort, even from the fruits of the spirit in men; yet that which must resolve the case, the great case, and satisfy the spirit of a person, that he hath interest in Christ, and his privileges, must be something else besides his own righteousness.

It is true, there are some kinds of comfort will flow even from the fruits of the spirit in men’s conversation; namely, as he seeth how God is glorified by it in the world; it must needs administer a great deal of joy to the people of God, that he will use them as instruments, to set forth the praise of the glory of his grace; as for example, thou art a minister, and in thy ministry the Lord is pleased to show himself, in some great measure

to clear up the consciences of his people, and cheer their hearts; and thou art an instrument of his glory, in that his free grace in the gospel, and the truth and simplicity of it is published; now thou rejoicest that the Lord is glorified. But if we shall proceed so far as to gather our peace from the exercise of this ministry, thereby to be resolved of our interest in Christ from our diligence and sincerity therein; then we must know, that except there be perfection in it, this very ministry itself speaks a curse.

But, beloved, to come to the great question yet remaining; are there not any evidences by which persons may know comfortably their interest in the privileges of Christ?

I answer, yes; there are evidences to resolve men, if the Lord do but give them unto them, and power to receive them; men may thereby sit down satisfied concerning their own interest in the privileges of Christ. Which are they, will you say? They are two. The one is a revealing evidence, and the other is a receiving evidence. The revealing evidence is the voice of the Spirit of God to a man’s own spirit; this is the great evidence, indeed, and which at last determines the question, and puts an end to all objections; even the voice of the Spirit of the Lord speaking particularly in the heart of a person, “son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” When he saith this to the soul, there shall be never an objection, while this voice is received, worth a rush, to disquiet and disturb it; and till the Spirit of the Lord come immediately himself, and speak this to a soul, all the world shall never be able to satisfy it. In brief, therefore, beloved, you shall know your sins are laid upon Christ by the Spirit of the Lord speaking this to you; and, till he do this, all the signs and marks in the world are mere darkness, mere riddles, a soul can never understand them.

It will be a needful business, I suppose, to clear up this truth, and herein to show you, that the Spirit of the Lord is mainly sent into the world by Christ, for this very purpose, to speak personally and particularly to the hearts of men, to satisfy them of their interest in Christ; he in the scripture, holds out nothing more than this, that we must come at last to himself, to resolve this case, and explain this riddle for us, before we can be satisfied in it. That this may be the more evident to you, beloved, it may be cleared from the very attribute or title which our Saviour gives unto

the Spirit, {Jn.14:26; 16:7-14,} as the title or attribute given to the Spirit, in all these places, is the Comforter. "But the Comforter, whom the Father will send in my name." "When he, the Comforter is come;" and again, "except I go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but, if I go away, I will send the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth." I say, the attribute and title of being a Comforter in any eminency, imports that satisfaction concerning interest in Christ, is his work. Do but consider the nature of solid comfort, and it will be clear to you.

Suppose a man have a trial in law, or an action to be debated, his heart is full of fears, especially if the title be not clear to himself; when a witness comes in, and speaks point blank to his case, that the judge himself is satisfied, and upon that, gives the sentence in behalf of the person; the testimony of this witness being accepted, gives comfort to his spirit. The truth is, beloved, the Holy Ghost is the Comforter in this regard, as he clears up the case, and makes it unquestionable to thy spirit, and mine, that our sins are forgiven. What is the occasion of all the trouble of spirit in tender hearts? "God hath forsaken me," saith one; "my sins are gone over my head," saith another; "I shall one day be called to account, and answer for them," saith a third. What will now cheer up the heart of such? Let it be satisfied of this, that God will not lay its sins to its charge, and that God will not forsake it; then it is comforted by such a resolution; and say what you will, except you can clear up this thing, that God will never impute iniquity to him, nor bring him to an account for it, you cannot comfort him. Now, the Spirit of God, being the Comforter, must needs have this property to satisfy the spirits of men of such things wherein their comforts consist. If they consist in assurance of pardon of sin, then he cannot be the Comforter, except he satisfy herein; and you shall see that comfort lieth mainly in this, by Christ's own testimony, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." {Mt.9:2} Good cheer depends upon this testimony of the forgiveness of sins, the Spirit of God cannot make a tender heart be of good cheer, till he testifies thoroughly, and clears up this truth that "thy sins are forgiven thee."

Besides this bare title of Comforter, the Spirit hath this particular office given him, as that for which he comes. "But the Comforter, which is the

Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." {Jn.14:26} Here it is expressed how the Spirit comforts, by teaching all things, and by leading into all truth, as you have it in Jn.16:13,14, "howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you;" for here our Saviour tells us what those things are, that the Spirit teaches, and by which he comforts; you shall see that forgiveness of sins is the comfort of the Spirit; for "he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you;" mark the words well, beloved, "he shall show it unto you;" by this you may perceive wherein the comforting faculty of the Spirit lieth, namely, in receiving Christ, and in showing those things it receives of him to men. Now, what is it for the Spirit to show to believers those things he receives of Christ; and what are those it shows? The things of Christ, you know, are those the apostle speaks of, Acts 13:38,39, where he mentions his glorious excellencies in few words, "be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man {Christ} is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Now, these being the things of Christ that he intended to send abroad into the world among his own people, these are the things the Spirit receives of him, and is to show. And what is it you will say, to show a thing? It is no more but this, whereas a thing hidden, it is now drawn, held forth, and made manifest; this is to show a thing. All which intimates thus much, that the proper work of the Spirit is to make clear and manifest to the view of men those things of Christ, especially forgiveness of sin, and justification from all things, that they are theirs to whom they were hid before; therefore, in Jn.16:7,8, you find how our Saviour speaks concerning himself, "it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you; and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Among other particulars, remember this, "he shall convince the

world of righteousness;” the meaning is, he shall make known my things, especially this, my righteousness, so manifestly that he shall convince those to whom he speaks of it. But what is it for persons to be convinced? A man is convinced, when things are made so clear to him, that he hath nothing to object against them; as long as he continues objecting he is not convinced; but when things are made so plain and clear, that a man objects no more, then there is conviction. All comes to this, that the Spirit of the Lord is said to convince of the righteousness of Christ, that is, to make it so clear, that any objections made shall have no place at all; that an objector shall have no more to say against it in respect of his own particular.

And whereas, it may be conceived that the Spirit of the Lord comes to comfort only in general; know, beloved, that there is this difference between the ministration of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ; Christ came into the world to merit salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sins, and to comfort men in general; for, though he merited comfort in particular, to be applied by the Spirit, yet still, in his ministration, he runs upon general terms for the most part; but the Spirit of the Lord is sent in his room, to come to every man’s spirit particularly by himself, and speak that within a man’s own self, that Christ by this ministry of the gospel speaks in general to men; and that is the reason that Christ saith, “it is expedient that I go away, because if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you.” As if he had said, he himself doth not come so particularly home to men’s spirits; I speak in regard of the general course of Christ, in his ordinary way of ministration; not but that in extraordinary cases he did come home in particular to men’s spirits; but the ministration Christ was to exercise was general, and spake more in general than the Spirit did, and therefore he appropriates comfort to the Spirit, rather than to himself; “if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;” that is, while I am here, the Comforter is not with you, and therefore I go that he may come. This clears up the truth, that the Spirit of the Lord is sent of purpose for this very business, to resolve the spirits of men, whether they have interest in Christ or not.

But now, lest these should seem to be too general, let us descend to particulars; and therein you shall see, that the evidencing particularly to a man’s spirit, his

interest in Christ, is the proper work of the Spirit of God. For this purpose, look into Rom.8:14-17, “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Give me leave, I pray you, to open something out of this text; for here you have two spirits that are set in opposition; the spirit of fear and bondage and the spirit of adoption. The spirit of bondage is nothing else but a spirit that speaks from such principles as always lead unto it; the true meaning is, so long as men have no other spirit speaking in them, but from the principle of their own righteousness, they have none but such as leads to bondage; “but we have received the spirit of adoption; whereby we cry Abba, Father;” as if he had said, the Spirit of God speaking to men, is such a Spirit that speaks, in such as have him, this gracious language, “Abba, Father,” that is, that by which we are able to say of ourselves that God is our Father, is the spirit of adoption; nothing but that is able to make a man cry, “Abba, Father.” What is that? The true meaning is, when a person is so resolved, as that he sits down satisfied that God is now his Father, then he is able to cry, “Abba Father.” It is not saying Father, in a general notion, that is meant, but Father in respect of a personal appropriation, my Father. Now, when any comes to this, to be able to call God his own Father, then is the case resolved, and he cannot say, God is his Father, till he can say, he is his child. This is by the apostle again expressly appropriated to the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of adoption.

And that this may be made more clear, the next words are more full, “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.” Now if the question be asked, how shall I know whether I be a child of God, or no; the answer is, “the Spirit testifies with our spirits, that we are the children of God;” and that testimony resolves the case; and whereas the apostle saith, “the Spirit itself beareth witness;” his meaning is, that it is the immediate voice of the Spirit, without any instrument; as when we say of a man, he did a thing himself, it implies, he did not do it by another, or by deputies, but in his own person,

and by himself immediately; so the Spirit himself, in his own person comes, and gives this testimony to a man, that he is the child of God.

Look into I Cor.2:9-13, and the case will be even more clear, that there is no satisfaction concerning things freely given of God, but only by the voice of his Spirit; in the beginning of the chapter, the apostle clears himself, that he meant not to deal with them “in the enticing words of men’s wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power.” The word ‘demonstration’ hath a great deal of force among logicians; it is the strongest proof to evince anything that is in question, that can be; it is that kind of proof which carries such light with it, that it cannot be refuted; it is as much as to say, I came not in my own strength, but I came with the Spirit of God, that brings demonstration with him, and that so clear, that there is no gainsaying it; and that this is the meaning here, observe the words in vs. 9, and so on, and you shall see it clearly; for there the apostle saith that, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but {saith he} God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;” as if he should say, there are things prepared by the Lord for his own people, that are so deep and hidden, that eye can never see, ear can never hear, the heart of man can never understand; that is, there is no way to find them out, but only that he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; so that it is plain and clear, that nothing besides can make known those things which the Spirit himself makes known; and he gives the reason, “for {saith he} the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Though there be no diving into the secrets of God, yet “the Spirit of God searcheth all things, even the deep things of God;” and he proves this by an argument thus, “for what man {saith he} 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.” Observe the comparison well; when a man hath some secret thought within himself, and only within his own breast, it may be, of good to such and such a man; while these thoughts are within his breast, who can dive into them, while yet he conceals them within himself? No man but he that thus conceals them; and this is that which the apostle drives at. Even so is it with the secrets of God; the Lord, in his own counsels, hath

set down particularly by name, this and that man and woman; these are mine elect vessels; they shall be saved by Christ, and partake of privileges here and hereafter; this I say, the Lord hath not himself communicated in one word from the scripture, I mean, expressed such a man in particular, as, he hath not said, thou Thomas, thou art the man I mean, these things concern thee; things concerning particular persons, are concealed and hid in the breast of the Lord; but, although it be hid there, in respect of any particular vessel that shall be made partaker thereof; though it be concealed, in respect of any visible demonstration; though neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor heart hath understood this peculiar dignity; yet the Lord reveals this by his Spirit. Now that the Spirit is able to do it, is clear; for as the Spirit of God knows the things of God; and as he only knows them himself, so he knows those that are freely given us of him; so that if ever you be satisfied in your own spirits, concerning that which is not personally and particularly mentioned in the word of God, as thy name, and my name, which are not recorded there, then we must have it done by the Spirit of God, that only knows the mind of God; for none knows the secret of God, but he that is in God’s breast; none can reveal these, but he alone that lieth in his bosom, the Spirit of God; therefore, II Cor.1:22, the apostle tells us, that God hath “sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

You may find the like expression, Eph.1:13,14, where the apostle saith, “in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” The Spirit is said to be a seal and an earnest given before-hand; but what is it for a person to be sealed, or to receive an earnest? To be sealed, is no more but that whereas the Lord, in his own secret council from eternity, singled out in his own thoughts, such a particular person, and said, he shall be saved; afterwards he comes and sets a mark, as it were, upon him, that so he may be known; as when a man goeth to buy sheep, {bear with the comparison,} he looks upon twenty in a flock, it may be, and he thinks within himself they shall be his; after he hath thus chosen them, by and by he comes and sets his special mark

upon every one of them, that they may be known to be his. So the Lord deals with his people; first, in his thoughts he calls out such a number, and afterwards he comes and sets an evident mark upon them, and seals them; and this sealing is everywhere appropriated to the Spirit of God. {Eph.4:30}

By all these testimonies, I hope you may be abundantly satisfied, that the resolution of this great case, whether or not I have interest in Christ, must be the particular voice of the Spirit of the Lord to the hearts of those, to whom the privileges of Christ do indeed belong; and till there be such a voice, there cannot possibly be a fall resolution of the case.

And yet, for all this universal testimony of Christ and his apostles, how lamentable is it to hear the scorns, out-cries and reproaches of men, against those that dare but say, they know their condition by the Spirit of the Lord; do but tell them, that he informs them of their condition, and speak of his revelation for satisfaction, presently they cry out, these are enthusiasts, have revelations, must be satisfied by the Spirit, before they have satisfaction. I beseech you, take notice, how you blaspheme the Spirit of God, how dare you cast such reproachful terms upon him? Dare you say, he is not given to reveal these things, and for this very purpose? Dare you say, he is not a Spirit of revelation? Is the Spirit of the Lord upon persons out of date now with you? I say, beloved, let men say what they can, till he comes and puts an end to the controversy in the spirit of a man, he shall never be satisfied and resolved.

But some will object; we will not deny but it is the voice of the Spirit that will satisfy the case, but here remains the case yet in question unanswered; suppose I hear such a voice in me, saying, "be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" here is the doubt, this is a mystery; O that the Lord would enable you to fathom it! This is the usual way of men; if the word itself did bear witness to this particular voice of the Spirit in me, then could I be satisfied that this were his voice; but if the word do not bear witness to it, speaking in me, I dare not trust it.

Beloved, let me not be mistaken, I answer, having recourse to the word, to give testimony to this particular applying voice of the Spirit in a man, that he may be resolved it is his; I say, that it is true, the Spirit of the Lord never speaks to any believer, but he

always speaks according to the word of grace revealed; and if his voice and the word be in the soul, {as they go always together in the faithful,} they will agree, as face answers face in a glass; but yet beware, that you make not the credit of the voice of the Spirit, to depend upon the word; as now I ask of any man, which is of the greatest credit, the testimony of the Spirit, or the word barely considered? If you say, the word written is of greater credit than the testimony of the Spirit, then the Spirit wants something in itself of credit; for this is a certain rule; he that is trusted for a surety's sake, he, for whose sake he is trusted, is of greater credit than the other trusted for his sake; so if the word be the surety for which we will credit the testimony of the Spirit, then it is of greater credit than the Spirit itself. But now, let me tell you, it is not the word that makes us believe the Spirit, but it the Spirit that makes us give credit to the word; we do not receive the Spirit because the word testifies of him, but we receive that, because by the Spirit we are enabled thereto. What our Saviour saith of himself, is as true of the Spirit of the Lord, resolving the question or a man's interest in Christ; "if I bear witness of myself, my testimony is true;" so I say, if the Spirit of the Lord testify of himself, that it is he indeed, it is true; for the Spirit himself bears true witness of himself, that he is the Spirit of truth, and not the spirit of delusion.

Suppose that a father meets his child in the dark, the child is afraid, and fears it is not his father; now, is not the father able to satisfy the child of himself that he is indeed the father, except he bring some other man to resolve it that he is? Is a man able to bear witness of himself to resolve a particular question, and will you take away this privilege from the Spirit of the Lord, to satisfy of himself that he is the Spirit of truth, and not the spirit of delusion?

In brief therefore, as it is the testimony of the Spirit, speaking indeed according to the word, that must satisfy us that we are the children of God; so the same must assure us, that he is the true Spirit of God, and not the spirit of delusion; but still I say, he speaking to men, concerning their interest in Christ, always speaks according to the word of grace; and it is most certainly true, that every voice in man speaking peace, contrary to that, is not the voice of the Spirit of the Lord; yet it is only the Spirit of God, that can truly satisfy the spirit of a man, that it is his own testimony,

and not the spirit of delusion.

You may understand the word in a double sense, either for the word of the law, or of grace in the gospel. Now mark, when we say, it is the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirits, according to the word, that we are the sons of God; it is not the word of the law that agrees in this with the voice of the Spirit; that speaks nothing but curses; therefore, if you will regard what the law saith, and compare the voice of the Spirit speaking with it, there will be no agreement. The word, according to which the Spirit of the Lord speaks, when he speaks to his people, is the word of grace, and that is no more but this; that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" {II Cor.5:19;} this is the word of grace, according to which it speaks, reconciling the world to himself; even the world, when men are no otherwise but merely men of the world.

Now, if anything suggest, contrary to this word of grace, it is the voice of the spirit of delusion, and not the Spirit of God.

But how shall I know that this voice, though it be according to the word of grace, is indeed the voice of the Spirit of the Lord?

For answer to this, I must tell you, that as in all arts and sciences, there are some principles that are as ground works, beyond which, there must be no enquiry; so also in divine things, in answering cases of conscience, there must be some principle that must be as the last determining principle, beyond which there must be no further enquiry, nor questioning; as, when a man heareth of something that is to him probable, to clear it up, he would have something to come in that should make that certain, and so satisfy him concerning it. Now that which is the last principle and ground of things, as something there must be, when that comes, a man must be satisfied with that, and question no further concerning the thing, or else he shall never be resolved. So I say to the case in hand, if I would be resolved concerning my interest in Christ, I must take for granted some principle or other, beyond which I must not question, or else there will be question upon question; and so a running in infinitum, and never a conclusion of the case in question. For example, there is the voice of the word of grace that "we are justified freely by his grace;" and this in the spirit of a man, telling him, according to the word that his sins are forgiven him; but how shall

I know, saith he, that this is the voice of the Spirit of God? For answer, let me ask but this question; is there anything of better credit, or rather to be believed, than the Spirit himself? Nay, can any believe but by him? If not, then nothing else is able satisfyingly to bear witness to the soul, but itself; this is as if we should receive the testimony of the Spirit upon the credit of some other thing.

I beseech you, beloved, understand me aright; for here is the voice of the Spirit, speaking in man, according to the revelation of grace in the word, saying, thou art the person that dost partake of this grace; this, I say, is the voice of the Spirit of the Lord, establishing a soul, and it may be satisfied in it; especially when the Spirit of the Lord gives power to it to receive it, speaking in it.

It is true indeed, John saith in I John 4:1, that there must be "a trying of spirits, because all are not of God;" but, if you mark it well, he speaks of the trial of ministers, whether they preach true doctrine or not, and refers not to the trial of the Spirit, testifying according to the word, particularly to a man's self; and for anything to give credit unto, or to be a rule of trial to the Spirit of the Lord; and the voice of it being, as I said, always according to the word, the Lord never appointed anything for that end; for he never intended that anything should be of such credit, as to give credit to his Spirit; but the Spirit himself hath sufficient power of himself, by his own efficacy, to clear his own testimony to the heart of the believer.

Thus I have endeavored both to show that the Spirit of the Lord is he that must satisfy a believer; and also how he alone is able to do it, that nothing else can; that this testimony and voice, being according to the word, is his own, and not a false spirit.

But there is one thing more, very considerable, for the further resolution of the case in hand, that the Spirit of the Lord both speaks, and likewise gives to men, to credit and receive what he speaks.

As for instance, suppose the most honorable man in the world should come, and tell a person, such a friend of yours is dead, and hath left all his estate to you, and that you are the heir; this man may speak the truth and nothing but that, and yet the person may not be satisfied of the truth of it, except he be of such credit with him, that he takes it for truth which he speaks. From hence it comes to pass, that besides the voice of the Spirit of the Lord, there must be a voice in

the spirit of a man to be as an echo, and that is faith; and, therefore, at first, I told you, there were two main evidences; now, when these concur, then is a man resolved. When the Lord hath spoken to the heart of a man, by his Spirit, according to the word, and his faith receives this testimony, then he sits down by it, and seeks no other satisfaction.

But, for this assurance of faith, {seeing there are many things to be spoken of it,} I shall take another opportunity hereafter to handle it.

31 The Assurance Of Faith

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all.” {Is.53:6}

Two things I have proposed to be considered in this passage. 1. Whose iniquities they are, that the Lord hath laid upon Christ; which, after we had handled, we come to the 2nd, how persons may know that their iniquities in particular, are laid upon him. Here I must crave your patience a little, being desired by some, to clear up some particulars formerly delivered, being stumbled at by some, to whom they seem not to be evident enough.

There were two things proposed for the revolving, of this question, How a person may know in particular his own interest in Christ?

1. I discovered the dubiousness of the way that many persons go for the resolving of this case, laying down such arguments, and proposing them in such a way as can never give them satisfaction; that is, a proposing to themselves signs and marks from their sanctification, to be resolved of their interest in Christ. I instanced three particulars; universal obedience; sincerity of heart; and, love of the brethren. Now some have conceived, that herein I have directly stuck at the heart of these particulars, as if I attempted the overthrow of them; but mistake not, beloved, I spake only of their insufficiency to give a satisfactory resolution of the great case depending; they are of excellent use in their own kind, sphere, and orb; but, when they are set on work to do those things that are beyond their power, men do but entangle themselves, instead of getting themselves loose. Universal obedience, as it is practiced, leaves the case very doubtful, in respect of its many imperfections; and, in that regard, it cannot

of itself determine the case, but there will be scruples arising from it.

I said, there is no such thing in the world, as universal obedience, if you take it according to the property of speech; for that is obedience to all things; that is the true meaning of the phrase. Now, there is no man under heaven that is obedient to all things, for “in many things we sin all,” saith James. It cannot then be universal, so long as there are so many particular failings in the hearts and ways of men. Universal, some say, in the purpose of the heart, though not in practice. I answered, the purposes of the heart are many times extremely corrupt; there is not a constancy of actual purpose of heart toward the will of God; many times there is an indisposition of heart; and averseness of spirit, to many things God requires; witness the case of affliction, what contesting is there with the will of God in bearing it! What groaning under it with a kind of impatience at least! Not that pleasure taken in it as God intends, and as the thing itself deserves. Afflictions are for the good of God’s people; “they shall bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them that are exercised therein;” and, as they are good, they must not be distasteful, but rather affected; as a man prizes such a physician that can bring a medicine to cure his disease; yea, the very medicine itself, though bitter for the present. But how far the hearts of men are from being thus disposed, even believers themselves {for they have too many such frailties} appears by their own experience. Where is that constant disposition and propensity of their spirits, to the whole will of God?

And yet, I say, if there were a kind of obedience in men, yet that cannot be an evidence to determine the case of itself; that which must be an evidence, must be proper and peculiar; if it be common to unbelievers and enemies of God with believers, it is no distinguishing mark; but, in Phil.3:6, the apostle saith of himself, that while he was a persecutor, even at that time, “according to the righteousness of the law. He was blameless.” He walked strictly and exactly, without blame, and yet was a persecutor. Now, I ask this question, suppose that a man’s heart tells him that he walks blameless according to the righteousness of the law, as the heart of Paul said; this will not prove him to be in a better estate than he was, who was even then a persecutor, not converted to the faith;

therefore there may be a walking blamelessly in the righteousness of the law before conversion. For my part, I desire to see further light in this truth; but, to me, it seems, as plain and clear as the day, that from the express words of the apostle himself, a blameless heart there may be, and certainly strict to all the will of God, and yet a man be in the state of nature.

For sincerity of heart, in doing things to the Lord, with respect to him, what that is the apostle expresses in the true nature of it, saying, “servants, obey your masters in all things, in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord.” There is a singleness of heart to the Lord, when the heart hath an eye to him in all that it doth. If it hath any wrong ends, it is not sincerity, because that is sincerity that is done for the Lord. Now, where shall a man find rest in the examination of his own sincerity, that he may have peace by it, so long as men find, upon examination, so much self? I dare be bold to say, that believers have actually in their thoughts, themselves in their performances, more than they have God in them; and they find stronger impressions in their spirits to do, with regard to themselves, than to the Lord. It is an infirmity in them, and I grant; they may not allow of it; but the thing is true, there is a constant selfishness in that which men do. If therefore, upon examination, the heart must of necessity accuse itself, as being extremely selfish, how can a man conclude certainly, a sincerity, where there is so much opposition and contrariety to it? But suppose there may be sincerity; let it be granted, people may be sincere in their own hearts. The Jews that were enemies to Christ, had sincerity according to God, that is the true property of sincerity; Rom.10:2,3, “for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God,” here is the fervency of sincerity; a “zeal for God.” If their zeal had been never so hot, had it been for themselves, though it seemed for God, yet it had not been sincerity; but if there be zeal, and that for God, this is sincerity, in the proper nature of it; and if they had taken a wrong course, and gone a wrong way in their zeal for God, it might not be true sincerity; but they had a zeal for God, and this was exercised in the will of God himself; for they went to establish their own righteousness, and that “was according to the law of Moses,” as you see in ver.3-5. Here is that we describe to be sincerity, namely, earnestness of heart, in the doing of that which the law of God requires, and that for God himself; and yet,

“they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God;” where it is plain, they were enemies to the Lord, and Christ, while they had such zeal to God.

As for the point of love to the brethren, there is much stumbling, as I conceive, at that raised from the text, I John 3:14. Hence men conclude that the love of the brethren is an infallible mark of itself, that they are the children of God in Christ; for answer to it, I think the apostle may be understood in this passage of one believer knowing another, by the love expressed one to another. But you will say, “why may he not, mean as will, we may know ourselves by it?” I answer this, and profess, let us love never so well, there will be cause of suspicion, or occasion at the least, that our love is not sound, such as it should be; for if we understand how the apostle describes the love of the brethren, {I Cor.13:1-8,} where he recites many circumstances, qualities, or properties, essential to it; as that “love seeketh not her own, love is not puffed up, it envieth not;” with many others; I say, if a person will but examine his love to the brethren, by those many particulars in that place, I know his heart cannot but tell him that he is exceeding faulty in all these; it will tell him, I am quite contrary to this rule in my heart; I have, and do much seek myself in the love of my brethren; I am much puffed up over them; I have been too much a censurer of their ways; I have exalted myself too high, &c. I say, a true enlightened, tenderhearted man, that can but look back and search into the several turnings and windings of his own heart, concerning the love that he hath to the brethren, will find his heart will be still accusing him, and as long as it is, surely it is not speaking peace; where there is an accusation brought against a man, there is not an absolving, or discharging him by the same voice; but the love that we have to the brethren, is exceeding blame-worthy, in regard of the imperfection of it; and all that blame-worthiness will stare in a man’s face, and accuse him as defective in it. Now, if there be suspicion in the heart, there cannot be quietness in the mind.

But to go on; I do not determine peremptorily, that a man cannot, by way of evidence, receive any comfort from his sanctification;⁹² I will give you

⁹² So that the Doctor does not deny sanctification to be an evidence of a man’s state, and of his interest in Christ, and title to heaven, only of a lesser kind, and after-evidence; and, indeed, faith, which he makes to be the receiving evidence, is a branch, and a principle branch, of sanctification. Gill.

somewhat for the clearing of my judgment, which I know is according to truth; namely, that the Spirit must first reveal the gracious mind of the Lord to our spirits, and give us faith to receive that testimony, and to sit down as satisfied with it, before ever any work of sanctification can possibly give any evidence; but when the testimony of the Spirit is received by faith, and the soul sits down satisfied with it, then all the gifts of the Spirit bear witness together with it, and with faith.

In brief, beloved, all the righteousness that ever mere man reached unto, since the fall, of itself, was never able to say, upon good grounds, such a person is a child of God; nay, I will go higher, the very word of grace is not able to speak to a soul, till the Spirit of the Lord speaks; this seems strange; but, beloved, give me leave to appeal a little to your own experience; for how many times, have some of you heard such words, of grace as revealed in the gospel, published unto you; as may revive the hearts of men! It may be, you have read them over, meditated on them, and endeavored to reason out your comfort from them; and yet all this while, they have been dumb to your spirits; they have been like a dry tree, or rather a tree in winter, without the appearance of sweetness from them, or in them; at another time, the same word of grace is marrow and fatness to your spirits; what should make such difference, that a man should find fatness in it at one time, and yet should be so dry to him at another? All the difference lieth in this; when the Spirit of the Lord will speak himself with the word of grace, it shall be sweet and satisfactory; when he will be silent, the word shall not speak anything; for, indeed, that is but the trumpet of the Spirit; if the Spirit blow, the trumpet makes a sound; if it blow not, it makes none at all; as he speaks in the word of grace, so the melody of it ravishes the ears and hearts of believers; but if he himself will be silent, there is no music in the word.

I came further to consider how a man may then come to know his portion or interest in Christ. First, the Spirit of grace speaking to the hearts of God's people, according to the word of grace, is the revealing evidence. I cleared this out of such testimonies of scripture, as I thought none could have contradicted; he is therefore called the Comforter, because he speaks peace to the people of God; he is therefore said to take of the things of Christ, and show them to them; he

is therefore called the "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." No man under heaven can say God is my Father, with propriety, but by the Spirit of adoption; men may with lip service say, our Father, but in spirit, comfort, confidence, and knowledge, that the Lord is their Father, it is impossible any should say it, but by the Spirit of adoption; "the spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God."

To draw to a conclusion of this subject; this Spirit of the Lord always speaks according to the word of grace; but doth not receive its credit from it. The word of grace is the visible voice of the Spirit; his testimony to the hearts of believers, is the hidden voice; and it is impossible they should jar, because both proceed from one and the self-same Spirit of truth; therefore, there is always a necessary argument between the word of grace and the voice of the Spirit; so that you may safely conclude, if there be a voice speaking in the heart of a man, contrary to the word, it is not the voice of the Spirit; yet, nothing is able to satisfy a person, that such a voice is the voice of the Spirit indeed, but he himself that speaks it. I will go higher; no person under heaven is able, upon satisfied grounds, to say, the word of grace is the word of God, but by the Spirit's testimony. All the arguments in the world can never satisfy men with conviction, that this book is the word of God, but the Spirit of the Lord bearing witness, concerning the truth of it. I know this is taken to be a strong argument, and thought to be convincing in the judgment of most men, to prove that the word of grace is the word of God, namely, the exceeding power and force it hath upon the spirits of men; for, say they, nothing but the word of God could have such predominance over them. Beloved, I beseech you to be not mistaken, as if I spake against the word of grace, or the truth or authority of it; only let me show you the true foundation, whereby you may be enabled to rely upon it, and be convinced of the truth and infallibility of it; for I dare be bold to say, human words work sensibly, as strong impressions upon the spirits of wicked men, as ordinarily the word of grace works upon the spirits of believers. For example, to a person condemned to die, looking for his execution, there comes a word of grace from the king that his life shall be spared, what impressions do these words work upon that condemned wretch! What a print

hath it upon his spirit! What raptures of joy doth it produce! I think there are few believers that will say; they are ordinarily sensible of stronger impressions upon their own spirits by the word of God, than such malefactors have by the words of a prince. Again, a fierce and tyrannical master comes to his servant, or scholar, speaking big and terribly to them, sometimes strikes them with terror and amazement; sometimes also, the terror of a king's voice hath struck dead a person against whom he was incensed; another hath gone home, and never enjoyed himself again, out of the extremity of the grief, and deepness of impression such words have had upon his spirit; such dread the words of a king work upon the spirits of men, especially if there be dependency upon him. Oh then, thinks he, all is lost and gone, he is undone forever, if the king do but frown upon him. The thundering of the law works terrors upon the spirits of men, it is true; but, certainly, beloved, there hath been well-nigh as deep and strong impressions made in the natural hearts of men, from the terrible words of a king, as from the terror of the law; at least, so strong, that many times you are not able to find such from any divine words, as from such human words; and therefore, such an argument as this, though it be probable and useful, yet it is not infallible to prove the truth of the word of God, and so give satisfaction to the spirits of men, of the truth of it; the proof indeed, that must be satisfying in conclusion is this, the Spirit of the Lord satisfies the spirits of believers, that it is his word; and so, after much dispute, the most solid divines resolve the case, that he must determine the point, and resolve it; not but that there is an unchangeable stability in the word, and a man may be satisfied of it; all that I aim at, is this, to reduce you to that principle that indeed gives true satisfaction, and not dwell only in such that will admit of some dispute.

Now, to the second evidence, whereby persons may come to know their interest in Christ; the former was a revealing and working evidence; this we shall now speak of is a receiving evidence, and this is the faith of a believer; though the Spirit of the Lord reveals his mind to men, yet they are not fully resolved concerning it, till by faith they receive it.

An honest man may come and tell a friend, there are such and such lands settled upon thee; but he is not resolved of it, though the man speak never so true,

except he give credit unto him, and so receives his testimony; but when a man first speaks the truth, and his credit is such, that he to whom he speaks receives it, then he is satisfied, but not till then.

The Spirit of the Lord brings the thoughts of God to the elect, telling them, that he is their salvation; now, until they receive this testimony, and believe it, they are never resolved; but when they receive and believe it, that it is a true testimony, then they sit down satisfied.

When a man brings word such legacies are given you, and you credit him, then you are satisfied, but not before. Concerning this evidence of faith, I shall propose two things to your consideration. 1. How the scriptures plentifully authorize faith, to this business of evidencing our interest in Christ. 2. What kind of evidence this believing holds out in scripture.

1. If you will mark the scripture well, you find that it authorizes faith in a believer, to give full evidence concerning interest in Christ; for the clearing of this, a solid argument that necessarily infers a conclusion, is a full proof of it; look into Acts 13:38,39, and you will see, how necessarily it must be received, that faith gives interest in the privileges of Christ. "Be it known unto you therefore, {saith the Apostle,} men and brethren, that through this man {namely, Christ} is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Out of this text I argue thus, if there be justification from all things where there is believing, this believing is a proof of it; the conclusion that necessarily follows from the argument, also infers the proof of it, and its validity; the apostle here endeavors to prove, that every person that believes is justified from all things; if therefore thou dost believe, this is a certain truth that thou art justified from all things, from which thou couldst not be justified by the law of Moses. It is an undeniable argument, because the apostle affixes justification to believing; he doth not give the effecting of justification to it; but annexes it to believing; as the evidence; every one that believes is justified, though it is not believing, by the worthiness of its own act, that justifies the person.

But I will clear it further; some will be moving objections against the effectualness of faith, as the Spirit of the Lord is in it to satisfy the spirits of

believers concerning their interest in Christ; therefore look into Rom.15:13, where the apostle proves a fulness of evidence in faith, concerning all things that may fill up joy. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Do but observe the phrase well; all joy and peace, in the fulness thereof, come to persons in believing. What is it for a man to have fulness of joy? This consists not only in the apprehension of goodness in a thing, but in the propriety of it, and the security that it shall not miscarry. A man may know there is great treasure in such a place, and not joy in it, if it be not his; and if it be his, and in danger to miscarry, and be taken from him, it doth not fill him with joy; there is not this joy, except there be assuredness that it is not in danger, then is there joy indeed; for even all the fulness of Christ for the sons of men, though apprehended for the extent of it in general, hath not power to work joy in their spirits, that cannot apprehend this fulness to themselves in particular; men may come to have some glimpse of it, but they only joy in it, that find their names written, and have propriety in it.

Again, though there be propriety, yet except the person be secure from miscarriage in it, he will be in fear and sadness; so that there cannot be fulness of joy; therefore it must follow, that where there is that, there is not only propriety, but also security, in respect of the safety of it. Now, saith the apostle, "God fills you with all joy in believing;" but except believing could appropriate the excellencies of Christ to particular persons, and secure them concerning the safety of these, that they shall not miscarry, this believing could not be the instrument of all joy; therefore, it must needs follow, there is a satisfying-ness in believing, in that there is all joy in it and by it. A man that is at law, is never quiet, till his case be determined; as long as there is fear that the sentence of the court, or suspicion, the cause will go against him, so long he is unquiet; but when the sentence is given, and given for him, then he is at rest; even so, you can never be at quiet, if your hearts be enlightened and convinced of your natural estate, but you must be full of fear, till you know the sentence of the Lord concerning you; it must therefore follow, that that which brings peace to men must clear to them what that sentence is; for, saith the apostle, "the God of hope doth fill you with

all joy and peace in believing." In believing, then, the soul receives peace, that is, it receives the answer and sentence of the Lord concerning itself, even the sentence of peace; for there cannot be peace till it be satisfied of this.

If this testimony will not serve, you shall find how the Holy Ghost appropriates full assurance to faith; and therefore, faith must needs be a very excellent and satisfying evidence. In Col.2:2, you see how clear the apostle is in this; for in verse 1, he tells the Colossians, what conflicts he had with his spirit in their behalf, to this end, that "their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Observe, he speaks here of the riches of full assurance of understanding and acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus, with God and the Father. What is it for a man to understand and acknowledge the Lord Jesus, but believing? To acknowledge him, is to believe in him. Now saith the apostle, there are riches of full assurance in this understanding and acknowledgment; and, in verse 5, he tells us expressly, wherein, this full assurance of understanding and acknowledgment stands; "joying {saith he} and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." So then, that stedfastness of faith is the full assurance of understanding, and acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ. Some grant that faith hath an evidencing power in it, only as it concurs with other evidences, and so gives full assurance; but the apostle doth not only appropriate assurance, but even fulness of assurance, to faith alone.

But, you will say, perhaps the text is somewhat dark, and may be otherwise understood. That I may therefore clear the matter more fully, and stop the mouths of all gainsayers, I will allege the words of the apostle, that assurance is of faith, and even full assurance; "let us draw near {saith he} with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." {Heb.10:22} Here you see expressly, that full assurance is applied to faith, and he lays down the ground of it in the next words, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Now, what is it that can sprinkle and purge the accusing and corrupt conscience, but the blood of Christ? If there be any sin upon it, whereby it becomes an accusing and an evil

one, that cannot be pacified and quieted, till the blood of Christ comes “that takes away the sin of the world;” and this is that which sprinkleth the conscience, from whence there is full assurance of faith; so that faith fetches full assurance to the spirits of men, not from within themselves, but from without, even from that that sprinkles the hearts of an evil conscience.

Now then, if faith receives a full assurance, certainly it must needs be an unquestionable evidence, with which a man may be satisfied in all enquiries. What is the end of enquiries, but the assurance of a thing? When a man is already assured, especially fully assured of a thing, he never enquires any further, or calls for more witness. Look but upon your trials at law; there comes in one witness, and he speaks point blank {as they say} to the case, and makes it as clear as the day; by him the judge is fully satisfied of the case; he will bid all other witnesses stand by, he hath heard enough. So the apostle tells us, there is a “full assurance of faith;” doth faith assure a man, wherefore doth he then enquire further? When he hath enquired his heart out, he can attain but to assurance, at most but to full assurance, he can but be satisfied; if he have this by believing, what need he look further? If witness comes in, even after a full testimony is given, it doth but spend time, for the first witness hath given sufficient satisfaction; so, if the Spirit of the Lord come in, and bear witness, that such a soul is interested in Christ; when he, and the faith of a believer, give their evidence, and raise full assurance from that evidence given, for what purposes serve all other evidences?

Consider one place more, and it is of great moment, I John 5:7-10; where the apostle speaks as much of witnessing, as is spoken in all the scripture; “there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one; and there are three that bear record on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one.” Mark that expression well, “these three agree in one.” What are these three that agree in one, you say? There is a great deal of dispute about the meaning of spirit, water, and blood. Beloved, the dispute will end, if you observe the next words, “he that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness in himself;” they agree in one; in what? In believing; as much as to say, a man hath as much witness and evidence as can possibly be desired, when he hath believing within himself; for in

that agree these three witnesses, the spirit, the water, and blood. The apostle clears the matter farther, how there is sufficient evidence in believing alone, in the next words; “he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar;” he being willing to clear this, that faith is sufficient to resolve a soul of its interest in Christ, doth it thus; when a man believes it, then he takes God’s bare word, without any other testimony, and sits down, and subscribes to it; but, when he dares not believe that word, but requires more evidence to satisfy him, that God hath appointed, but will have signs and marks drawn from his own works, as well as the word of grace, to give him assurance, he makes God a liar. How so? Because he doth not take God for a God of truth, which when he hath spoken, will not sit down with it, but will call for further evidence. But, when men seek after signs and marks to testify to God’s word of grace, that he hath spoken, or God shall not be believed, what is this but to make him a liar? Suppose a man brings tidings of such large deeds of gift; but, except another come and testify with him, he shall not be believed; what do we esteem him better than a liar? I am sure he doth not take him for a true man, if he did he would be satisfied with his testimony; this is the sense of the apostle, “that he that believes not, makes God a liar,” in his testimony to the sons of men; this makes it clear that there is a large evidencing faculty in believing.

Let us now see what kind of evidence believing gives; for as I said before, it is not a revealing, nor an affecting, but it is a receiving evidence; or it is an evidence as it receives that testimony which the Spirit holds out, applying it unto the heart; it is an evidence, as an officer in court is one upon trial of a case, that speaks nothing of his own knowledge, but produces records, and testifies to the authenticity of them; the life of evidence is materially in the records themselves, but the officer is an evidence, as he asserts the truth of them.

It is even so with faith; the Spirit of the Lord makes the records, and speaks them to the heart; faith comes in, and receives the truth of them. In brief, faith is an evidence, as it takes possession of that which the Spirit of the Lord reveals and manifests to a person; I say, as it takes possession, or as it enters upon the deed of gift, the Spirit of the Lord brings to the heart. Possession is a good evidence in land; let a man prove he had

lawful possession given him, and that proves his title to be good. The Spirit indeed, makes the title good, but faith makes good the entry and possession, and so clears the title to us, though good in itself before; faith is nothing else but the receiving of Christ, that enters upon the possession of him.

To apply it to our purpose in hand; would you know that the Lord hath laid your iniquities upon Christ? So you must know it thus; is there a voice behind thee, or within thee, saying, particularly to thee in thyself, “thy sins are forgiven thee?” Dost thou see this voice agree with the word of grace, that is, dost thou see it is held out to most vile and wretched creatures, as thou art? And, upon this revelation of the mind of the Lord by his Spirit, according to that word, doth he give thee to receive that testimony of the Spirit, to sit down with it as satisfied, that, upon that agreeing with the word of grace, thou makest full reckoning thou hast propriety in this, particularly to thyself? If thou dost receive the testimony of the Spirit, according to that word, here is thy evidence; thou hast thy propriety and portion in this. How will this be made good, you say? Consider John 1:12,13, “but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Mark first, that receiving him, is called believing on him; or in his name; and, observe what follows, “as many as did receive him, to them he gave power;” so it is in our translation; but in the original, the word may be rendered, he gave them right or privilege, or he gave a warrant, as I may so say. As when kings give out their warrants, they thereby authorize persons to such and such offices; so the receiving of Christ hath this consequence, namely, Christ’s authorizing or warranting a person to be an adopted son; from whence it follows most clearly, that when persons believe, there needs no more but that, to give them propriety, to authorize and warrant them to claim the adoption of sons.

But you will say, there is a dead faith in the world, and a man may presume of receiving Christ; and therefore there must be something to give witness to faith, before the case be resolved by faith itself. I answer, wherever there is a receiving of Christ indeed, there cannot be presumption in that act; let the person be what he will, if there be but a real receiving, and

true believing; for the text saith, “as many as believe in his name, he gave them right to be the sons of God;” mark also what Christ himself saith, “he that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast him off.” What is coming to Christ, you say? Christ tells you himself, “he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall not thirst;” that which he calls coming first, he calls believing next; so that coming and believing are one; as if he had said, “he that believes in me, shall in no wise be cast away.”

But you say, I am such and such a sinner, such a gross, vile, and filthy creature; guilty of so many abominable sins; this is that which will cause him to cast off those that come to him. Nay, beloved, let me tell you, this is quite contrary to the text; for he saith expressly, “I will in no wise cast out;” I say, even enmity itself, which is the highest pitch of sinfulness, is no bar to the receiving of Christ, or any bar to the enjoyment of his privileges in receiving of him; “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” {Rom.5:10} But you say, if there be not fruits of faith, that faith is a dead faith, therefore there must be something to evidence with it, or else its evidence is nothing worth.

Beloved, that which is only credited for another’s sake, hath no credit at all given to it; for if a witness come, and swear clearly to a case, and his testimony will not be taken or received, except another come in and give testimony to him, and what he hath sworn; the first man’s testimony is of no force, because it is not received for itself; so if faith be not able of itself to give testimony, or must not be credited when it doth, except something will come and testify for it, to give credit unto it, its testimony is of no worth at all.

Again, that which hath the whole essence of faith is not a dead, but a living faith; now, the whole essence of faith, is nothing but the echo of the heart, answering the foregoing voice of the Spirit, and word of grace. “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” saith the Spirit and word of grace; “my sins are forgiven me,” saith faith. And the soul that can assume thus from the Spirit and word of grace, hath the whole essence of believing; it is true, there are fruits of faith, as love by which it works, and several others, which are begotten of God by his Spirit through it; “for the grace of God that brings salvation, appearing;” that is, being apprehended by faith, “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and

worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” {Tit.2:12} It is not faith that originally begets any grace, but it is the conduit pipe through which the Lord is pleased from himself, and of his own accord, to convey the other gifts of the Spirit. If therefore, the echo to the voice of the Spirit, and word of grace, be the essence, nay, the whole essence of believing; this is certain, where there is receiving or believing, there cannot be a dead faith. The truth is, that faith which fetches its evidence from man’s righteousness, is dead; for the ground of a lively faith, is righteousness, wholly without a man’s self; that faith, therefore, that maketh anything within a man’s self its ground, that is not right; for there is no believer but seeth so much filthiness, even in his own righteousness, that his faith necessitates him to go out of himself, and everything in him, and to fetch all argument of righteousness wholly from without, even in Christ the Rock; so then, whatever faith builds itself upon, anything within a man’s self is a sandy foundation; the righteousness of Christ, and not of man, being the rock. For a man to believe, I am justified before God, upon this consideration, because I am holy, is to make a man’s own sanctity the ground of his faith, and so destroy the nature of true faith. All men receive this principle, that the promises of the gospel, are the grounds of men’s believing, and they are nothing else but the free grant of God to men, of his own accord, for his own sake; now to turn the free grace of God, granted unto men, into the righteousness we perform in ourselves, and instead of making that, make man’s righteousness the ground of our faith; what is this but to destroy the life of it, and so it must needs be a dead faith indeed?

In a word, if any remain unsettled in what I have delivered or desire further satisfaction therein, I entreat them to set down in their memories, or notes, what I have delivered; and likewise to bear in mind the allegations and proofs I have brought for the confirmation of the same, and I shall endeavour to give them satisfaction. For my own part, the Lord knows, all I aim at is, that our God, in our Saviour Jesus Christ, might have the pre-eminence in all things; that not only our salvation and justification might have their rise from Christ alone, but that our peace of conscience might be fetched from thence; and that he that gives to us the great things of the

gospel, might speak the same things by himself, or by his Spirit, unto us, according to his word, and so we rest satisfied upon that. If any thing swerves from this principle in all that I have delivered, I myself abhor it. To make the evidence of the Spirit, according to the word of grace, and the faith of a believer, no infallible testimonies of our interest in Christ, must of necessity produce this effect, to rest and build upon our own works, and to give the glory of our peace of conscience and comfort thereunto; but to preach that it is only these that evidence to us our interest in Christ, is to give unto the Lord Jesus the honor and glory of all, and to assume nothing at all unto our own works.

Thus, beloved brethren, you have heard the admirable grace of God. Oh; let not there be such a heart in any, as to turn it into wantonness! Oh; let not any one continue in sin, because so much grace hath abounded; but let it “teach you to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously and soberly in this present world.” For my own part, whatever others may think, I abhor nothing so much as a licentious undertaking to continue in any sin, because such fulness of grace hath abounded; and I hope assuredly, that the God of grace and mercy, will keep by his power to salvation, all those whom he delivers; and that he will so sow the seeds of grace in their hearts, that they may not sin, that is, presumingly break out of purpose, in hope of pardon before-hand; and I hope also, that God will meet with such as are disturbers of the truth of Christ, and peace of the gospel, by their base and vile conversation. And I recommend to them {if there be any such here} the reading of the Epistle of Jude, where they may see the fearful wrath of God upon such persons as abuse the grace of God to sin; that because God freely pardons it, therefore they will sin, and presume to do that which is ever so filthy. O beloved, let not the love of the Lord God in Jesus Christ thus manifested, be so basely requited at your hands; seeing he hath so freely loved you, and given Christ to you, that you might be to the praise of the glory of his grace, in a godly and Christian conversation, whereunto you are ordained. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” {Eph.2:10} And I beseech you to always remember that you cannot answer the free love of God towards you any

other way, but by showing it in a fruitful conversation in the world; and considering that one end for which the Lord did redeem you, was, that you might be a "peculiar people," to himself, "zealous of good works." {Tit.2:14}

32 God's Covenant With His People, The Ground Of Their Security

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." {Is.41:10}

In the former part of this chapter, {which we will speak a little of because it will make way to the discovery of the true scope of this text,} you find the Lord graciously acquainting his people concerning his mind in sending Christ into the world, and what tumults this should raise; how the Lord repelled that outcry; what success he giveth unto Christ, raised up in spite of all the malignity and force against his power and glory.

And it is worthy your observation, beloved, to consider how the Lord manifests this, as a preamble to this very text, in verse 1, he seems to represent unto us the world, under the name of "islands and people," and to present them in such like posture, as Demetrius and his fellows stood in, in Acts 19, upon Paul's setting up of Christ; there was a horrible tumult raised against his doctrine; so it seems, the islands and the people were in such a kind of posture here; therefore the Lord is pleased to call for silence; "Keep silence before me, ye islands;" for such a noise there was, as I may say, that God could not be heard; and therefore, first, he requires silence, and then, instead of that confusion that was among them, in respect of their madness; he desires them to deal somewhat rationally with him, he charges the world to put out all the strength it hath, "bring forth your strong reasons, let them come near, and let us reason together in judgment." Now, that which the Lord speaks, is as intending to hear what they could say for themselves, in their opposition to Christ; for so you see plainly in the 2nd verse, when the Lord had got silence, he pleads the cause of Christ, by way of expostulation; as if he had said, what madness is it in you to set your faces against him! For "who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him

to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings?" Why do you contend in this manner? Can you tell who it is that sets him up? If ye did but know against whom ye rise up, it would appear to yourselves to be a vain contention; and therefore, verse 4, he answers the question himself, and therein shows the vanity of their opposing him. "For {saith he} the Lord hath done it, who is the first, and who is the last." If you fight with me, what will you get by it? Be ye sure, I will manage the thing, it is the work of mine own hands; and it is I that raise him up, even to rule over kings; and therefore you do but kick against the pricks, in your contending with me.

The Lord proceeds further, to show the certainty of the prevalency of Christ, and in verse 3, he goes on to let us see, not only the facility, but also the extent of the prevalency of Christ, both how easily, and how far he should prevail. This matter is of excellent consideration, "He shall pursue, {saith the text} and he shall pass on safely," or as it is in the margin, he shall pass on in peace; as much as to say, when Christ takes upon him to set up his own kingdom and glory in the world, every one that sets his face against him, shall be easily destroyed; therefore Christ shall run quietly, and not after them too hastily; there shall be such softness in his pursuit, that the overcoming of the opposers shall seem to be a time of peace; there shall be such little opposition to him.

In verse 5, the Lord goes on, and tells of the fruit of this conquest Christ shall have, when he comes to reign in his church; the first fruit of it, is terror to them that set their faces against his kingdom, "the islands were afraid;" then he shows what an ill use they made of this fear, whereas it should make them stoop to the scepter of Christ, that was too hard for them; like malefactors indeed, when they saw themselves overmastered, they assembled and gathered themselves together; they hoped to raise up more forces, and then try it out once more with Christ. Besides, you may observe what a politic devilish practice they use; to bring down Christ again, when he was raised; that which hath been the main and grand plot of Satan, even to raise up idols and set them up by Christ, to steal away the hearts of people. It was the policy of Balaam, counseling Balak to lay stumbling-blocks before Israel, to entice them unto the idols of Moab; and it was the counsel of Jeroboam to overthrow the kingdom of Christ, to

set up the calves in Dan and Bethel, that so there may not be a going unto Christ. So you have it, verse 7, "the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, &c." Well, the Lord having thus discovered what opposition there would be, at the setting up of Christ, begins to speak somewhat comfortably unto his own people; just so, the opposition indeed of the world never stirs, nor moves God, because he knows well how he can blast every attempt; yet, because he knows that his people have flesh remaining still in them, the appearance of a tumult, and the opposition of the gospel may per-adventure, put them into an affright. The Lord therefore endeavors to hearten them against the frights they might take, in regard of the outward appearance of opposition; and this he doth in the words of the text; "fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

Now, lest there should be a mistake to whom the Lord directs this speech; for his intent may be mistaken in the extent of the people to whom he speaks; therefore vs. 8, 9, the Lord shows to whom he speaks such encouragements, "but thou, Israel, art my servant, and Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

Some will say, it seems then, that in this text, God's speaking comfort, and encouragement, is confined only unto the people of the Jews, that are the children of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham; and therefore, whatever comfort there is in the text, there is little comfort belongs to us.

Consider verse 9, and then it will appear that though God speaks of Jacob, Israel, and the seed of Abraham, yet he doth not speak of the seed according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; for there you read, "thou whom I have chosen, and taken from the ends of the earth." That Jacob then, and Israel, to whom the Lord speaks these comfortable words are the Jacob and Israel that are called from the ends of the earth. Now, if you would know what is meant by the ends of the earth, the prophet tells you, chapter 43:5-7, "fear not; for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." As much as to say,

this Israel and Jacob, to whom the Lord speaks, not to fear, are a people gathered from the east, north, south, and west; now the seed of Jacob, naturally considered, is not of that extent, as to overspread the world every way; however, the last clause, that it is "even every one that is called by his name," puts it out of doubt, that it extends also to us Gentiles.

This I note, beloved, that so we may not only have a guess that the comfortable language, frequently mentioned by the prophet, belongeth unto us, as well as the Jews; but that we may see that it is the mind of the Lord he hath revealed, that it indeed extends itself unto us; for by the way, solid comfort will not be raised upon mere guesses, or presumptions, taking things for granted, without a good foundation to bear up such comforts. All the comfort people have, when they run upon guesses, is only abiding with them so long as there is not administered an occasion of discomfort; but all comforts will vanish, that have not some foundation when they are struck at, and when some tempest beats against them, therefore it is good to be established in every truth, wherein comfort may be received

1. From this passage, as it hath reference to the coherence, I may observe unto you, that, whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is set up in glory and beauty, he always meets with strong opposition; I say, the Lord Christ, that righteous man, was never raised up, but a storm was raised with him; there is an everlasting fighting against the glorious light of Christ's gospel, whenever it breaks out. You may see the truth of this, beloved, especially, since Christ's personal coming, at all times; no sooner did the apostles begin to preach him, as raised from the dead, but a madness and a fury grew upon those that thought themselves in authority, as the Scribes and Pharisees; their swords were presently drawn, their prisons set open to clap up those that preached Christ; Herod killed one, imprisoned another, intending to kill him too; beloved, I need say little of this, your own experience may now be a sufficient witness of that, which perhaps, you feared long before. Now is come the time of reformation, and purging of the church, of getting up the ark, and bringing Dagon down; you see the fruit of this; what combustions this hath raised in the world; let Christ himself be never so peaceable, yet when he comes, men will quarrel with him; therefore, by the

way, as it is a truth in general, so it is in particular cases; whenever we, the ministers of the gospel, devote ourselves only to set up Christ, and labour mightily at this work, we must expect to have the world about our ears; and for you, beloved, if you dream of peace and rest in the world, finding friendship, and applause with men, while you endeavour to set up the Lord Christ, you mistake exceedingly; you must look for uproars, tumults, and clamors from the world, and there will be these continually attending you.

2. You may observe, as mad and desperate as the world is, and the enemies of Christ are, in fighting and making opposition against him, yet no weapons, formed in this kind, shall prosper. The Lord hath raised Christ up, {saith the text,} and he shall rule over the heathen, and they shall be as "dust before his sword, and as driven stubble before his bow." {vs.2} "Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish." {vs.11} I say, this shall come to pass, and therefore, it is no great matter how majestically the world looks, and how mighty it makes itself; for beloved, if all the world should combine against one person that stands for the cause of Christ, rather than Christ should sink, this person should be able to withstand even the whole world. But however, let that person be borne down to the ground, or overborne with the world, Christ shall never be overborne; he shall reign in glory and triumph, not only in heaven, but also in his church; when all comes to all, let them fight never so desperately, Christ shall be the conqueror; he shall pursue, nay, he shall pass on softly; he shall not need to take any great pains, nor toil, to maintain himself, thus set up, and destroy his enemies, he shall do it with ease.

But this is not what I mean either; I come to the text itself, which is a word of encouragement, held forth to those spirits that are subject to faint and droop, in respect of the afflictions that are likely, or at least, seem to be likely to grow upon the church of Christ. "Fear not, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I am with thee."

In the words, there are two generals very observable. I. The temper of spirit that the Lord aims to reduce his people unto. II. The course he takes to reduce them to it.

The temper of spirit that the Lord desires to reduce

his people unto, is delivered in a double expression, "fear not, be not dismayed;" they are both one, saving that dismayedness is the highest extremity of fear; so then, the temper that he endeavors to reduce them unto, is a quietness, settledness and undauntedness of spirit.

The course that God takes to bring them to this temper of spirit is a proposal of motives and arguments of sufficient effect and prevalency to pull down vain fear out of the heart. "Fear not, for I am thy God, I am with thee," and so forth. The result of the text is briefly this; they need never be afraid, nor dismayed at anything, though it appear ever so hideous, who have God for their God, and present with them, and a help unto them. Beloved, these are times, {as I hinted before,} that require such a cordial as this; for now, in a more eminent way than ever, is the glory of the kingdom of Christ contested, and attempted to be thrown down to the dust. Now, when we hear of evils, our hearts are subject to be dismayed, and especially when we see them with our eyes; the sword is drawn, nay, blood is drawn; the hearts of men are full of faintings, and many almost at their wits ends; many begin to suspect what will become of things, out of the fainting and suspicion of their spirits; and, therefore now, it is time to bring forth, out of the treasures of the Lord, that which may stay the spirits of his people; that is, such an encouragement as he himself gives which will be the best way to establish our hearts, namely, when God will say to a soul, "fear not, be not dismayed; for I am thy God;" it is a cup of consolation indeed; and that we may draw it forth to you, with the better advantage to drink of it, let us take these particulars into consideration.

1. What it is, not to fear, nor to be dismayed. 2. What it is, that we must not fear and be dismayed at. 3. What the fruit of fear or dismay is; or what prejudice or disadvantage fear and dismay bring along with them. 4. We shall then consider the motives of the Lord, to take us off from these distempers of fear and dismay; namely, because God is our God; and in that we shall consider.

1. What it is for God to be thy God. 2. What strength there is in this argument, how this takes off fear and dismay. 3. And, seeing there is such strength in it, we shall consider how God becomes the God of men, that so you may see the way to enter into this privilege to

have God for your God, and so to be secured from fear and dismay.

What it is for a person not to fear, nor be dismayed. I have observed, concerning all the passions and affections of men, that the sense of them far better opens their nature, than any discourse possibly can. When a fit of fear, especially when the height of it, seizes upon a spirit, that spirit may read a plainer lecture to itself of that passion, than all the rhetoric of men can express; I mean, fear is such a passion, as everyone knows better, by those experiments they have of it, what it is, than another is possibly able to describe.

It is a very distracting, disturbing, confounding passion; it is a kind of besotting passion, that makes men lose themselves, especially if it be in the extremity of fear; it arises from an apprehension of some unavoidable, insupportable evil, growing upon a person, and occasioned, either by some symptoms of that evil, or by some messenger or other relating it, or by some foresight of it in the eye. Now, as evil appears greater or less, and more or less tolerable, so the passion of fear is more or less in persons. I will give you a touch of the nature of this passion, in the words of the psalmist, where he sets it forth, by its contrary, by what it is not to be afraid or dismayed, "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies." {Psa.112:7-8} Mark the phrases, and in them, you have a full lecture of a heart not afraid, nor dismayed. First, it is a heart that is not moved nor stirred; suppose evil grows on, it may be the sword, the enemy appears bigger and bigger; still the dangers are greater and greater; what is it now not to be afraid? It is, not to be moved at all at any time; so far forth as the appearance of danger moves the heart, or turns it, so far he is afraid; so the other phrase imports, "his heart is fixed." You know, that fear in the heart, is often times expressed by the shaking and trembling of it; and therefore, the Holy Ghost expresses it also by the shaking of the tops of trees; it causeth an unsteadfastness of spirit. Now, saith the psalmist, "they shall not be afraid, whose hearts are fixed;" that is, as a post that is set deep in the ground, and rammed in, stands fast, so that if you thrust against it, it stirs not, it is fixed; so, when anything beats against the heart to

shake and overthrow it, when the heart of a man stirs not at it, it is a fixed heart, and is not afraid. And so the phrase that follows, "his heart is established," signifies that it is made stable and firm, that it cannot be shaken. In brief, to have a heart not afraid, nor dismayed, is to have a heart calm, that looks with a regardless eye, {as I may say,} upon evils when they grow out. You shall see, beloved, this affection or temper of spirit, "not to be afraid," in the sense I mention, excellently described in Daniel 3:16, and there, whenever you would know whether you be afraid or no, you shall find always, as in a lecture, the thing discovered unto you. You know what danger was in the eyes of those three children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; for there was a hot fiery furnace prepared for them, seven times hotter than ordinary; the king proclaims, that whatever he be that will not fall down and worship his image, should presently be cast into this furnace; this was enough to startle a person, and make him tremble; but, how is the temper of the three children expressed? "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." These threatenings, though very fearful in the eyes of others, seemed nothing to them, they made a hush at it. Even so, people are then free, who, when evil is coming, care not for it. A man, when he cares not for anything that assails him, rushes in up upon it; and though it seem to threaten him some mischief, yet he is confident it cannot hurt him. So far as you can overlook evils drawing on you, more or less, not regarding them in respect of any hurt they can do you, so far are you free from fear.

You will say, none can have such a temper of spirit, when dangers are growing, especially great and thick upon them. No? What say you of these three children? I speak of men now, they were careless. You will say, it may be, but that was an extraordinary case. Nay, you find, that the very ground of the undaunted-ness of their spirits, was the same which the Lord proposes in this text, to put us out of fear. "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us." The carelessness of their spirits was grounded upon a common principle of the whole church, and upon the same the Lord proposes to all the rest of his people, they being confident God was their God, neither the greatness of the king, nor the violence of his threatenings, could stir them a jot; they were all nothing to God, who was their God, who was

able to deliver them, and would deliver them. Their confidence in this was that which made them break forth into this bold expression, "we are careless to answer thee in this matter." But now, let us consider.

What the people of God should not fear. What, to be afraid of nothing? Doth not the Lord himself commend fear to men? Nay, is not God himself called the fear of Isaac? And yet would you make us believe, that we should have no fear? I answer, there is a three-fold fear; there is a natural, a religious, and a turbulent fear. A natural fear is nothing, but such an affection as is in men by nature, that they cannot be freed from; such a fear was in Christ himself, without sin. A religious and godly fear, is nothing but an awful reverence, whereby people keep a fit distance between the glorious majesty of God, and the meanness of a creature, and it is opposed to sauciness; a turbulent fear, is a fear of disquiet-ness; now all disquieting fear, is that which the Lord endeavors to take off from his people.

Well, but what are the things, you will say, that we should not be afraid of, nor dismayed at? Perhaps I shall pitch upon things, people are much afraid of, and will think strange they should not. I must tell you, the people of God, need not be afraid of their sins; and yet, let me not be mistaken, I do not say, they must not be afraid to sin, but they need not be afraid of their sins; they that have God for their God, there is no sin that ever they commit that can possibly do them any hurt. Therefore, as their sins cannot hurt them, so there is no cause of fear in their sins they have committed.

Some will be ready to say, this is strange; all the evils in the world that come, grow up from the sinfulness of men. If a man be afraid of anything, he should be afraid of sin, from whence all evils flow.

I answer, beloved, it is true, sin naturally is a root bringing forth all manner of evil fruit. "The wages of sin is death;" but yet, whatever sin in its own nature brings forth, yet the sins of God's peculiar people, that have God for their own God, can do them no hurt, and in that regard, there is no cause of fear from any they have ever committed. Beloved, I conceive this may seem somewhat harsh to some, especially, such as misconceive the drift I aim at, which is not to encourage any unto sin, but to ease the consciences of the distressed. I desire you to resolve with yourselves this one thing, so far as the Lord reveals it, so far you

will sit down contented with his mind revealed to you; and I beseech you, kick not against the truth. There is not one sin or all the sins together, of any one believer, that can possibly do that believer any hurt, real hurt, I mean; and therefore he ought not to be afraid of them.⁹³

How will that be made good, you will say? I will make it appear out of Rom.7:14-25; it is true that the apostle expresses himself in heavy complaints against such sins as befall believers, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I;" insomuch, that in the last verse but one, he with much vehemence, puts the question thus, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Some will be ready presently to say, here you see plainly is a fear of sin, or ought to be; here is a body of death in men to be afraid of. But give me leave to tell you, that the apostle in this chapter, as I conceive, personates a scrupulous spirit, and doth not speak out his own present case, as it was at this time, but speaks in the person of another, yet a believer; and my reason is this, because in respect of his own person, what was become of his sins, was already resolved; therefore, I conceive, he acts the part of a troubled spirit, that in respect of the multitude and prevalency of corruption,

93 This is condemned as an error by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pg.181, through misinterpreted by him; for the Doctor speaks not of the natural evil of sin, and the effects of it, which he represents as odious; but of the penal evil of sin, and the penal effects of it; which the believer need not fear, or that he shall be hurt by it, even eternal damnation, Rom.8:1,33,34; nor does he speak of sin before it is committed, smiling upon a man with a promising countenance, which is most dreadful and odious to the faithful; but, as committed, and lying on the conscience, as he afterwards explains himself; and so Johannes Hoornbeek, "Summa Controversiarum Religionis," pg.714, and Hermann Witsius in "Animadv Iren," chap.12, sec.6, both understood him; and in this sense, sin is not to be feared, nor can it do a believer hurt; that is, bring eternal damnation on him. Dr. Goodwin says the same thing, "if thou believest in Christ, fear not sin; for God, from everlasting, saw all thy sins, and yet for all that he continued to accept thee in his beloved; — the reason is, because Jesus Christ is more beloved of him, than sin is, or can be hated by him; if sin should come to have more interest for hatred, in the heart of God, than Christ hath for love, thou mightest well fear; but he hath accepted thee in his beloved, therefore, be not thou afraid." "Exposition of Ephesians," Vol.1, pg.95. Yet, after all, I am of the same mind I was some years ago, that such expressions should be disused; see my Doctrine of God's everlasting love, &c. pg. 15, and heartily join in the same wish with the excellent Witsius, Iren, chap.13, sect.21, that nothing of this kind might drop from the mouth of a reformed divine; for though sin cannot do any penal hurt to the believer, though it cannot damn him; yet it may damp his spiritual joy, break his peace; yes, his bones, interrupt communion between God and him, dishonor Christ, grieve the Spirit, and cause him to depart for a season. Gill.

was ready to cry out thus; but mark how the apostle answers this question, whether it be his own case or another's, and you plainly see he concludes, though there be such marvelous filthiness and prevalency in sin, yet it cannot do any hurt; but, saith he, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," who will deliver me from this body of death; as much as to say, indeed, till a man look to Christ, there is nothing but matter of bitterness and evil to be seen as the certain fruits of sin; and there can be nothing else, in regard of the evil that is like to follow it. But when persons can once look to Christ, the case is altered. What doth he thank God for? That though naturally a body of death grew up by sin; yet there is no prejudice in this, can come to him, through Christ. Now, that the apostle plainly means, that he thanks God, in that sin could not do him, or others, any hurt; mark how in this thankfulness he expresses himself in chap.8:1, "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh; but after the Spirit." There you see the ground of his thanksgiving; no condemnation to those in Christ. No, you will say, no condemnation in hell; but yet, as there are remainders of sin in God's own people, so there will some evil or other fall upon the commission of sin; mark what the apostle speaks of it, in verse 2 & 3. Would you have the clear mind of the Spirit in it? There it is held forth; "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Here Christ stands for the deliverance of his people from condemnation, and eternal wrath, say some; yea, but saith the apostle, "we are delivered from the law of sin and death;" what is that, but what the law may do to persons, for those sins which are committed by them? Now, what can sin do when it is condemned? It is true, like a traitor, as he is at liberty, he may do mischief, but take him as he is arraigned, condemned, bound and manacled, he can do none. Now sin is condemned to the believer, it can do no hurt at all to him; for what hurt can that do unto a man which is carried into a land of forgetfulness, to avoid further prejudice of such persons as are endangered by it? When men have been found dangerous unto the state; it hath been a common practice, to banish them from the kingdom,

into a place far remote where they cannot have any opportunity of doing any mischief, and when they are banished, they are not to return again, upon pain of death. Now beloved, our scape goat Christ hath carried our sins into a land of forgetfulness.

Consider further; suppose a man be entered into many bonds, for great sums; it is true they remain in force; such a man, is subject to fear arrests; but put the case that these are all canceled, that the debt in the creditor's book be blotted out, what hurt then can these bonds do a man, when the seal is torn off, and all the writing in them blotted out? If a man saw a thousand such bonds, in which he were obliged, it would affright him no more than if he saw none. True indeed, every sin is a great debt, and we commit sins daily and hourly against the Lord; and the torments of hell are the merit of the least sin, for I speak not this to extenuate any sin, but to show the greatness of God's grace, and to ease upon good grounds, distressed consciences. Therefore, such as look upon these sins as un-cancelled, and these debts, as true debts, so long they may work a horror in them; but believers, that are the members of Christ, may read fairly all the sins that ever they have committed, also the desert of them, which should be executed upon them, if they were not blotted out; but mark what the Lord speaks, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25} Now, what prejudice can that do, that is blotted out? Every debt of a believer is cancelled, so that the Lord himself hath nothing at all to lay to his charge; for, how can that scorpion hurt, that hath lost his sting, and spent his venom in the sides of Christ, and left it there? Christ was wounded for the transgressions of his people, he was bruised for their sins, the chastisement of their peace was upon him. {Is.53:5} What hurt can there be to whom there is peace from God, and nothing but peace? It is true, our sins themselves do not speak peace, but Christ, bearing the sin and wrath that they deserve, speaks peace to every believer, whose transgressions he did bear.

Therefore beloved, be not afraid, ye that are believers and members of Christ, of wrath breaking down from heaven upon you for such and such sins, which you have committed, for all your sins together can do you no harm; all the sting and poison of them were

spent upon Christ. Mark that excellent expression of the apostle, "the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law;" so that here seems to be a sting in sin even to death itself; but mark what follows, "but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." {I Cor.15:56,57} What both he mean? Even the victory of overcoming sin and death. Though naturally sin hath a sting, yet there is a victory over it; Christ is the death of it, as he took away its sting; so that the sins of believers, set up to affright them by Satan, or his instruments, are but scare-crows and bug-bears; things to affright ignorant children indeed, but men of insight, and understanding are able to see that they are counterfeit things. It is true before men come to see the light of the gospel of Christ, their sins stare in their faces, seeming to spit fire at them; but just as children put one of their company into hideous postures, and a fearful and terrible representation, causing every one that knows it not, to run from him; so sin, as it is set up by Satan, with a terrible visage, as it were, to spit fire in the faces of the godly, seems very threatening and dreadful; but, they are to know for certain, it is but a made thing, there is no fear from the sins of believers; all the terror of sin, Christ himself hath drunk; and, in drinking it, he, our life, was crucified; and, in that regard, all the terror and hideousness of sin, as is represented by Satan, is spent, and sin itself is dead. It is true indeed, a living roaring lion is a terrible creature; but, of a dead lion, there is no more fear than is of a stick, or a stone, to him that knows he is dead. While sin is alive, it is fearful and terrible; but, when it is dead, there is no more terror in it than is in a dead lion.

Thus I speak concerning sin, not as it smiles upon a man, with a promising countenance before it be committed; for so it is most dreadful and odious to the faithful, as that which crucified their sweetest Lord; but as committed, and lying upon the conscience of a believer, endeavoring to drive him to deny the love and free grace of God to him, and the all-sufficiency of Christ; for, in this regard, it is crucified by Christ, and so a believer need not be afraid of sin. Indeed, terrible it may seem to be at first, but without just cause, for it can do no hurt. Therefore, the apostle telling us of the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and contrary to us, saith, "that Christ hath nailed it to his cross." So that the sins of believers

are crucified with Christ; "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections, and lusts." We commonly understand, as if our mortification of sin, were the crucifying of the flesh; but the apostle speaks otherwise, and intends, that they, that are Christ's are crucified with him; as much as to say, Christ's dying upon the cross for believers, became the death, that is, the expiration of sin for them, that it should be no more terrible unto them, nor affright them. I have insisted, the more upon this, because, indeed, it is the root from whence all other fears spring; for, from crosses and afflictions, which come upon persons, {of which we shall speak presently,} they run immediately to their sins, and conceive that it is they that have put stings into them, and make them so bitter; still therefore, they are perplexed with fears, as long as sin is upon them; certainly, some fearful thing will come upon them; why? They have committed such and such sins, these be the cause of their fear. But beloved, either deny plainly that Christ died for your sins, that he hath borne the whole wrath of God that sin hath deserved; or sit down by this truth, that sin hurt Christ so much, that it cannot hurt the believer for whom he died.

As we should not fear our own sins, being believers and members of Christ; so neither ought we to fear the sins of others. But you will say, supposing there be no sins of our own to pull down judgments, yet the world is full of iniquity, and abundance of sins there are, that bring down wrath from heaven.

Though it be true, that national sins bring down national judgments and wrath; yet all the sins of the times cannot do a member of Christ a jot of hurt; and therefore, as they cannot do him any, he need not be afraid of them. I will make it appear, that the sins of the world, the crying sins of the times, can do a believer no hurt. Mark the plea of the Lord, often mentioned in Ezek.18:2-4, against the people that hit him in the teeth, as if he were unjust; "the fathers {say they} have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He pleads his own innocency in it, and directly answers, that "the soul that sinneth shall die;" as much as to say, he that commits the fault, shall bear the burden of it; thou, that art not the committer of the fault, shalt not bear the burden of it. Therefore, the sins of the times that are committed by the wicked, cannot do God's people any hurt; the children's teeth shall not be set on edge.

But, some will say, I have had some hand in these sins, I did not reprove them; or, I did not separate myself from them. I answer, suppose the members of Christ are in some sort accessory to these sins, yet, so far as you, in your own persons, have been actors or partakers of these transgressions, Christ hath borne them, and suffered for them. It is not some sins, that Christ bears, and leaves some for believers to bear, and so also leaves some punishment for them to suffer; for he, "the Lamb of God, takes away the sins of the world;" and that he takes them all away, appears, I John 1:7, "the blood of Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Whether then you consider every elect person, as he sinneth by himself, or as he shares with others, all these sins the blood of Christ cleanseth him from; and, therefore, I say, the sins of other people shall not, they cannot, be imputed to him that is a believer.

But, you will say, surely the Lord sends crosses and afflictions upon his own people {as well as upon the people of the world} many times, and should we not, therefore, be afraid of them? Let me tell you, as there is no occasion or need; nay, as people ought not to be afraid for the sins of others, so ought not they to be afraid for the chastisements of the Lord upon them. Consider but the true nature of fear; look upon things as they are in themselves; if there be occasion of fear in anything that may come, there must be evil in these afflictions, or else there need not be fear. Now, there is no evil in them, but all are exceeding good, and they work for good; and that which works for good, is not evil; every agent produceth effects answerable to its own nature; an evil tree brings forth no good fruit, nor a good tree evil fruit; so then, if there be nothing but good in all the afflictions of the people of God, then there is no cause of fear. There is an apprehension of evil in a thing, if there be fear, but there is not a just one in a thing that is good; be assured of this, there is no fear of afflictions, let them be ever so tart, great, or many. Oh, saith one, I shall be undone, as others are, that are plundered; here the heart is disturbed and distracted. But beloved, suppose you lose all that you have, even the wife out of your bosoms, and your children out of your arms, and so deprived of all, yet there is no evil in them, and therefore you ought not to be afraid. There is nothing but good in them; as the apostle tells us, that it is true, for the present that no

affliction "seemeth to be joyous, but grievous;" yet he takes away all occasions of fear, though, for the present, they seem evil; yet afterward {saith he} they bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." {Heb.12:11} What hurt is in them, when they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness? In afflictions, they are refined as silver and gold. What hurt is there to silver in the fire, when nothing is intended but the separation of the dross from it? When the Lord afflicts his people, he sits, as a refiner, to take away the dross; the afflictions of God's people are nothing but the refinings of God, to take away the rust; what hurt is there in physic, especially good, when the body is distempered? They that know the benefit of it, will they be afraid of it, though it make them sick for a time? It is true, ignorance and suspicion of the operation, will make men afraid; but the Lord hath made it known to us, that all his chastisements are the fruits of his love, and this is the end of all to take away sins; it is true, men need not fear that the sins they commit shall do them hurt; but the Lord makes use of afflictions, to purge out sin from the conversation, where it is a trouble and burden to the faithful; though he doth not revenge himself of any sin before committed.

As we ought not to be afraid of sin and afflictions in general, so we are to take notice that they that have God for their God, must not be afraid of men. The enemies of God that fight against him, there needs no fear, either of their wrath, or policy, their menaces, or cruelty; there is no cause of fear of any of these. It is true; there is, doubtless, an implacable rage, and an unchangeable resolution of revenge, if possibly they could, even to bring fire from heaven, to devour the servants of the living God; but even if their rage were more desperate than it is, there is no cause to fear, inasmuch as God is their God. In Psalm 124, you see there is no cause to fear, though there be ever so much evil approaching; which was made of purpose to set forth this, that the godly need not fear the fury of the oppressor. If the Lord had not been on our side, when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up, when their fierce wrath was kindled against us; but "blessed be the Lord, {saith the psalmist,} who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken" and we are delivered. Here is fierce wrath,

but yet here is escaping, as a bird out of the snare of a fowler; and how comes this to pass? The Lord is their help, and on their side; and if he be on our side, what need of fear is there of their wrath? "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." {Psa.76:10} See what little cause there is of fear from the wrath and rage of men; there shall nothing but matter of praise come forth to the Lord out of it. Wilt thou be afraid of that by which he shall be praised? He is praised by the wrath of men, and all the superfluity of wrath, more than is for the glory of God, he will restrain; the wrath that is more than for his praise, he will be sure to keep it in, and that that is for his glory, wilt thou be afraid of?

Moreover, as you ought not to fear the wrath of men, so neither their policy; though hell itself combine with them to lay snares to entrap the people of God, there is no cause of fear; let there be Ahithophel's among them, whose counsel is an oracle of God, yet he will turn their counsel into foolishness; their Lord confounds the wisdom of the wise, and brings to naught the counsel of the prudent; where is the wise man, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? He hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, as well as the weak things of the world to confound the strong. Now if the Lord choose foolish things to confound the wise, or the wise things of the world to confound themselves, why ought thou to be afraid?

Also there is no occasion of fear {to them that have God for their God,} of the instruments of cruelty; let them have all that cruelty itself can invent, fear not them, fear not their swords, their engines of war; what need we be afraid of that which shall not prosper? Now, the Lord saith plainly, that no weapons formed against the church shall prosper. You know, indeed; that unto a naked breast a sword is terrible; but where there is a coat of mail to fence off a sword, he that hath it, is, or need be no more afraid of the thrust of a sword, than when there is no sword at all thrust against him, especially when he knows his coat of mail is sword-proof, that it cannot pierce it. Armor of proof, you know, will keep out a bullet; when a man knows his armor is of proof, he cares not whether he hath a dagger thrust at it, or a pistol shot against it, he fears not, he cares not; the armor of believers is pistol-proof, it cannot be shot through.

But, you will say, there are many that are slain; will you condemn all that are killed by the enemy, as not believers? Mistake me not, I do not say they are sword-proof, so that the same thing may not befall unto them, as unto others; but only so, that nothing that befalls them, can be truly evil unto them; and in respect of the soul, all that the enemy can do, cannot destroy that. Do you not see them dead, you will say? But mark what the apostle saith, "our life is hid with Christ in God." It is true, there is a natural life, that may be destroyed, as well as the life of a wicked man; but yet the soul of a believer, is not destroyed; it is cannon-proof, all the devils in hell cannot destroy it. Christ himself is our life; now, when he shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory; so that Christ himself must be killed, before our lives shall be destroyed by the enemies. You that are believers have this advantage of your enemies, the unbelievers; you may take away their lives, but they cannot take away your life; they have but one life, a natural life, but they that are believers, have a life in Christ; nay, he is their life; he himself must be annihilated before they shall; all the power of the sword cannot take away that life from you. It is true, they may take you out of this world, and the comforts of it; but know, that this world, when the Lord will have the soul separated from it, is a comfortless world; if he himself should answer a person, to give him life in the world, when himself, hath purposed to take him out of it, that, and life itself would be a hell to him. Beloved, the Lord intends only your good in all your changes, and that which is best, he provides for you; though your life is taken away from you, where is the hurt or loss? Consider it well, beloved, death is but the opening of the prison doors to let you out; it is but the arrival of a vessel into the haven of rest. What doth the sword do when it enters into a believer? It makes but a change of immortality for mortality, of life for death, of strength for weakness, of glory for shame, of holiness for sin; it doth but pull down a rotten house of clay, to give possession of mansions of glory; it doth but take persons from cottage at will, to enter into a lordship of inheritance; for it gives full possession of an eternal one. The sword that enters into the breast of a believer, doth but put him into the chamber of the bridegroom, and consummates the marriage of the Lamb to him; it is the fulfilling of the great cry of

the saints, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" and, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; it takes the bride into communion with her long looked-for beloved, and gives her possession of those things she longed for.

While we are in the flesh we are absent from the Lord; we enjoy the vision of Christ now but in hope, and darkly; but, "when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have an house not made with hands." It doth but carry the believer out of a barren, blustering, troublesome wilderness, unto his home, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of glory. What hurt is there in all this? Consider this, that when the worst comes to the worst, if ye should be brought into the greatest strait that ever man was in, when cruelty shall rage and swell to its utmost bounds; this is that which stays up the heart, and makes the weakest spirits strong; and the want of this makes the strongest run away; when a man shall think with himself, if I should be now thrust through by the sword of the enemy, what will become of me? If I be not a member of Christ, I shall go to hell for ever; O, how will this startle him! This in the heart of the stoutest soldier is enough to make him run away, have he never so much courage; but when a man shall stand in the face of an enemy, and the bullets fly about him on every side; and thus think with himself, what if one of these should hit me, what shall become of me? Whither should

I go? If he can but say in true faith, heaven is mine, and Christ is mine, I shall go presently unto God, my Father, at whose right hand are joys for evermore; I cannot have a better turn done me, than by one of these messengers, to be sent presently thither. It is recorded, that there was a man that had a spear run at him, by one that sought his life, and entering, it happened to lance an ulcer, that all the physicians could never cure; that thrust of the spear cured the ulcer. O beloved; all the world is not able to cure the ulcers that are in believers, in respect of the cohabitation and practice of sin; for sin will arise, and break forth, in spite of all, and they shall not cease to sin, till they cease to be here. Now the sword that enters into their hearts at one thrust, perfectly cures the ulcers of sin, that there shall never arise anymore; now what hurt is there in that spear, that cures instead of killing?

This, beloved, I speak to encourage all the faithful;

for when the enemy looks big upon you, and your hearts are ready to faint; consider what the Lord saith, "I am your God, be not afraid, nor dismayed." Sometimes I observe, people look upon believers with an evil eye, because they do not see them of such dejected countenances, and so full of fearful expressions, as are in themselves, or others; hence they presently censure them as void of sense, and full of security. But consider, hath not the Lord promised that they shall not be moved with evil tidings? Is there nothing in such a promise? Will you say, there is no strength, nor truth in him, in whom is the fulness of all? That when you find such undaunted-ness in any, that when men speak of fire and sword, and the cruelty of the enemy, say, "we are careless, as touching this matter;" you say, they are stupefied, or carnally secure, do you not therein charge the three children for the same. Shall the people of God, who out of the apprehension of God being their God, and out of the gun-shot of sin, say, we fear not touching this matter, shall they be condemned for it? Do not condemn God; is thine eye evil, because his is good? Now, what are the disadvantages by this dismayed-ness of spirit? There are three sorts of them. Fearfulness of spirit produces a great deal of prejudice unto God; not simply to the being of God, but to his glory and honour; it casts many slanders upon him, upon his power; upon his faithfulness; upon his care and providence; upon the freeness of his grace, and upon the efficacy of the sufferings of Christ. It casts a slander upon the power of God; for if you lend a man an hundred pounds, and he give you a bond to pay it you again, it may be, you fear you shall not have it again; what is the ground of it? I doubt, say you, he will not be able to pay me; when fear ariseth from such a principle, doth not this cast an aspersion upon the ability of the man? If you thought he were an able man, you would not suspect him; so, when you see such and such evils growing towards you, and you begin to be afraid, and to cry out, doubtless I shall sink under them, God is not able to deliver me at such a time; I say, unbelief of the power of God, being the occasion of such fear, thereby casts an heavy slander upon him.

But some may say, I never doubted of the ability of God. If you do not, yet Israel did; "can God, {say they,} give flesh in the wilderness?" And consider with yourselves, how often it hath been in the hearts

of people, when they have been in any great extremity. How shall we escape? There is no possibility for us to avoid this evil; is not this now a calling in question the power of God? If so, then is there a great scandal cast upon it.

2. It likewise brings a scandal on the faithfulness and truth of God. Some will say, I do not question whether God can do this, but all my fear is, whether he will do it, or no; this ariseth from a suspicion, that God will not do it. Now, I ask, hath he said, he will do it? Hath he said, "I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee?" That "all things shall work together for our good?" And do you fear he will not do it? What do you think of God? Is he not as good as his word? Are God and his faithfulness out of credit with you? Hath he said, and will not he perform? If a man hath promised to give you an hundred pounds, and when he is gone, you fear you shall never have it; do you not call in question the honesty of this man? Do you not make him a liar? Hath not God promised to save and defend you; to be your shield and buckler? Now you, by fear, calling this in question; is this any better than to charge him with dishonesty, and to make him a liar, that he hath said, and will not make good what he hath said?

3. You charge the providence and care of God; for you know that he hath said to "be careful for nothing, but in all things make your requests known to him; and cast your care upon him, for he careth for you." Do you think, he is mindful of you and cares for you when extremity of danger comes upon you; and you fear that you shall miscarry in such danger? Either you think that he doth not mind you, or if he doth, he is not able to help you. This was David's fault, he runs on in this manner, "will the Lord cast off forever; and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever; doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" {Ps.77:7-9} David charged God with forgetfulness.

4. You cast a scandal upon the free grace of God, when thus afraid; thy fear is, that such an evil will overtake thee; and thou lookest upon thy deserts, and say, this may well come upon me, I have deserved it; I have committed such and such sins, and they will certainly provoke the Lord to send all these evils I fear upon me; and because thou hast sinned, thou fearest

such punishments will come upon thee; consider, how thou slanderest the freeness of the grace of God; there is no avoiding of evil, sayest thou, because sin hath been committed; yet herein grace indeed consists, that though it be, yet no wrath shall be provoked, nor punishment inflicted; so often as men fear afflictions from sins committed, they slander the grace of God; there is no way for me to escape, for I have sinned, will men think. When a scholar comes home to his father, and cries, I have committed a fault, there is no escaping the rod, for every fault I commit, I shall be whipped; is not this to cast a scandal upon the clemency of the master, as if he were so rigid, that he would pass by no fault? If you, upon sin committed, fear wrath and judgment, what do you think of God? Do you not plainly declare that there is no clemency in him?

5. You cast a slander upon the sufferings of Christ, that fear wrath, because you have committed such and such a sin; beloved, to what purpose are they? Were they not for the sins of men? Did the Lord behold the travail of his soul, and was he satisfied? And will he come and exact a new payment, after satisfaction given and acknowledged? Either God must be dishonest, to exact payment twice for one debt, or Christ's satisfaction was insufficient? If he did not bear all the wrath of God, but you must bear some of it yourselves, where is the efficacy of his sufferings? If they were sufficient, wherefore should you then fear any wrath? Certainly, you must either say, Christ hath not borne all indignation, and so make the scripture a liar, which saith, "he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied," and his sufferings of none effect; or else, though sin hath been committed, you cannot fear wrath, or any evil, as the effect of it.

The second prejudice of fear is as it respects God's service; it may appear divers ways to you.

1. So far as fear possesses the heart, so far is faith suppressed; as it is the cut-throat of believing. "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." {Is.30:15} Where there is rest, there is confidence; and where there is no rest, there can be no confidence; therefore as far as you fear the afflictions of the world, in respect of your sins, so far are you weak in faith; faith makes men sit down satisfied, whereas fear fills men full of doubts;

when things are not clear, there are disputings, but faith puts an end to all doubts and fears; wherefore, so long as there is fear, there is unbelief.

2. Fear is prejudicial to all religious duties; it is a damper of prayer. Beloved, you know, that the life of prayer lies in faith, "if any man pray, let him ask in faith," saith James. Faith is the wing of prayer, and carries it up to heaven; clip the wing, and the motions of it must be slow. Beloved, you that are afraid, in such a fit, what hearts have you to pray? In brief, there is this great prejudice in fear, as it makes all the duties that persons perform, merely selfish. You know that a servant is very diligent for his master, when no danger cometh; but, let the servant be in fear of it, he will leave his masters business to shift for himself, and seek for his own safety? So consider it well, whether your hearts are not for yourselves in your services, when there is a strong passion of fear in your spirits. When a man is in prayer; against some evil he fears is approaching him, what prayer is it? He is altogether for himself that he may be delivered from his present fear; there is not a thought {so far as this fear prevails} that God may be glorified all the while, but only of the evil that is, or like to fall upon him. The believer should serve with sincerity and singleness of spirit; he should do that which he doth, as unto the Lord. Do not mistake, it is not the spirituality, nor fervency in the performances of duties, that carries it; duties are not expiatory helpers with Christ; but, when duties are performed as to, and for the Lord; and not to, and for a man's self, then are they right as services. But all our hope that we must have in any condition; must be only from the grace of God, and all that we act must be to him, for what he hath done for us. Therefore, seeing it is the Lord himself that calls upon you, and bids you be not afraid, take courage from him, and quit yourselves like men; in danger "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." There is this difference, between God's call and man's to do anything; men call to services and employments, but cannot give them power to perform that which they are called unto; but God calls, and gives influence of his own, to make men do such things he calls them unto. The Lord saith, "fear not," and in his voice, there is life, to frame the same temper in your hearts. Christ stands over your dead hearts, as he did over the dead body of Lazarus, saying "arise," who immediately arose; the

word of his mouth carried life into it, and with it; so it saith, "fear not," and immediately it takes away all fear from the spirit of that man he speaks inwardly unto; other men may speak, and speak their hearts out, and never the better; but when God calls upon you not to be afraid, he is present in his ordinances, merely for his own sake, to hold out this undauntedness of spirit to you; and it is now with you, if you embrace it; he will make you of an undaunted spirit; he shall strengthen you as that leviathan the Lord speaks of in Job 41, which esteemed iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood, because his scales were so strong. Know this, that believers are the leviathans of God, he will so steel their spirit, that they shall cut iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The Lord is able to put such a spirit into you, and he will make good his promise, wherein he hath engaged himself, that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness; therefore, though you have said, my strength faileth me, yet he shall be the strength of your hearts, and your portion forever; thus you shall give that to him that fearful men rob him of, that is, the glory of his power and faithfulness, the freeness and riches of his grace, and care of his people's welfare, and Christ of his sufficiency; wherein he hath promised plentifully to supply you with all spiritual strength, that you "shall run, and not be weary, walk and not faint." In a word, there are a few civil respects that I will mention as motives against this fear.

Know that fear, especially dismay, puts a man besides his wits, that while he is in such a passion, he is to seek for common ways of safety; so that whereas men think that fear will help them to avoid danger, commonly in amazement, people stand still, not able to stir to save themselves. Besides, this fear is such a torment, that commonly those evils, so much feared, prove not so hurtful, nor evil to a person, as the present fears; and, besides this, it many times doth not only daunt the spirit of a man in himself, but proves very dangerous to others. You already have had sufficient experience, not long since, of the evil and mischief this fear had like to have occasioned in the army; a thousand to one it was, that the fear of some had not made all the rest to fly; and it was a miracle of mercy, that there should be so great a fear in the army, and yet stand so to it. Fear, at such a time, is of a wonderful spreading and dangerous nature; fearfulness in one,

kindles it in many; and so, not only men's persons, but also the cause itself, is hazarded; but these are but low things in respect of the prejudice God himself sustains in the fear of men; therefore, for your encouragement, consider what the Lord hath in store for you; nothing he hath, is, or can give, he thinks too good for you, but is willing to part with it to make you happy; he parts not with his goods, but with his Son, for you; nay, with that which is more, if anything can be more than his Son, that is, himself. Will you now deprive yourselves of the sweet enjoyment of all these, by your base unbelieving, and fearful hearts? Rather let us freely receive, thankfully acknowledge and constantly rest upon our Father's abundant mercy, expressed in so many blessings; but, especially in the gift of his only Son, given unto us, "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." {Lk.1:74,75}

**CHRIST ALONE
EXALTED**

IN THE

**PERFECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF
THE SAINTS**

NOTWITHSTANDING SINS AND TRIALS

**BEING THE THIRD
VOLUME
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SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, AT
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NOTES EXPLANATORY OF SEVERAL
PASSAGES IN THEM

**WITH MEMOIRS OF THE DOCTOR'S LIFE
BY JOHN GILL, D.D.**

Mr. Cole, In his Treatise on Regeneration, says, "This work savours of a true Gospel Spirit; they who carp at it, I fear, will be found wider from the Gospel in their Principles, than this Author (as they vainly imagine) was in his."

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of Grace. And if by Grace, then is it no more of Works : otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of Works, then It is no more Grace : otherwise Work is no more Works"

Romans xi, 6,

Introduction

This work of Tobias is reproduced in 3 volumes with the first containing the first 14 sermons published after his death in 1643. Volume 2 contains sermons 15-32 and volume 3 sermons 33-52 published between 1643 and 1646. These are the complete works of Tobias Crisp D.D.

Tobias Crisp clearly taught that salvation was by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ alone. He taught the doctrines of grace in which Christ died for the elect and his righteousness was imputed to all that believe.

In the early Church there were men who taught the Law of Moses must be kept in order to be saved but the Apostle Paul stepped in to show clearly that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the rule not life for the believer and not the Law of Moses. The apostle was charged with being an Antinomian and so too has Tobias Crisp. He was not as will seen in his sermon 51 entitled 'The Use of The Law.' However there have been conflicts among those who advanced that the Law of Moses is the rule of life for the believer and as such have advanced that certain days are to be kept holy and they seek to bind others to their practice. For further study see our publication Reflections of the Sabbath that contains extracts from John Calvin, John Bunyan, John Gill, William Huntington, J.C. Philpot, Frank Gosden and others to give clearer light on the subject

Preface To 1690 Edition Samuel Crisp

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

To such I recommend a few lines; and if thou art a Christian indeed, then Christ is all in all to thee. And though the pure streams of the light, life, and love of God in Christ Jesus, be most sweet to thee, as they come flowing fresh, as living honey from the honey-comb, the Scriptures; yet I know the discussion of divine truths, by those that have had the richest experiences of them, will be grateful to you, when you find, that as face answers face in a glass, so these following discourses answer the heavenly sense and relish you have had at any time of the love of Jesus in your soul.

I find myself somewhat concerned to say somewhat of this new edition, and an addition of my father's sermons. As thus; I was some months since surprised with a letter from Mr. Marshall, the undertaker, to reprint all my father's sermons in one volume, he desiring subscription for a set of them. I wondered that such a work should be set about by a mere stranger, after so many years, {about forty-five,} that they had filled many minds, some with admiration, and some with contempt of the free grace of God exemplified therein. But, joyful I was, that what had refreshed many souls forty-five years ago, might, through the good hand of God, be of great use in these days, seeing that the Lord Jesus is hastening to call all to a sad account that stand out and reject the testimony of his grace.

I considering that as the time when these sermons were preached and first printed, 1642 and 1643, was as sad a time as this nation knew for many years; when a violent storm of an outrageous civil war did rage in the bowels of the kingdom. So that every day people looked to be slain by the merciless sword; which called for consolatory discourses for the people of God; which God eminently assisted my father to preach, with great acceptance to thousands that flocked to hear him from place to place, in this great city of London, twice every Lord's-day, and to his house, to the repetition of them at night; until his abundant service therein cost him his life. He being snatched away in the height of his glorifying the free grace of God in Christ, to be glorified by it in the midst of his days, at the age of forty-two, on the 27th of February, 1642. I say, as that was a time that these

discourses were of all times most necessary, death hanging immediately over the heads of all; so now the inculcating this great point, is of as much, if not more use; when not only judgment upon all unsound professors is hastening, but at this latter day of the world, a new gospel, or a sort of Grotian Divinity, hath obtained among the generality of professors, joining man's righteousness with Christ's for salvation; and saying plainly, our good works concur to our justification, directly contrary to the Apostle, "that by the works of the law shall no man be justified." And I challenge any man to show me a good work that is not the work of the law; for if not from God's law, he will say, who required it at your hand? Which considered, made me conclude, the republishing these discourses may comfort and settle many souls. Whereupon I gladly accepted the bookseller's motion to assist in reprinting them; provided he would add to them several other sermons that have not been yet printed, which I would transcribe out of my father's own notes; which I desired him to do on two accounts.

First, to set forth more of the glorious free grace of God, in what is added. And, secondly, to remove some reflections cast on my father's discourses; as if his advancing free grace, tended to suppress good works, which was far from his, as it also is from every good Christian's thoughts. For who but a devil, or his children will say, "let us sin that grace may abound," or because a good blessed prince hath, with the hazard of his life, rescued us from slavery, therefore we will spit in his face. Therefore to show that my father was not of that spirit, I have transcribed, from his notes, these following discourses, to be printed with his other sermons; namely, an ample discourse, being the subject of several sermons, preached at Brinkworth, {where his lot was cast,} on Titus 2:11,12; showing therein, "how grace in Christ to sinners teacheth godliness, not licentiousness." Another on Galatians 3:19, on "the use of the law." A third is a funeral sermon of Mr. Brunsell, a minister, on Galatians 1:8, "though an angel preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed." A strange text for a funeral sermon; but shows, that Mr. Brunsell, giving my father that text, was of my father's opinion, that "Christ alone is to be exalted," notwithstanding men's carping at the doctrine of free grace. The last is the heads of a preparatory sermon; to the people at Brinkworth, to a solemn fast, July

8th, 1640, which is a subject so rarely treated on, or practiced, I concluded, that as it might convince any unprejudiced person of my father's strictness to the height in holy performances, {yet not making them the main grounds of his comfort,} so it would be very grateful to those in the ministry, who may meet with it, and to show how strictly those called Puritans of old, {of whom my father was accounted none of the least,} exercised themselves in godliness.

Now that these are my father's own discourses I fully satisfy any thus, that I know the hand-writing of these discourses is his own hand-writing, {being in his own books, and being in the same hand that all the former printed sermons of his are of, and agrees with all the other writings I have of his,} as much as I know any man's face I have been long acquainted with. So that I do no more question them to be my father's genuine offspring, than I do that once there was a Queen Elizabeth in England.

And moreover, in transcribing them, most of the similes which my father used came fresh to my mind; they having made a deep impression on my tender memory, when I heard them, being then about seven years old; especially the preparation to a day of humiliation. I do as well remember the solemnity thereof, forty-nine years ago, as if it had been but last year. So that I can, and do testify, that they were really {and are faithfully transcribed from} his own notes. Now that they all may be as satisfactory to you in perusing, as these last have, through God's goodness, been to me in transcribing, is my hearty desire.

It doth not comport with common modesty, nor can it be expected, I should put encomiums on these discourses, though much may be said of multitudes that have owed, some their spiritual birth, others their soul refreshments to those sermons, under God. Neither can I avouch so much skill in disputes, as to maintain a scholastic defense, in opposition to the arguments, that some, more learned than evangelical scholars, have or may raise against them, as mere controversy is unproductive; so neither of the soul's satisfaction in divine truths. All must be left to the Author of all grace, to soften some, and harden the obstinate, by those divine testimonies of this servant of the Lord in the ministry. And many hundreds that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, in solacing their souls with the things transmitted here to the

world, have been better satisfied in the truths of the gospel, herein laid down, in a plain familiar style, than if they had been averred by the most learned arguments of reason, from the princes of the world, by human wisdom only. I know these sermons have had hard censures put on them by some persons of great learning; I wish they had better learned Christ, for then they would not have quarreled at the honour ascribed to him by my father. If learning must take the upper hand of divinity, then Antichristian, Socinian, Pelagian, Arminian doctrines would have jostled out Christianity long since; for who more scholastically learned than Antichrist's Doctors, and yet who greater dunces, like Nicodemus, in Christ's school, where we are to account all our own righteousness, much more our learning, dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. God will ever make it good, that the poor of the world, for parts and self-excellency, are chosen by him to be rich in faith; while the rich, with their gifts and parts, are most of them sent empty away. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, {be his parts ever so great,} neither can he know them. A blind man may as well dispute the colors in the rainbow, or the deaf man of sounds, as the graceless scholar of the wisdom of God in a mystery which none of the princes of this world knew; or of Christ in his members their hope of glory. But I have so much charity as to believe, that some that have aspersed these sermons, are persons of real true piety, and eminently devout; to which it may be said, it is no wonder, when we find many devout ones bandied against the apostle Paul, Acts 13:16. And there were many true disciples, believers in Christ, that had not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. Acts 19:1,2. But blessed be God, though some sour spirits were busy, when these sermons were first exhibited to the world; God hath been graciously pleased to send forth many sons of consolation since, of whose labors in the ministry, I have been a happy partaker, and whereof I may say, that of 5200 discourses I have by me, {besides many lost,} taken from the lips of several gospel preachers, such as famous Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Owen, Dr. Wilkinson, Mr. Christopher Fowler, that great lover of our Lord Jesus, and exalter of his righteousness alone in the matter of justification, I can scarce reckon six of the 5200 that do oppose the

Now I shall conclude, after I have given a note or two from a scripture, suitable to the calling God set me in; which is Matthew 13:45,46; "again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." That this pearl is our Lord Jesus Christ none questions; but this selling all for him is much questioned, though not by those that find him. The Papist, Socinian and Arminian, apprehending some excellency in themselves, they will be wise merchants indeed, but make God a very silly one; they will barter with God, and give him their rotten rags, their dung-righteousness for his pearl, and eternal glory, and so put a cheat upon the all-wise God; but he will not be mocked. But the truly wise merchant considers how richly he was set up, God making him upright in Adam, but the subtle broker, the devil, deceived him, and he willfully threw away his stock upon the serpent's suggestion, for the shadows of knowledge of good and evil. He sees the longer he trades upon his own skill, the more bankrupt he is; and for all the vast debt he owes, he hath nothing to pay God his great creditor, but a warehouse full of counterfeit, rotten, decayed filth, fit only for the dunghill. At length this dreadful bewildered merchant hears of a wonderful pearl dropped from the heavenly Indies, offered to such poor broken merchants as will accept him without money or money's worth. {Is.55:1} He being ravished with the glorious radiancy thereof, shining with enraptured translucency into his heart; this merchant, by the all-conquering power of the Spirit, is brought to see into what a wretched condition he hath brought himself, by feeding on the poisoned drugs of his own works, and clothing himself with the filthy rags, the spider's webs he spun out of his own bowels. He having found this inestimable pearl, the pearl having first found him, {we loving him, because he loved us first,} he sells all, he parts with all, he renounces all, his whole stock, "accounting all loss and dung for Christ." {Phil.3:9} As he buys without money or price, so he sells without money or price; he lays all his sins upon the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, he sees by faith the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and now gives up himself to be accepted in the Beloved, his sins to be pardoned in Christ's blood, his services to be first washed, then accepted in the same justifying blood

all, he now, upon the gospel summons, buys this pearl of great price; that is, comes to Christ, receives Christ, believes in Christ, as his alone treasure, riches, store, life, righteousness, beauty, wisdom, strength, and all, in him, to him, for him. This pearl now makes him a man again, with this pearl he pays all his debts, he answers the law in all its demands, only by showing that this great, good pearl is his; he now is free from all arrests in his conscience, he comes to the Exchange {to communion with God} again, he hath credit now into all countries, especially in the heavenly Indies, whither, by virtue of this pearl, he draws his bills of exchange every post day, that is, morning and evening, and at all times, by faith and prayer, where his bills have good acceptance, and always, when need is, they are paid at sight, with gracious tokens of love and favour. Now this merchant drives a full tumbling trade, his pearl whithersoever he turns it, turns all into grace and glory, he himself being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. This I take to be selling all for this pearl, as the Apostle did. {Phil.3:8,9}

But some will be caviling; what horrid boldness it is for any, when he is reeking in sin, to lay hold on Christ, upon his call? But if such were in the condition that a nephew of mine was in, that fell from the ship into the sea, when the ship was sailing, he would say otherwise. If the master of the vessel should cast out a rope for him to catch at, to rescue him; would he say, Sir, I am not worthy; I fell overboard when I was smeared with pitch and tar, and I am not clean enough to come on board again? Sure all the world would think such an one mad. And is it madness not to accept of a temporal deliverance upon an idle conceit; I am not worthy of it? And is it not much more madness, not to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and salvation by him, because we are full of sin? Methinks all should conclude we are under the greater necessity to fly for refuge to him. For preaching which doctrine, my dear father was maligned by some, when living. Though God supported him wonderfully, even to his dying moment, in the lively sense of God's being most glorified, in the highest exaltations of his freest grace to the worst of sinners. Insomuch, that a few moments before his departure out of this world, he spake to friends, by his bedside, saying "where are all those that dispute against the free grace of God, and what I have taught thereof? I am now ready to answer

them all;" and so thus fell asleep in Christ. "He that heareth, let him hear". So rests;

SAMUEL CRISP Clapham October 28th 1698.

33 God's Covenant With His People, The Ground Of Their Security

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." {Is.41:10}

Upon a like occasion, now offered, I have, {peradventure, in the hearing of some present,} made entrance into these words that I have read unto you; I shall give you but a taste of what I have formerly spoken; so much as may serve, by way of introduction to that, in which I mean to spend the remainder of this time.

The occasion of the words, you may see in the former part of this chapter. At this instant, was a great tumult, upon raising of the righteous man from the east, that is, the setting up of Christ; such a noise, that God was fain to call for silence, and then for their plea, verse 1, if they had anything to say against this, to bring their strongest reasons. Having obtained silence, the Lord makes his plea against their tumultuous opposition, verse 2, who is he that raised Christ up, and hath given nations to him, and "made him to rule over kings?" I, "the Lord did it," verse 4, what have you to say to me? He shall prosper with ease, he shall go softly, he shall never run for fear of being circumvented; he shall go in a way that his foot hath not trod before; he shall go further than he hath gone. And what say they to this, when God speaks? Yet, the tumultuous men will not be quiet, they consult to find out help; nay, they conspire, the carpenter and the smith. {vs.7}

Now, because there is such a combustion when Christ is set up, lest the people of the Lord should be possessed with fear of miscarriage, he turns his speech to them; "fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." Christ, whenever he is exalted, did, doth, and will, find great opposition; but, in spite of all, he shall prosper, all opposition shall not hinder; nay, he will go softly, that the world may see that he is not afraid of any whatsoever. In this text, the Lord is pleased to provide a pillow {as for a king} for the heads of his people, or a staff for their trembling hands, to support their sinking spirits; they are apt, to be

discouraged; it seems the Lord is pleased to take their condition into his hand, to speak to the occasion of their trembling; and to give out such words that may be a stay, that they may stand fast, though blusterings grow greater than they are.

The text is nothing but gracious encouragement, or a comfortable support of a sinking spirit; the encouragement is, "fear not, be not dismayed;" the arguments by which he would prevail with them not to fear, nor be dismayed, are, "I am with thee; I am thy God; I will help thee; I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The point is, they that have God, for their God, need never fear, nor be dismayed; seeing he is with them, will help them, strengthen them, and "uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness."

Concerning this fear and dismay, we spake largely the last time on this occasion. 1. What it is not to be afraid. 2. What we are not to be afraid of. 3. What the inconveniences of such fear are.

1. In brief, not to fear is no more but a composedness against any evil that cometh. Excellent is that expression, Psalm 112:7, they "shall not be afraid of evil tidings." Why? Because their "heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD." Established, they shall not be removed. Here is the expression of a fearless heart, a heart fixed, established, and not moved. You have it likewise excellently set out, Daniel 3:16, in the story of the three children, being sentenced to be cast into the fiery furnace; they came before the great king Nebuchadnezzar, and he spake big to them, and tells them what they must trust unto, if they will not fall down and worship his God. Mark now, their fearlessness is expressed, as they "answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, &c." See what a disposition this is, and what the ground of it; here is a true fearlessness, if whenever evil comes, men can say, it matters not, we are ready for it. And look into the root of it, and you shall find it in their answer that "our God is able to deliver us;" that made them so careless in so weighty a thing.

2. What it is we should not fear. I answer, not God himself, as to do us any hurt; though fear him with awful reverence we must. A believer, that is the servant and chosen of God, need not fear that he will do him any

hurt. "It is God that justifieth," therefore will not harm thee. The heart of God is to his people; "my bowels are troubled for thee;" saith he to Ephraim. Can he hurt them while he is troubled for them? They must not fear their own sins; I do not say, they ought not to fear to commit sin; but they ought not to fear what hurt their sins can do them, seeing they are blotted out. If a man have subscribed and sealed an hundred bonds, and all these are cancelled, he need fear no hurt they can do him. Paul in Romans 7, complains indeed of a body of death, and the power of sin; but in the close, he shows how little he fears anything that sin could do. "Thanks be unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." What doth he thank him for? That though his sins were so great, yet they could not do him any hurt, nor any of God's people. Look into chapter 8:1-3.

Now beloved, give me leave to tell you, if you be believers, and weak in faith, I dare be bold to say, nothing cuts the heart so much, in respect of fear of evil, as the sins you commit; these will be swords to your hearts; but if you be believers indeed, the sword is broken, the sting is gone. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" over sin and death; so that we may boldly say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" {I Cor.15:55-57} If you be the Lord's, and he yours, if you be believers, you may triumph as the apostle doth; it is gone; nay, "O death; saith the Lord, {in the prophecy of Hosea} I will be thy destruction." I beseech you, give not ear, either to Satan, or to whatsoever instrument he hath, that would possess you, that though Christ died for you, and bore your sins himself upon the cross, or on the tree, {as the apostle Peter expresses} yet those same sins will do you hurt, and prove a mischief to you. I say, there cannot be greater affront offered unto Christ, than to make the believer conceive that he was not able to bear their sins, nor the wrath of God sufficiently for them, but that they must be wounded, notwithstanding all that he hath done. If Christ be hurt as much as sin can hurt him, how can any man be hurt by it, for whom he suffered? If he upon the cross took the sting out of it, and carried it to his own grave, how cometh it to have a new one? Or did he die in vain? If he took away the sting of one sin, and not another, there were need of another Christ, it seems, to take away that

which is left behind, and so Christ hath not perfected forever them that are sanctified. {Heb.10:14} I desire you to hear with patience; this is the first ground of all your comfort in affliction, that sin is gone; for them all your afflictions cannot give discomfort, seeing all arise from sin, the sting of affliction. Hereupon the apostle triumphs, "who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," who can condemn? Contrariwise, the soul is in the greatest bitterness, when sin remains, and the sting of it is not taken away, but when God is reconciled, as he is to the faithful, and not sin imputed, II Cor.5:19, how can sin do hurt, when it is not to be imputed? God uses to reckon when he takes payment; if he doth not reckon with men, he will never smite them with wrath; as is the wrath, so must be the hurt that person is to sustain, in respect of sins committed; chastise he doth indeed, for special ends, but the sin doth not at all hurt; and though the Lord afflicts, that will do you no hurt neither; for afflictions are his physic to purge the conversation. Will a man think that is ready to die of the stone, or wind-colic, or stoppage in the stomach, if a physician comes and gives him a bitter portion that he does him any hurt, when he knoweth it is to recover his life and save it? He knows he dies, if he heals not the infirmity; God useth no physic, no chastisement or affliction, but it shall work for good; as in Heb.12:11, "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." What hurt is there in all this?

But I must come to that which I have more particularly to deliver to you; and that is upon the consideration of God's motives, by which he attempts to prevail over the spirits of his people, not to be afraid, or dismayed, come what can, or may, he is best able to persuade; he best knows what rhetoric will take with his own people. A man that hath had the breeding of a child, and observes the temper of it, can better tell, than any other, which way to win him. God hath the breeding of his own children; nay, he goeth further, he hath them at his own beck, and therefore, can best tell which way to work upon them, and beget that in them which he calls for of them. The Lord would have them not be afraid, nor dismayed; let him propose his way to bring them to this composedness of spirit; it is but presumption in any creature to conceive, there

may be better ways to work upon the spirits of men, than that which God prescribes; and it is worth our observation to consider, that when the Lord puts his people upon such a spirit, he doth not say, you have fasted, prayed, forsaken your sins, denied yourselves, and walk holily with me, and therefore, fear you not; he hath higher propositions, that have more excellent virtue to move his people. He saith, "fear not, I am thy God; I will help thee, and uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The prop for upholding of spirits against fear, when evil cometh, is without a man's self, in him that is a rock, and unchangeable; the Lord doth not say, you change not, you continually proceed in holiness, and waver not, therefore ye are not consumed, but, "I am God, and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

Therefore, if you would have settledness of spirit, you must go out of yourselves, and fetch it out of God himself; and I dare be bold to say, take all the comfort of all the world, of all the creatures mixed together; extract the quintessence of their excellencies, all shall never settle a heart, nor make it secure and free from fear, but only this, that God is their God; and by the fruit of this principle, a poor tottering spirit is underpropped, with four pillars, at every corner one, as I may say; or rather, there is one main principle, and three subordinate supporters affixed unto the main principle, for sometimes you shall see great weights laid upon some great pillar, and for the better securing of that which is laid upon it, some short pillars branching out from the main, spread out wide, and so upholding.

This present discourse seems to be such a main principle, that is, God's being a God to such a people, "I am thy God;" this is the foundation, this is the great pillar, "I am with thee, I will help thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness;" they are the three supporters that issue out of this main principle; for they are all but branches flowing from this privilege of God's being your God; these, I say, are sufficient to keep the most tottering spirit immoveable, like mount Zion, never to be removed. I shall take the principle, the main support, into task, at this present, and therein consider what excellency there is in it: "Fear not I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God."

In handling of this, that you may the better see what

stability there is for a tottering spirit in this support, let us consider: 1. What it is for God to be thy God. 2. What a person hath in this, who hath God for his God. 3. By way of answering objections, show how it is so well with those that are the Lord's, this being true, that God himself is their God. 4. How he becomes their God, and upon what terms. 5. How he will be found of them to be so. There are excellent usefulnesses, if the truth be well sifted, and dived into.

1. What it is for God to be thy God.

There is much in it, nay, there is more in it than is any one thing delivered in scripture; there is all in it that concerns the present and future well-being and happiness of a believer; all is in this one thing, "I am thy God." While you have all things else but this, you have but the rays of the sun; while you have this, you have the sun itself in his brightness, glory, and lustre. But to clear this a little, what it is for God to be thy, or my God; you must not understand the Holy Ghost, speaking in the plural number, of the whole world; or, of all the members of Christ, as one body; the passage is to be understood distributively of every such particular person, and so he is thine, and mine, and theirs; I am their God, is all one with, "I am thy God." In the scriptures you find a vast difference between God, simply and abstractedly considered, and relatively considered; and that we must note beforehand, that you may know wherein the strength and comfort of this passage lies. For God to say, "fear not, I am thy God," is ten thousand times more comfortable, and hath more in it, than simply for him to have said, "fear not, I am God." I say, there is far more support in this expression of him, considered as our God; than as he is considered simply and abstractedly without relation to us; for so it imports only to us, the incomprehensible, perfect, and complete being of God, as he is in himself; but, considered in relation, as he is thy God, imports to us, not only what he is, in respect of his absolute perfection, but, what he is to them, whose he is; so that the phrase imports, not only what God simply is, but also, that whatever he is, in and from himself, the same he is to those persons whose he is. It is worth the observation, that the scriptures plainly hold out, that whenever the Lord is spoken of, in reference to wicked men, he is never mentioned in way of relation unto them, but only to his own people; you will not find in all the scripture, God said to be the God of

any person that is a wicked man; but, lest there be a mistake, you must know this relation of God to people, may be considered, either as common, or as special and peculiar. It is true, take a church, as it is mixed, so sometimes the Lord is spoken of in relation to them; as for example, Exod.20:2, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Here is God spoken of in relation, "I am the Lord thy God;" and this seems to be spoken collectively to the whole body of the church, one with another; but always observe this rule, where the Lord is mentioned in relation to a mixed people, that is, a church, consisting of mixed persons, all the privileges from such a relation of God, in reference to such persons, are but common privileges; so in that text, "I am the Lord thy God," observe, he calls himself indeed, their God, takes them conjunctly, one with another; but wherein their greatest privilege was, which they had, in having him their God, he expresses thus; "that brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" which was but a common privilege; and therefore, though God be said to be the God of people, being mixed, yet he is not so theirs, as he is his own peoples, the living members of Christ. Those that are mixed, receive some common propriety, or common things in that propriety; but they partake not of the whole propriety. Usually in scripture, the phrase, "I am thy God," is spoken only to the Lord's servants, his chosen, that he will not cast off; and so it is to be understood in this text, as it is in the words immediately before it, for you will see that God speaks peculiarly of his own elect people, and saith of them, and to them, "fear not, be not dismayed, I am thy God, &c." The Lord frequently expresses himself in this relation, when he comforts and stays up his people, as the best motive to uphold their spirits. "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." {Is.50:10} Here is the very basis, the great pillar to bear up, even in a state of darkness; God is his God, let him stay himself upon him, because of this relation. Beloved, a man that trusts to another man's estate, trusts to a broken staff, as we say, and may be deceived, except that be made his own; a child of light can never be able to walk in darkness, except he have assurance that God is his God, by whom he stands.

"God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God;" saith the psalmist. {Ps.62:7} "Who is God save the LORD; or who is a rock save our God?" {Ps.18:31} So Thomas, not being present when Christ made it appear to the rest, that he it was that suffered, and rose again, because he would not believe Christ was risen, he received this check; "because thou hast seen thou believest; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Now Thomas, having such a check, what had he to rest upon but this, "my Lord, and my God." "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." {Jn.20:28} When Christ seemed to be angry, he closed with this, "O God, thou art my God;" thou canst not forsake me, thou canst not be wanting to me, thou art my own.

It will be worthwhile to consider, what the Lord's being a man's own God is, and the best way to set this out unto you, is to speak as plainly as may be, even in the most familiar way, by which you may reach some of the depth of this mystery. "I am thy God," is as much as to say, thou hast a propriety in me; or, I am as much thine own, as any goods, or anything is thine; look, therefore, what difference you may observe between these two things; much treasure, great revenues in general; and this much treasure, great revenue, and this my possession. I say, what difference you observe between these two particulars, things simply considered, and things particularly considered as yours; the same difference there is between God simply considered, and considered as thine. You know what difference there is in the spirits of men, looking upon things these two ways. There is difference in outward things, as a poor man looks upon the riches and honors of great men with an envious heart and uncomfortable spirit; now the ground of it is this, he looks upon them as none of his own. Two malefactors are condemned to die, one hath a pardon sent him, the other none; now mark how these two persons differ, looking upon this one pardon; so are you to conceive of the difference between God simply being God, and being their God; for he whose pardon it is, can say it is my pardon. Oh; his heart leaps within him, having found a ransom; he hath received his life again; his heart is taken up infinitely in the consideration of his pardon; but look upon the other man, he seeth the same pardon, and looks upon it with a trembling heart and sad spirit. Now all the difference of the case

of these two persons, depends upon the propriety in the one, and want of it in the other; a wicked man may think of God simply as God; but he can never say, {till he reveals it unto him, that he is an elect person,} that he is his God, and think upon him as his own; see then how much thy case is better for thee to consider God is thine, than to consider him in himself, and how great thy privilege is of having him to be thy God.

But what kind of propriety is it? I answer, it imports as much, as when thou sayest, that such money or land is thine. If you will have the nature of propriety, the apostle, in Acts 5:4, will tell you in general what it is; the land, {speaking of that which was sold by Ananias,} "was it not thine own?" When it was sold, was not the money "in thine own power?" So then, for a man to have a thing as his own is to have it in his own power, to do with it as is best, and most profitable for his own advantage, to the utmost extent of the worth of the thing. As for example, suppose a man hath money in his purse, he wants bread, his money is in his own power to dispose of for the supply of his want, and so, in general, he may make use of all for it. So, God's being a man's own, imports, that so far as God will go, as I may say, for a man's use, and for the supply of all his necessities, so far he hath power with him; God himself is engaged to give forth himself to the utmost for such a man's good.

Now, God's all-sufficiency reaches beyond all wants; so that he that hath God for his God, hath him for all the uses that can be for his good. If a man be many hundred pounds in debt, and hath land that is his own, he may make use of it for the best to make him a free man again; he may sell and dispose of it as far as it will reach, to pay his debts, and procure his discharge; but, if it be another man's land, then he cannot make use of it to pay his own debts, but must remain as he was before; so the Lord is able to make up everything that is defective, to all that have propriety in him; I do not say, that a man can sell him, but I say, so far as God can reach, with his all-sufficiency, so far may I draw up from him, as from a well of salvation, whatsoever I stand in need of; the believer hath as free and uncontrollable right, in God, being his own, as he hath in the money and land that is his own; the one is not more in his power, than the other. It is true, indeed, a man may abuse his land or money, and so he may abuse God too; but using things as men use things

that are their own, that is, for their best advantage, they have as much interest in God for the uses they have occasion for, and as much power with him, as anything in their own power. When God gives gold and silver to men, he gives but some thick clay, but when he communicates himself, he gives all that he is; and he that hath God for his God, hath everything that he is or can do. God can do nothing by his omnipotent power, nor devise anything by his infinite wisdom, but all this is as much in propriety his, who hath God for his God, as it is God's own; his propriety in himself is but that he is his own; their propriety in him is that he is theirs. All the difference will be this; God, in respect of himself, hath the disposing of himself by himself, and no other disposes of him, but himself; as for the people of God, because they know not how to dispose of him, as I may say, to their best advantage; therefore, he is pleased to give out himself according to their several occasions, as he in his wisdom seeth most conducing to their good; for example, a father hath an inheritance for his own; his child hath land by inheritance too; now, during minority, the child is not capable to manage it; but the one hath as much propriety in his land as the other; all the difference is that the father disposes of his land for his own use himself, the child hath his land disposed of for his use by the father; but, I say, the propriety is the same. So far as God may be useful for a creature, he is the creature, to do good to it; I do not speak here, according to the foolish fancy of some, nor conceive as if there were a transmutation of the creature into God; but, I speak of him, in respect of usefulness for accommodation, so far as it is possible for a creature to have him; he hath made over himself in particular; for man may have a propriety in God, passed over unto him, as these good things of his that we enjoy, are not transmuted into man's nature, nor is it changed into that good; but so far as they may be useful to him, or conduce to his welfare, so far he may make use of them; so, when God is thy God, so far as he may be useful to thy good, he is as much thine, as anything is thine. Be it far from thee, therefore, to think that God is able to do good in such and such a case, and yet I cannot, I shall not, have him for such good to myself; this man that so thinks, must needs conclude, God is not his God. Was it ever heard, that a man had money in his purse, and yet wanted bread, and perished for want, except there

were no bread to be had for money? So, this is to deny the all-sufficiency of God, to think that he cannot, or will not, supply us with all needful blessings. Assure yourselves, as God is your own, so as far as may be, for your good, you have him as much as anything that is yours; only, you have not the disposing of him to yourselves, and for yourselves, that he hath in trust for you. And this will serve for a hint by way of answer, to some questions by-and-by. Thus, considering what men have, in having God; let us now consider what the treasure is, in having him to be ours.

It is true, there are some things in which creatures have propriety, and yet are little the better for them, the things being not of sufficiency; a woman may have propriety in a husband, and yet she may be a beggar, if he be one; she can have no more than he hath; therefore propriety simply, is no comfort, but the nature of the thing wherein there is. If God be an empty and scant propriety, then there were but little comfort in having him; but mark, he that makes himself over in covenant, the God of such a people, is the greatest, richest, most incomprehensible treasure that can be. You have heard of some that have been raised from beggars to mighty estates; they have been had in admiration that they should be made so rich. What should the sons of men do, if they were able to apprehend what infinite superlative treasure they have all at once, when God is theirs? Beloved, I conceive it a matchless mercy that he reveals but glimmeringly for the present, and some taste of the treasure that we have in him; for certainly, the over-excellency of that fulness, he gives unto us in him, would swallow us up; we should not be able to endure the glory of it, if he revealed all unto us; and that is the reason we know but in part now, because we should be confounded in the knowledge of all that is to be known, and all what God is to his own people. There are three particulars whereby especially you may observe, what great treasure people have, in having God to be their God.

1. In regard of the quality of the treasure. 2. In regard of the virtue of it. 3. In regard of the sovereignty, universality, and variety of help in it.

1. In regard of the quality of the treasure; men may have many things, which may be of little worth, for want of excellency of quality; there is a great deal of difference between a heap of dust, and of diamonds; he that hath one, may be a beggar, and the other having

the same quantity, is the richest man in the world; so we having propriety in God, are the richest persons in heaven or earth, by reason of the excellencies that are in him; some men have not many acres of land, but the few they have, in regard of the riches of them, are more worth than many millions of others. One acre, as I may say, of propriety in the Lord, is worth a thousand of the richest properties in the world; so rich is God, and everything that is in him. All things that are given to enjoy are but beams of this Sun of Righteousness; and if there be so much glory in the beams, what is there in the body of the sun itself? David, when he considered the countenance of the Lord, and its superlative excellency, breaks out into admiration, "there be many that say, who will show us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." {Ps.4:6,7} Mark, while others look for goods, for corn, and wine; he looks for God's gracious countenance, and having that, lies down and sleeps, as one filled and satiated. There is abundance of treasure and superlative excellency in God; silver and gold are not to be compared unto him; nay, the apostle Peter, comparing silver and gold unto Christ, saith, they are but corruptible things, in respect of his blood; how much more is God himself, whereunto Christ's blood is but the means? Now the means is subordinate unto the end for which it is a means; if then, the blood of Christ be so precious, that silver and gold are but corruptible things in comparison of it, what is God, the blood of Christ brings us unto?

2. Consider the virtue of it; many things are of worth in the world, that are of little virtue in themselves; some are worth a thousand pounds, in respect of their value, but when they come to use, and afford virtue, are but dry and unprofitable; they can never cure the sick, nor warm the cold, nor recover the weak. Such are gold and silver in themselves, they can afford the weak heart no nourishment, they have none in them; a little bread in the house, in a famine, is worth a house full of silver; so God, being your God, if there were no suitableness in him, or fulness to supply your wants, then your propriety in him were the less considerable; but you will find the Lord is not more rich than he is full of virtue unto all those to whom he is a God; the quintessence of all virtues is in him; all the virtues

of the world are but beams that proceed from him; they are but fruit that drops from him; he is the root, from which all is derived. The virtue of physic is more eminent in God that gives power to it, therefore he must needs be instead of all these, and abundantly supply the want of all.

It was an excellent speech of a woman in Queen Mary's days, for whom, because of her courage for the truth, they would take away her bread, she answered, "that if they took away her bread, God would take away her stomach." There is such an usefulness in him, that he serves for all necessities; and observe the variety of uses that there are in him, to all that he is a God unto; all manner of plenty and variety are comprised in him; reckon up all the wants men are subject unto; many physicians and surgeons have dived into the various kinds of diseases incident unto the body of man; but suppose every creature should sit down, to cast up every particular disease or want it is subject to, it would make up more volumes than are yet in the world, by setting down particularly every defect, incident to the whole creation one time or other; yea, were the wants multiplied to infinite millions more than they are indeed, yet there is such a variety of help and supply in God, that there is no disease or lack, but there is a fulness of redress for it in him, especially to his people, for all this virtue he puts forth in their behalf, so far as it may be for their good. As for the quantity of goodness that is in God, the truth is, beloved, it is not to be expressed; the word quantity, is but a representative word, to set out how much usefulness and help there is in God to our apprehension; for quantity hath dimensions and bounds, and are, and may be compassed; but there are no bounds of help in him; there is no want upon you, but we may say of you, as of a map, it may be but the breadth of a man's hand, and yet describes countries of vast circumference. Beloved, you are the image of God, it is true, but yet, as in a little map, that hath the world enclosed in it, God is an infinite vastness, far above your capacity; be you as empty as may be, you are but a nutshell, to be filled with the waters of the whole ocean; he is an ocean of goodness, to fill you up with this, is to fill a nutshell with the sea; the Lord is so full, that much of his fulness goes by a flood-gate, as I may so speak, because there is more than will run through thy mill; but still there is as much as will fill

it, and keep it in a perpetual motion. Art thou sick or poor? God hath health and wealth in him; art thou in any extremity, he is the God of all consolation; art thou at thy wits ends, his wisdom is infinite; art thou weak, he is omnipotent; there is no disease, nor infirmity, but remedy is most plentiful with him.

But some will say, is the propriety such in God, and is he so abundant to those that have it in him? How cometh it then to pass, that those whose God he is, are so far to seek as they are, for many things that he can supply them with? How many are the complaints of things they want, that God could supply? It seems therefore, that there is not such propriety as that he is, or may be so useful to them, that they have power of it.

Let me tell you, there is nothing in God, wherein he may be useful for the good of his people, but he pours out himself, and is never lacking to them; there is nothing that they complain of, that God doth not afford them out of himself; but it is not good for them, that they should always have those things, which they think that they want? It is no infringing of propriety, to withhold from a man some things, at sometimes, that are his own; as for instance, suppose a man be in a desperate humor to draw his own sword to run himself through; he is but a sorry friend, that will let a man have it to do himself a mischief. Suppose a father of an unthrifty son, hath an estate of his in his hands, because it is his, were it wisdom in the father to let him have the disposing of it, to waste it unprofitably; were it not the property of a wise father to keep it for better uses for his son? There is nothing that the Lord doth hold from his own people, to whom he gave up himself, but that which in the use thereof, would do them more hurt than good.

Yea, but you will say, you do not speak of such things that God might afford that will do us hurt, but to those that he hath given himself unto, for there are wanting many things that would be very good for them; they are very much distressed, and God hath in him that which will ease them; they seek to him for it, and they cannot find redress, though it be in God; if he be so beneficial, then why cannot they have what is good for them out of him?

I answer, there is nothing that is good, but you have it out of him; let me tell you, beloved, you are not always fit to be judges of what is good for you, of

those things that God hath in store. A man may be in a distemper, and may judge amiss; you know, when a man is sick of a severe fever, he may exceedingly desire drink, he may shake, and may ask for that which is his own; and yet for all this, it is a loving wife's duty to keep it from him, till the wise physician permit; thus would it be with us. If the Lord should give us those things that we think good, we should soon bring an old house over our heads, as they say.

But some will say, there are things that are good for me, and I have them not. Let them be what you can imagine, and let others judge so as well as you; yet I shall stand to this, and make it good, that there is nothing that is truly good for the faithful, that God withholdeth from them, to whom he hath given himself; let it be never so special a gift, it is not good at that time, for that person from whom it is withheld; for instance, some will say that the thing I want is, that I have a stony heart, and fain would I have a heart of flesh. I have a dead and wandering spirit in God's service, and fain would I have a settled spirit; fain would I have a cheerful heart, and free spirit; are not these good for me? And yet I seek God for these many times, and having God, they are mine own it seems, because they are in him, and he himself is mine. How can he be said to be my God, and all he is, and hath, to be mine, and I cannot come at these good things which are in him, and are so needful for me?

I answer; that God in giving himself unto persons, gives himself to be communicated unto them at sundry seasons, and in divers kinds and measures, and yet so, that he will be judge of the fitness of the time. The question then will be this; is it softness, or more softness of heart you seek for? Is it a largeness, or more largeness of heart you seek? I mean this, that which you seek and enquire after from God as your God; is it something you have nothing of? Or, is it for more of something you have already? If you say, it is something I have nothing at all of; I have a stony heart, and no softness at all in it; that is false, there can be no seeking of God, where there is no softness, and all hardness; for he must first soften the heart to seek him; but you conceive there is none at all, because the apprehension of that which is wanting, and the want of that which you have not, swallow up that you have. It is more that you would have in respect of measure. But you will say, is it not good for me, though I have

a little softness, a little spirituality, and a measure of largeness of spirit, to have more?

I answer that you must distinguish time. God doth not see it better at this instant, that thou shouldest have more softness of heart than thou hast; and this I am bold to affirm, if he judged it were better, that thou shouldest be more spiritual at this instant. Beloved, I speak of a person to whom God gives himself, he would not withhold it all from thee. Mark it well, you will find, that all the spirituality belonging to a believer is the mere gift of God to him, and all at his disposing; and without the leave of the creature, he may make whom he will, partaker of it, and in what measure he thinks meet; so that the creature can enjoy no more of spirituality than God will give him; so the covenant runs, that you may not think that your spirituality depends upon yourselves, and the putting forth of yourselves for it, "a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." {Ez.36:26,27} "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." {Jer.31:31-33} Mark the covenant well, wherever it is, whether in Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, or Hebrews, chapter 8; where the covenant is again and again recited. Mark it, there is not one clause of it that God will have men do this and that good; he doth not put them upon bringing anything to make it up; for all that is required of the person covenanted with, the Lord is bound to make good all to him. Now if so be the Lord did see more of these spiritual enlargements requisite for thy use; he that hath made such a solemn engagement of himself, for the performance of all that is to be wrought in thee in this covenant, would not withhold that at this instant from thee; thou knowest

not what a corrupt use thou, at such a time, would make of them; for some, through more abundance of spirituality and spiritual enlargements, have abused them, to grow more proud and scornful. Paul met with such, to whom, being puffed up with pride, saith he, "who maketh thee to differ from another; and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" {I Cor.4:7} Beloved, your own experience may witness; you shall find some persons, more eminent in spirituality, have more abundance of pride; for example, you shall find some excel in prayer, some in other gifts; what follows? The corruption in the heart of man gathers such corrupt inference from hence, that pride rises in it, that another saint, because he hath a stammering tongue, though equally sound hearted with him, is not fit for such a one's company. God is wise, he knows the measure and proportion that is fit for every member of Jesus Christ, and that he doth not withhold. I speak not this with any intent, but that people should still rise to as much as can be attained, but that they "still press hard to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ." {Phil.3:14}

Beloved, when we seek God in his own way for increase of any good for soul or body, let us stand to his good pleasure; and, for encouragement, let me tell you, if ever the Lord would have withheld anything for the sinfulness of his creatures, he would have withheld the gift of his own Son, "but while we were enemies, Christ died for us." Would not God spare his own Son, but deliver him up for us all, while such, seeing the delivering up of him, was for the good of his people? Will he detain small things in comparison of him, because of weaknesses in us? Mark the apostle's words, "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32} As if he had said, thou poor wretch, wantest such and such spirituality, thou seekest and canst not find, and by-and-by crieth out, that such and such sins hinder God, that he will not give thee such grace as thou needest; and at last you question, whether he gave thee Christ, or no; nay, when thou wert viler than now thou art, thy vileness did not hinder, but he freely gave his Son for thee; much less shall it bar from thee those spiritual gifts that God intends to give thee.

Here objections start up, this is the way to make persons slack duties, and be careless; if we preached, that God will not give till we mend ourselves, and leave our sins, is not this a far better way to put men upon it, than thus to preach? Let me tell you, we must not be more wise than God, that all that the creature hath, might appear to be from his grace, and so he have the praise of the glory of it. I say again, it is not sinfulness in creatures that shall hinder God's communicating so much of his Spirit, as he seeth useful; and he will take care they shall not take a licentious liberty to go on in sin, or neglect seeking him, because they know it is not their seeking that makes God answer for what they want; for it is not your reforming that gets God to communicate more to you; but he doth it merely for his own sake, from his mere motion, out of his mere compassion, the riches of which was purchased by the blood of Christ. This is the only spring and fountain that brings forth to you the fulness of God in such measure as you have; as he is yours; so, whatsoever in him is fit for you in season, he shall cease to be his own, when he ceases to be yours; and therefore, beloved, I beseech you, that you will not stumble at God himself, as if he were so humorous, that every little thing, {not that any sin is, in its own nature, little, but comparatively,} every infirmity and failing, should make him pull his hands into his bosom, and refuse to give his grace. The Lord from all eternity determined what to give to every saint, and had every act of every believer, before his eyes; so that, if they would have been provocations to him to keep his gifts, he should never have bestowed any upon him. But I must tell you, it is the foundation of all our comfort in all our failings in this life, that there is nothing that we enjoy from God, but what was appointed us before; and no sin is committed, but what was from eternity, before him; and, if any sin should have hindered him, he would never have set down so fully and graciously what he would do; so that if he hath already manifested the greatness of his love by communicating himself to you; assure yourselves, this being established, nothing shall hinder the communication of anything whatsoever, that may make for your good. Well, let us go a little further and consider how he becomes the God of people; for I must tell you, that for lack of clear distinguishing between these two things, how he becomes theirs, and how he is to be theirs, occasions a

great deal of confusion in the minds of men, for these two go all for one; but you shall see their difference, and the different principle from whence they flow.

1. How doth God come to be the God of people? You will say, this is of great use, it is worth the hearing, let it cost what it will, to have God for my own; but, I say, there is no more treasure in him, for our use, than it is free to; the gift of him, for our own God, is as cheap as it is rich; he never looks the creature should bring anything to procure it, but we partake of this merely and properly from the pleasure of his own will. I say, there is originally and efficiently, no other motive, or nothing concurring to make him our God; but only that he would do it simply for his own sake; therefore it is so. Beloved, look upon the creatures; God gives his image only to the sons of men; "let us make man after our own image;" how doth man become partaker of it, more than the rest of the creatures? You may plainly see there is nothing in man himself that procures this privilege to him; man was made but of one common lump with other creatures, even of the same materials that toads and frogs. Now, that which was the cause, why man had the image of God, and no other creature, is the cause why believers have God given to be their God; and the reason of both is his good pleasure. It is true, there is a propriety of land many times made over unto persons, in respect of amiableness or desert, conceived to be in them, and so it is conferred unto them; but in God's giving himself to the sons of men, there could not be such motives in them. If anything could be a motive to the Lord, it must be the most excellent thing the creature hath since the fall; as fasting, prayer, mourning, weeping, self-denial, mortification, cleansing of themselves, amending, and the like; but it was impossible, beloved, there should be any motive, out of any of all these, for God to give himself over to people; for all these performances, and whatever else are in man, are but branches that issue from this main root, God's being their God. If they be spiritual gifts, they issue out of this principle; there is no man that believes, fasts, prays, and mourns, in a truly gracious manner, but God is first his God, and, being so, communicates these things to him. How can that then be a motive to God to communicate himself, that is not in man till he hath done it; and indeed, is but the issue of it? So then, it is impossible that God should fetch any argument,

or motive, to make himself ours, from what we do; and if we could do any such thing, yet there cannot be any moving power in such performances, to obtain him for our God; for in the very best of them there is unrighteousness, there is filthiness; nay, the prophet saith, "that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" sweet motives to prevail with God, for such a gift as to communicate himself! No beloved, it is not what we do, but what he in his own thoughts hath freely determined to do for us.

But you will say, Christ makes God to be our God. I answer, beloved, in some sense, that is true; but, as I said before, originally, he doth not; give me leave to open this clearly unto you; for I must tell you, that Christ himself is particularly careful, not to take to himself that which belongs unto his Father; nor should we give to Christ himself that which belongs unto God peculiarly, as giving Christ himself unto us. Christ saith, "give to Caesar, the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's;" and this holds as true between God and Christ, as Mediator; give unto God the things that are his, and to Christ the things that are his; for our Saviour, in John 17:4, saith, speaking to the Father in prayer, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." What work was that? See verse 21, "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;" as much as to say, that thou mightest communicate thyself to them. Christ professes, that it is the work that his Father hath given him to do; he did not put himself upon it originally, but the Father put him upon it. The truth is, the mere good pleasure of God, contriving and ordaining this communicating of himself, was the ground that Christ was sent into the world, that he was conceived in the womb of a virgin, &c., and the Lord by the righteousness of Christ hath actually brought all the benefits of the gospel upon us, to which end, Christ hath done this work; but the first foundation of it, was the thing by which he was Christ and Mediator; and therefore he could not be the original of that eternal decree of God to communicate himself to us, for the execution whereof he was sent into the world. The schools have a rule, that the end is first intended, though it be last in execution; so this, that God would communicate himself to the sons of men, being the end for which Christ was sent; though,

till he had, by virtue of his death, made way, there was no actual communion, yet still it was the end of his coming into the world; it was in the mind of God, before the means was in being. Therefore, if you will have God to be your God, you must not think, that such and such things will make him yours. Nothing will, but his own free motion from himself by his Son.

2. There is a way by which God is found to be the God of his people; now these things being confounded together, put people into a labyrinth, thinking the way to find God, and to get him, is all one; now, though it is the mere good pleasure of God himself, that bestows himself upon us; yet he is pleased to chalk out a way, whereby he may be our God; and that we may find him to be so, we must meet him in those ways he useth to be met in.

But you will say, how doth God usually manifest himself, and how is he found of his people to be theirs?

I answer, there is an efficient and a passive instrument of finding him out; the way of finding out of God efficiently to be our God, is the Spirit of the Lord, acquainting men with the mind of the Lord, he is the efficient; all the world is not able to work any impression upon the spirit of a man, that the Lord is his God; only the Spirit of the Lord must persuade the spirit of man, to receive this principle; it is true indeed, he doth it according to the word of grace, and speaks no more to the spirit of a man, but what is in that; but the word doth not of itself work this impression, that God is my, or thy God, but it is wrought by the Spirit.

What serves all the ordinances for, you will say? Is not here a crying down of them? There will be still this scandal cast upon us; but let me tell you, there is a most comfortable use of them, though they serve not such high purposes as these, to beget, find out and reveal to the spirits of men, the things that concern God; yet, besides the efficient revelation of God, to be our God from the Spirit alone, there is a passive instrument, by which the Lord makes himself known to be the God of his people.

God makes himself known passively to be the God of his people, by the word of his grace, and faith laying hold upon it revealed, and more subordinately in prayer, fasting, receiving of the Lord's supper, and such ordinances, so far as they are mixed with faith. Now give me leave, in a few words, to communicate unto you the full use and utmost extent of God's thoughts,

concerning the ordinances that he hath propounded, how far forth he would have the creature look upon them, and be put upon the use of them, so far as they are useful. Know therefore, that all these ordinances are but passive ways of conveying this great gift, the knowledge of God to be our God; I mean more plainly thus; these are only of and in themselves, empty channels, through which the Spirit of the Lord brings from God himself the spring; these riches and conveys the same into the spirit of a man. Look as a channel dug in a dry ground is the way through which the spring conveys its water unto a cistern; the channel itself communicates none of its own, only it is a passage, through which the spring conveys its water; so are all the ordinances, even faith itself, prayer, and all other services, they are but channels, through which the Spirit of the Lord passes, and brings from the Lord himself {the spring and fountain} the revelation of God to be our God. In all the rest of the gifts of God, which he hath so freely bestowed, never a gift of God's Spirit procures anything of its own; our faith, fasting, and prayer, have nothing of their own, but as the Lord hath been pleased to make them to be passages to convey himself to the sons of men, and so they are to be made use of by them. And indeed, beloved, this is the load-stone, to provoke persons to the use of all ordinances; God hath ranked them together, that he hath so much, and so often promised through them to convey himself. You are "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation;" as if he should have said, the Lord conveys himself, and the manifestation of his own salvation, through our believing; the Spirit of the Lord passing through the ministry of the gospel, as the breath of man passes through a trumpet; the trumpet is the gospel, the breath is the Spirit of the Lord; the trumpet adds nothing to the breath. Now know, beloved, so far as you will attend the ordinances, because God calls out to them, and because you have heard the Lord promises to bestow such things upon you in them, so far you shall attend them according to his pleasure; but when you ascend so high, that ordinances get things, then you rob the Lord, and give more to them than God hath given; now, though they have no efficiency of their own, in that nature I have spoken, yet there is good cause for all God's own people to esteem very highly of, and to be joyful, and to long much after ordinances,

and make much of them; for the Lord hath made his promises to be found of them, and to be with them in ordinances. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." {Ps.50:15} And here, by the way, know from hence, what is the expectation of believers themselves, which they ought to have of the Lord, for such things, when they come to such ordinances, that so, when we attend the Lord in them, we may find him in them. In Ezekiel you find, there was a constant motion in the wheels, but it was because there was a spirit stirring in them; there is no motion in the heart of man, nor ordinances, but as the Spirit of the Lord is in them; the Lord hath promised to meet with us in ordinances, or else they would be as dry as anything in the world; therefore as the poor man lay at the beautiful gate of the temple, not because the gate would relieve him, but because it was a place of concourse, where honorable men resorted, from whom he might have alms; so in the ministry, fasting, prayer, and all other services, there is the gate of the temple of the Lord, the place God makes usually his resort, and appoints, to give the meeting. Therefore in expectation from the word of his grace, that we may find him in ordinances, we resort to them. Now, what derogation is there all this while to them, while we make them but thus passive? The richest treasure in the world may come to a man through the poorest vessel; the treasure is never the worse, because the vessel is poor. It is no matter of what price the means of conveyance is, so that the thing we desire to be conveyed to us by it, only we must not give it that, which is above its due; to ascribe the obtaining of these things to prayer, and ordinances; that is, to make gods of them. If we think that anything shall move the Lord, but his bowels in Christ, you invert the course of the gospel. The Lord saith, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name sake;" so all that which God doth to men, is done to them for his own sake; he will not be so much bound to any creature, as to fetch the least motive from it, to do good to it; look therefore, as you would speed, wait upon the Lord, where he saith, you shall.

And this shall be encouragement sufficient to wait upon all ordinances, where the Lord appoints; that he will, for his own sake, give a gracious answer, and bestow all good things upon you, that you stand in need of in them; this is motive sufficient, I say, to stir

you up to attend upon them, and yet not make gods of them; to ascribe that to them, which belongs alone to God, who does all ordinarily through ordinances; it is the only way to disappoint you of your hope, when you expect help from them.

But what is all this to fasting, will you say? If you consider the nature of fasting aright, you will find there is nothing more proper for this day, than this thing, God to be thy God, to keep thee from fear. What is the end of fasting, but this, to get a prop to support from sinking, by reason of approaching evils? Who knows, whether the Lord will repent and leave a blessing behind, saith Joel, when he proclaimed the day of a fast? Then to find the Lord with his hands full of blessings, is the end of a fast. Now, if you will find the Lord your God, you shall find the utmost that you can in fasting; for in him you will find that which will support you, when the greatest extremities grow upon you. Therefore, I have no more to say to you, beloved, but only to commend this work to the grace of God, and to the power of his Spirit, that is able to fasten it upon your spirits, for your everlasting comfort.

34 Revelation Of Grace

No Encouragement To Sin

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {1 Jn.2:1,2}

Of all the prophets, Daniel alone had this prerogative, to be called, "the greatly beloved of the Lord;" and this greatness of his endearedness was expressed in the manifestation of the riches of the gospel unto him, in a more singular manner than to others; so the Lord expresses it by his angel, Dan.9:23, 24, "thou art greatly beloved; {I come to tell thee;} therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision, 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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." And among all the disciples that conversed with Christ, this disciple John had the

privilege which Daniel had among the prophets, to be called “the beloved disciple;” and as an argument of that, he is admitted to lie in the bosom of Christ; and of all the apostles, you will find none of them hit so upon the great grace of God to the sons of men, as he doth. Compare the gospel which he wrote, with other evangelists, and you will find a vast difference between the manifestation of the free grace of God to them, and to him. He also writing this epistle, follows the same strain; in the former chapter he delivers unto us, two admirable passages; the one is, “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all our sins;” and the other, “he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;” two great manifestations of the absolute freeness of the grace of God to the sons of men. Now, in chap. 1:4, he declares one main end, for which he publishes this free grace of God; “these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full;” implying that there is fulness of joy in the grace here revealed; and it is fit, that little children that have fellowship with the Father and the Son, should have the knowledge of it for that end.

Now, whereas he speaks of God’s forgiving freely, he would not have men mistake, as if his revealing pardon of sin intimated, that people did not sin anymore; and there he anticipates it in verse 8. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Sin we do; but the grace of God stands in this, that when we sin, it is forgiven, and it is an act of justice for God to forgive it. Beloved, I perceive the world clamors extremely against the fearful fruits {as they conceive} of such publishing the grace of God to men. Tell men their sins are forgiven, and whatsoever they commit, being believers, they shall do them no hurt; this is the way, say they, to bring all manner of licentiousness into the world; this opens the flood-gates for floods of sins to overflow the church. But the apostle prevents this great objection, and not only so, but establishes the direct contrary to the inference men make from the free grace of God, in the words of my text. And observe it well, were it not an apostle of Christ that spake these words, there are many zealots in the church would condemn it, not only for heresy, but for the greatest absurdity. This appears plain, for there are two things the apostle drives at in these two verses.

1. An enforcement of something that he would

work upon little children, as he calls them, that have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

2. The great argument he useth to prevail with them to embrace that which he would fasten upon them.

The thing the apostle would fasten upon believers was “that they would not sin;” because he writes these things to them; the argument by which he would prevail with them to do this, is a strange one in the opinion of most men; “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.” Put them together, and it amounts to this; I would have you not to sin; now, the only, and best way, to prevail with you, is, if you commit sin, there is an advocate with the Father, that shall take care that the sin you commit shall do you no hurt; though you sin, he is become the propitiation for your sins; therefore, fear not any hurt that can come to you by them; this is the argument by which he would prevail with them and us against the commission of sin. Now, what an absurd argument seems this, not only to the world, but even to zealous professors, to prevail with men to the forbearance of sin, to tell them before-hand, that if they sin, there is an advocate for them, and he is the propitiation for their sins? There is nothing so vilely calumniated, as publishing this free grace of God to men, in this way, as being the high-way to break out into all manner of sin whatsoever. This, say men, is that which lets go the reins on the neck of libertinism, and makes men take liberty without control, freely to commit any sin. Whoever is of this mind, I must tell him, before I go on, directly crosses the wisdom of God, and gives the lie to the apostle here that presses, with infallibility, how little hurt the knowledge of the pardon of sin can do to persons in Jesus Christ, in that he passes it as an argument to prevail from sin. I beseech you, beloved, not to have any regard to any words I shall say of myself, but as I shall speak the full mind of the Holy Ghost; and I shall give you one point first in general, which is the main scope of the apostle here, and afterwards handle the several branches of it particularly.

First, I say, take his general scope, and then, as the scripture will; evince the truth, so for the truth’s sake, receive that which shall be delivered, though for the present, it may seem otherwise.

The point that ariseth out of the words, is this; for a person, who hath fellowship with the Father and the Son, one of the little children, which the apostle speaks

of to know, before he commits sin, that there is an “advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for sin;” is so far from being a spur to provoke him to the commission of sin, that it is one of the strongest arguments, and the best motives, to prevail with him to refrain from it.

That you may see the doctrine is no fancy, nor opinion of men, but the clear truth; it appears plainly, that the apostle’s business is to take men off from sinning, “these things I write unto you that you sin not;” and then immediately follow these words, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” To what purpose are these words, if not as a motive to prevail with them to the thing he persuades them unto? Nay, he tells us plainly, he writes them on purpose that they sin not. What was it that he wrote to them before? That “the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;” and “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;” and now, “these things I write unto you that you sin not.” Suppose one man should come to another and tell him, there is such a friend of yours, will do such and such good things for you, for he hath told me he intends it; and I tell you, that you may comply with him, that will do all this for you. Beloved, is not compliance to this man, provoked by the kindness revealed he will show? Yea, this favour revealed, is the spur to cause him to comply, so the apostle saith, “if any man sin,” &c. It is plain, therefore, that the knowing what shall become of our sins beforehand, that they shall do us no hurt, is not the opening a channel to provoke to sin, but a bridle to restrain from it; for you find, by consulting the scripture, that the Holy Ghost is not rare, but very plentiful, in opening this very truth; that the free grace of God, and the security of believers from sin, are therefore made manifest, that they might not sin.

Look into Rom.3:21-26, where the apostle {after he had showed the desperate condition of man by nature, in respect of what he himself could do} begins to relate the admirable free grace of God to men, even while they are enemies, and can do nothing that is good; and then he comes to show, that this revelation of grace is a way to put them upon more obedience, than if it should be hidden from them; observe the words, “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; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, &c.” Mark how sweetly and excellently he preaches the free grace of God, concluding all under sin, and in a desperate condition in respect of it; and then he brings in the righteousness of Christ, namely, free justification by him that is the propitiation for our sins. But now, what is the fruit of all this? The apostle, in his time, found that the preaching of this free grace unto men, as sinners, raised this very objection that is on foot to this day, and I believe, will be to the end of the world; and, therefore, mark the last verse, {after he had ended this great discourse, and laid down his foundation,} that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law; the objection that comes in, is this; “do we make void the law through faith?” Mark the expression, few will subscribe to this sentence which the apostle delivers; that to preach to men, {though the most desperate sinners under heaven,} there may be as free justification, as for the most righteous man in the world; though by the deeds of the law there be no justification, nothing but condemnation by it, pronounced against him; yet there is justification for such men, and this is the means to restrain from sin. Why, say some, this gives liberty to all uncleanness, for a man to know, that notwithstanding his wicked estate, he shall be justified freely, and be saved, it is impossible he should miscarry. Who will not take liberty to sin, when he knows that though he sins, and his sins be ever so great, all shall be done away, he shall not receive any hurt at all by them? Is not this to make void the law, you will say? Mark the apostle’s answer, “God forbid; nay, rather, we establish the law;” that is, the preaching of this doctrine to you that are believers, little children, that have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, will not make void the law; you cannot take liberty from this free grace revealed. The preaching and publishing of this free grace of God, more effectually wins believers to obedience and forbearance of sin, than any other course that can be taken; this, saith he, is a doctrine that establishes the law, and men in obedience to it; and brings them

nearer in conformity to it, and doth not set them loose to the breaking and violating of it.

And so the same apostle, in chapter 4 & 5, having gone on in an unparalleled way, in the revelation of the admirable grace of God to Abraham, that he was justified, being yet uncircumcised, to show that we are justified when we are in the worst of sinfulness; and sweetly speaking in chapter 5, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” {vs.6,8,10} And in the latter end of it, having showed the free gift and grace of God to us, being considered as lost persons in Adam, in chap.6:1, meets with the same objection in substance, and answers it more fully than he did before, “what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid; {saith he;} how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” The sum and substance of the objection is this, is there so much grace, that where sin hath abounded, grace aboundeth much more? Then it seems, that the more sin a man commits, the more will the glory of the grace of God appear in the pardon of it; and so I shall glorify God best, when I commit sin most, will some say; so that the preaching of the abundance of grace, where sin hath abounded, seems to let men loose to the commission of sin as much as is possibly. The apostle answers this with, “God forbid;” as if he had said, God will never suffer any believer, though ever so weak, through any such truth revealed, to break out into sin, or to make any such abominable inference from it; and, he also gives the reason, why they cannot make such use of the grace of God; “how shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?” To him, the inference seems so absurd, that he appeals to the adversaries themselves, how it can follow such a proposition. He doth not say positively, that they cannot live in sin, that are dead to it, but he puts the question, how it can be? And whereas, some may answer, yea, they may easily do it; no, saith he, they that are partakers of this grace, are dead unto sin, and how can they live in it, when they are dead to it? The glorious power of this grace revealed, strikes sin dead in men, or rather strikes men dead to sin. “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.”

And as you shall hear by-and-by, the apostle makes the very grace of God to have that power in it, as to break the neck of sin in the believer. This is the most certain truth of the text, and springs directly from it. There is a death unto sin, where there is a revelation, effectually of the grace of God to persons to whom it belongs. It brings a dart with it to slay sin. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;” {Rom.8:2,3;} so that, though to reason and sense, the preaching the free grace of God to men, what the Lord hath done for them for his own sake, and that before-hand, may seem to be a licentious doctrine; yet it seems to the apostle there is nothing that more establishes a restraint from sin, than the manifestation of it.

In Rom.11:32-34, the apostle tells us, that “God hath concluded” all in unbelief, that he might “have mercy upon all;” and therefore falls into admiration, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Now what follows; having revealed this unsearchable grace, see how he begins in chapter 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, &c;” that is, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you refrain from sin; what doth he mean? Even the mercies of God, concerning the freeness of grace, manifested before in chapter eleven. Now, if he had been of some men’s minds, that the preaching of the free grace of God, were a dangerous doctrine to set men loose to sin, he would never have used the mercies of God, as an argument to prevail with men to refrain from it; he would not have published that, which should have been of such dangerous consequence, but would rather have been silent, so far from revealing of it as an argument to the contrary. Were the revelation of it the way to bring men to licentiousness, it had been his wisdom, and others, to have concealed it, which certainly he would have done, had it been so; but he was not of that judgment; and therefore, in I Cor.6:20, he draws his argument after the same manner; “ye are

not your own; for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Observe here, that the injunction which the apostle gives the Corinthians, is, that they should glorify God in their bodies and spirits; and what is the argument by which he would persuade them to it? "You are bought with a price;" but, will some say, it seems I am bought, and the price is laid down for me, I am sure and safe enough, the gates of hell cannot prevail against me; I may live as I list, for no danger will follow me, I may take liberty to sin. Now, if the apostle had known that this consequence would justly have followed upon preaching this grace, he dealt very disingenuously with the people of God, and absurdly by enforcing a conclusion from a ground contrary to it, revealing such a doctrine; therefore, surely he would never have used this expression of being "bought with a price," if he had known that this would follow; but contrariwise, he knew that there is no way will so much prevail with God's people to leave their sins, as by telling them beforehand that they are forgiven, and that they are bought with a price.

In Titus 2:1-10, you will find how the apostle urges Titus, that he press a holy conversation, answerable to old men and women, as also to young men and women, and also suitable to servants; and especially he writes concerning them, that they should not purloin from their masters, but show all faithfulness; but what is the argument by which he urges all these things upon them? "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared" {saith he} "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." {vs.11,12} As much as to say, the Lord hath revealed his salvation to you, and you see it before you, it is brought unto you; and not your well doing, but the grace of God, is that which brings salvation, brings it to you. Then may I do what I list, will some say no, saith he, this grace of God that brings salvation, brings this too, "it teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live godly, and soberly, and righteously in this present world." I say, it is blasphemy against the truth of the Holy Ghost in these several passages of scripture, to maintain, that this is a necessary inference from the revelation of the free grace of God to men beforehand, that thereby men will break out into sin, and give up themselves to it, and that this is the way to give up the

reins into the neck of licentiousness.

I will give you but one passage more, and I confess that I have gone further in clearing of this, than I intended; because I know it sticks so in the hearts of cavillers that are ready to spit fire in the faces of those that are asserters and maintainers of the free grace of God in Christ, and the publishers of it to the people of God. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." {I Jn.3:9} He that is born of God. What is that? It is no more but this, he that is received into grace by Christ, is one with him, in respect of spiritual union between them; to be born of God, and be a new creature is all one; to be new creatures, is to be such as we were not before. More fully, a new creature is one that is translated from himself into Christ, and stands before God as Christ himself, and not as he is in, or of himself. Now, such a person, saith the apostle, sins not; there may be some difficulty in the expression, but you must know, the intention of the apostle, is to take off the objection against the doctrine of the free grace of God being licentious, and the reproach that is unjustly cast upon it; and his meaning is, he cannot take such liberty to sin, or make such licentious uses of the grace of God, as to walk in sinful courses, though his sins shall not hurt him; and the reason is, because his seed abides in him, that is, there is an over-ruling power planted in him, to over-match the propensity of the flesh that remains still in him; that it should not have that power that naturally it would have, by virtue of such a principle, implanted; not that the apostle speaks absolutely of sin, that a child of God shall sin no more; for that were to make himself a liar, and that by his own words; for he saith in another place, "he that saith, he hath no sin, deceives himself, and is a liar;" and Solomon also, who saith, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Eccles.7:20. Therefore by sin in this place, he must needs mean a licentious liberty taken to sin.

Beloved, I know that there are many objections raised against this truth; I shall briefly run through some of them, and if it be possible, clear it unto you, and vindicate the gospel from those abominable untruths cast upon it; and that I will do the rather, because thousands turn away from the grace of God, and dare not venture themselves upon it; because they fear, if they should, they should presently take liberty

to sin, and so fall away. Oh; how many have refused their own mercies, and have not received the gospel to this day upon such conceits, that the receiving of it should make them break out unto ungodliness. I know, there are many here present, cannot but witness, they are afraid to close with free grace, though never so fully proved and manifested in scripture, upon this consideration, that it will make them live loosely.

Some will object and say that we know many believers, that do take liberty to themselves, when once they have been acquainted with such free grace that hath been preached.

For answer to this; I say, that if believers, from this grace published, take liberty, they take but what God giveth them; the end of Christ's coming, and preaching the free grace of God to men, is to proclaim liberty to the captives, which are his own people. He came of purpose, "to deliver those, who through fear of death are subject to bondage all their lives long." {Heb.2:15} And therefore, saith Christ, "if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed;" that is, if the Son give you liberty, then you shall have liberty indeed; so that, if believers do take this liberty, upon this ground, they take but that which is their own, purchased unto them by the blood of Christ, and given unto them freely by God their Father.

But some will say, it is a true Christian liberty that Christ allows, and this, indeed, is a liberty he gives men from the captivity and bondage of sin, which they were under before; but many that profess this doctrine, are known to be more slack in the performance of duties, and to grow more and more cold in their zeal, and careless in the practice of religion, and are more regardless of sin; and, in a word, take more liberty to sin, since such grace hath been revealed.

For answer to this, beloved, first, you are not to expect perfection of works from believers in this life, and that they should be free from all manner of sin. I know none of those that have the most indignation against this doctrine of the free grace of God to men, but will yield, that they themselves are not without failings; they ought not, therefore, to aggravate the weakness of their brethren, much less ought the truth of God to be charged with the failings of men. But suppose some do make evil uses of the free grace of God, and are thereby encouraged to be more bold with sin; as they are not to be upheld in it, nor allowed,

so ought not their fault to be laid upon that, which effectually teacheth the contrary; for, though believers in infirmity may happen, at some times or other, to be overcome with strength of passion and corruption, to fall into sin, upon consideration that the free grace of God will save them; yet shall we therefore conceal this grace, because men take that liberty which it doth not give? I say, beloved, if this should be a standing rule, God should never have revealed the gospel to the sons of men. I know no believer so perfect in a course of sanctification and obedience, and abstinence from sin, but his corruptions may occasion him to take advantage, even from the gospel itself, to sin; but certainly, I dare be bold to affirm, there is not any true believer, that maintains this principle, that he may sin without control, because the free grace of God hath abounded; I dare say further, that it is a bold slander, and that no man is able to make it good from true evidence, that there is any that takes constant and frequent liberty to break out into sin, because he knows what shall become of him, and that his sins are done away by the blood of Christ, so that they shall do him no hurt; for, the belief of this, effectually teaches and produces an hatred of sin, and a love of holiness; so that certainly, this is more than can be proved against any true believer, that he should approve himself in any sin upon this ground if indeed believers were in their own keeping, then what sin might they not fall into? But they do not stand upon their own principles; for, saith the apostle, "you are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. {I Pet.1:5} And again, saith the apostle Paul, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." {Gal.2:20} It is not a believer now that lives, but it is Christ that lives in him, and he is the predominant principle whereby his actions are swayed; and as he is carried along according to the principles of Christ, he cannot fall into sin. It is true indeed, Christ for reasons best known to him, may let loose the reins wherewith he holds a believer for a while, and then he may fall into sin; but this comes to pass, because the grace of God is hid, and not because it is manifested unto him, and believed by him; and at length the power of Christ shall pull them in again, even by those cords of love, whereby they were first drawn unto him. And the believer hath the engagement of Christ himself, that he will never

fail him, nor forsake him; and he hath promised, that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness, and his grace shall be sufficient for him; and that because they are not “under the law, but under grace, therefore sin shall not have dominion over them.” {Rom.6:14} So that except Christ will give up one of his own members, to make it his constant practice to abuse and turn the grace of God to sin, he shall not do it; but he hath undertaken, that sin shall not have dominion over that person, that is a member of his.

But some will say, there are many that admire and adore the doctrine of the free grace of God, that are yet notoriously known to live in all manner of licentiousness, and that upon this ground, because their sins are laid upon Christ; and they say, we may live in sin, and do what we list; and what is their argument? Oh, say they, our sins are laid upon Christ, and he died for them.

For answer to this, I profess, I never heard from any person of credit, that there are any such monsters as these, that dare make it their practice to be drunk, to break the Sabbath, to curse and swear, and live in uncleanness, and all manner of vileness, because all their sins are laid upon Christ, that say, they are believers, and they shall do well enough. There are many that are taxed for such but, for mine own part, I cannot say anything to the truth of this charge, by mine own experience, of any man; but, it may be there are such monsters as these are, in the world; and the apostle Paul said, there were such in his time, that because the grace of God abounded, would make sin to abound, and turn it into wantonness; and therefore, it is probable there are such now. And, if there be any such, let me deal plainly with them; for my part, I must account them the greatest monsters upon the face of the earth, the greatest enemies to the church that ever were; and, I say, of such dishonourers of the church, and disturbers of the consciences of God’s people, that they are carnal, sensual, and devilish. They are the greatest enemies to the free grace of God, the greatest subverters of the power and purity of the gospel, and the greatest hinderers of the course of it, that are under heaven; and I dare be bold to say that open drunkards, harlots, and murderers, that profess not the gospel of Jesus Christ, come infinitely short of these in abomination; none so wound the sides of Christ, as he that professes the gospel, and yet lives

wickedly. And, if there be any such here, let me tell them, their faith is no better than that of devils, for they believe and tremble; and that Christ will have a heavier reckoning with such, when they come to judgment, than any under heaven besides. How many thousands have forsaken their own mercy, and despised the free grace of God, accounting it a licentious doctrine, and all because of the occasion such persons as these give by their vile conversation? Well, beloved, admit that the free grace of God hath been thus abused by such wretches; look over the whole scripture, hath not both law and gospel been abused, as well as this particular grace? Is not Christ appointed for the rising and falling of many in Israel; a stumbling stone for the falling, and a corner-stone for the rising of many? Is not he set up as a rock for some to build upon, but to dash others in pieces? For a stone of offence to grind many to powder, as well as to be a foundation-stone to others? Assure yourselves, the gospel of Christ, as it makes believers far more holy than they can be that receive it not, so there are some that grow far more filthy, and take occasion from it, to filthiness; but, in the meantime, shall the children want their bread, cause dogs catch at it? Will not you give your child a bit of food all the day, and all the week, because, when you give it them, the dogs snatch at it, and it may be, pull some of it out of their hands? Shall the children starve for want of bread, because dogs abuse it? Neither must we make that bitter and sour; which God hath made sweet. Because wicked men abuse the gospel and the free grace of God, shall the people of God be deprived of that which he hath appointed and provided for them? Let me ask this question of you; did not the Lord himself, from everlasting, as clearly see and know, even long before he did reveal it, how his free grace should be abused, when it should be preached, as we ourselves see it abused? If it be such a dangerous and pernicious thing to preach it, why did he give such a large commission and such a strait charge to his apostles and ministers to preach it to every creature? If the publication of it be so dangerous, who must be blamed for it? Must not God himself that hath commanded us to preach it to every creature? Beloved, if the ministers of the gospel preach the mind of Christ unto his people, shall they be traduced and opposed for it? Do ye not, through us, wound the sides of Christ, and God himself? Is not

this to charge him that is wisdom itself, with folly? For if ministers declare this doctrine, it is no more than that which God hath before revealed unto them, and given them commission for; but, if they, out of a carnal and needless fear of liberty, instead of preaching the mind of God, shall preach themselves, {let it be never so specious and well-liked of men,} they shall be judged of God as coming in their own names, and not sent by him.

But you will say, it may be done with caution and limitation.

I answer, let us not be more wary and cautious than God would have us be, to put mixtures of men's doings to the obtaining of his grace, while he himself pours it out to men simply for his own sake, without consideration of anything in them. "The children being yet unborn," speaking of Jacob and Esau, when yet they had done neither good nor evil; it was said unto Rebecca that "the elder shall serve the younger," as it is written; "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Men will be mincing this truth, and they will tell you, if you keep close unto God, and refrain from sin, especially from gross sin, God will love you, and then you may apply these promises to yourselves; but God speaks plainly and expressly here, "before they had done either good or evil, Jacob have I loved." The grace of God is passed over to men as they are ungodly, "while they are yet enemies and sinners;" men being yet unborn, when there is nothing in them considered, but pollution in blood and all manner of uncleanness, God casts his loving-kindness and establishes it; before Jacob had done anything, or had any good intention to him, God loved him, and appointed this grace for him; this is the grace of God revealed, and he hath revealed it, thus freely to men. Now, is this the Lord himself that speaks it? Hath he given us commission to preach this gospel and grace of his, and shall we be blamed and opposed for speaking those things that he hath commanded us to speak, and hath put into our mouths, saying, we preach a doctrine of looseness and licentiousness; and give men leave to do what they list? And yet all this is but grounded upon carnal fear and needless jealousy of a licentious liberty.

But some will say, the preaching of the terrors of the law, the wrath of God, damnation and hellfire unto men, is a safer way to take men off from sin, than to preach grace and forgiveness of sins beforehand. It

is better to lay the foundation first in preaching wrath and damnation.

For answer to this, I say, if we preach wrath and damnation, we must either make them believe they lie under it, and that it shall come upon them; or we must make them believe, that though there be wrath yet it shall not fall upon them. Now, if we tell them of wrath and damnation, and the terrors of the law, and say they are secure from them, they belong not to them, to what purpose do we tell them of them? We had as good say nothing; if we should terrify them, and make them believe, being believers, for of those I speak, if they commit such sins, they shall be damned, and so come under the wrath of God; and except they perform such and such duties, walk thus and thus holy, they shall come under the wrath of God, or at least he will be angry with them. What do we in this, but abuse the scriptures? We undo all that Christ hath done; we injure and wrong the believers themselves; we tell God he lies to his face; for, if we tell them, that except they do these good works, they shall come under the wrath of God; what is this, but to tell that God lies, and to bring the faithful under a covenant of works? In Isaiah 54:9,10, you can see how it is a belying of God, to say, that believers may come under wrath and damnation, except they do thus and thus; the Holy Ghost speaks there of the time when the seed of Jacob shall inherit the Gentiles, that is, the time of the gospel; in the beginning, the Lord tells us of an everlasting kindness, that should never depart, nor be made void, and he confirms it thus, "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 would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 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." Observe it well; hath God made such an oath concerning these very times, so firm and stable, that the earth shall be drowned again with water, before it shall be broken; "that he will not be wroth with his people, nor rebuke them anymore?" And shall we tell believers, if they sin, that they shall come under God's wrath; except they do such and such good works, God will be angry with them, after he hath so sworn, that he will not be wroth with his people anymore? Is

not this to make God a liar? Again, we do not only, so much as lies in us, make him a liar, but we offer an insufferable affront unto Jesus Christ, and strike at the very heart of the whole office of his Mediatorship. If we say, that God is wroth with believers for whom Christ died, for what end did he suffer death? I say, if this principle be a truth, that God will be wroth with his people, then Christ died in vain; for he could have been but wroth with them, if he had never died; and to bring the people of God under wrath and vengeance again for their sins, is to take away all the virtue of the death of Christ, and to make it of none effect; and how will this stand with Isaiah 53:11, that he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied? Was God indeed satisfied with the sufferings of Christ, having the sins of men laid upon him, and yet is he wroth and angry with believers for those very sins again, which before he acknowledged satisfaction for? If a man be indebted unto another, and the creditor be willing to take a surety for the debt, and this surety comes in and pays his debt for the man he was bound for, and he thereupon gives a general discharge under hand and seal, shall he yet, by and by, after take the debtor by the throat, and clap him up in jail; when the surety hath answered for the debt before, and after he hath delivered, under hand and seal, that he was satisfied, and that his book was crossed? Who but must say, it is injustice in the highest degree?

What justice, what equity is in this? Beloved, Christ became our Surety; God accepted of him for our debt; he clapped him up in jail, as I may say, for the debt; he took every farthing that he could demand of us; he is now reconciled unto us; he will not now impute our sins to us; he hath acknowledged satisfaction, it is upon record; and now shall he come upon them again with fresh wrath, for whom Christ hath done all this? Shall he charge the debt upon them again? He hath forgotten the death of Christ, it seems, if this be true. Therefore know thus much that it is against his death; a making of it of none effect, and his coming to be in vain, to say that the wrath of God will break out upon believers if they commit such and such sins; and for this I have said, if any man can produce one scripture against it; or show in all the book of God, that it is any otherwise than I have delivered, I shall willingly recant my opinion. But, I see the scripture runs wholly in this strain, and is so full in nothing as in this, that

God hath particularly and completely discharged the sins of believers. Oh; then, take heed of falling into that error of the papists, that say, that God hath taken away the sin, but not the wrath of God due to it; that he hath forgiven our sins, but not their punishment; but I beseech you, consider, that as our sins were then upon Christ, he was so bruised for them, that by his stripes we are healed, and the chastisement of our peace was so upon him, that there is nothing else but peace belongs to us; that he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied; Christ was chastised, as I have often said, with the rod of God's wrath, that it was quite worn out and wholly spent itself upon him; this is apparent in the very tenor of the new covenant itself; it runs altogether upon free gift and grace; God takes upon himself to do all that shall be in believers, and asking and requiring nothing at all of us; it is true, he saith there shall be the new heart, and a new spirit, and a new law written in the inward parts; but he requires it not of the believer, but he himself hath undertaken to do all, and bestow it upon him. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." {Ez.36:26,27} He doth not say, you must get you new hearts, and new spirits, and your stony hearts taken away; and you must get you hearts of flesh; but I will take the work in hand, and I will see all done myself; all runs freely upon God's undertaking for his people. Seeing, therefore, God doth all things freely of his own accord in us; then, beloved, see how the grace of God is abused by those that would make men believe that it depends upon men's doings, and tell men, if they do not, the wrath of God will follow thereupon. This likewise batters down to the ground, that way of urging men to holiness, which some men hold forth; that if men do not such good works and leave such sins, then they must come under the wrath of God; and the wrath of God is but hidden all this while they do these and these good works; but, if they fail in any of them, then the wrath of God will break out upon them; whereas they ought rather, after the example of the apostle, to excite them to these goods works, because they are already freed from wrath.

Certainly, this, that I have delivered, proves it

efficiently, that the appearing of the Faithful God is revealed at the Bar of Justice he will be; and the more he seeth what God hath done for him, the more obedience he seeth he oweth unto him.

teaches men to do the will of God effectually; the love of God constrains the faithful, and not the fear of wrath.

But to conclude, do not mistake me; in the meanwhile, I have no thoughts as if wrath and vengeance were not to be preached, and made known even to believers; they are to be made known to them, and that as the deserts of sin, and as the means to keep from sin.

But now, some may say, this seems to be against, and to overthrow all that you have delivered.

Observe me well, do not mistake me; you must know, that wrath and vengeance must be revealed to believers, and to restrain them from sin, but not in that way men ordinarily think. I mean thus, wrath and vengeance are not to be revealed, as if believers were to fear them, or as if they should come under them; but as they are secured and freed from them, that so they should fear to commit sin; not for fear of coming under wrath, but out of love, because God hath been so gracious to them, as to deliver them from the weight of so heavy wrath and displeasure, that otherwise must of necessity have fallen upon them; and so their walking with God in a holy conversation, is a fruit of the mercy already shown, and doth not go before, as a thing by which it should be obtained and procured. They serve God, because they are delivered from wrath, and not because they might receive deliverance from it. It proceeds from joy; in consideration of wrath already past, and not from fear of it to come; so that the wrath of God is preached unto them, not that they are to come under it, or are in that way to fear it, but they may see what they are delivered from; what they did, and should, and others must lie under; that they may see God's love unto them therein, that this may draw them to obedience, and restrain them from sin. And, now they say, because I have been delivered from so great a wrath, therefore will I sing and rejoice, "and walk before the Lord in the land of the living;" and triumph in him, who is my deliverer; leading a life answerable to the love of God, bestowing such a deliverance upon me; and so, by this preaching of the wrath of God, as being freed from it, the more one seeth what he is freed from, the more he seeth what Christ hath done in bearing that wrath from him; and consequently, the more he is stirred up to walk before God in more cheerful and comfortable

more he seeth what God hath done for him, the more obedience he seeth he oweth unto him.

And now, if any persons here present, have an evil opinion of the grace of God, as a thing of dangerous consequence, as a licentious doctrine; let them learn from that which hath been said; to mend their minds, and correct their judgments, knowing that the Holy Ghost is of another mind; that the revealing of the grace of God, is the best way, to take men off from sin; so far is it from letting loose the reins to break out into all manner of sinfulness.

35 The Faithful Friend At The Bar Of Justice

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {I Jn.2:1,2}

I have elsewhere made an entrance, in respect of some generals, these words afford; time being precious, we shall be as thriving of it as possible may be; only a few words, so far as may serve to bring us where we were, and then we shall bring you on {by God's assistance} through the particulars this text holds forth.

The main scope of the apostle is to endeavour to take the people of God off from running into sin; but, first, he useth an argument to prevail with them, which seems absurd unto the world, and doubtless goes for little less than foolishness among men, if not worse, "I write unto you that ye sin not." Well; but how will he prevail with them? "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins;" as much as to say, this is the best way to prevail with you, that you sin not, to know beforehand, that if you sin, you have an advocate with the Father, that will take away your faults, prevail over people from committing sin, to let them know how gracious God is unto them, even to the forgiving of their sins they shall commit; and that which we noted as the main body of the discourse, was; for such persons, who have fellowship with the Father and the Son, to know beforehand that they have "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous,

is the propitiation for the world; but I go on to that we have yet to consider. I have spent some time in objections and answers, but we cannot now dwell upon them. We are to consider now the specialties of the argument the apostle useth here to prevail with people that they sin not.

Beloved, this very text is the opening of the fountain for sin, and for uncleanness; it is a spring of water to revive a fainting and swooning spirit; it is the prop of a tottering soul, to keep it from sinking and perishing; in it the Lord Christ is revealed unto us, an all-sufficient succor to all his own, notwithstanding all their sins that ever they commit. Here we consider: 1. The matter of his argument. 2. The force and strength of it, in reference to the thing the apostle would argue from hence.

1. The matter of the argument itself that is contained in these words, "if any man sin," &c. The force of it lies in the reference of it to the thing the apostle calls for; wherein we may consider, what prevalency this position hath to keep from sin; namely, for persons to know, that when they sin, they have an advocate with the Father.

We begin with the matter of the argument, and in this proposition there are two things observable; a supposition, and a provision of indemnity against the mischief supposed. The supposition is in these words, "if any man sin;" the provision of indemnity is, "we have an advocate with the Father," &c. In the supposition you may note, the thing supposed, sin; and the time which illustrates it; he speaks of present and future sins; he doth not say, if any sin heretofore, in the preterit-tense, but he speaks of the time present, "if any man sin;" there are some things that are spoken of the present time, that are in force, but only that very instant in which they are spoken; and that instant being past, the thing itself is also past; but, for this expression, "if any man sin," it is not transient, but permanent; the apostle speaks not only of his time, and of the people of it, "if any man sin" now; the very words are not to be understood of that very instant only, and exclusively, as having reference only to those that did sin in his time, then these words should have been transient; but the meaning is, that the present of which he spake, should be a standing present time, and the words should be of force for present, even as long as the word of God should remain upon record; they are to be understood of this present time, and all

world; but I go on to that we have yet to consider. I have spent some time in objections and answers, but we cannot now dwell upon them. We are to consider now the specialties of the argument the apostle useth here to prevail with people that they sin not.

Beloved, this very text is the opening of the fountain for sin, and for uncleanness; it is a spring of water to revive a fainting and swooning spirit; it is the prop of a tottering soul, to keep it from sinking and perishing; in it the Lord Christ is revealed unto us, an all-sufficient succor to all his own, notwithstanding all their sins that ever they commit. Here we consider: 1. The matter of his argument. 2. The force and strength of it, in reference to the thing the apostle would argue from hence.

1. The matter of the argument itself that is contained in these words, "if any man sin," &c. The force of it lies in the reference of it to the thing the apostle calls for; wherein we may consider, what prevalency this position hath to keep from sin; namely, for persons to know, that when they sin, they have an advocate with the Father.

We begin with the matter of the argument, and in this proposition there are two things observable; a supposition, and a provision of indemnity against the mischief supposed. The supposition is in these words, "if any man sin;" the provision of indemnity is, "we have an advocate with the Father," &c. In the supposition you may note, the thing supposed, sin; and the time which illustrates it; he speaks of present and future sins; he doth not say, if any sin heretofore, in the preterit-tense, but he speaks of the time present, "if any man sin;" there are some things that are spoken of the present time, that are in force, but only that very instant in which they are spoken; and that instant being past, the thing itself is also past; but, for this expression, "if any man sin," it is not transient, but permanent; the apostle speaks not only of his time, and of the people of it, "if any man sin" now; the very words are not to be understood of that very instant only, and exclusively, as having reference only to those that did sin in his time, then these words should have been transient; but the meaning is, that the present of which he spake, should be a standing present time, and the words should be of force for present, even as long as the word of God should remain upon record; they are to be understood of this present time, and all

present times that shall be in the next age that shall succeed; if any man sin now, or in the next age; there is to be understood a perpetuity of present time, in this expression. It is of great concern, beloved, that you receive this truth, unless you exclude yourselves from the benefit of the advocate-ship of Christ; for, if the words were intended only for that time wherein they were expressed; what should become of us that live so many ages after? They must therefore be of a perpetual and permanent being.

Note in the supposition, the nature of it, "if any man sin," saith the apostle; this word "if" admits of a double construction; either the supposition imports a thing possible, but not likely; or a thing that may be likely to come to pass, or rather that will come to pass. Either it is a supposition, in case a thing is, which, it may be, will not; or a supposition by way of confession and granting of the thing supposed. In this place, John puts not the word 'if' by way of supposition, as if it were only likely there should be a sinning; and if there were a sinning, there were an advocate; but he puts the word here by way of concession, as if he had said, there must and will be sinning; we, God's own people, shall fall into sin, it cannot be denied; but for refuge, when such sins are committed, know that there is an "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Thus you have the first part of the text branched out unto you; namely, the apostle's supposition.

Consider the provision that the Lord, by the apostle, holds forth unto persons that are believers, the members of Christ, for their indemnity against sins they do, or shall commit; namely, "we have an advocate with the Father." In which observe, the office assigned for the making good such provision, "we have an advocate with the Father;" the person to whom this office of advocate-ship is given, and therein the ability and qualification of him to manage it effectually, "Jesus Christ the righteous;" and the issue, and the event of the execution of this office, "he is the propitiation for our sins."

In the office that the Lord sets on foot for the provision of indemnity against sin, being committed, you may observe, the office itself, and that is an advocate-ship; the propriety of this office, or the relation of it to the persons that are the members of Christ. The apostle doth not say, simply and abstractedly that there is an advocate, but he speaks relatively, we have

an advocate, that is, our advocate, &c. This advocate is set forth, not only in his relation to men, as theirs, but also unto God; for he doth not say simply, we have an advocate; but declares the excellency of this office, by this circumstance, with the Father; that is, we have an advocate, he is our advocate; and not only so, but an advocate of ours with the Father; which notes unto us, that the plea of Christ for indemnity from sin, is not in any inferior court; where, if there be a sentence of acquittance procured, there may be a charge from an higher; but the advocate-ship of Christ is managed for our good, in the highest court of all, with the highest judge; that when he gets a sentence, it is definitive, and there is no other court that can take upon it the determination of the case; or call in question the trial of that which hath been determined there.

The provision in respect of the office assigned is excellently illustrated by the circumstance of time, when on foot, or when the officer manages it. The text doth not say, we had, or shall have an advocate, but he speaks in the present tense, "we have an advocate," that now is to act. It is but cold comfort for a man to say, being now a beggar, he had abundance of wealth; neither doth it give him fulness of comfort, to say, that he shall have abundance of wealth hereafter; but herein lies his comfort, that he can say in truth, I am rich, I have abundance of all things. It is but cold comfort for a man to say, I had a friend in court once, but he is dead now; if he had been alive now, it had been better with me than it is, I should have sped well; I had then carried the cause on my side; he would have done so and so for me; but here lies a man's comfort, that he hath a friend at court that will do him a good office at his need; the apostle saith here, "we have an advocate." As, therefore, I said of the present being of sin committed, so I say of the present being of our advocate; it must not be understood to be a transient, but a permanent sentence; it was in force in the apostle's time, it is as full in force in our time; and we may as well and truly say, "we have an advocate;" and, in after ages, the church of God shall say it to the end of the world in their times; as truly as we now and the apostle in his time.

Consider here the person managing this office of advocate-ship, who is described unto us by three notable titles that are proper and full for the comfort and encouragement of those, whose advocate he is; he

is "Jesus Christ the righteous." He is Jesus, and that is a word that imports a Saviour, as the angel expounded it, "and they shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." {Mt.1:21} An admirable encouragement to lift up the heads of dejected and drooping spirits, when the advocate comes to plead; this advocate is their Saviour; that is, his plea is of such force and prevalency, that he saves his client.

But some may say, many times in suits of law, men might have skillful lawyers, which are able to save them, who are not admitted to plead for them, because they are not called to the bar.

Yea, but this Jesus is Christ too; this advocate does not rush into this office of his own head, without warrant, but is called to it for, as you shall hear afterwards, the word Christ imports anointing to the office. Many a good lawyer, indeed, may not be admitted to come to the bar of Common Pleas, although he can plead the cause of his client the best of all; he must be authorized and called unto the bar, or else he may not speak; but the advocate provided for the indemnity against sin, is Christ, he is called to it.

This advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous;" and that imports the strength of the plea he hath, by which he becomes a propitiation for sin; it is his righteousness that prevails in heaven, to get the sentence on the side of the client.

Lastly, you may observe here, the issue what will become of this advocate-ship, what effect it will have at the last; many who have causes in suit, are restless to know how their cause will go; when they come to trial, fain they would know on which side the verdict will be given, and it is a great refreshing to persons, to know beforehand, that the cause will go on their side. Now, the apostle here intimates unto us, what will become of the cause before it is tried; he is such an advocate with the Father, saith he, that he is become the propitiation for all the sins of God's people; and what that is, we shall show hereafter beloved, this is a large field of excellent variety of sweetness and fatness; we must take the particulars into consideration, that we may discuss them the more orderly; and I hope it will be no difficulty to gather some of the flowers in this garden; and the Spirit of the Lord assisting, there may be such sucking, that persons may be satisfied at the breasts of consolations. That we may the better lay

our mouths to this breast, and draw more easily the milk of it, let us briefly consider these particulars.

The office here spoken of, what it is to be an advocate, and how Christ manages it, being in Heaven; whose cause it is, that Christ undertakes to be an advocate for; how he is qualified for the comfortable managing of this office; and what it is to have Christ to be the propitiation for the sins of his people; for this is the sum of the whole drift of the apostle, in these words.

What the office of advocate-ship is, and what it is for Christ to be an advocate, and how he now manages it in heaven for his elect. This office, as it is appropriated unto Christ, is not once more mentioned in all the scripture besides. Of an Intercessor and

Redeemer, and the atonement, we read frequently in scripture, that Christ is all these; but that Christ is an advocate, is not mentioned in all the scripture but in this place; therefore it will be the more difficult to find out the intention of the Holy Ghost, what he means by it. The word advocate is used in John 15:26, and attributed unto the Holy Ghost, and is there translated the Comforter; saith the text, "the Comforter will come." Now the same word that we have here "advocate," is also and indeed the proper signification of the word "a comfortable advocate." But what is this advocate-ship, you will say? It is a borrowed expression, and an allusion, opening the prevalency of Christ with the Father, for his own people; it is taken from an office among men. Advocates in the common law, you call them counselors, but in the civil law, they have this very title of advocate. The office is, namely, being well experienced in the nature of the law, and the rules and principles of justice; whenever a cause comes to be tried, they are to make clear those principles, and so plead justice on the behalf of the client. I say, the office of an advocate is to plead the cause of a person as it stands in equity and justice, and to demand and require a sentence of acquittance from justice and equity itself; and herein an advocate differs from a suppliant; a suppliant makes only requests, and depends altogether upon favour alone; so as if he should stand to the rigor of justice, he must be gone, and his cause must miscarry; but an advocate stands to the justice of a person, whose cause he pleads, and puts the issue of the trial on justice itself; that as the cause can be cleared to be just, so the judge would pass a sentence upon it. Just so, I say, is it with Christ,

pleading the cause of his own people with the Father, in respect of indemnity from sin; for his advocate-ship is this, namely, to lay the law to the Father, to plead justice in the discharge of the sinner that commits sin, that it is but right to discharge him; and it were injustice, if he should not; I say it is most certainly true, that Christ stands here upon justice, and he will in righteousness have God to discharge his own people from all the sins that they commit; and he pleads, that it is an unrighteous thing, to charge them with them, or to plague or punish them for them.

But some, peradventure, will be ready to say, this cannot be, that Christ, as an advocate, should plead for indemnity upon terms of justice; for in the strictness and rigor of justice, the soul that sins must die; and the gospel seems to say, it is only and solely grace, that any person is discharged from sin; for, in justice, there cannot be a claim made of pardon and discharge from sin; but all the plea must be merely bounty and favour.

This objection seems to have a great deal of strength in it. How may these two things stand together, that Christ pleading justice, God must forgive; and yet, notwithstanding, justice sentences a person unto death if he sins? For answer to this, you must learn to distinguish, and I desire you warily to observe this distinction, that so you may plainly see a reconciliation of that which seems impossible to be reconciled; namely, consider the pardon, or discharge from sin, in regard of anything laid down, in consideration of sin committed by the person who partakes of pardon; and this pardon, or discharge from sin, in reference unto Christ who gets it. Now, in respect of us that partake of this discharge from sin, and in regard of anything that we can bring in recompense for it, it is merely and only grace, that sinners, being the members of Christ, are discharged. When you, or I, commit a sin, that God discharges us, doth not lay our sins to us, or doth not give sentence of damnation upon us for such sins committed, it is an act of mere grace alone; justice cannot be pleaded in this case.

But then, consider the indemnity from sin, in respect of Christ, who gets this discharge; then he is to be considered two ways; as he is allowed by the Father to stand in the room of such persons, whose cause he pleads; or, as he hath actually made full payment, his satisfaction being allowed and admitted before. Now, I answer, considering Christ, in his being allowed by

the Father to stand in the room of the persons whose cause he pleads; this discharge from sin by him, is an act of grace; Christ cannot plead justice, that he should be allowed; there was not a tie upon the Father, that Christ should be in man's room, and that he should be unrighteous, if he did not ordain him to be so; it was an act of free grace in God, when men were under the curse, and became miserable bankrupts, that Christ should make satisfaction for them. When one man owes another money, it is not an unrighteous act in the creditor to refuse a surety; he may make the debtor pay the debt himself, if he will; it is matter of grace, mere courtesy so to do; even so it is matter of grace, that Christ is admitted to come in the room of man, and bear his sins; to be admitted to bear the wrath of God for these sins, that another hath committed, is an act of grace; and, in regard of these particulars, is the scripture so frequent in expressions of the free grace of God, in communicating this discharge and pardon of sin unto sinners.

But consider, Christ allowed of the Father to stand in the room of men, as he hath come forth, and paid down the utmost farthing that God in justice could demand for, or in consideration of these sins committed by his people. I say, when Christ hath deposited into the hands of his Father, the utmost farthing that he could charge upon, or demand of believers; this being received by the Father, and acknowledgment being made by him, upon the receipt of what Christ hath paid; this is an act of justice, that the Father should justify and acquit these persons, for whom he hath received of Christ this satisfaction, and accordingly hath acknowledged it, under his own hand, and acquitted them. You know, though it be in a man's power whether he will take a surety, or the principal, for his money; yet when he hath taken a surety, and he hath made payment, it is an act of unrighteousness in the creditor, after the acknowledgment of full satisfaction, to come upon the principal, and make him pay the money; and it is plea grounded in law, that if that cause come in trial, the judge ought to acquit the principal, if it be proved that the debt is paid by the surety.

Now, Christ hath paid all that the Father could ask, and he hath acknowledged full satisfaction for all. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

{Is.53:11} Now, being satisfied, it is an act of justice, that the Father should acquit a person in this manner. Suppose one should be brought before a judge, in a cause wherein he owes the judge himself such a sum of money; an advocate comes and pleads the cause before the judge, that it is true, there was so much money lent, and borrowed, but, saith the advocate, I myself became the surety for that man, I paid every farthing; here is the acquittance you gave under your own hand; now, I ask this question, the judge being convinced, and a righteous judge too, of the truth of the plea, whether in judgment he ought not to acquit that person, whose cause is pleaded before him? He took satisfaction, he acknowledged it, he could have it but of him, therefore in justice he must discharge him. The same case is between God and us; it is true, indeed, believers commit those things that are in their own nature debts; “forgive us our debts,” as the word is; but when this cause came to be pleaded before God, the judge himself, to whom the debt was owing, Christ the advocate came, and stood up and pleaded, that he himself being become the Surety of a better testament, upon it he came, and paid the whole debt; and he, having satisfied his Father, received under his hand, that he had paid every farthing, and that he was completely satisfied, and that upon that satisfaction his people should be discharged. Now, this plea is grounded upon justice itself; for observe how fully and clearly the apostle speaks the same things, “the blood of Christ his Son, cleanseth from all sins;” and here, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;” and again, “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Mark well, that the apostle grounds himself upon Christ’s satisfaction; namely, his blood that cleanseth us from all sin; upon this he concludes that it is an act of faithfulness and justice in God to forgive it. I dare say, none are so ignorant in these days of light, as to think there is such a proportion between confession of sin and forgiveness, that confession can balance forgiveness, and so, consequently, make it an act of justice; no, the apostle grounds the force of justice upon the blood of Christ that is shed; therefore, if you observe it well, you will find, that he speaks of confession, by way of prevention of fear; for you know the common proverb concerning a malefactor apprehended, “let him

confess, and be hanged;” and why so? Because, if it be disclosed, the law lays hold upon him, and he shall be sure to die for it; and therefore, in natural policy, his safety lies in concealing it. But, if satisfaction hath been made by a friend of his to the law, and accordingly a pardon sued out for him, there is no danger in his confession. Now, the apostle in this place, having before said, that “the blood of Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sins,” from hence gathers encouragement unto the people of Christ, that they should not fear, so as to conceal their sins, lest being known, they should do them a mischief; but, saith he, lay all open before the Lord, there is no danger to be suspected now, for God is faithful and just to forgive them; therefore the hiding of them should prevent no evil, because no evil should come upon them for them, though they were laid open never so naked. Therefore was this spoken by the apostle, to take away fear, and is the true meaning of the Holy Ghost I say, to take away fear from the damage that would ensue, if we should confess our sins. Paul writing to Timothy, mark what he ascribes to participating of the excellencies of Christ, even of righteousness and justice, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness;” {II Tim.4:7;} mark, “a crown of righteousness is laid up;” in which is included the discharge from sin, and participating of glory, and this prepared and laid up; but mark the foundation of his confidence, that he shall partake of it; it is a righteous judge that shall give it; he shall give it out of righteousness itself; justice shall prevail with him to do this thing. Whence it is, that Christ is called so frequently, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;” {Jer.23:6; Jer.33:16; Is.54:17;} a prophecy concerning the righteous branch; and his name shall be called, “the Lord our righteousness;” that is, the Lord that is righteous, makes us one with God, and communicates his own righteousness unto us, that we may be the delight of the Father.

Give me leave to tell you, beloved, that God is so unchangeable in all his attributes, that even Christ himself is not able to obtain anything of him that may be any ways prejudicial to any attribute; he can get nothing of the Father, whereby his justice may suffer, or be violated. Christ must make it clear, that justice shall have its full due, and God shall not need to bate one grain of what it expects, or else Christ himself

can have nothing of him; for he came not to destroy the law, much less that which is essential unto God. Justice is essential unto him; if Christ violate justice, he should destroy the very being of God himself; without giving justice satisfaction, this would be a derogation to the Father; hence when Christ pleads with him for the sons of men, that they might have a discharge from sin, he makes it manifest, that all he asks of him, is according to justice; nay, he makes it appear, that justice is as much satisfied in discharging of believers from their sins, as it is in the damnation of the reprobates in hell for theirs.

Justice hath no more right in their damnation, than it hath in the other's acquittance and discharge; in their damnation, to satisfy justice, there is no more but the wrath of God revealed from heaven, and executed upon them; now, for those that are the members of Christ, and discharged by him from their sins, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, and poured out upon his Son in their behalf; who sustained, in respect of the proportion of justice, equivalently to all the torments the reprobates in hell do; so that Christ hath as fully satisfied the justice of God for his elect, as it is satisfied in the damned in hell, who suffer in their own persons; surely, there had been no need of his coming into the world, if believers might have been saved, and justice violated without satisfaction; but now justice had been violated, had not a proportional recompense been made, before the sin had been discharged from the person committing it. Therefore the psalmist speaks admirably, when he saith, "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." {Ps.85:10} This place is appropriated unto Christ, showing, that in managing the work of redemption of the sons of men, as he exalts mercy, so he doth not diminish justice; but carries the business so, that both of them have their due, and so their due, that they agree one with another; nay, embrace and kiss each other; they come to rejoice and triumph in the satisfaction of each ether.

And, therefore, it is but an ignorant imagination in the hearts of some men, that God will grow more remiss in respect of the sins of his own people; that he is not so much offended with sin, after Christ died, as before; for he hath all the abhorring, detesting thoughts of sin in the nature of it, since Christ is dead, as he had before; it is altogether as abominable unto

him, as before; Christ did not come to make sin less filthy to the Lord, or to make a person, where sin is, more lovely, or less hateful to him, but rather declares, and sets forth the wrath of God against sin in the highest degree.

Wherever the Lord seeth sin, and not Christ upon the person taking away that sin, he cannot but hate both the sin, and the sinner. All the pleasure the Lord takes in the sons of men, proceeds from a purity Christ puts upon them; and the taking away of that sinfulness from them, which otherwise could not but stir up indignation and wrath in him against them, where he finds it, is the ground upon which Christ pleads justice, that so it might appear there is no violation of it; but the Lord is as well satisfied, as if the person transgressing had laid under the wrath deserved, in his own person. I could wish, I were able to speak to you in so full and clear language, that not one dram of this glorious mystery of this gospel of Christ might be hid, for the comforting and refreshing of your spirits; the thing I drive at, being, that all the people of Christ might know wherein lies their strong consolation, not in themselves, as if they did not sin, or could make amends for their sins; but in him who hath made perfect amends for them, and in whom they are accepted with the Father, {as if they themselves in their own persons had made this amends,} who hath presented them so complete in himself unto him, that he is pleased to look upon them as upon his own innocent Son, and to take pleasure in them, with the same pleasure that he takes in his own Beloved. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." {Mt.17:5} And, if ever you mean to have your consciences, and your consolations established, well grounded, concerning the pardon of your sins, you must see that Christ hath only pleaded, doth plead out your acquittance and discharge, and this your indemnity, even to the satisfying of justice itself. For if justice be not yet satisfied; if the Lord hath yet a plea against your souls, and Christ hath not fully answered it, but left this plea with God, who shall stand up before him, Christ being silent to plead for you? God's justice comes in, and pleads terribly against you, and will exact satisfaction of you; therefore you must receive this principle, if you will be established in consolation; that as there is mercy in respect of us, who bring nothing in consideration of our sins; so there is justice

in forgiving sin, in respect of Christ our advocate, that manages his office, and makes it known for this very end, that we might have the stronger consolation.

36 Christ's Advocateship For All The Elect

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {I Jn.2:1,2}

We have formerly {as some of you may remember} entered upon these words; wherein the apostle makes the proposal of the grace of God in Christ, the encouragement unto people to forbear sin. The first thing we noted from hence was, that the knowledge of an advocate that becomes a propitiation for sin, even for such as commit sin, is so far from opening a gap unto a licentious life, that indeed it is the best means to keep us from it. The last day we fell upon the matter of the argument, which the apostle useth to dissuade little children from sin, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Herein we proposed to be considered.

What this advocate-ship of Christ is and how he manages it? Whose cause it is that Christ here pleads? How he is qualified for this office? What the issue of this advocate-ship of Christ is, proposed in the last words of the text; "he is the propitiation for our sins?"

What this office of advocate-ship is, the sum is briefly this; the office of an advocate is to plead the cause of a man, as it is in justice and right; so that the advocate-ship of Christ consists in pleading the discharge of his people, even from the principle of right and justice.

Whereas it is objected, and indeed seems a thing irreconcilable, namely, that this discharge from sin, goes all along under the notion of free grace and pardon, how can this be, if it be merely an act of justice, for God to forgive sins?

This may easily be reconciled with distinction; discharge from sin, in respect of us, or what we can bring by way of recompense for the sin committed, is merely free grace, for we can bring nothing at all; also in respect of Christ, as he is allowed to stand in our room, it is grace too; but, Christ being allowed and admitted, and the Lord having taken the full payment he could

ask at his hands, and acknowledging satisfaction upon such payment; this act of Christ makes it an act of justice, that God should forgive sins; and therefore the apostle in I John 1:7, tells us, "that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all our sins;" and concludes, that "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" but, I cannot insist upon what I have formerly delivered now, peradventure some, {though I confess a little over-curious,} desire to understand how Christ, being now in heaven, executes this office of advocate-ship, or in what sense he is said to plead the cause of his people. I call it a curious query, because the scriptures are very sparing in declaring the manner of Christ's managing this office; that he is an advocate, is clear enough; how he deals with God in the execution of it, is more obscure. Frequent mention is made indeed of Christ's intercession in heaven; "he ever liveth to make intercession for us;" yet though this be frequently mentioned, and the comfort of God's people much laid upon this, yet the scriptures are very sparing as to what kind of intercession he makes, whether he prays to his Father in heaven, as he did upon earth; and the like I say, of this business of advocate-ship. Some few passages of scripture there are that will give some hint, at least have some glimmerings of the very manner of Christ's advocate-ship, and the execution of it. Hebrews 11:4, will give us some light, "by faith {saith the apostle} Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh;" that is, by which sacrifice. The sacrifices, you know, were Christ in the antitype; for all the life of them, from which men obtain testimony of God, that they are righteous, is Christ himself; and it is Christ in sacrifice that speaks, even when the sacrifice itself is offered. I conceive therefore, beloved, as sacrifices speak, in respect of a prevailing power they have with God, when he sits in judgment; so likewise the advocate-ship of Christ, which is nothing else but the speaking of Christ, is managed after such a manner. Christ speaks as sacrifice speaks; for, indeed, he as advocate pleads only as a sacrifice for man. In chapter 12:22-24, you have another expression, a little more clear. "But ye are come {saith the apostle} 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 firstborn, 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." Here you see, whereas he in the former chapter, put a voice, or a plea in the mouth of sacrifices, in this, he speaks more plainly, and puts a voice, or plea, to that which is the life of sacrifices; namely, the blood of sprinkling, the blood of Jesus Christ; and, this is that which speaks better things than the blood of Abel. You know that there was a strong plea in his blood, which cried from earth to heaven, till it brought vengeance upon the head of Cain; the blood of Christ, hath a stronger plea, and cry, and is for better purposes; so that under favour, {for in this I shall not contend much,} so far as I can see, the value and desert of the bloodshed of Christ is the plea that he makes as advocate in heaven; that when a believer commits sin, the efficacy of the blood shed is fresh in the presence of the Lord, in the behalf of that poor wretch that hath thus sinned; I say, the blood is present, and the whole efficacy, and virtue of it, is fresh in the thoughts of the Lord; and, as it is thus effectual and powerful, brings the discharge and acknowledgment of it to his thoughts too, if I may so speak, whereby he is pacified towards them, and pleased with them. This is always before him; and present with him; yea, when the sins that a believer commits are present; and the counter-plea of the value of the blood of Christ overcomes the natural plea of the sin itself; but I will not dwell upon this, but hasten to another thing very considerable, which is.

Whose cause it is that Christ pleads with the Father; or, for whom the value and virtue of his blood pleads? I remember the disciples, when Christ spake generally concerning his betraying, were very inquisitive, "is it I," saith one; "is it I," saith another. I doubt not, but in regard of the prevalency of the plea of the blood of Christ, many persons present will fall upon this enquiry; "is it I" that he means? Is he my advocate? Am I his client? I shall endeavour to make it clear, and to resolve it, as the apostle here proposes it.

The plea that Christ puts up for the persons, whose cause he undertakes, are all sorts of believers whatsoever, high or low, rich or poor, nay, strong or weak; he pleads their cause, he is the advocate of the

weakest believer in the world; nay, more, when he is the greatest sinner, I mean, when he falls foully; when he falls, it may be, through the weakness of his faith, making him suspect that Christ will be silent in his cause, in regard of such failings, and sinfulness, he is then as properly the advocate of such a believer, who peradventure, falls into some scandalous evil. Mark but the apostle, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;" he makes no exception, neither in respect of persons, nor sins; he doth not say, if any man sin merely of infirmity and common frailty; but in general, "if any man sin;" as if he had said, there must something be done by believers, that goes beyond the being of sin, before they can be excluded from having interest in the advocate-ship of Christ; here he speaks expressly, there is an advocate-ship of Christ, for believers sinning, without exception. I know it is too frequent among many, that more gross sins than ordinary in a believer, not only waste the conscience, but also interpose between such a person and Christ, of which we shall have occasion to speak elsewhere. For the present, there is a conceit that if a believer sins more than ordinarily, presently there is a just cause for him to suspect Christ will not sufficiently manage his office for him, at least hath not sufficiently managed it already; so that there is cause of fear. But, let me tell you, to the everlasting consolation of God's people, that there is no sin, which a believer can commit, which can exclude him from the benefit of this advocate-ship of Christ, or bring him beyond the bounds of this large grant, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;" and, if it be any man, you will say, it extends to all men in the world, as well as believers. Nay, there is a restraint in the words, and you shall easily see it; "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;" if any of us that have fellowship with the Father and the Son; it is not every one that hath Christ for an advocate, but those that are believers; those that have right to fellowship with the Father and the Son, are only spoken of in this place. I speak this, to the end that those, who through fear of death, are subject unto bondage all their lives long, may know that Christ is come to deliver them, and reveals this truth, on purpose to deliver them from the fear of death, and bondage, by being their advocate for their sins; he is an advocate, he is a propitiation for every sin of his elect. The words run in the general to the

end, for the apostle doth not say, he is not an advocate for such and such believers, that sin so and so; if they commit sin so and so aggravated, and their sins rise to such an height, there is no propitiation for them; but he speaks in the general stile, "if any man sin," and he is the propitiation for our sins; yet, beloved, I must be bold to go a little further, in respect of the persons whose cause Christ pleads, and in whose behalf he is an advocate; for I say, it is for all sorts of believers; nay, I go further, it is for more than present ones, even for some who are not so for the present, but remain, as yet, in a state of unbelief.

In brief, Christ is the advocate of the cause of every person for whom he paid the price, of redemption, whether they be already called, or not yet acquainted with the grace of God; for every elect person, as well unconverted, as converted, Christ equally, in respect of the substance of his plea, interposes; but, when I say, he pleads as well for the unconverted, as for the converted, I mean for such unconverted persons as belong unto the election of grace, and have their portion in the price of his blood.

Beloved, for my own part, I cannot yet conceive any other considerable difference, between the plea of Christ for converted persons, and the elect unconverted, but this circumstantial one; namely, that the value of his blood is equally of force, to believers and unbelievers, being elected; saving that believers have this privilege, that Christ pleads for the manifestation of this discharge unto them, but not for the present unto the unconverted; till such time as they shall be called to the faith, and, by that faith, that thing be made evident, which before was hid. I say, the pardon of sin, by the blood of Christ, is as full for the unconverted, as fully passed over in grant, I mean, as to the believer himself. God adds never a tittle of pardon itself more to him that is a believer, than to him not yet converted to the faith, in regard of the substance of it.

For the clearing of this, I beseech you to note, what is the rise or ground-work of the pardon of sin, and when it is complete with God. These two things considered, you will perceive that all the pardon, in respect of the substance of it, that God passed over unto men is before their conversion. Look, I say, upon the rise, or original, of the pardon of sin, it is the gracious grant of God, upon the blood of Christ shed; this is

the only foundation of pardon; and there is no pardon applicable to any person, but what is to be found in the word of grace. Thou, that art a believer at present, hast the pardon of thy sins in thy spirit, thou art assured of it; where hast thou this pardon? Didst thou not fetch it out of the word of grace? Then, as soon as that was first published, this grace of pardon was held forth. If thou found it not here, then somewhere else; but where will you have this grant to build upon, if you have it not in the word of grace? You will say, the Spirit of God will reveal it unto you. It is true indeed; but if he reveals a grant of grace, it is according to his word. The Spirit speaking out of the word of grace to men, speaks not otherwise, but according to it, in men; and if there be a contradiction between the inward voice, and this word of grace, it is enough to give you cause of suspicion; yea, you may be confident, that this voice within you, being a contradiction, is false; I say, Christ sends us unto his word, and from that we take out the pardon of sin.

Now, beloved, I beseech you to consider, if all pardon to all the elect, to the end of the world, be contained in this word of grace, there is no more pardon than what is written there; then it must needs follow, that God passed over this at that instant, when he entered it in the volume of his book. Is there no pardon till thou art converted? Then it is not to be found in this word of grace, because this was written before thy conversion; so that either you must deny the pardon that is properly and truly revealed in the word, and must seek out some newer than is revealed; or you must acknowledge that which is granted unto men, is, in regard of the substance of it, as soon as it was in the volume of his book.

Hence it is plain, that as believers coming to believe, fetch out of this word of grace their pardon; so unconverted persons elected, have their grace equally in it, only the Lord hides the publication of it to them, till such time as he is pleased to call them, and give them faith to read their portion here, as other believers have before. It is true, indeed, though the pardon of every unconverted elect person be equally passed over by the Lord, yet, till their conversion, he gives no more hint of it than he gives to the reprobates themselves. This is that which will take away the suspected inconveniences that may follow upon pardon already granted before conversion; for

whereas, men may think this will make unconverted men presume, to know their pardon before; I say, it is true, there is such a pardon for them, but they know it not, nor ever shall know it, till they be brought out of darkness to the glorious light of the Lord Jesus Christ; otherwise, how can it be true, that all the sins of God's people, past, present, and to come, are all of them at once pardoned, as the godly learned protestants say? Whence shall a believer, coming to believe, fetch all his comfort, that all his sins, while he was in rebellion, were pardoned, if there were not a grant of this extant before; upon which, as upon a sure foundation, his believing might stay itself?

How comes it to pass, that persons are not cut off before they are called, if their sins are not pardoned; which stand between the wrath of God and them? Nothing else but the blood of Christ stands between them, even between the destroying wrath of God, and his people that commit sin, even before conversion. In a word, where will you find a new act of God since the grants registered in his book? Certain I am, that the persons pardoned were not converted, when this was made; and if there be, or come, after this was first made, a new grant, either it must be entered anew here, or be in a new book by itself.

If, therefore, all pardons are as ancient as this record, then they are more ancient than the present believing of any person that now liveth. Hence, we may let persons know, that it is but a rash expression to say, that such and such a person is in the state of damnation {if it be meant he is so before God} while he remains in the state of un-conversion; and the wrath of God abides upon that person, though elected, till he be called. Beloved, let me tell you, the state of the unconverted elect persons is as sure from danger of final miscarriage, as the estate of a saint in glory; saints stand there by the blood of Christ alone, which hath purchased the pardon of sin for the unconverted elect person; so that the same discharge of them, by the blood of Christ, concerns the one as much as the other; but, I say, still the unconverted person cannot make any conclusion from all this, because he cannot know his portion till he believes.

How is Christ qualified for such a vocation as this? His office is of admirable use to men; to be a propitiation for their sins, and to get the discharge of God manifested to a person, for whom he pleads it, is

of great consolation; so then it must needs be, that the advocate that is to plead the cause be well gifted for that employment. It is too well known, that a righteous cause many a time miscarries in the world, through the deceitfulness or simplicity of the counsel. When men come upon life and death, it concerns them much to have a skillful lawyer to plead for them; or else for lack of urging that, which is most necessary to be pleaded, they miscarry and perish. The Holy Ghost therefore, beloved, is pleased to impart unto us, not only that Christ is an advocate, and whose cause it is that he pleads; but also communicates unto us, the largeness of the gifts of Christ, for the managing of this office. I will not go beyond the text itself, to observe to you the fullness of the gifts of Christ, to manage this advocateship, even to that effect and issue, that his heart can desire, that is, more than thy heart can desire. There are three titles appropriated in this place unto Christ, all of them very aptly and sweetly manifesting his excellent gifts, as mediator, or as advocate for, or on the behalf of poor believers, to wit, "Christ Jesus the righteous;" every title setting forth how he is gifted.

The title Christ contains much in it to strengthen our confidence in him, which is to plead our cause; it is a word that properly signifies anointed. Now, anointing carries two things along with it; the separation, or calling of such a person anointed to some special office; and the abilities of the person for the office that he is called unto; so that our advocate being Christ, and called so here, imports unto us, the lawful call of Christ unto it, by him that authorizes him; and the large abilities he hath to manage it.

The title Christ imports unto us, his lawful call to plead; as the apostle saith, Heb.5:4-6, that "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Where he further clears, how Christ was lawfully called unto it; for "the Lord sworn, {saith he,} and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." {Heb.7:21} Here is calling. Of what moment is this, will you say? I answer, of great moment; let Christ be ever so able to plead, except the Lord admit him to it, he must hold his tongue. You know in common law itself, there are students in it, and counselors, then sergeants at law; a student in the law, it may be, is more able to plead a cause, and can do it better than some sergent at law, or some others that are called; but yet, because

he is not called, he must hold his tongue. Beloved, were Christ our advocate a novice, and not graduated; if he were not called to the bar, though he can plead never so excellently with God, he could not be heard. God will give a call before he hears; and thus Christ is called.

Yet again, when men are called to be counselors, they cannot plead at every bar; at the Common Pleas none plead but a sergeant at law; though many counselors be able lawyers, and better gifted than some sergeants, yet this will not suffice, as he is not called to the bar in special; and therefore, they must not come till they have the call as the sergeants have. The Lord doth not bid us to seek his face without a mediator; but he that is the advocate at the court in heaven, is the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, the man Christ; he that hath the best rhetoric in the world to plead his case, must have him as a sergeant to plead for him; he cannot be admitted in this court to plead for himself. The ministers of God are in some sort the pleaders of our cause, yet they themselves, must have this sergeant to plead for them, when they come to this tribunal of God, and he alone is admitted to it. And it is a great matter to know what kind of Christ he is, that is singled out; and then you must know, that if the world offer this service unto you, to plead your cause before God, it would not avail; if this man Christ were not freely assigned, and called to plead your cause, you are gone forever, for nothing and no one can be heard but him. You will say, the servants of God are heard when they pray. I say, Christ is only heard when he prays; you must pray in faith, saith James, "let him not think that he shall obtain anything at the hand of the Lord that wavers;" he must ask in faith, that is, he must ask in Christ, for faith rests not upon itself, but entirely upon him. It is Christ that gets everything for men; it is not they themselves, nor their prayers, but it is Christ that prevails. Now, this advocate speaks his mind, and is admitted to do it to the full; but this is not all, he is qualified that he may plead effectually. There may be some unrighteous judge in the world, that may call men for favour, as a father calls his son, whether he be qualified or no, that is not regarded; this man for some bye respects, shall come to the bar; but God is a righteous judge, that hath no partiality; Christ indeed is his Son, but he is not called merely for favour, but as he calls him so he breeds him; you

know, beloved, that at the inns of court, the judges and prime lawyers are teachers of students, and when they find them proficient, they call and admit them to the bar; so Christ is the student, and the Father instructs and tutors him; he breeds him up, if I may speak, after the manner of men, to be fit for the advocate-ship, and when fit, he puts him into it.

You will find anointing, as in the word Christ, imports gifting of men, when they are called out. Aaron was anointed and gifted to make atonement; and so Saul, when Samuel anointed him, the text saith that God gave him another {a regal} heart; when he made him a king, he gave him the heart of one, a kingly spirit. {I Sam.10:9} And this was that which Solomon prayed for, when the crown was set upon his head, that God would give him a wise and understanding heart, to go in and out before his great people; and the Lord answered him, and gave him wisdom; so that there was none before him, nor after him, like unto him; {I Kgs.4:29;} even so God did with Christ, as he was anointed to be our advocate, and as he anointed him, he gifted him for it, as he saith, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." {Ps.89:19} Christ is the person that must bring help, and therefore must be mighty. You see that God gifted Christ, when he called him forth, "thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." Here the office of Christ is to deliver captives, and for this purpose must be gifted; if he be not qualified, he will fail in the execution of it. But above all, Isaiah 42:1-8, manifestly clears this matter; "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, &c." Here you see how many expressions the Lord uses to show how he qualified his Son Christ that so he may be fit to manage his business.

He is not only called Christ, but he is Christ Jesus, and the title further illustrates the excellency of his qualifications to be an advocate; Jesus, is a name importing the effectual prevalency of Christ in his plea. I will not stand to clear the signification of it by the etymology of the word; but for a more sensible understanding of it, the word is taken up and examined by the Holy Ghost himself, Matt.1:21, when the angel brings the tidings of his birth, he gave his name; "they shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins;" Jesus, is as much as to say,

a Saviour of people from sin.

Now, see how admirably our Saviour is qualified; he hath not only rhetoric and law at his fingers ends, as we say, but he hath an admirable prevalency in it; there is not any cause that he yet took in hand, that miscarried; not any client that he ever pleaded for, that at any time was cast, but he that pleads is still the Saviour of his people; he pleads so, that he saves them from their sins. It is admirable to consider; let the sins produced against a person be ever so many, or heinous; let the witnesses come in, and swear ever so punctually, and prove ever so fully the crimes committed against such a law; yet such is the faculty of this advocate with the Father, that he stops the judgment, the sentence cannot go forth; this Christ, as he is Jesus, is first the bail of all believers, till the day of payment. You know the nature of bailing; persons should go to prison upon the trespass, but bail takes men off till judgment be given, or perfect satisfaction be made. As we have sinned, so in legality we ought to lie by it presently; but Christ comes before-hand, even the advocate, and passes his word for us, that there shall be current payment in due time, binding himself body for body, that there shall be appearance at the day; but that is not all, when the day is come, though most witnesses prove point-blank, the crime objected, and the law pleads the just desert of the punishment provided in that behalf, yet this advocate steps in, and pays all it can demand; I myself have satisfied the law on their behalf, saith he, therefore there can be no more asked of them. You know, that if a man have borrowed an hundred pounds, and he be sued never so violently, and witnesses come in, and prove the debt never so clearly; yet if a surety comes in, and enters bond for him, yea, and pays the debt for him; if he hath been discharged, and hath an acknowledgment of satisfaction made on the behalf of that person, then there is no judgment comes out against him that borrowed the money. This is the case with our advocate, he is the Surety of a better testament, and pleading, when matter of fact is proved, and the law speaks directly against it, and justice pleads for such a penalty to be inflicted; yet then is the Saviour produced that makes current and full payment. There could not be expected any stopping of the sentence for the client, by pleading, but there must first be a satisfying of all; this is the Saviour's office, and as a

Saviour, so he is the Satisfier.

The advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous;" and this title imports two things very considerable; and they have either respect unto us, or unto God, and both of them show how admirably and sufficiently he is qualified for this office of advocate-ship; it hath reference unto us, he is "Christ Jesus the righteous;" as much as to say, the true and faithful. Faithfulness and righteousness are taken for one and the same thing, for dealing truly with persons. Many a one loses a good cause for the unfaithfulness of his counsel; they make against their clients for bribes, and play on both sides; they deal not honestly with men; they carry the business in a dilatory way; they will not dispatch, but delay the suit; but this our advocate, is the faithful and true witness, he deals ingenuously and uprightly; this one you may trust with things in his hand. Many times men put their whole business into their counsel's hands, to sink or swim; but here is an advocate that is faithful, here is no danger of sinking; you may put all into his hands, you need not fear at all, he is the righteous and faithful advocate. But the principal thing, I intend in this righteousness, is that wherein the strength of his argument lieth, he pleads in the behalf of his client; that is, the advocate Christ, is so righteous, that this very righteousness of his shall carry the cause on your side, even to a full discharge from all sins whatsoever.

Beloved, the whole security of persons from wrath and hell, from sin and death, hangs upon this one hinge of his righteousness; as there is force enough in it, so the cause prospers on the client's side; and if that should fail, nothing can uphold it. It will be therefore of mighty concern to consider, how clear the scripture is, that lays all the burden of the task in pleading upon his righteousness; and further, what kind of righteousness of Christ that is, that carries such a strength in his pleading for his people; both of them need to be cleared, especially the latter. For the first, the scriptures will be clear of themselves; only, the latter, what kind of righteousness it is that hath that prevalency is to be made apparent. A righteousness, and his righteousness, most grant but some mistake there is, in the minds of some, that reach not the height of the gospel, what that righteousness is, that hath such a prevalency. The present time will not give me leave to handle it fully, and I will not do it by

halves; and, therefore, I will leave it to another time.

37 Christ's Righteousness Only Discharge The Sinner

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {1 Jn.2:1,2}

In these words, you have the apostle's conclusion, and his argument to enforce it; his conclusion is that he would not have them to sin; his argument is, "if any man do sin, &c."

The first thing that we have observed out of these words is; that it is a powerful argument to prevail with persons, such as John writes unto, not to sin, to let them know, that though they do sin, they have an advocate with the Father.

We are fallen upon the consideration of the argument itself; the matter of it and the force of it. Every argument hath some firmness in itself, from whence is produced some good inference; that which hath none in itself, is not able to make good another thing. Concerning the matter of this argument, you have, the apostle's supposition; a provision against that which this supposition might do; or, against that which he supposes a man might do. Here is a supposition, you may sin, though you be little children; the provision against the evil that sin might do is, though we sin, yet we have an advocate with the Father. And, concerning the matter of the argument, we have these things proposed. 1. What the office is that is here ascribed unto Christ, in that he is called advocate, and how he in heaven exercises this office. 2. Whose cause it is he pleads by virtue of it. 3. How he is qualified for it. 4. The issue and event of the execution of it.

This advocate-ship of Christ is a plea founded upon justice; Christ doth not appeal in his plea to mere mercy, but his client stands or falls, as justice itself pronounces a sentence. And, concerning the second clause of this first part, Christ exercises this office in heaven, rather virtually, than vocally; he speaks as his blood speaks; "we are come to the blood of sprinkling, {saith the apostle,} that speaks better things than the blood of Abel." {Heb.12:24}

We come further to consider, whose cause it is that

Christ maintains and pleads; the cause of all believers, even the cause of little children, even when they have sinned, without limitation; for he expresses himself in general terms, it is the cause of those that sin, "if any man sin." Yea, the cause not only of present believers, but also of all the elect; believers, or unbelievers, if they be elected. It is true, they shall believe in time, but yet, I say, Christ is an advocate of them, while unbelievers, if they be elected. There is not a sin, but as it is damnable in its own nature, in the rigor of justice, so it doth not allow of any forbearance; it is only Christ that makes the forbearance, even until they are called. Then we come to consider, how Christ, our advocate, is qualified to manage this office with that efficacy and success to the comfort of those whose cause he maintains. The qualifications of Christ are expressed in three things.

For the title, he is anointed to be an advocate; he hath a lawful call to the bar; nay, he is privileged, there is none to plead but himself; it is Christ anointed, that is, gifted and made able to minister. In Isaiah 42, the Lord tells us how he "shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law." This we must understand in two ways; that is, the isles shall now be directed and guided by him as their law-giver; or, he shall be so good a lawyer, that the isles shall wait for his law; as much as to say, if a man have a cause to be tried, and hears of a good counsel, very expert in the law, he waits for such a man's law, he waits for it out of his mouth, and he hopes he will plead his cause so, that it shall go well with him. God makes Christ so good a lawyer, that when he comes to plead his law, he shall carry the sentence on his client's side.

He is Jesus, saith the text, and in that is imported a notable qualification of Christ to exercise his office of advocate-ship, Jesus, as much as a Saviour; and it shows the efficacy of his plea; he pleads the cause of his clients so strongly, that he saves.

Another qualification of Christ unto his advocate-ship is that he is Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is so in a double sense, and in both is declared the excellent qualification of Christ to advocate for us. Christ is "the righteous," that is, the Faithful, a Counsellor that will deal truly and uprightly with his client that will not fail. This advocate is righteous, or hath such a righteousness, as that the whole strength of his plea,

and the force of his argument he urges in it, lieth altogether in his righteousness. The former expression imports what Christ himself is, this what his argument is; I say, the only argument that hath power to lead the cause, to state the conclusion for the client, the only force lies in the righteousness of Christ; this is that which God looks upon, and which prevails with him, and makes it a righteous thing with him to forgive and discharge a sinner; I say, his righteousness is the hinge upon which the whole frame turns, the pillar upon which all our safety hangs; the only hold-fast that keeps us from sinking. If this should fail, nothing could bear us up; therefore, nothing should be more searched into and understood than this truth; namely, that it is the righteousness of Christ that prevails in plea with God, for a person that sins, and this only. I shall therefore endeavour, for the clearing up of this, that the strength of Christ's plea with God lies in his righteousness, to show you evidently out of scripture, that it is this righteousness, and only this, that prevails with God for the discharge of a member of Christ when he sins; and then we shall consider what this righteousness is that so prevails with him.

The scripture, or rather the Holy Ghost, in the word of grace, holds forth this truth frequently unto us; that all the strength of the plea with God, and consequently all the ground of solid comfort unto us, wholly depends upon the righteousness of Christ, and nothing else. Look at Psalm 50:5, for David, even in his time, was marvelous clear in the truth. "Gather my saints {saith the Lord} together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness." Gather them together, that is, bring them to judgment, such as have made a covenant with me by sacrifice; and then, when they stand in judgment, "the heavens shall declare his righteousness." He saith not, the heavens shall declare my righteousness, though it is a truth, that they do declare both his and Christ's; his, in passing sentence of absolution, Christ's in pleading so for it, that God in justice cannot but pass it. Either understand it thus, the righteousness that shall be pleaded is that which comes down from heaven, of which we shall speak hereafter; or, the righteousness which Christ shall plead, shall be so clear and evident, in the prevalency of it, that the sun in the firmament hath not a clearer brightness in it, than this shall have to clear up the business. "Gather my saints together that have made

a covenant with me by sacrifice." What sacrifice, will you say, or what is there in sacrifice, that the Lord should be in covenant with his people? Look into Psalm 51:19, for you shall there see what there is in sacrifice that makes a covenant between God and his people. "Then shalt thou be pleased {saith David} with the sacrifices of righteousness;" righteousness in the sacrifice, is that which procures a pleasantness in God unto those persons unto whom sacrifice belongs, or for whose use sacrifice serves. I say, righteousness in the sacrifice, not an inherent righteousness in the typical sacrifice itself; for, saith the apostle, it is impossible that the "blood of bulls and goats should take away sin;" but there is a righteousness that is declared from heaven and annexed to the sacrifice, the righteousness of Christ; this is that which puts an end to the quarrel, and makes an agreement between those that are at difference; and in verse 14, you see, beloved, David hath such a confidence in the righteousness of Christ, and so makes it his refuge, as that in the greatest of sins he was ever overtaken with, he betakes himself unto it, "deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; {or righteousness;} and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." There you plainly see deliverance from blood guiltiness is ascribed unto the righteousness of God; and he waits for his deliverance, even out of the power that righteousness hath with God; for that purpose David in Psalm 71:2, makes the righteousness of Christ his refuge in extremity. "Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear unto me, and save me;" and afterwards how he sticks to this righteousness for refuge still, and will not leave it, "my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." {vs.15,16} Mark the expression well, let David be in what condition he will, he will make no other plea but this, "thy righteousness, and thine only;" whether you understand it of God's righteousness simply, as judge, or of Christ's righteousness, as he is the advocate, they come to one reckoning; for, if God deliver in a righteous sentence, or according to righteousness, deliverance proceeds from righteousness pleaded. So that, I say, if you understand it of the Lord, then you must conceive the righteousness of Christ is the ground, why, he

pronounces a sentence of righteousness. And in Psalm 143:11, David there again ascribes his deliverance unto righteousness, "Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble."

The prophet Isaiah comes behind none in evangelical sweet truths for the comfort of God's people, as he is marvelously full concerning this thing, namely, the discharge of the people of God by the righteousness of Christ. In chapter 1:27, "Zion {saith the Lord there} shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness." Here you see, beloved, that the church of God shall be brought to judgment; judgment, you know, is a sentence passed by a judge, and there shall be redemption unto Zion, even by judgment; and this sentence of a judge must be pronounced for the deliverance of the client; and this is our comfort, we shall be saved by righteousness. In Isaiah 41:2, you see how the Lord sets out Christ in this very term, "who raised up the righteous man from the east?" "I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he," saith the Lord in verse 4. Christ, I say, is held forth unto men, as the righteous man raised up for "an horn of salvation for us." {Lk.1:69} In chapter 51:4, the Holy Ghost tells us, that God will "make my judgment to rest for a light of the people;" that is, when the Lord brings his people into judgment, it shall be a lightsome day unto them, and though it is, yet who can stand before his judgment? Mark the ground of the lightsomeness of it when they shall come unto their trial; "my righteousness is near; {saith the Lord;} my salvation is gone forth;" therefore it should be a lightsome day, because there shall be righteousness in it to plead out that judgment that shall be given on the behalf of the clients of Christ. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" {Is.53:11;} that is, God shall see the travail of the soul of Christ, and shall be satisfied. But how comes it pass, that God is pacified by beholding the travail of the soul of Christ? "By his knowledge, {saith he,} shall my righteous servant justify many." There is a great deal of difficulty to understand the meaning of the phrase "righteous servant." For my own part, I think the plain sense carries much light in it; as much as to say Christ knows so much concerning the prevalency of his own righteousness with the Father, that he shall be sure to carry the cause in behalf of his clients when he pleads

it for their justification, when they come to their trial. The Lord, saith the text, wondered that there were none, that he could find never an intercessor; therefore, as it follows, my "arm hath brought salvation;" but how doth his arm bring salvation? "My righteousness, it sustained me." {Is.59:16}

Observe it well, there is none to deal with God on the behalf of men, but the Son of God, Christ himself, there could not one come in to help him. There is a mighty charge laid against poor believers, containing such a bulk of transgressions, with so many aggravations, that Christ himself had sunk under them, being alone, had not his righteousness sustained him; this was that which held him up in the whole plea, till the sentence was given on the behalf of his clients; for he put on righteousness as a breast-plate. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." {Jer.23:5,6} Here is a righteous branch raised up, then follows, "they shall be saved." How so? In that there is a righteous branch to plead for them, Israel shall dwell safely, and Judah shall be saved, in the world, and from the world; a righteous branch being raised up, Judah shall be saved from the wrath of God himself that it shall not break out. God himself shall not cast Judah out of possession, not only Judah in the letter, but also in the spiritual sense; God in judgment shall not cast out Israel, because this righteous branch is raised up, which shall in righteousness establish them to dwell safely; and the reason of all this is notably rendered; namely, in that this righteousness is become ours, and he is so become our righteousness, that his very name is, "the Lord our Righteousness."

It is very well worth your observation, how still the last refuge is fastened upon the righteousness of Christ. In Daniel 9:24, "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, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Mark it well; the sealing up of the vision, that is, the establishment of the forgiveness of sins, follows after the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, and this is the righteousness

of Christ. Therefore, in Malachi 4:2, healing is appropriated unto Christ, and shown where the virtue lies, that he hath such healing, "unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings;" therefore, a healing Sun, because he is the Sun of righteousness; and the virtue in the wing of Christ to heal, is his righteousness. I have been more copious in these passages of scripture, before the coming of Christ, that people may not think, that to depend only, and solely upon his righteousness, for security and comfort, is a new thing, but was known, and was a refuge from the beginning. The apostle Paul speaks more clearly than the rest; I shall instance but in two passages; for the truth is, all the epistles are full of this. The strength of the plea of Christ, in the behalf of his people sinning, stands in his righteousness; for this purpose, Rom.3:9-12, and see how mightily the apostle pleads to the convincing of all the world of sin, and the fruit of it; from verse 13, is a description of the sins of men; and in verse 20, he makes a conclusion, "therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Now, after he had taken off all that might possibly be in man towards his remedy, or in the law for the people to rest in, he begins to establish the foundation, upon which the safety and security of God's people depends. But now, saith he, beginning in verse 21, "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; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." You see here is an inculcating again and again, that it is Christ's righteousness, which God hath set forth to be a propitiation to declare this upon all, imports unto us, the sole refuge for the remission of sins is only that righteousness. Look also into Rom.5:18,19, "therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification

of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Our transgressions are the issue which Adam's disobedience brought forth; that obedience of one man is our security, and deliverance from hell, and death, which one man's disobedience brought into the world; all of it is frustrated by the obedience and righteousness of that one; nothing but that setting persons free from the fruits of unrighteousness and disobedience in Adam, is able to make them righteous. I hope, by this time, the truth is cleared enough, that there is nothing to be mentioned, but only his righteousness, nothing can be a plea, but that. You shall therefore consider out of all these passages, what that righteousness is, that has efficacy and prevalency with the Father, for the discharge of a member of Christ when he sins.

Negatively; there is not any righteousness of a believer which he acts, which can possibly have any force in plea with the Father for his discharge that hath committed sin; I mention that righteousness which he acts, because the very righteousness of Christ itself, is indeed the righteousness of a believer; for he is "the Lord our righteousness," as you have heard. As he was made sin by imputation, so we are made the righteousness of God in him; that is, Christ's righteousness is as much become our righteousness, as our sins became Christ's; and as Christ bore the whole fruit of our sins, by being made sin for us, so we enjoy the whole fruit of Christ's righteousness, by being made righteous in him; therefore, I say, not simply that no righteousness of a believer, but none which he himself acts, hath the least force in plea, to prevail for the discharge of sin. There is no divine rhetoric, or omnipotent excellency in any righteousness whatsoever, which a believer can put up unto God; it is not your turning from your evil ways, your repentance, though never so cordial and large, nor your departing from iniquity, or doing good that hath the least force of plea with the Father, to prevail with him, for your discharge; or to move him to give the sentence upon you, that you are discharged. No righteousness, I say, whatsoever you can do; for the best righteousness that ever man did perform, Christ only excepted, hath more in it to make against him, than for him to obtain a sentence of discharge; and my reason is this, in the best righteousness of man, in

turning from sin, repenting, or mourning, or whatever else there is to be thought of, there is abundance of sin, even in the very best actions that are performed; and where there is, there is a plea against the person; so that if you bring that righteousness to plead with God, to prevail with him, you bring that, which may be rejected against you, and may prove a strong plea, or mar the cause that is in hand. I beseech you, beloved, observe the apostle, Rom.7:18-23, where, I think, I shall meet with those things, which most people in ignorance commonly make their chiefest plea, whereon they build their whole comforts, as if all were between God and them thereby; yet, you will there find, how the apostle, though qualified as he was, both renounces any such plea, and also betakes himself to that in hand; he saith expressly, "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin;" out of which, observe, I beseech you, these particulars.

The apostle, though he said that he fell through infirmity, yet he clearly perceived his heart was upright towards God, "to will is present with me; the good that I would do, that do I not; and the evil that I would not do, that do I." Though he was overtaken, yet his heart was towards God still; when he did evil, his heart said plainly, it is not with my consent; when he could not do good, his heart told him, it was for lack of power, and not because he did not desire it. Now, come to persons that walk exactly, as he did, they are overtaken with a sin; what is their comfort when they sin? Though I be overtaken, the frame of my heart is right still, my heart is sincere towards God; it is directly contrary to my disposition; I do not do that evil I do, with a full bent of my spirit; and in regard my heart is thus right, there is comfort in me, though I have sinned. Suppose your spirits were in that frame, the apostle's was in at that time; I ask but this, do you not draw comfort still from the plea of this disposition your spirits make? When you have committed a sin, do you not fetch comfort from thence? Ask your hearts, and they will

answer, yea, we have done so. I beseech you, consider it well, when the apostle had urged the case thus, what was the final conclusion, and the sole refuge that he flies unto, or the plea that he would trust unto, for his deliverance and comfort? He doth not say in the conclusion, "I thank God, to will is present with me;" or, "I thank God, my heart is in a good frame and temper, though I was overtaken;" I say, Paul doth not make use of this plea, but he betakes himself to this, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ; and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ; and it is the law of the spirit of life that is in Christ, has freed me from the law of sin and death." {Rom.8:1-2} So that the whole refuge of the apostle, was not any inward disposition, as if he could plead out comfort unto himself therefore; but the plea was without himself, even in Christ, therefore he gives thanks unto him for deliverance.

So in Phil.3:5-9, he pleads the same thing there, as he did here; namely, that it is not any righteousness that he can reach unto, he dare venture the plea, or his own comfort upon; first, he tells us, that "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless;" this was before his conversion, you say, it is true; but after his conversion, he tells us also of a righteousness he had then; but, beloved, doth Paul put out his own righteousness to plead for him? Doth he expect his comfort, or the answer of heaven for discharge upon the plea of that? No, saith he, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Surely, beloved, if he had reckoned that his righteousness could have had any force in plea, he would never have rejected it as dung. That man that thinks he hath strength in an argument, will not fling it away, and not make mention of it for the trial of his cause. But this the apostle did, he accounted his righteousness dung, even after he was converted; and, in that regard, he durst not be found in it, but only in the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Christ. He doth not simply say, he would not be found in the righteousness of the law, but exclusively he would not be found in his own righteousness; so that he bars it

quite out, there shall be no plea at all go along through it; the righteousness of Christ shall be his plea, or else he would look for no good issue at all; this, beloved, is the way.

Let me give one touch by way of application; for you may easily perceive how mightily people are mistaken, and therefore, no marvel they live so uncomfortably; that they are in fear of death, and thereby in bondage all their life long, while they run for the refreshment of their spirits, to their own righteousness, to the plea of their own works, and will have their hearts eased upon that which they themselves do; whereas, nothing gets a gracious discharge from their Father, but only Christ, and his righteousness. Therefore, beloved, however it may, with some a harsh thing, to take men off from their own righteousness, in respect of speaking comfort unto them, and to lead them to the righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel, as that from which they may draw all their comfort; though this may sound harsh to some people, that have not been trained up in the way of grace of God, and in the freeness of it, revealed in the gospel; yet, I doubt not, but in time, the Lord will be pleased to reveal to us, that running to Christ out of ourselves, and disclaiming our own righteousness and comfort from it; that leaving our own actions, and all that can be imagined to be in us, or can be done by us, will be the thing that in the end, will establish our own hearts and spirits, yea, and "fill them with joy and peace in believing."

It remains, that we should consider one thing, that I know startles some, or, at least, lays blocks in their way, before I can possibly come unto the righteousness of Christ itself, that makes up the strength of plea with God for poor sinners.

Some will object, though all that we do of our own will not hold plea; yet there is a righteousness of faith that pleads with the Father, and gets the discharge of sin from him. Beloved, there is some dispute about this point, and I shall not desire to enter into it; only, in a few words, endeavour to clear up the truth, that I may go on.

I answer, in general, so far as the righteousness of faith is the righteousness of Christ, there is strength in the plea; but this must be considered merely as it is Christ alone, and not as it is any righteousness of faith itself. If any strength of faith be brought in as

concurrent to that righteousness that pleads out the discharge of a sinner, over and above what is simply and only Christ's own; I say, it is not to be pleaded, nor hath power, or force, in plea, at all. I shall give two or three passages. It is true, the apostle in Rom.10:6-8, tells us, "the righteousness of faith speaks on this wise;" importing, what indeed before was called the righteousness of God himself, they submitted not to; but, beloved, I take it, the righteousness here, is called the righteousness of faith, as faith is the hand that closes with the righteousness of God; not as if this righteousness were properly, but faith merely objective, as we say; as it lays hold upon that righteousness which is only Christ the object thereof. In Rom.1:16, the apostle saith, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." Mark it well, here is the power of God to salvation revealed; in what is the power of God to salvation? It is in the gospel, of which he was not ashamed; so that though the power of God to salvation is to every one that believeth, that is not in believing, but in the gospel. And what is the gospel there? Certainly not faith, but the object of it; for it is said to be revealed from faith to faith.

In Luke 2:10, you will see plainly what the gospel of Christ is, an angel came down from heaven to the shepherds, and speaks thus, "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy;" that is, I evangelize, so the word is in the original; "I bring you glad tidings of exceeding great joy; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, that is Christ the Lord." The word gospel, in Romans, is the very same word drawn from Luke; it is as much as to say, the gospel is glad tidings of great joy; and what are these glad tidings? "A Saviour is born unto you." So Christ, a Saviour, born to men, is the gospel; and, saith the apostle, "I am not ashamed of it;" that is, I am not ashamed of Christ, born a Saviour, for this reason; Christ "is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth."

In I Peter 1:5, the apostle tells us that "we are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation;" where it is plainly imported, that faith unto salvation, is but a mere channel through which the righteousness of Christ runs; not communicating any righteousness itself, by which a man may stand righteous before God, or have a discharge by, the Lord, or from him. This I would fain know, beloved, in every, or in any act

of believing, is that absolutely perfect and complete, without any defect or weakness; or, is there some imperfection? There is some, you will say. If then, this I would fain know, how that thing, that hath imperfection, unrighteousness in itself, can constitute a person, by itself, righteous? Can faith, chargeable with unrighteousness, make a person, righteous in himself, stand righteous before God?

The apostle, in Heb.7:26, telling us of Christ, saith, "for such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" if Christ himself had had sinfulness with his righteousness, that very righteousness of Christ itself, would not have served the turn; and, therefore; it behooved him to be holy, harmless, and undefiled, and without offence. Beloved, Christ himself could not constitute us righteous before the Father, if he himself had not been holy, and without sin; and can it be imagined, that faith, that hath unrighteousness in it, can make us righteous? This is the sum of that I shall speak at this time. I hope, the things I have spoken will not be offensive to any; for I desire freely, that this, and all that I have, or shall deliver unto you, may be received as they agree with the light of the gospel; that is to be the rule to measure all truths by; and the rest, that remains, I shall come to the next day.

38 The Act Of Believing Is Not Our Righteousness

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {1 Jn.2:1,2}

We have observed already, from the connection of both verses together, {the latter containing an argument in it, to enforce a charge in the former;} that the making known of this discharge from sin, before sin be committed, is so far from opening a gap unto licentiousness, that it is one of the best means to restrain men from it. Then we came to consider the argument, and, in it, the matter and force of it. The argument to prevail with men not to sin, is, "that if any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father."

We have considered what this advocate-ship is, and showed that it is a plea grounded upon justice; and for whose cause it is it is the cause of believers, even when

they sin; and not only of present believers, but of the elect, though not yet believers, which yet in time shall believe. We came also to consider how Christ, this advocate, is qualified for this office. His qualifications are intimated in the three titles attributed unto him. 1. He is Christ; that imports a lawful call, and a sufficient furnishing him with skill to plead. 2. He is Jesus, importing the efficacy of his plea; he pleads so that he saves his people from their sins; he carries the cause. 3. Another qualification for this office is imported in the attribute of righteousness; "Jesus Christ the righteous;" and that contains in it the strength of his plea whereby he attains to the salvation of those whose cause he pleads. Concerning this last attribute we have observed, that the righteousness of Christ contains in it the strength of his plea, as advocate, whereby he becomes the propitiation for the sins of his clients; I say, the strength of his plea lies in this, that he is "Jesus Christ the righteous." We have therefore proposed to be considered, how clear the scripture is in this truth, that it is his righteousness that carries the cause of a poor believer when he hath sinned, and gets the discharge for his sin after it is committed; I cannot insist upon the scriptures mentioned, they are very plentiful. We came further to consider, what this righteousness of his is that hath such a strength of plea in it; the resolution of this I distributed into two heads, negative and affirmative.

The righteousness which carries away the cause, and obtains the discharge of a believer's sin, is no righteousness of his own, no not so much as the righteousness of faith, as it is our act of believing. Here we left the last day. I will give you a touch of the impossibility that faith should so plead for the discharge from sin, in its own name or strength, as to carry the cause on the side of this person sinning. It is true, that the apostle speaks of the righteousness of faith, Rom.10:6-10, a righteousness of faith there is, indeed; but that which is here ascribed unto faith, is afterwards appropriated to the word; that is, unto the gospel, which is the righteousness of faith that speaks on this wise; "say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that

if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." That is, the word of faith, and so not the righteousness of a man's own act of believing. I cannot dwell upon what I have delivered.

Therefore some things briefly to be considered; even about our believing, as it hath a stroke in discharge from sin, or the pardon of sin. The truth is, beloved, some hand faith hath in this business; but it is not any righteousness, in the act of believing, that carries any stroke in it. If you will consider it well, you shall easily see, there is no more righteousness in our believing, as we act it, than there is in any other gracious act whatsoever we do; than is in our love of God; nay more, there is as much sin in our act of believing, as in our other acts. There is no man under heaven hath attained unto that height of believing, or strength of faith, but there is still something wanting, some imperfection and sin in it and as there is weakness and imperfection in believing, so it is not possible that this should give forth such a righteousness, as to constitute a person, who is unrighteous in himself, to be righteous before God. That which cannot set itself, complete and righteous before God, can never set another righteous before him. Faith must be first just itself, or else it is not possible it should ever, by the righteousness of its own act, justify another. Beloved, whatever the scriptures speak concerning faith justifying, it must of necessity be understood objectively, or declaratively; either faith is said to be our righteousness, in respect of Christ only, who is believed on; and so it is not the righteousness of his own act of believing, but the righteousness of him that is apprehended by that act, or else you must understand it declaratively, that is, whereas all our righteousness, and discharge from sin, flowing only from Christ alone, is an hidden thing; that which in itself is hid to men becomes evident by believing; and as faith makes the righteousness of Christ evident to the believer, so it is said to justify by its own act, declaratively, and no otherwise. And whereas in Rom.5:1, the apostle saith, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." In chapter 8:33, he saith, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Now, I beseech you, compare these texts together; then tell me, whether the act of believing, except it hath reference to the object,

which is Christ, of itself justifies, or how else these two places can be reconciled. It is God that justifieth, and it is faith that justifieth; faith is not God, neither is God faith. If therefore, it be faith, in respect of its own act, that justifieth, it is not God that justifieth us; and, if it be God that justifieth, then it is not faith, in respect of its own act; how will you reconcile it? When therefore the Holy Ghost speaks of faith justifying, it speaks of it as laying hold upon God for our justification; and therefore, though faith here appears as that which lays hold upon the righteousness of God, yet it cannot be said to be that righteousness that justifies us.

But some will say, it is not to be understood as if faith had any innate power of its own, to procure the discharge from sin; but it is to be understood as the instrumental cause, that lays hold upon that justification; and so it goes before the justification of a person, and it is to be understood no otherwise.

I shall desire to keep in the plain path for the clearing up of this truth, and so far as possible may be. I abhor to walk in the clouds, in a truth that so highly concerns the comfort, and establishing the conscience and spirits of men; and therefore, I say, that faith, as it lays hold upon the righteousness of Christ, doth not bring this righteousness of Christ to the soul, but only declares the presence of it in the soul that was there, even before faith. I beseech you, mark me well; I know, beloved, I have many very catching ears about me; I speak it the rather, that there may be the more wariness, because there are frequent misunderstandings of the things I deliver, especially, by those that come to catch. I say again, there is no person under heaven, reconciled unto God, justified by him through the righteousness of Christ, but he is justified and reconciled before he believes. And therefore faith is not the instrument radically to unite Christ and the soul together; but rather is the fruit that follows and flows from Christ, the root, being united before-hand to the persons that believe; so that the efficacy and power of believing, is to be instrumental for the declaration of an act that was done before, only it was hid.

For the clearing this, beloved, consider that expression, Heb.11:1, "faith, {saith the apostle} is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." Here he doth not give any efficacy to faith, to procure or bring forth a new thing; but he

gives to faith only an evidencing power, and that not to evidence any new thing, but to be an evidence of things not seen; that is, of things that were before in being, but were hid, and by faith come to be apparent, and cease to be hid, when the evidence of faith brings them forth to light; for either you must say it is not in being till faith is come, and so it doth more than evidence, even beget, and give being to the very thing, or you must confess the thing indeed was, but faith makes it evident that before was hid and obscure. Now, though faith be honored with the greatest business of all the gifts of the Spirit of God; yet that Christ may not be robbed of that which is peculiar unto him, and properly his own, that is, to give complete being to our justification, and be given unto faith itself; I say, give me leave to propose to you some particulars, wherein it is as clear as the daylight, that it is impossible for any person to believe, till such time as he be first united unto Christ, and become one with him; and that faith, being but a fruit that flows from our union with Christ, is not that which unites, or that knits Christ and a person together; I shall not need insist upon that place I have often made mention of, Ezek.16:8-10, the time when God fastened his love upon the church, was the time of blood. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love;" that is, the time of thy blood, that he spake of before, was the time of love; "and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee &c." Here is, first, loving and spreading the skirt over the church before it is washed; not, first washing, and then loving and spreading the skirt over them; but after that comes washing, and thoroughly washing from blood. If any man think that this washing is to be understood of sanctification; consider whether or not there be a thorough washing from blood, as that the person so washed is presently all fair; or, as the prophet speaks, expressly in that chapter, "complete in beauty;" that is, perfect, and that through his comeliness put upon him.

But to go on, consider, I beseech you, beloved, that expression in Isaiah 43:22-24, the Lord there is pleased to declare himself concerning his people, in

what a condition they were; "but thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel;" "but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities," saith the Lord. And mark what follows; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {vs.25} Here the people, whose sins God blotted out, are not considered as believing; but as a people that wearied God with their sins, and made him to serve with their transgressions; they are considered as a people that had not so much as an heart to call upon God, but were quite weary of him; and even while he considers them thus, even then, he, for his own sake, blots out their transgressions.

And, in Isaiah 53:6, whereof I spake so largely heretofore, you shall see plainly, there is nothing but sin considered in the person, whose iniquities the Lord laid upon Christ. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Here is not a consideration of people as believing, as though there must be that, before there can be a discharge from sin; but of people before they believe, even while they are going astray, and turning every one to their own way. But the most notable expression to this purpose is in John 15:4,5, and I desire you to seriously consider the strength of Christ's plea in that place; comparing himself in verse 1, where he saith, "I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman;" but the main thing, to be observed, is this; "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Out of which passage, I shall observe briefly these particulars; wherein, I hope, it will be clear, and plain unto you, that it is impossible that a person should believe, till Christ hath united himself to him. I know, beloved, there is none, or at least, I cannot meet with any yet, that will deny, but that faith is a fruit of the branch that grows upon the vine; that is, one of the fruits of the Spirit, that are wrought by the Spirit of Christ, in those that are his; as in Gal.5:22, where the apostle reckons up the fruits of the Spirit, and he takes up faith for one. If therefore, believing be a fruit that persons bear, by virtue of union to the vine Christ, then, it must needs follow, they must first be in him, and then believe; for, if persons believe before they are united, and their union be by a faith that they

act, then the branch must bear this fruit before it be in the vine, before there be union; and, if faith be that which unites, it is present before the union be made; and so the branch bears fruit before it abides in the vine, contrary to Christ's words; for it is affirmed, that it is faith that makes the union, and therefore cannot be a fruit of it.

Beloved, this I would fain know, is faith the gift of Christ, or no? Is it Christ that works faith in those that believe in him, or no? The apostle, Heb.12:2, saith expressly, that Christ is the author of our faith. Is he the author of faith, and yet is that faith the author of our union unto him? Can a father beget a child, and yet this child beget his own father? Doth Christ beget faith in us by virtue of our being united unto him; and shall this faith beget that union of which it was but a fruit? From whence shall persons that believe, before they are united unto Christ, receive this faith of theirs? They are not yet united unto Christ, and therefore it cannot come from him, for we can have nothing of him but by virtue of union; and then it proceeds not from the Spirit of Christ neither, for we partake of that only by virtue of union with him too; from whence should it come then? If you have it not from him, by virtue of union, it is not from the vine that his person is incorporated into already, because there must be union before there can be communion; all communion with Christ, all participating of anything, proceeds from the union persons first have with him; he is the root, and as the branch is incorporated into the body and root, so sap and influence is communicated and flows out into the branch from the root. But this, you will say, is but a paradoxical expression, and parables prove nothing.

I answer, whereas Christ is pleased to apply the parable, his application of it hath as full a proof in itself, as any scripture whatsoever. Now, in this place, Christ makes exact application of it himself, to the purpose we now speak; "as the branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "I am the vine, ye are the branches, &c." Ye cannot bring forth fruit, except ye abide in the vine; and do you abide in it, when you are not united unto Christ? No man can say that. Can you bring forth fruit before you are in the vine? Can you believe before you are in Christ? Beloved, it is as great an absurdity to say that you can, as to say, a branch can bring forth fruit

without a root. So that, beloved, you must hold this for an undeniable truth, you cannot bring forth fruit, except you abide in the vine. I can bring many other passages for the further proof of this thing, but this will suffice. Mistake me not, I do not any way aim at any derogation to believing; but my desire is that it might have its proper office, and not encroach upon the office of Christ himself. It is the Lord himself, of his own mere grace, without respect to anything in men, that makes him give his Son Christ unto persons, that he might be the justification of them. In Isa.42:6, you see expressly, Christ is given as a covenant by the Father, before ever men have eyes to see, or faith to behold Christ. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." The Lord gives Christ for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes. He himself, as the covenant, and as given, must open the blind eyes, or else they shall never be opened. We must not have our eyes opened, and then have Christ given to us; but he is first given, and then our eyes are opened. We must not believe that so we may be in covenant with Christ; but we must first be in covenant with Christ, and then believing must follow as the fruit of it. If we have faith before we be united unto Christ, or our eyes be opened before Christ be given to be the covenant, then he is anticipated; for, whereas he comes of purpose to open the blind eyes, and is given for this very thing; this work is done before he comes; and so his coming, and the end of it, are frustrated and in vain. In brief, suppose that our faith acts towards the discharge of our transgressions; then it must follow, it is not only the righteousness of Christ that pleads, by way of advocate-ship, with the Father for it. If thou comest to the Lord, and plead out that for thyself by virtue of thy faith, which his righteousness alone was appointed to do; and dost not wholly cast thyself upon that, as that which will bear thee out in all thy approaches to God; but join thy faith withal in the manner I have spoken, and say, in thy heart, I believe, and in that plead thy discharge; if you put this into your plea for the discharge of sin, Christ is not your sole advocate, but your faith also concurs with him in this office of advocate-ship, and so you make it your Saviour; what can be more dishonorable and more derogatory unto this glorious office of Christ? For, if we must believe

before God will justify us; then the simple and only plea of Christ's righteousness is not all-sufficient for God to pardon, or to discharge sin; for, suppose I have not yet believed, the righteousness of Christ it seems hath not strength enough, till my believing come in, and join with that righteousness; but it is only the righteousness of Christ that pleads out the justification of a person, and not the concurrence of our believing. Our believing, I confess, gives comfortable testimony, that God hath freely justified persons, in and through the alone righteousness of his Son Christ; it conduces to the declaration and manifestation of that which God for Christ's righteousness sake did; by faith we have evidence of this thing, but it is not our believing that works the thing itself.

Consider affirmatively, what this righteousness of his is, that carries the whole strength of the plea, for the discharge of the people of God from their sins which they have committed; I say, it is his righteousness, and his alone. Now, this righteousness is to be considered in the quality, quantity, and nature of it. Concerning the quality and quantity of it in brief; that righteousness that hath the strength of plea, for the discharge of the sins of God's own people, both for quantity and quality, must be so powerful, large and spacious, that it may serve to cover the whole nakedness of the person whom it doth concern. This righteousness of his has so much spaciousness in it that it will serve to cover all; as large as the want is, so far it can cover. See how the Lord taxes the church of Laodicea, Rev.3:17,18, "because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" well, notwithstanding her high conceit of herself, that she was rich, yet she was poor, and naked, and lacked all things; and my counsel is, saith he, that thou buy "of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Here Christ puts the church upon the way, by which she may be secured from that, he charges her with poverty, wretchedness, blindness, and nakedness; the course he puts her upon is to receive of him gold and white raiment; it is white, there is the excellent purity of it; and so large and spacious, that if she should be covered therewith, not a jot of the shame of her nakedness shall appear. In, Rev.19:8. you may see, that this white raiment is nothing but the righteousness of the saints,

"and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints;" not the righteousness acted by the saints, but the righteousness of Christ, imputed to them, and that is the pure, clean, and white linen. So in, Ezek.16:8, we find this righteousness expressed, by a skirt spread over a person to cover the shame of his nakedness. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness." The sum is that the righteousness of Christ is such, that there is a complete fulness in it to serve for every purpose, to extend itself to the utmost of every transgression; there is not so large a spreading of sinfulness, but this righteousness spreads itself perfectly over all, that none of it appears. But all the difficulty still lies in what righteousness this is of Christ, that is expressed to be so full, large, and pure? For answer, there are two distinct natures in Christ; he is perfect God, and complete man; and answerably, there are two distinct righteousnesses in Christ; there is the essential righteousness of Christ, inseparable to his Godhead; and there is also the righteousness of his humanity. Now, though it be true, that in respect of the ineffable union of these two natures, both are inseparable to the Person of Christ; yet it is as true, there is no more confounding of them, than there is of the natures in the person; but we must consider as distinctly the one as the other.

Now the question lieth mainly in this, which of them it is, which pleads the discharge of a sinner, whether the righteousness of God, simply as God, or the righteousness of the human nature? I answer, it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ; God simply considered, nor the human nature is Christ; but it is God and man, ineffably united in one, that makes up Christ. Accordingly, I say, as Christ consists of God and man jointly, so the righteousness that becomes the righteousness of Christ's people, is the righteousness of both united, and not of each severally. The simple righteousness of the humanity of Christ alone, is too short and narrow to cover all the filth of all the sins of all the members of Christ; the simple essential righteousness of the Godhead alone, is not communicable to the persons of men; but, it is a righteousness of God-man that carries the strength of plea for the discharge of a sinner, and something from

both natures must necessarily concur to the discharge of sin.

Note that the righteousness of the human nature of Christ consists of two things; active and passive obedience; in doing the will of God commanded, and in suffering the will of God imposed upon him; this, I say, is the righteousness of his human nature. God, as he is simply considered, is not capable of either of these righteousnesses; he is not capable of obedience, because there is no supreme above him, to whom he should yield it, nor of passion, as he is not subject to suffer. Therefore this obedience and suffering are properly the actions and passions of the human nature; yet both concur necessarily toward the discharge of a believer from sin; Christ's active obedience in doing, and his passive obedience in suffering, the will of God.

Compare these things together, as they stand in Romans 5:18,19, and you will perceive, that the obedience, the doing of the will of God, is one branch of righteousness requisite in Christ towards the discharge of persons from their sins. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Here is a comparison, or rather an opposition, set between Adam's offence, and Christ's righteousness; as the one brought judgment, so the other brings justification and life to men; yea, but what is that righteousness, that is there spoken of, you say? The apostle tells you plainly, "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Observe it well, we are made righteous; how? By the obedience of one; that one is Christ. Well, but what is this obedience? It is an obedience set up in opposition to Adam's disobedience. What was Adam's disobedience? It was the breach of the law. What must Christ's obedience be then, but the fulfilling of the law? So it must be certainly be true, it is directly against the gospel of Christ, to exclude the active obedience of Christ, from power and share to plead out the cause of those that believe; I say, the active obedience of Christ comes in to make the plea for this discharge; and, as the active, so likewise the passive obedience of Christ; the scripture is more full in this, than in the other, because it is the complement of all, the last thing Christ went through for the discharge

of the sins of his people, you shall see there is no fruit that illustrates the discharge of a person from sin; hence it is appropriated unto Christ's sufferings. If you speak of reconciliation, which consists of God's acceptance of persons, and his agreeing with them in the death of all controversy, between him and them; for that is reconciliation, when persons, that were at variance, are now made friends, and all things that were objected between them are answered, and no more for one to say against another; I say, if you speak of this reconciliation to God, it is appropriated to the blood of Christ. As, Romans 5:10, "for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." So that reconciliation is attributed unto the death of Christ; as that was the last act of the Son of God for man. Again, "you, who were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." {Eph.2:13} Here you see the same thing in substance, given unto the blood of Christ, though in other words. Men that were afar off, that God was at controversy with, who were at great distance from him, by the blood of Christ are made nigh again. So likewise, the satisfaction that God takes for the discharge of sin which he hath acknowledged is said to be the travail of the soul of Christ. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." The apostle speaks in general, in his epistle to the Hebrews; without blood there is no remission of sins; Christ entered with his blood once, into the holy of holies; and thereby he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Infinite it were to quote scripture for the illustration of this, that to the sufferings of Christ, which are indeed all summed up in the shedding of his blood, because that was the last, and chief of all blessings are attributed, as reconciliation, adoption, &c.

Again, beloved, though it be most true, that the active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature must concur, to make up a righteousness, yet these together, are not enough, there must be something more. That is strange, will some say; what can there be more required, than the active and passive obedience of Christ, to make up the righteousness of a person? Is not that sufficient? Let me tell you, beloved, what the Holy Ghost speaks of the righteousness whereby we come to be righteous and discharged from sin; he speaks in a higher strain than to appropriate it to the

active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature only. In Romans 10:3, when the apostle taxeth the Jews for going about to establish their own righteousness, he taxeth them also with this, that "they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God." In II Cor.5:21, we read that Christ "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I say therefore, beloved, that the righteousness, by which we attain to our discharge from sin, and the pleading out that, is the righteousness of God. The righteousness that gives the full discharge to persons from sin, must have something that is proper to God himself, added to the human righteousness of Christ, as giving dignity to it; I say, something proper to God, that must concur with the active and passive obedience of Christ, to make up a complete righteousness for the discharge of a sinner. It is a known rule, nothing can give more than it hath itself; the active and passive human obedience of Christ can give no more than it hath in itself. Now, man considered as a sinner, hath need of more than barely the human active and passive obedience of Christ, to make him righteous; the sin that man commits, hath its extent according to the dignity of the person against whom it is committed. You know, beloved, that crimes against magistrates have a deeper tincture in them than ordinary ones; the self-same offence committed against a prince, and against an inferior person, hath its additions of extent and heinousness, according to the person of the prince offended. Now, sin is committed against an infinite majesty, an infinite God, and so hath a more deepness of tincture and filthiness, in proportion to the injury done to such majesty; in that respect, sin indeed becomes an infinite crime; for, still according to the injury done, in respect of the person injured, so is the offence. You know the difference in slanders; for slander a poor man, and, it may be, the action will not bear above ten pounds for it; but slander a rich merchant, whose credit goes far, there men lay an action of a thousand pounds for the slander of such a man, in regard of his degree; he being greater, and his credit of greater value, the offence in taking away his credit is so much the more heinous. Now, by how much God is greater than man, by so much is the heinousness of transgression committed against God, beyond all other transgressions whatsoever. Now beloved, that righteousness that must save a person

harmless must have an extent in it that may reach as far as the transgression. Take into your consideration the transgression committed against Divine majesty; take the active and passive obedience of Christ, as it is acted by his human nature only, it is but a created finite thing; it cannot extend to such a height, as to answer in proportion to the offence of the Divine majesty. Beloved, let it not seem strange, that the very Godhead itself must confer something of its own, to the active and passive righteousness of Christ, to make it complete. The Divine nature gives value and virtue to the obedience and sufferings of the human nature; it adds so much, as to raise up that created obedience to an infinite value and height of worth. All that I contend for, is but this very thing; namely, that the divine nature must give worth, and that simply the active and passive obedience of the human nature of Christ is not sufficient of itself, without something of God's own being communicated into it, to discharge a believer from an infinite fault or guilt.

But, what is it that God communicates, {more than this, that he gives value to the human righteousness,} and how he communicates it, is a secret we know not; but this we are sure of, that we are made the righteousness of God in Christ; and that righteousness of God, is the righteousness by which we come to have our discharge from sin. The apostle tells us, Col.2:9,10, "for in him {speaking of Christ} dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, and we are complete in that; our completeness consists in, and springs from the fulness of the Godhead in Christ, as from its fountain; there is certainly something in it worth our observation, that the Holy Ghost should take notice of a fulness of the Godhead in Christ, before he speaks of a completeness which we have in him. Surely, it imports, that Christ communicates something that is God's own unto us; and yet this will not import any essential thing that is wrought in our persons; as if Christ did substantially change our natures into God's nature, or his unto ours, which were a gross absurdity. But there is a communication of an infinite value and virtue to the active and passive obedience of Christ; for the righteousness that becomes ours, by which we stand complete with God, must have so much value, as I said, as may stand in proportion to the breach of the law of God. Now, if

there be but a righteousness of Christ's human nature, consisting in his active conformity to the law, and suffering for the breach of it, and we to stand in this righteousness, this will not make us complete; for, mark, he that is complete, by the righteousness of Christ, it must serve for every purpose whatsoever; if there should be some defect which that, as it is acted by him in his human nature, doth not make up, we could not be complete by it; although that, even as it is human, is absolutely complete in its kind, and without defect. This righteousness of a man consists in a conformity to the will of God revealed, and that in all relations whatsoever, and in all actions of those relations. Suppose a magistrate, {besides his common duties he is to perform, as he is a man, or a Christian,} he must perform the duties of his public relation, he must do justice in judgment, and the like. Now, suppose that he should be exact in all the common duties, as he is a Christian, and should still fail in the duties of this public relation, he is not completely righteous, because there is a want of a magistrate's righteousness. Now, what is it that makes this man complete in Christ? It must be the filling up that which is empty in him; there must be that found in Christ's righteousness, that may fill up this defect, or there cannot be completeness in him; so likewise, if a father, or a mother fail in the duties of their relation, they must go to Christ for a righteousness to supply this, and all other defects. Now, where will you find it in Christ? Christ never was a father, nor a mother, he never performed these several offices requisite to these several relations; he never brought up children; never was a magistrate. When a father fails in the duties of his relation, where can he find out a righteousness fit for him to make it up in Christ? Now therefore, the Divine Nature either must add some eminency of worth, that must serve in the stead thereof, unto that, which his active and passive obedience, as human, did not particularly effect; or else there cannot be a complete righteousness given by Christ unto him; and therefore, whereas it is objected against the active obedience of Christ; forasmuch, as it doth not serve for us, in regard, it is not every way answerable unto the unrighteousness done by man, therefore there must come a righteousness of faith instead of that. I say, the remedy is worse than the disease, and my ground is this; if Christ's active obedience, through non-

performance of some particulars required of us, be not a complete righteousness for every circumstance required; much less faith, wherein, as acted by us, there is both omission of good and commission of evil, which simply is sin; whereas the active obedience of Christ could not be charged with the least sin in any kind; I say, much less can faith fill up this emptiness, being itself sinful; seeing the active obedience of Christ, being free from the least spot of sin, only through non-performance of these several duties of these several relations, and being but a created righteousness, could not fill it up; and therefore, I collect from hence, rather that a supply here, from the dignity of the Godhead, which could not be in the active and passive obedience of Christ; and this shall be in the stead of every particular circumstance, which ought to have been in the perfect accomplishment thereof. So that though we fail in our relations, as of fathers, mothers, and magistrates, and the active obedience of Christ hath not these particulars in it; yet, this is supplied by the eminency of worth of the Person, being God himself; and it cannot possibly be any otherwise supplied, but by the giving such infinite value and virtue to that which Christ did; that though he did not every particular circumstance which is wanting in us, yet notwithstanding, it amounts in value to all particulars which we should have done.

Now, it remaineth that we should only consider wherein the strength of the plea of that righteousness consists; we have considered what that righteousness is; namely, the active and passive obedience of Christ, made of infinite value, by a supply of worth from the dignity of the person superadded thereunto; we should now, I say, have considered wherein the strength of the plea of that righteousness doth consist.

There are but two ways by which persons may be acquitted in judgment, being charged with any crime; either by pleading and proving not guilty, or by pleading and proving full satisfaction made, though there be guilt; either of these are enough to plead out a full discharge.

As for the first way of plea, Christ manages it not, that is, he doth not plead non factum; {it is not my deed;} Christ acknowledges this and that person did commit such and such transgression. It is true, this he doth not deny; but the strength of the plea of Christ consists in the latter, that though the fact be done,

yet he, by virtue of this righteousness, pleads out a satisfaction, and by virtue of that, pleads out a full discharge for those that are his members.

39 Faith, The Fruit Of Union

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” {I Jn.2:1,2}

You have heard from these words; first, an argument to prevail with the people of God to abstain from sinning, “my little children, I write these things to you that you sin not.” This is urged as an argument to persuade them, namely, “we have an advocate with the Father.” We have considered already the force of this argument, and the nature of it. 1. We have considered what the advocate-ship of Christ is, namely, to plead for his people’s discharge according to the rules of justice and equity. 2. Whose cause it is that Christ pleads. 3. How Christ is qualified for this office of advocate-ship; he is Christ that is called of God, and furnished by the Lord unto it; and he is Jesus Christ, an effectual and prevailing advocate, that saves every client harmless, whose cause he pleads; his name Jesus, is as much as the Saviour of his people from their sins.

We have considered further, that Christ is qualified with righteousness; and herein also the strength of the plea of Christ, or the argument of it; he pleads discharge from sin by virtue of his own righteousness.

Now, because this discharge depends upon this righteousness of his; we posed to your consideration what this is that hath such strength of plea, as to obtain discharge from sin to the members of Christ, after they have committed sin; negatively, and affirmatively. The righteousness that obtains discharge from sin is no righteousness of our own; nothing we do hath prevalency in the court of heaven with God for our discharge; not our tears, prayers, or fastings, but the righteousness of Christ only. By the way, a word or two, before I go on; let none think that denying efficacy unto our performances, for the procuring of our discharge from sin, takes away, or eclipses these performances, which are the things God himself calleth for at our hand. I am not ignorant, what an aspersion is rather

by men collected, than what can be justly raised out of what I have delivered; as if there should be a slighting and a derogating from the performances that are the business of a believer’s conversation in Christ; as if denying efficacy to prevail for discharge, should be the overthrowing of these performances in God’s people. You know what is said of fire, “it is a good servant, but a bad master,” useful in the hearth, dangerous in the top of a house; I say, the like of all performances whatsoever; keep them within their due bounds, they are for excellent uses; let them break out of their bounds, and they are dangerous. Rivers are useful, but when they overflow their banks they drown all; they are good creatures within the banks, and water is useful and necessary for many purposes, but nothing more dangerous and destructive when it rises too high. Exalt performances once into the throne of Christ; give them his peculiar privileges, and they deny him; keep them in subordination to Christ, they are useful in their kind. Prayer, fasting, circumspect walking, and holiness of conversation, so far as they are kept within these bounds; namely, the glorifying of God, the manifestation of thankfulness, and our due obedience to Divine Majesty, doing good to others, and as they are looked upon as the ordinances of God, in the performances of which the Lord will be graciously pleased to meet with his people, and in them make good to them things that are freely given by him before in Christ; so far they are exceeding useful. For instance, God calls forth unto prayer and fasting; what is the encouragement of men to perform these services? Not a prevalency that these themselves have with God, but because he hath promised, that when his people call he will answer; so for the promise sake, we are encouraged in expectation that the Lord will be as good as his word. These things will I do, “saith the Lord GOD; {but,} I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” {Ez.36:37} Observe it well, and in it you see the usefulness in seeking God, in any way that he will be sought in; he saith, “these things will I do;” he hath bound himself, he cannot alter it, the word is gone out of his mouth; the thing shall come to pass, he will make that good for his own sake; and I will be sought unto by the house of Israel; I will do it, you shall seek me; and when you seek me, I will make it good. So when we come to the ordinances, we look

to what God hath promised, and engaged himself to make good to us; and when we are in ordinances, our eye is, or ought to be, upon the promises; not upon our own performances, and the ordinances, as if these were our qualifications, and doing this or that were the procurers of that we desire; but the procurer is that which moved the Lord to make a promise. As not our righteousness, so faith hath not any plea in it to prevail of itself for discharge from sin after commission. Faith improperly is called the righteousness of God. The apostle expresses himself thus, “but the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, &c.” {Rom.10:6,} here by the “righteousness of faith,” cannot be meant the righteousness of the act of believing, but the righteousness of Christ believed on.

I came to this assertion, that faith hath not such prevalency of plea to discharge from sin; nay, not so much as to be an instrument to unite a soul unto Christ. I desire, beloved, in this case, to be marked and heeded attentively and spiritually, ingenuously and candidly. The assertion I delivered was this, and the reason why I deliver it again, I will tell you by-and-by; there is, I say, not such a thing as an uniting, cementing, or knitting power in faith, as that it doth, or should become the instrument to unite a soul unto Christ; for, before believing, a soul is united unto Christ, and it must be before it doth, or can believe.⁹⁴ I said this of elect persons still, and so carried it along to the end of the discourse; that an elect person is united unto Christ before he can believe on him. Something I said before, for the clearing up of this truth, that a soul must be united unto Christ, by Christ’s own power, before there can be believing on him. But, beloved, whereas we had thought the truth had been cleared up sufficiently, I have found it otherwise; I find that many stick and stumble at this assertion; there must be believing, say some, before there can be union with Christ, and it is believing itself that makes up the first union with him.

⁹⁴ The dangerous consequences following the contrary notion are afterwards observed by the Doctor, but this is condemned as an error by D.W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pgs.90,91, but received and defended by many eminent divines; particularly the learned and judicious Witsius, who says, “the elect are united to Christ in the eternal decree of God; by the union of the eternal compact, and by a true and real union, but what on their part is only passive;” and adds, “since faith is an act flowing from a principle of spiritual life, it is plain, it may be said in a sound sense, that an elect man may be truly and really united to Christ before actual faith.” See more of this in my Doctrine of Eternal Union, &c. pgs. 23-44. Gill.

Since the last time I spake unto you, I have received {and, I suppose, from an ingenuous spirit, for under such a style it comes} an objection against this assertion; and, weighing the objection, I find it of weight enough to require an answer. Besides, I find that divers other persons, exceedingly stick and stumble at it; and, therefore, I shall desire to clear this, both by answering such objections that may be made against it, as also by letting you see what dangers necessarily follow upon the contrary. I shall and do commend the candidness and ingenuity of those that seek to be informed in things they not yet so clearly understand, while they do it with a spirit, rather seeking satisfaction, than to maintain contention.

The objection proposed is briefly this, that our Saviour very frequently, in the scripture, holds forth believing, under the notion of coming unto him. The inference is, coming implies, or supposes, a distance between the person and Christ till there be coming. The effect seems to be, that he that comes to another, is at distance from him, till he be come. The conclusion is, if believing be a coming to Christ, then those persons that do thus come by believing, before their believing, are at distance from him, and if at distance from him, then there can be no union between Christ and them, till their coming draws them, and makes them nearer, and so that unites them. The ground of this objection is taken out of some portions of scripture; divers are objected, and one seems to have some strength with it, and that is, John 5:40, “and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” Whence it is inferred, that there is no life till there be coming, and this coming is believing, and so consequently there can be no union till there be this believing. The argument, indeed, is laid as strong as may be; and, peradventure, may seem to bare an undeniable strength in it. How I shall endeavour to answer this objection as candidly as it was made; and, it may be, other objections that may be made, like unto this, shall be answered in this. And, that you may better understand the answer, it shall be in two ways. 1. In respect of the matter of the argument. 2. In respect of the proof of it.

1. In respect of the matter of it; before coming there must be a distance, and coming is believing; and therefore, before believing, there must be necessarily a distance, and so consequently no union. For answer to this, beloved, we are to take into consideration,

what is meant by distance, and then what by coming. If by distance, in this place, be meant disunion, as it seems it is, {because the thing urged in the objection is, that there is not a union,} then we shall proceed on accordingly. You know, full well, that coming is but an allegorical expression; and that all coming will not necessarily infer a distance before coming. Mark the expression, Heb.7:25, "wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;" here is mention made of coming to God, and of Christ's ability to save them that come. Now, consider this; suppose a man hath been a believer many years, and so as long united unto Christ, whether or no doth not such a believer still come to God by Jesus Christ? Certainly men, after they are believers, frequently come unto God; now, doth coming import a distance before it? Then there is a distance, even a disunion {for such a distance we are speaking of} between Christ and believers themselves, as oft as ever they come. Observe John 17:13, where Christ speaks to the Father himself, "and now {Father} come I to thee;" here Christ comes to the Father. I ask this question, was Christ at a distance, or was he disunited from him before he did come to him; for he saith, "now I come to thee." It seems, before this coming Christ was disunited, if the argument be good, that where is coming there is a distance, and this coming makes up a union that was not before. It seems by this there was no union, but a distance between Christ himself and his Father, till now at this very time that he comes; but Christ himself, in that same place, testifieth the contrary, saying, "thou Father; art in me, and I in thee." In a word, coming, it seems, must import believing; suppose it be so, must there be distance, or disunion, always before such coming? Then consider this, that believers, even to the end of their days, have occasion, ever and anon, to renew their acts of believing, that is, to renew their act of coming to Christ; for still, take this along with you, that coming and believing are all one, for so saith the objector. Well, be it so, then believers have cause every day and hour to believe afresh, that is, to renew acts of believing; and is there distance or disunion before there be such coming? Then it must follow, there must be union and disunion, and union again, and disunion again, and this as frequent as there is the renewing of the acts of faith. But some will say, peradventure, the first act of coming to Christ, or believing, imports

disunion; but all after acts do not import it. To this, I answer, mark where the strength of the argument lieth, and you will plainly see, there is the very same reason for after believing, as there is for the first act of it. The first act of believing is coming, and are not two, three, or four acts of believing coming too? What coming is there more in one act than in others? If this be a general rule, that believing is coming, and coming argues a distance, and distance must necessarily be before coming; hence it must follow, that it is no solid argument, persons are disunited, or not united unto Christ before the act of believing, because believing is a coming unto him for, you say, and grant, that there may be, and often is a coming unto Christ by faith, and yet there may be union before such coming.

But now, to the texts of scripture; that are brought in for the confirmation of it. "You will not come to me, that you might have life." The strength of the argument, it seems, lies in this; there is no life till there be coming, and coming is for life itself; therefore there is no union till there be a coming by way of believing. To clear up the meaning of the Holy Ghost, in this scripture, we are first to consider, what our Saviour means by coming, and what this life is he speaks of, which they should have in coming to him.

First, what that coming is which our Saviour speaks of in this place. I will not insist upon this, that Christ speaks to opposers, men that contested with him, and to persons with reference unto others; for, I verily believe, though our Saviour speaks this to the Pharisees, who certainly never should come to him, nor have life by him; yet his intent was to speak to them to whom the life of Christ did belong, and who should come to him; let us therefore, I say, consider what he means by coming in this place. In, John 6:44, our Saviour plainly expounds what he means by coming unto him, "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Mark the expression well, and you will perceive what Christ means by first coming unto him, for, in both places he speaks of first, and not of after coming. In which words you may perceive the act of first coming to Christ, is rather by, and from the Father, than by any activity in the person that comes; for, coming there, is plainly attributed unto a drawing act of the Father; so that the first coming to Christ, is just like the coming of a froward child to meet the mother; the child is sullen

and will not stir; if it be carried it strives and struggles, whereof the father is fain to take it up, and by a kind of force, carry it with an over-mastering strength where meat is; the child comes to his meat, but how? Not by any act of its own, as if he came of himself, but by the power of him that brings it. A coach, we say, comes to town, when it is but drawn. The coach is wholly passive, and the child in coming to meat; and so every elect person at his first coming to Christ is passive; his coming is nothing else but the Father's over-mastering and drawing of him unto Christ. "Thou hast chastised me, {saith Ephraim,} and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God." {Jer.31:18} Ephraim here appropriates the act of his conversion, not to any coming of his own, but to the Lord himself; acknowledging, that the work of bringing unto Christ is the work of God's own drawing; nay, he sheweth, that he himself was so far from coming, that he confesses, that when God took him first in hand to bring him to Christ, he was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. It is true, in common speech the bullock is said to come unto the yoke, even a bullock unaccustomed; but how? By mere force he is brought to it, and not willingly.

Beloved, you must either establish the rotten principle of free will, that is, a previous principle of a man's own spirit to come to Christ, or you must confess that persons, at their first coming unto him, are merely passive, It is a known principle, we are first acted, or actuated, before we do, or can act; there is not only a weakness simply before calling, but a deadness, and therefore there cannot be coming; and if there be, it is merely passive, and the whole business must be the Father's own drawing. The Lord speaks to Christ thus; "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" {Ps.110:3;} there is no willingness till the overcoming power of Christ comes in to make it, even contrary to the natural will. The sum then is briefly this, and so to apply to the text objected, "you will not come to me, that you might have life;" that it hath not pleased the Father to draw you unto me, that you might have life. I cannot conceive how there can be any other sense given to it, but that it is the Father's sole and only power to bring to Christ, that there may be life; or there is no principle of life from Christ, till the Father, by his over-mastering power, brings unruly

and cross spirits unto him.

But it may be, some will say, though this coming to Christ be the act of the Father's drawing, yet there is an act of believing, when he draws.

I answer it is not possible, there should be an act of our believing, while the Father is first drawing; mark what believing is, in sum and substance, it is but a yielding to the mind of the Lord revealed. While persons are contradicting, they are not believing, in respect of those things that they contradict. To believe and to contradict the same thing, is a contradiction; for to believe, is to sit down satisfied with the thing that is related; as long, therefore, as persons are contradicting, their spirits are cross, and they kick against that which God proposes unto them, so long they believe not. Now, while the Father is drawing, that very drawing is an argument of resisting, and a kind of kicking against that he aims at; for, if there were yielding, submitting, a willing coming on to the truth revealed, what need there any drawing? Men do not draw those things that come of themselves. And therefore, I say, during the Father's first act of drawing, he laying violent hold, as it were, upon the person, there is no act of believing. The truth is, the Father gives his elect to Christ his Son; "thine they were, {saith Christ, Jn.17:6,} and thou gavest them me;" and the Father that gave the elect unto Christ, gives unto Christ also power, both in heaven and in earth, "all power, {saith he,} both in heaven and earth, is given me; go teach all nations;" {Mt.28:18;} as much as to say, I give you apostles, and ministers, that follow you, a commission from myself to preach, and in preaching to convert; and how so? All power in heaven and earth is Christ's. So that, beloved, the Lord takes his elect as they are self-willed and untamed, and brings them as such to his Son, and by virtue of all power that is given to him, he himself breaks, tames, and brings them to his own bent. "For the Father {saith Christ} judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." {Jn.5:22} Take notice, that as Christ is ordained the Mediator of the covenant, the Father doth nothing towards or concerning his elect, but what he doth by his Son; it is the Son doth all; so that all that the Father doth is to deliver up elect persons, such as they are, in blood, enemies, and rebellious, to his Son; and the framing of their spirits to his own bent, is the sole work of Christ himself; Christ is become, by the donation of

the Father, the life and soul of every elect person.

Now, philosophers observe of the natural soul, that it is the framer of its own body and organs, that so they may be fitted for it to act its own will; so, may I say, it is with Christ, he hath the framing and disposing of the whole man, to bring everything in him to his own bent; the Father bringing the creature, as he is a stubborn and stiff-necked one, delivers him up to his Son; so that, I say, there is not a previous act wrought by the Father without Christ, or by the Spirit, by which a person comes, and closes with him; but the Father gives that person, without any faith or qualifications whatsoever, to his Son; he frames and creates that very faith in them to come to him; and therefore in Isaiah 42:6, you plainly see, there is not an opening of blind eyes, a giving of believing eyes, to close with Christ before he himself be given, and given as a covenant to them; so saith the text, "I will give thee for a covenant;" and here you see Christ passed to persons, not with a supposition, that when they believe he shall be theirs, and they his; but, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes;" and the eyes are not opened before Christ comes, but he comes when the eyes are blind, and when he comes he opens them.

But to go further; let us suppose, that coming, in this place, is spoken of believing; it cannot follow that though there be no life till believing, therefore there can be no union before. I say, if it could be imagined, that there may not be life from Christ, till believing, yet it follows not, that there must be believing before union; nay, beloved, there is nothing clearer than this; namely, suppose there cannot be life before there be believing, yet there must be union before there can be life from Christ; for, suppose that the fruit upon a branch, should have such a faculty to draw life into the branch from the root; though this would be a strange conceit; whereas the root communicates life to the branch, and the branch, by virtue of that life communicated, brings forth fruit; but yet, suppose the fruit should draw life into the branch from the root; that is, suppose that faith, which is a fruit growing upon a member of Christ, that is, a believer, and a branch of that body, should have such a faculty to draw life from Christ, the root, into the branch; yet, it is impossible that faith should draw life into the branch, till the branch be united into the stock;

for, beloved, that is Christ's comparison, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Now, suppose a branch, growing upon a wild olive, is cut off from it, and for the present is not united to the good olive tree; can a wild olive, or suppose it to be a good olive upon this branch of the wild tree; can this fruit upon the branch draw life from the root of the good olive tree, while it is separated and laid aside, and is not united to it, from which root it must draw life? It is known to all, that communication is the fruit of union; there is no participation, nor communion of anything that is Christ's, but as it flows from union with him; so that either you may say, that faith, which you speak of, is not of Christ, the root, but hath some other root from whence it hath its being; or else you must confess, if Christ be the root, it must come from him, by virtue of union to him first.

Finally, suppose it should be, that coming is believing and that this life, spoken of here, is not in persons till they believe; what is meant by life here? The apostle tells us that "our life is hid with Christ in God;" and that "Christ is the life of the world," that is, of the elect. It seems then, that the life of every elect person hath a being in Christ, before he believes; believing, therefore, doth not produce a new life that was not before, only it manifests that which was before; and it makes that life, which was before, an active life; or is an instrument by which that life that is hid in Christ, after believing, becomes an active and appearing life in this person. So that all that can be made of it, is but this; till believing, there is no activeness of the life of Christ in the person that is elected; his life is in Christ, and was reserved in him till the time of believing for him; and then doth he, the elect person, become active in life, when Christ gives him to believe actually; but to say, that this believing should give the first being of that life in persons, is to say, there is not that life of the elect in Christ, before they believe. In a word, beloved, I seriously desire you, that with candidness and ingenuity of spirit, you would take into your consideration, those dangerous consequences that must of necessity follow, if you will receive this for a principle, that there is no justification and union at all belonging unto elect persons, till they actually believe in Christ; if persons are not united unto Christ, and do not partake of justification before they believe, but that believing is the instrument by which they are first united, then mark what will follow.

1. In some respect there will be a bringing to life again, the covenant of works. How will that be, you say? I beseech you to consider it well; the apostle will tell you so, as well as I, for the Lord told Adam at first, “do this, and live;” and Christ to the rich man, “if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;” and the apostle, {Rom.10:4,5,} tells us of the covenant of works clearly, for Moses, saith he, describing the righteousness of the law, saith thus; “he that doth these things, shall even live by them.” Mark here, the covenant of works out of these expressions, is this; namely, for persons to do, that they may live. The covenant of grace runs upon contrary terms; men must first live, that they may do. God in his covenant of grace gives life first, and from that life freely bestowed comes doing; in the covenant of works, there must be first doing for life. But, you will say, how doth this follow out of this conceit that men must believe, before they shall live in Christ? Thus you must of necessity press upon yourselves these terms, or such like, I must do, that I may have life in Christ; I must believe, there is no life till I do believe; now, if there must be living first, then there is doing before living; but, it may be, you will say, faith is opposed to works; when it is opposed to works, it is understood objectively, that is, it is understood of Christ believed on, and not of the act itself believing; for it is certain, beloved, our act of believing, is as much our doing, as our acts of love, or others. So that here must first be doing before life be obtained; if persons must first believe, before they have union with Christ.

2. If there must be our act of believing before there be participating in Christ, then mark what will follow, those sins which were once laid upon Christ, and taken away from the elect; for they could not be laid upon him, unless they were taken from them; are, it seems, returned back again upon these believers; whereas they were charged upon Christ; he once paid the full price; upon the payment of this, there was acknowledged full satisfaction, so that those sins were once blotted out. I say, if there must be believing before there be union with, or interest in Christ, it must necessarily follow, that, till such believing, the person of that elect bears his own transgressions, is chargeable for them that are imputed unto him. But how can it stand with the glory of the redemption of Christ, that he should have all iniquity laid upon him, carrying all iniquity, like the scape-goat, into the land

of forgetfulness, whither they were once carried, and they are afresh charged upon this person. Did Christ bear them away; and did he return them back again? Where did you ever find, that sin once taken and carried away by Christ from the person offending, did return back again upon the person from whom Christ took it away?

3. Suppose this, that men have no interest in Christ till they actually believe in him, then it must follow, that these persons, till they are actually believers, are under the hatred of God; for, if they bear their own transgressions themselves, then God being a jealous God, his holy and pure nature everlastingly hating iniquity, and also the person upon whom iniquity is charged; there must be a hatred of God upon these persons till they believe; and to conceive that God hates these persons, is to conceive that God may love and hate the same person; whereas he saith, {Rom.9:13,} concerning Jacob, that being yet unborn, “Jacob have I loved;” here you see love is communicated to Jacob, being yet unborn. Now mark, Jacob, when he was not yet born, was not an actual believer. Well, had Jacob no interest in Christ and the love of God, till such time as he believed? Yea, he had; so saith the text. Aye, but yet Jacob, must be hated till he believes, because Jacob, till he believes, must bear his own transgressions; so that here must be, at the same time, upon the same person, both the love and hatred of God; and how can these contraries stand together?

Yet again; suppose persons have no interest in Christ, till they actually believe, it must follow from thence necessarily, that there is a believing in such persons before they have union with Christ, and then you must make some other root from whence this believing must spring; as for Christ, it hath nothing to do with him; for he hath nothing, in regard of communicating his grace and Spirit, to do with them; but they are believers, and their believing is that which knits the knot between Christ and them; whence comes this believing? Where is the root of it? Is Christ the root? Then have they first union with Christ, that they may receive it from him; then must they first be united unto him, and made one with him, and live in him, and by virtue of union with him, receive this faith as a fruit of that union. If it proceed from some other root, I beseech you consider how it can be, and how can this be avoided, but that this conceit must needs

be exceeding derogatory to Christ, to make another foundation besides Christ; whereas, {Heb.12:2,} it is expressly said that Christ is the author, as well as the finisher of faith. Beloved, upon these considerations, for my own part, I have received this principle that I have delivered unto you, and merely the vindication of the glorious privileges which are proper and peculiar unto Christ alone, is the occasion that I refer the being of faith itself unto Christ, and to nothing else, and that I may uphold these particular and glorious prerogatives that are proper to Christ, that he may not be robbed of any of them.

To this end, I deliver it to you, that elect persons have a participation and share in Christ himself, even before they believe; and let none conceive that this takes away, or diminishes from the prerogative of believing neither. For there are glorious things done by faith unto believers; God hath honored it above all mere creatures in the world; he hath made it the conduit pipe for the conveyance of all that peace and comfort; nay, of all that strength which believers bare all their lives; no faith, no comfort, no peace of conscience, no pleasure to walk with God; through faith, Christ conveys himself in speaking peace to the soul, in bidding the soul to be of good cheer; the soul lies in darkness, while it lies in unbelief. But still that which is proper and peculiar to Christ alone, is not to be ascribed unto believing. I should now proceed, {having as well as I can, taken away the rubs,} to that which I purpose to follow. But the time is past.

40 Christ Alone Our Mercy Seat

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” {1 Jn.2:1,2}

We have considered already the office of Christ here spoken of, his advocate-ship; the cause he manages, and also the persons whose cause it is. The cause he manages is in behalf of the sins of his people; and the persons are not present believers only, but all elect persons, though yet unbelievers. We further considered the qualifications of Christ unto this office. 1. He is Christ; that is, called of God unto it, and furnished by God for it. 2. He is Jesus;

he takes no cause in hand, but he saves his client. 3. He is the righteous; the efficacy of the plea of Christ lieth in this righteousness of his, that being the sole hinge upon which it turns. In the opening of this unto you; negatively, the plea that prevails for the discharge of sin, is not our works; no, nor our faith, but the righteousness of Christ only; and affirmatively; there is an active righteousness of Christ, for “by the obedience of one man, many shall be righteous,” {Rom.5:19,} and the passive righteousness of Christ, as “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” {1 Jn.1:7} But it is the divine righteousness, or dignity of the Divine Godhead that adds an efficacy, and virtue, making the active and passive righteousness of Christ a complete righteousness, that we might be complete in him; and we gave a touch to you, wherein the efficacy of the plea of this righteousness stands; as it stands in the satisfaction that righteousness hath made to the justice of God. In judgment there are but two ways to be quitted, either just proof, that the person upon trial is not guilty; or being guilty, the law is already satisfied. The strength of the plea of the righteousness of Christ, insists not upon the first way; he grants the persons whose cause he pleads, had, for matter of fact, done the thing that is charged; but the strength of it is, that the law on their behalf is satisfied already. This latter plea being good, hath the like force for acquittance and discharge as the former, so that the sentence of judgment can no more pass upon the person for whom the law is satisfied, than it can upon persons that never transgressed it.

Now it remains to be considered, by way of objection out of the premises, how this can be, that the justice of God should be satisfied, seeing this is bringing a recompense to answer, in proportion for the offence committed; the ground of the objection is, all that Christ, as man, brings unto God, comes short to make a recompense. I told you before, that the divine righteousness is that which makes this righteousness complete, and that a mere human righteousness is not able to effect, till it be infinite, or be made infinite by the divine righteousness.

Now, when Christ brings recompense to the Father for the transgressions of men, that which he brings to him should not be that, which was his own before now, whatever the divine righteousness is, that is God’s own; the active and passive obedience of

Christ's human nature, is brought to him, but not the divine righteousness.

You will say, this is just as one man owes another an hundred pounds, and he sues him for it; the debtor, he cannot raise above ten pounds of this money; but the creditor must make it up out of his own purse. So then, here is the ground of the objection, and the truth is, this matter contains in it the depth of the mystery of the gospel; that justice should be satisfied by bringing a recompense for transgression, and yet that, as it is brought, is not so much as will answer the injury that is done of itself. It is true, there is enough in the divine righteousness, to make the satisfaction for the injury done; but how is this divine righteousness brought?

It is most certainly true, where there is satisfaction of justice in this case, there is also mercy; for though God be just to forgive sins, yet you shall find, that where the apostle speaks of justice in this act of forgiveness of sins, he speaks of mercy too. You know, to forgive a thing is an act of grace and mercy; yet, even while there is forgiveness, justice is manifested, and takes its course.

But this, you will say, doth not resolve the question where can there be a satisfaction of justice, seeing there is not brought, by way of recompense, that which is proportional to the injury done.

1. Justice is satisfied in the strictest sense, when there is such a plenary and equivalent recompense given, that the person injured thereby, is in a good estate every way as he was before the injury done; when a man is trespassed against, and sues for this trespass, and the man makes up, and brings in as much recompense as the injury cometh to; so that the party trespassed, is worth as much as he was before; here is a plenary satisfaction of justice. Now comes in the objection, and says, that the justice of God cannot be said to be satisfied, because the active and passive obedience of Christ, as human, bring not in so much to God as the injury comes to; and what is from the Godhead, is God's own before.

2. Therefore some say, that there is a satisfying justice properly, though there be not a full recompense, as in every point to answer the injury done; I will give you a familiar illustration of it, that you may not say, it is an unknown, and an unheard of thing, that justice is satisfied, though no plenary recompense, in the former sense, for satisfaction be brought. Suppose one

man murder another; now, for a plenary recompense to the injury done, he that is slain must be in statu quo prius, {in the same state as,} that is, must be made alive again; and till he be restored to life, here is not a complete recompense made. But, how is it possible, that any man that hath committed murder should make this full recompense to the person that is injured? He cannot restore life to him again; and, yet for all this, though he cannot bring in a full recompense in this way, he may properly satisfy justice; for, if life answer for life, if the murderer be executed, the law and justice may truly be said to be satisfied. Here then, there may be satisfaction of justice, and yet not the fulness of recompense in the strictest sense brought in. Justice, I say, is satisfied in this respect, because, here is as much brought in by way of recompense, as is possible to be had. Beloved, you have a proverb, "where there is nothing to be had, the king must lose his right;" and when a man pays all that ever he hath, he can pay no more, he satisfies justice. In this sense, justice is said to be satisfied, when the law is satisfied; and so the satisfying of justice doth not necessarily imply the fulness of recompense in the strictest sense, according to the injury done. How cometh it to pass, when a murderer is executed, that upon his execution only, the law esteems this to be a recompense, and justice to be satisfied, though it does not answer the injury done; but only as it answers to the law, that is the rule of justice, so it is satisfaction even so, the justice of God is truly satisfied, when the will and pleasure of God is fully fulfilled, whether or not there be a bringing in a full and plenary recompense. If the will and pleasure of God be satisfied concerning transgression, that is the satisfaction of the justice of God. Now, what is the will of God? It is this, that in the day that man sins, he must die; either in person, or by deputation; for among men the satisfaction of the law is made, either in the man's own person that is the debtor, or his surety that pays the debt for him. The law in some cases looks more upon the thing that is brought in to answer to it, than it doth upon the person that brings it. The justice of God looks upon the fulfilling of his will, although it be not by the same person that sinned; this alters not the nature of the thing, whether I myself pay the debt, or another for me, the payment is satisfactory, so in that the will of God hath its utmost bounds for the satisfying of

justice, whereas transgression must be recompensed with death. Now, Christ, the Surety of his people, going under the punishment, and fulfilling it, the law is satisfied, because every tittle of it is fulfilled, and there is nothing in it remains to be answered.

3. But, I say further, that the satisfaction of Christ is complete, even in the strictest sense, though it be granted, that the bare sufferings and righteousness of the human nature cannot effect it, without the divine nature, and the righteousness thereof; and whereas it is urged that the righteousness of the divine nature, is God's own already, it is granted; and that both, because it is essential unto him, and communicable to the creature; therefore, and also, for the reasons alleged before, in the objection, it cannot be formally, either the whole, or any part of our righteousness; yet, notwithstanding the divine nature, and so the divine righteousness, by the hypostatical union, fit and furnish Christ to be an all-sufficient Saviour, and Satisfier, that thereby the person of Christ is so glorious, that his active and passive obedience is made of infinite worth and value, to give satisfaction for us; and that, in the strictest sense, making a perfect reparation, and of all things in the behalf of the elect, for whom he undertakes, and brings upon them salvation to the uttermost.

In brief, beloved, though there may be some hint given for your better understanding, by way of illustration, how justice may be satisfied, yet the truth is, the fullest resolution wherewith persons ought to sit down without further dispute, is not by argumentation, but by divine faith. Suppose we could not find the bottom of this principle, that God's justice should be satisfied; yet we may sit down as fully resolved that it is, though you know not how, in that the Lord reveals to us, he is satisfied; whose word must be more to us, than all demonstrations can be by way of argument; that here Christ is said to be the propitiation for our sins; that God himself acknowledges elsewhere, that he is satisfied. What matter is it to me, how he is satisfied? I mean, in respect of resolving me by way of argument, how it is, his own word speaking it and resolving it to us, is that with which we should sit down with, without further dispute. If therefore, you cannot know how he is satisfied, your believing upon the testimony of God's word that it is so, may be as full satisfaction to you; yea, may be, a more full resolution

to your spirits, than all arguments and demonstrations can be.

And, so I come, to the last clause of the text; namely, the issue of this advocate-ship of Christ in the behalf of his people when they sin, which is, "he is the propitiation for our sins." The words contain the conclusion of the plea of Christ, telling us what it comes to, that by it he becomes the propitiation for our sins. The main thing to be considered here, that we may understand aright our portion in this grace, is to know what this propitiation means, or what it is for Christ to be a propitiation. Beloved, there is abundance of marrow and fatness in this very word, and, I doubt, much of it is lost, in respect of sense and comfort, for want of understanding the extent of it; that you may the better therefore dive into the mystery of this propitiation, you must understand, that the word, in the original is of the same signification with the word the Septuagint translation uses, when they interpret the Hebrew word, that is rendered mercy-seat; "he is our propitiation," that is, he is our mercy-seat. And if you would know what it is for Christ to be our mercy-seat, look into Lev.16:14-16, where you shall find the main end for which this was erected by the Lord; for, of all those ordinances that the Lord established among the Jews, this mercy-seat was the uppermost. "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat; and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins; and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness." Now, you find three things especially appropriated unto the mercy-seat.

1. The sweet incense that none ought to make upon pain of death, but Aaron alone, must burn upon the golden altar every morning before the mercy-seat.

2. The most notable of all the rites and types of the Jews, was to be prepared before the mercy-seat; the type of the scape-goat with the live-goat, as you find

there handled at large. The live goat must be brought before the mercy-seat, and Aaron must lay his hand upon the head of it, and then the scape-goat must be sent into the wilderness, and carry the sins of the people into a land of forgetfulness.

3. At the mercy-seat, as it is in Exod.30:6, the Lord appointed to meet with Moses, and there speak graciously unto him; and there God will hear him speak, and will be heard to speak, and return his gracious answer at the mercy-seat. "And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee." Well then, to come to the business in hand, that I may clear it the better; Christ is our mercy-seat, that is, the incense, or the sweet savor that smells with acceptance and delight in the nostrils of the Lord; that which makes a sweet savor is the mercy-seat. Incense, had it been burned anywhere else, but here according to the appointment and commission of the Lord every morning; the very place itself being changed, would have taken away the savor of the incense before the Lord; therefore, the mercy-seat is that, for which the incense becomes a sweet savor; as much as to say, all our prayers, duties, and services, {notwithstanding our sins, being believers,} become as a sweet savor to the Lord, as they are presented up before the mercy-seat by Christ; he is the propitiation then, that is, it is he by whom our persons and performances become a sweet savor to the Lord. Again, the scapegoat, and the live goat to be slain, were to be prepared before the mercy-seat; as much as to say, our sins are carried away into a land of forgetfulness, by virtue of Christ; as the scape goat being presented before the mercy-seat was made a type capable to carry away the sins of the people into a land of forgetfulness; so that as we are presented unto God, in and through Christ, our sins are carried by Christ into a land of forgetfulness.

Lastly, before this mercy-seat the Lord appeared, and at it God will return his gracious answer; as much as to say, in Christ and through him, the Lord returns all the gracious answers to his people upon earth; not a voice of grace, peace, and comfort, is to be heard, but at the mercy-seat; for, mark it well, you shall find God hath made over all that gracious language of heaven unto his Son Christ; and only unto him, there came this voice from heaven, when he was baptized, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But

upon the mount, the voice was a little more plain; for there it saith, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him;" as much as to say, all the grace I have to speak to men, I have put it into the mouth of Christ my Son, and not a voice is to be expected of grace from me, but as it cometh out of his mouth; there is not a word of comfort to be heard, but as it is spoken from the mercy-seat; so that putting these three things together, in respect of the sacrifice of the scape-goat, the text in Leviticus telling us of an atonement that is made by the presenting of this sacrifice before the mercy-seat.

In a word, the sum of all is that in and through Christ our Advocate, we become a sweet savor to the Lord; that there is an atonement made with him for us, our sins being carried into a land of forgetfulness; and, in Christ, he speaks all the gracious language of heaven to us. Now, whereas at this mercy-seat the special thing intimated unto us, is the atonement that is made, it seems, that propitiation hath reference in the signification of it, to that; as when a man desires one that is at variance with him, to be propitious; that is, would admit of a propitiation, or atonement. Now, that you may know what atonement is, and so propitiation likewise, look into Rom.5:10,11. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Reconciliation, what is that? Mark what follows; "and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." You see he makes a proposition, by way of supposition, "if when we were enemies," &c; and, in the next words, proves that there is reconciliation, or rather shows the fruits of it, being obtained, "we joy," saith he; in what? In him, "by whom we have received the atonement." What is that? Atonement, in this place, is the reconciliation which Christ makes between God and persons; so that propitiation indeed, runs at last into this cistern, namely, reconciliation with God; and herein lieth the efficacy of the plea of Christ, for his people committing sin; he is the mercy-seat, the propitiation, the atonement, or reconciliation. This is the issue of it; when Christ pleads for the discharge, this pleading produceth reconciliation between God and men. If we could but dive into the mystery of reconciliation between God and us, we should then find the comfort of this office of Christ to be a propitiation for us.

Now, if you will know what this reconciliation is which is indeed an interpretation of propitiation; observe, how the apostle illustrates it. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." {Eph.2:13} Reconciliation is making nigh those, who were sometimes afar off. Look into Col.1:21,22, where the apostle there tells you, in what respect the members of Christ, the elect, are said to be afar of. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled; in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight." So then to be afar off, and so afar off to be made nigh, is as much as to say, that persons alienated in respect of enmity in their minds, by wicked works, notwithstanding all that enmity, are made nigh, they are reconciled. You know well, in respect of men, who are elect, they are from all eternity in the purpose of God, made nigh by the virtue of the blood of Christ, that in time should be shed; which virtue is effectual in the eyes and thoughts of God from all eternity; so that though, in respect of the nature of wicked works, there be a separating and an alienating, yet in regard of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, being in force with God, the elect are nigh to him in purpose, from eternity. So that alienation and estrangement, in respect of enmity against God, is not to be understood, as if elect persons were in very deed, and properly, at any time decreed to be separated absolutely from God; no, he had them in his thoughts, as the objects of his love, from eternity; and these thoughts of being nigh, were intended to be executed through the blood that was continually in his eye; the apostle's meaning is, you, who so far as you wrought wicked works, had that in you, which in its own nature was the cause of alienation, and could not admit of your being near, till there was reconciliation made; that is, whereas these wicked works did, in their own nature, actually, and for the present, make you walk at a distance from God, and so in respect of them, were afar off, you are now made nigh by the blood of Christ. Christ hath taken away sin, the cause of that distance between God and you, and also hath revealed himself unto you, being believers; and in doing this, hath made known to you his eternal counsel, concerning your reconciliation; and that now you are actually, and really, in the very bowels

of God; and also he, in some measure, subdues and destroys the power of Satan in those wicked works; so that there is now more nearness, in conversation with God, after calling and believing, than there was before; and the blood of Christ is that which makes persons, who were far off, nigh again to God. And this is the reconciliation, namely, whereas there was a distance before, there is now a nearness, and this by the blood of Christ, as by a sacrifice of propitiation.

That you may the better understand the nature of reconciliation with God, you must know, that it properly imports, that whereas there is variance and estrangement, a person is then said to be reconciled when the breach is made up, and the controversy is ended, the quarrel is done, and persons become friends again. You know, as long as there is hitting in the teeth, a secret grudge, objecting one against another, and persecuting one another, in respect of injuries done, there is no reconciliation. When men are reconciled, they lay down the bucklers, quarrel and fight no more, but walk as friends together. And if they should walk as friends in outward semblance, and yet bear rancor in their spirits one against another, this were but an hypocritical reconciliation. In reconciliation, the very heart itself is made friends with persons reconciled. All this imports unto us thus much, Christ is become to believers the atonement; one that makes peace with God, ends the controversy and quarrel between God and them; whereas God was injured, and might have prosecuted the law with violence upon us; Christ brings to pass, that the Lord lays down the buckler, to have no more to say against a person, but to become friends with him. You know, that reconciliation is such a thing as is not only a making friends today, but so, that there may be a continuation of this amity. You cannot call this reconciliation when men are brought together, and their controversies are ended now today, but upon the same will fall out again tomorrow, here is not reconciliation; for, in reconciliation there must be a burying of all that which was the subject and matter of the quarrel. So Christ being our reconciliation, he making our peace with God, doth not bring God to be friends with us today, so as to fall out with us tomorrow again, but to be friends with us forever.

Therefore, by the way, know that every person reconciled unto God by Christ is not only a person become a friend of God now, but forever; and as

Christ takes away the present wrath of God against him today, so all quarrels and controversies forever; so that a person reconciled shall never have God at controversy any more with him. Some, it may be, conceive Christ reconciles God and us in respect of sins that are past; but if we sin anew, say they, God must have new controversies, and new quarrels. But beloved, remember that Christ bore all iniquity at once upon him; and when he made reconciliation with God, he brought in all the transgressions of believers, from first to last, and so ended the quarrel with God, in respect of everyone, even for sins future, as well as past. He dealt so with God, that he reconciled him to you in respect of them; so that Christ most either leave out those sins you think breaks peace with God, or if not, then that reconciliation as much concerns those sins, as other transgressions already committed. Now, think whether of these be true doctrine, either that Christ should leave some sins out that are brought again into controversy, and so God again begins to fall out with persons for them; or whether he made agreement for all, and all comes into reconciliation. Therefore, I say, suppose two men are at variance, they have a hundred actions one against another; a friend comes in to make up the business between them; he brings in every one of these hundred actions to this agreement; he deals so with them, that all the controversy between them, in respect of all these actions, shall die; and so he makes them friends. Now, I ask, when all actions are brought into the agreement, may these men fall to quarrelling and suits of law for any of them? They cannot do it; beloved, if Christ brought in all the transgressions of his people into the agreement, and they were all satisfied for by him, "his blood cleanseth from all sin," as saith the apostle; how cometh it to pass, that God should again fall out, and be at controversy with men, for any of these sins that were in the agreement in that reconciliation made? Therefore, know, for your everlasting consolation, that there is nothing that shall be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ, or make a breach between God and you, who are his people. Every sin which, in its own nature indeed, makes a breach, is taken into the agreement that Christ made with the Father; and if there should be such an objection rising in your hearts, when you have committed a sin, now God is at controversy with me for this, ask your hearts this question; was this sin

brought into the agreement of reconciliation, or was it left out? Did God accept of the reconciliation when this transgression was in the agreement? How can he then fall out again for this that was in his thoughts when reconciliation was made? But this may seem to be but discourse only, and therefore take a view of some passages of scripture, whereby you see, as clear as light, that God's reconciliation to men is one entire and simple act; this being once made, there is no more quarrel and controversy that God should prosecute persons reconciled. In Daniel 9:24, there is a time mentioned of making reconciliation; you therein see the effects that accompany it; I have heretofore recited other effects, "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city," for what? "To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Observe it well, when reconciliation is made, then there is an end of the matter that bred and fed the controversy and quarrel. When there is a controversy of God against a person, it must spring from his sins; but when reconciliation is made, there is a finishing, and a putting an end to sin. Take away the cause and the effect vanishes of itself; but observe the text a little more to show the unchangeableness of this reconciliation, when made, there is, saith he, "brought in everlasting righteousness." Righteousness, as you have heard, is that which begets, feeds, and preserves peace and reconciliation with God. So then this fountain of righteousness must be drawn dry, before the peace that is made by it can be wasted. How comes it to pass that a lamp goeth out, but because the oil is wasted that feeds it? So the righteousness of Christ is the oil that feeds the reconciliation made; either this must be spent, or the lamp of peace cannot go out; but, saith the Holy Ghost, there is brought in upon reconciliation "everlasting righteousness;" so that it is clear, when God reconciles himself to persons, they are reconciled forever to him.

Consider also that excellent expression, Isa.54:9,10, "for this is as the waters of Noah unto me; {saith the Lord;} for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 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.” The very express words show the excellent qualities of that reconciliation that is produced by the bringing in of a better covenant there spoken of.⁹⁵ Mark it well, I beseech you, for there are admirable expressions in it; the thing God proclaims is that he will not be wroth, and fall out any more with his people; and this he confirms by an oath, and what can be more binding than the oath of God?

Again, take notice of the continuance of this; how long will not he be wroth, nor rebuke? Even so long as floods shall cease to drown the world. God hath sworn, that till the world shall be drowned with water again, he will not be wroth with his people. As long as water shall not come upon the earth, nay, longer, if longer may be; “the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee;” as much as to say, the loving-kindness of God shall remain steadfast to the people reconciled to him, even longer than the mountains shall stand fast, and the hills un-removed; this, I say, is established by such a firm covenant and oath, and out of the mouth of so glorious a God, that the hearts of his people may be secure that he will not be wroth with them.

But, whereas some may say, the Lord, in verse 7, says, “in a little wrath have I hid my face for a moment;” therefore, it seems, it is not to be taken for such a perpetual forbearance of wrath. Consider, that all along this chapter, the prophet speaks of the church of God, in a two-fold estate; he speaks to it one while as it is a wife of youth, and another while as her breasts are grown; as a wife of youth, so the Lord for a moment hid his face; but as a wife that is grown up, so he will not be wroth with her, nor rebuke her any more. The apostle Paul most excellently expounds this different estate of the church, in the time before and after Christ, Gal.4:1-5. There was, {saith he} a time of minority, wherein, even an heir, being but a child, differs nothing at all, in respect of outward carriage,

⁹⁵ The meaning is, that God’s dispensations towards his people at the time the prophecy refers to, is like that of his to Noah and his family; and the love he bears to them is like that love which he bare to them; and the Covenant he has made with them, is as the Covenant that he made with him. The love of God to his people is an everlasting love; it always continues, it never did, nor never will depart, notwithstanding their fall in Adam, their depraved state by nature, their actual sins and transgressions, their many revolting and backslidings; though the Lord may hide his face from them and afflict them, still he loves them; whatever departs from them, his kindness shall not. Gill.

from a servant, though even then he be lord of all; and this time of being a servant, is not forever, saith the apostle, “but till the time appointed of the Father.” Here in respect of outward usage, during this minority, there is no difference between such a person, and him that is not an heir at all, but he is under tutors and governors; that is, he feels alike the rod, and still this is till the time appointed of the Father. See how the apostle expounds the words, “even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” We did partake of the common calamities of the world, but how long was this? “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” There was a redemption, even in the minority of the church; when it was at the youngest age, there was redemption, but not in respect of that which he speaks of here; that was a redemption from that condition, wherein the heir did not differ from a servant; therefore, most properly, according to the coherence of the words, the redemption, spoken of here, was from a condition wherein they did not differ from servants, into a condition wherein they should differ. So Isaiah 54:8, there is such a difference in this two-fold estate of the church, as is between a wife of youth, and a wife grown up. What is that, you will say? You know, even among men, they marry children when they are but two or three years of age; the child is a married wife, and yet, for all this, while she is four or five, yea, six or seven years of age, she is used as one that is not married; there is no difference between this child, and one that is not married; but when she cometh to riper years of age, and hath the actual fruition of her husband, then she cometh to be freed from the rod, and receiveth all the immunities and privileges of a wife, which she, though a wife, did not enjoy before; and so in this text, the church, as a child under age, and a wife of youth, is visited for a moment, and there is a kind of hiding the face of God, while she is as the wife of youth; but when the time of riper age is come, then “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 would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.” Thus, beloved, you see that God, once reconciled, never falls out with his people any more. It is true indeed that he

chastises them, but he never doth it in wrath and fury. In Isaiah 27:4, speaking of his church, that he would watch night and day, he saith, "fury is not in me;" the Lord hath no acquaintance with fury, in reference unto such persons; and therefore, although it be true there may be afflictions, and those exceeding tart to the flesh, even when a person or church is grown up; yet there is not wrath in these afflictions.

"Every son {saith God} I love, I rebuke and chasten." {Rev.3:19} There is love even in chastisements, and the fruit of it is love, to take away sin. The end why God sends these afflictions is not in wrath for sin, but to purge them from their filth. God takes occasion, when his people sin, to chastise them in love; but that chastisement is no fruit of the wrath and curse of God, nor sentence of the law, but the tender compassions of a loving Father, that makes use of them for his children's good. There is as much reconciliation with God under the rod, as when not under it; a father may love a child as dearly when he corrects him, as when he gives him plumbs. It is thus with God, to children reconciled to him, as he corrects a child committing a fault, he never whips him but there is fear he will commit it again; and therefore he chastises him to prevent a fault; he doth not punish him to pacify his anger for the fault committed. So God, in respect of the church, for the purging of it, and for trial in these respects, will chastise, and in chastising will convey the spirit of amendment to them; but, in respect of what is done, were it not to have them purged for the future, he would never afflict his people for that which is past. So that, though this be the great objection that troubles men's spirits, they fall daily into afflictions, here is wrath and enmity; reconciliation is not firm; God is now fallen out; yet, beloved, know, that God is not fallen out with his people when he chastises them. No man can suffer under afflictions, more than Christ himself did; yet, saith God, he is my beloved Son, not my hated Son, but my beloved Son, whom I afflict. It is true, indeed, as the apostle Paul speaks, "now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." {Heb.12:11} Consider this one thing; can God pour wrath when he only intends the good of his people, to purge and bring them as gold out of the fire? Certainly, what David had experience

of, shall be the fruit of all the afflictions of all the members of Christ, though they be never so many and great, "before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." {Ps.119:67} Whereupon he saith, that it was good for him that he was afflicted. God afflicts to teach, to draw home, to refine and purge. You know, the merchant doth not in wrath fling away his gold, when he puts it into the refining pot; it is no argument of less love, only he would have his gold tried and refined, and the dross taken away out of it. It is so with God; all the members of Christ, all that he hath prevailed for with the Father are the beloved of the Father, and the darlings of his soul; and his love ceases not, nor diminishes when they are under the rod.

One word of application, and I shall have done. Is it so, that Christ is such an advocate, that having such a strength of plea in his righteousness, he produceth such a good issue, as to bring, at the last complete reconciliation? In a word then, you know what to trust unto for your soul's discharge and comfort. "In many things we sin all;" and what should uphold your spirits that your sins should not sink your souls? Here is held out unto you that great supporter, the righteousness of Christ, Isaiah 41:10, "fear thou not;" and why not; "for I am with thee;" "I am thy God;" and "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." If you go anywhere else for support, when sin is committed, your sins will sink you and swallow you up; for nothing can bear you up in respect of the weight of sin, but the right hand of his righteousness; that alone is the thing that must uphold your spirits, or nothing can do it. Oh that the Lord would be pleased to work upon your spirits, to betake yourselves to this support, and to fix your spirits upon the fulness of support and strength, that is in this righteousness of his! When the Israelites were stung by the fiery serpents, it was not the applying of a plaster that could heal them, nothing but the brazen serpent. Oh, look upon the brazen serpent, the Lord Jesus Christ; look not upon any other plaster but him, to heal your wounded souls, stung with the serpent of

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your sins; though they may serve for other uses, yet they have not so much virtue in them, as to heal the sting of sin. Fix your eyes here, cast yourselves here, rest here; let the weight of your souls lean here. "He

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." {Mk.16:16} "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established." {Is.54:13,14} "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." {Is.7:9} Oh, go not to Christ, as if there were not enough in him to answer your transgressions; that you must carry something else with you to him, that may be a help to your discharge; if ever discharge from heaven come unto your spirits, it is only the hand of Christ, by his Spirit, that must bring it down to you; and nothing can do it, but that discharge, as it is recorded in the word of grace. In things that come by relation unto men, and so are opened unto them, how can men be satisfied concerning the truth of the thing reported, but upon the credit of him that is the reporter? Let a man tell me never so good news, if I do not believe him, my spirit is not satisfied.

So, concerning the discharge from sin, beloved, you hear it related from heaven; "we have an advocate," and "he is the propitiation for our sins." Now, there is no way to know that there is such a thing as an advocate and propitiation, but as it is revealed from heaven. The apostle John indeed reveals it here; if he had delivered it merely as he is man, so it had occasioned suspicion and doubting; but as it is the revelation of the Holy Ghost, and of Christ himself by the apostle, so we are to stick close unto it, and we shall find rest unto our souls, as we can credit the report of it; therefore, as the Lord will work upon your spirits, take up your rest where it is to be found; so your souls shall lie down and sleep in peace and safety; you shall sing and leap for joy; and you shall have all peace and joy in believing. O that men would keep up the dying language of a martyr, "none but Christ, none but Christ," in matters of faith and stability of spirit; of peace of conscience, as well as of salvation. And so I shall commend this word to the grace of God, in respect of the issue thereof, upon your spirits.

41 The Loveliness Of Christ's Beloved

"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee."
{Song.4:7}

The gospel of Christ being the great and invaluable treasure of the church, the prize for which it should

contend, yea, its sanctuary and refuge; it hath pleased the Holy Ghost, to present and hold forth this in change of raiment, as I may so speak; sometimes presenting it, as it were, in a cloud, more darkly by visions and dreams, when deep sleep was fallen upon God's people. Thus the Lord, in former ages, frequently held out the gospel, especially in that notable example of Jacob, who while he slept, had it preached unto him in the vision of a ladder, that reached from earth to heaven, by which the angels ascended and descended; which ladder was nothing else but Christ, by whom alone the sons of men rise from the lowest condition of sin and misery, to the highest of grace and glory. Sometimes the gospel was brought forth to the church with a mask upon its face, in hard riddles, and dark sentences, to exercise the wits of God's people; and thus, among other times, the gospel was presented unto Samson. You know the riddle that was put forth, occasioned by a lion slain by him, which being dead, there was a stock of honey in it, which represented unto his thoughts, the admirable benefit and privilege of the preaching of the gospel; "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." {Judges 14:14} It was nothing but Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah, by death had a stock of honey, not only nourishing, but sweet to the eater. Sometimes again, the gospel was presented, though not with so dark masks, yet with a veil over the face of it, that though some of the beauty of it might be seen, yet in respect of the glory of it, in an obscure way; and thus it was exhibited unto the Jews in types and shadows, and held forth in their sacrifices, temples, tabernacles, altars, mercy-seat, incense, and the like; in all of which there was a general darkness; namely, a putting over the face of Moses a veil, who in that represented Christ, the Mediator, as he was to be exhibited unto the people in those times; and yet, although for royalty and honors sake, the gospel was veiled; sometimes the Holy Ghost was pleased to lift up the veil for a moment, as it were, that there might some glance of the beauty of it appear; even in those times, for now and then a prophet would out with some admirable expression of the gospel; but this was but as the breaking forth of light in a dark night. Sometimes, again, the gospel was presented in a prophetic habit, and so it was held out, as it were, at a remote distance, that even an elevated and supernatural eye had as much as it could do to

see it in proportion; and this was the dispensation of the gospel in the prophets. Sometimes also, it was presented under a parabolic habit; and thus it pleased our Saviour to exhibit it in his time, delighting much to see it in this dress; insomuch, that all the gospel he spake, almost, was clothed in it; and so the kingdom of heaven was likened unto leaven, hid in three measures of meal, and to mustard seed, and a treasure hid in a field; and so he goeth on, setting of it forth under all sorts of comparisons to illustrate it. Finally, the gospel is presented sometimes without either veil or mask over it, in its own proper beauty, shining forth from the face of it, nothing at all hindering the prospect, in its own proportion; and thus was the gospel presented unto the disciples, when they said unto Christ, "now thou speakest unto us plainly, and not in parables." Unto us that live now, the gospel of Christ is represented in all these varieties of dresses together, to administer the more delight. It is accounted one of the greatest pieces of honour in a state, for a prince to have changes of raiment every day; now, the Lord puts so much state upon his gospel, that it shall not always go in one dress, or habit.

The text that I have read unto you holds out the gospel in Christ's own way, which was so much affected by him, I mean, in a parabolic habit. The most glorious excellencies of the gospel, as it pertains to the church of God, are comprised in this text, "thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." This, as the whole song throughout, is nothing but an elevated strain of discourse between Christ and his church, or a song tuned to the highest note that ever was sung; which discourse is an interchangeable speech between them; the church acting her part first, in chapter 1:2, "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" being amiable, sweet discourse indeed; then she falls upon the high commendation of his love, exalting the praise of her husband Christ above the sky; which kindled such a strong affection in her, that she seemed to be far from him, not near enough unto him; she called unto him therefore, that he would draw her nearer unto him, "draw me, and we will run after thee;" and that she may come nearer, she begs of him, to tell her where she may find him in a nearer communion with him, than yet she had. Hereupon, her part being ended, Christ begins to tune his note to a higher strain, in answering the church, "if thou knowest not, O thou

fairest amongst women," saith he. Here, after his commendation of her, he directs her where she may meet with him, by the footsteps of the flocks; by the tents of the shepherds. And then he falls again upon exalting and commending her excellent perfections, by many and several comparisons. The church, by and by, in verse 16, retorts the commendation he gives unto her, upon him again, "my beloved is fair; behold, my beloved, thou art fair, yea, pleasant." Thus you see that here is a making forth of the praises of each other's excellency, and of the high esteem each hath of other in their mutual discourse. Christ saith of the church, "thou art the fairest among women;" she replies again, "behold thou art fair;" and thus they go on in admirable expressions of the praises of each other. It would be too large to run over all the particulars of the sweet intercourse between them. In the text Christ retorts the commendation back again unto the church, before she had given him; she having begun to fall into the high commendation of her love, he follows; she retorts it upon him, Christ will not have it rest there; he will have the last word, as I may say; he retorts it back again to her, saying, "thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." So that here is an out-vying, as it were, between Christ and his church, which should mount highest in the praise of each other, extolling the excellency of each other unto the skies; the burden of the song being this still, "thou art fair; thou art all fair, my love." In it, observe in general, the high commendation that Christ gives of and to his church; in which note.

1. The most gracious amiable title that Christ gives unto her, he calls her love, the sweetest title a husband can give a wife; but there is an addition of one article, that mightily advances the endeared-ness of Christ, in respect of the specialty thereof; namely, "my love; thou art all fair, my love." 2. The matter of the praise, and commendation that Christ gives to his church, it is expressed in that which is accounted most desirable, fairness; "thou art fair;" but in this there is a double addition that exceeds the praise the church gives unto Christ before; the church is not only fair, but all fair. 3. For the further illustration of this beauty, there is a second addition, "thou hast no spot in thee." 4. The time of which Christ speaks; every man receives this principle, that in heaven, there shall be perfection of beauty, in which the church shall stand. But if Christ

had spoken of the state of glory, he would have declared himself in the future tense, "thou shalt be all fair my love." But it is to be observed that he speaks here in the present tense, of the present time of the church, as he hath communion with her here in this world, "thou art all fair." There is a great deal of difference; it is one thing to say of a man, thou shalt be rich, and another thing to say thou art rich. It is true, the church shall be all fair in glory, and it is as true, the church is all fair now. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." That these words are the language of Christ unto his church, appears, if you consider, what is spoken before; there is the commendation of the breasts; now, this hath reference to the spouse; but most plainly it appears in the words that follow, "come with me from Lebanon, my spouse," saith Christ; either they must be the words of Christ to the church, or of the church to Christ; but they cannot be the words of the church to Christ, for she doth not call him spouse, for the word spouse is spoken in reference to the woman, and not the man. You have it further cleared in the contents of the chapter, which show the drift of the whole; the author of them holds forth according to the Hebrew, where the genders are more distinct than in English, that these very words are the expressions of Christ unto his church. Whereby you see, that this is no new doctrine, neither is it set forth by any obscure person, being delivered by Solomon, or rather by Christ, personified by Solomon, that the church should be all fair, and without spot.

The proposition is briefly this, that the love of Christ is all fair, and without spot. You may remember, beloved, that I have hitherto at large endeavored to set forth the gospel of our blessed Saviour, in the first great part thereof; the gospel consisting principally in two things, the negative and the affirmative privileges of the members of Christ, their great privilege and invaluable benefit, being, exemption from evil, and a participating of all good. All the discourse I have had with you hitherto, hath had reference principally to the former branch of the gospel, setting forth to you the gracious discharge of the members of Christ from all iniquity; and so consequently from all the fruits of iniquity, in these words; "and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and I have further showed you, how the people of God, and members of Christ, partake of such discharge, which is the way of God,

by which the sons of men, believers, can have their portion, and their possession of this immunity, and that out of I John 2:1, "if any man sin, &c." It was in my thoughts, beloved, to have made present progress into the text that I have read unto you; but yet in some respect a necessity lies upon me to give you a brief touch of some things I have formerly delivered, by way of acquitting myself from injurious slanders. It is, and hath been my portion, and not unknown to many of you, that while I have labored freely, and by the assistance of the Spirit of the Lord, to make known his mind to the comfort and rest of the weary and heavy laden, I myself have not wanted my burden; yet were it not for the gospel's sake, lest that should receive prejudice, I should never open my mouth to vindicate a truth, as it concerns myself, in so public a way. But as there hath been most false imputations laid upon me, in respect of the gospel, so for the sake of that only, I shall acquit myself publicly before you of such things as are most injuriously charged upon me.

1. It hath been affirmed, and that by persons who have gone for men of credit, and consequently the wound must strike the deeper, and the report take the greater impression; it hath been given forth, I say, that in my discourse among you, I should deliver to you, that the active and passive obedience of Christ, as God and man, in reference to both his natures, hath not a sufficiency in it to make up a complete righteousness for us; and further, that the ground of it should be this, namely, that Christ did not perform the several duties of the several revelations wherein many persons stand; as the office of a magistrate, and the relation of a husband, &c. For the vindicating of myself herein; I shall repeat the matter I delivered before, and you shall also know the truth of what my judgment is in this thing, and then leave it to the church of God, whether it be a slander or no. This I then said, that the active and passive obedience of Christ properly, are the actions and passions of the human nature; for the divine nature is not subject to obedience, because there is not any superior whom it should obey, neither is it subject to passion; God cannot suffer; and therefore doing the commands and suffering the punishments are more proper to the human nature; and this is but a mere creature, and therefore the actions of it, as a creature, cannot extend to a proportion answerable to the injury done by sin to God. For this cause, I say, as

I said before, there must be an addition of virtue from the Divine Nature of Christ to make the active and passive obedience of the human nature a complete righteousness. So that all I said is this, that the actions and passions of the human nature are not sufficient to make up our righteousness complete, but there must be something of the Divine Nature superadded, to raise up one proportional to the transgressions we commit. And that expression concerning the not performing of duties of these several relations, was only to this purpose, to show wherein the human nature of Christ in obedience, did not fulfill everything in particular, which is the duty of a man; and that therefore the divine nature of Christ, by the eminent dignity thereof, is, as I said before, to make up the righteousness a complete one. Concerning this, whether it be truth or no, let the church judge according to the word; as for Christ, as God and man, it is well known, I used not the word, neither had I the thing in my mind, nor in my tongue, to the purpose they allege it against me. In a word, this, I say, that Christ, as God and man, hath in himself an absolute completeness of righteousness for all the elect; there need not be a going forth from Christ to anything besides for a perfect righteousness.

2. There is another charge, deep indeed, and I appeal to you, that frequently heard me, whether ever you heard any such thing from me, namely, that by way of inference I should deny Christ; how true this is, let the whole course of my ministry witness, which altogether aimed and endeavored the exalting of him above all the creatures in the world; and, except my being so busy with this truth, become an occasion of so manifest slanders and false aspersions that are raised, I know not what should be the cause of them. But beloved, how is it that I should deny Christ? In that, say they, I deny repentance unto life. Now, whether ever I did so, I appeal to you that heard me; this, I say, concerning faith and repentance unto life, that neither have any efficacy of their own to produce life; but those that attain to life, in time the Lord giveth them to believe and to repent indeed.

3. Another charge is stranger than all the rest; this I must touch also. I will name no persons, nor hint them; my scope is to deliver plainly unto you the truth of my own thoughts, and so lie under censure, or be acquitted. The charge is, that I should affirm, that should an elect person live and die a whoremonger

and an adulterer, and in all kind of profaneness; and, though thus living and dying, shall be saved; which, how contrary it is unto the whole course of my ministry, ye are witness; I dare be bold to say, you all know it to be a gross, notorious, and groundless slander. You know, a person being elect, it is impossible he should miscarry, and not be saved. Either God's election must be frustrated, which is impossible, or he that is elected to salvation must attain unto it. I think none of those that have cast this imputation upon me will deny it; but withal, this; I said before, and so I say still, there is no elect person, suppose him to be capable, and to come to years, shall die before he be called, that is, before the Lord gives faith to him to believe, and in some measure frame him to walk by the Spirit according to his rule; in a word, this person is changed in conversation; the principle is this; "he that beliveth shall be saved, and, he that believeth not shall be damned;" and that "no unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Every soul, therefore, being elected, as it shall be saved at last, so is it, or shall in time be called and enabled to believe and walk as a child of light. If this be not true doctrine, then I desire my mouth may be stopped.

Having thus endeavored to take off those aspersions, though not in respect of myself, yet in respect of some of you, who peradventure, may receive such things for truth, especially coming out of the mouths of such persons as those from whom the charge comes; I come to the text that I have taken to handle, namely, "thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." I shall say but little concerning the latter branch of it, it having been all my work heretofore to set forth this immunity we have by the blood of Christ, the cleansing from all sin; I shall keep myself to the former branch, "thou art all fair, my love." Let us therefore take into consideration these particulars that will give some hint of the grace revealed here. Who this love is, of whom Christ speaks? Why this person that is so fair, is here called my love? What this fairness is that is appropriated to her? What it is for her to be all fair? When this time is that she is all fair, "thou art all fair, my love?"

Who this is that is here called the love of Christ, the next words will unriddle the question, "come with me from Lebanon, my spouse." The love of Christ then here is the spouse of Christ, and beloved; if you knew

all, you would soon see what glorious, unspeakable, and unsearchable excellencies are contained in this grace, that the church should be admitted into the bosom of Christ, to be his very spouse. There are two things very considerable by which you may perceive, at the least, some of the glory and excellency of this privilege. If you consider the inequality of the persons that are matched; and the great privilege that issues from such a match. The word spouse is nothing but a title of relation, in reference to a husband; now, I say, first consider the inequality of the persons matched, and therein you shall see admirable condescending grace. I remember, in I Sam.18:23, when the servants of Saul came to David to make mention of Saul's mind concerning his marrying his daughter, David was in a kind of astonishment; and when they spake to him of the matter, he replied, "seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" This was strange news to poor David; what, presently to marry the king's daughter, and be the son-in-law to a king, being a poor man as I am; is this a small matter in your eyes? Much more may we be astonished, that we, poor miserable wretches, should marry the Son and Heir of the world, nay, the Son and Heir of Glory. Shall this seem a light matter to you to be the spouse of a King, to be the sons and daughters of a King of kings? It was an admirable witty expression of Abigail in I Sam.25:41, when David sent messengers unto her, to commune with her, to take her to be his wife, she in humility replied to the messengers thus, "let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord;" a high strained compliment, if it had been a mere one; but as it was real, so it expresses the great distance she conceived there was between herself and David; and therefore doth not spare to show her thoughts of her great unworthiness to be matched with him; this is an office good enough for me, to wash the servants feet, and not to lie in the bosom of David. Why, what a great matter was this; she was as rich as David, and she was very beautiful, and her stock and parentage was as good as David's; but there was but this difference, a kingdom was promised to David, and he was anointed king, but yet for the present, a persecuted anointed one; but notwithstanding she admires the great condescending of David, that he should take her to be his wife. Oh then, beloved, what

must be the condescending of the Son of God, the heir of the world, and the express image of the Father, and the brightness of his glory, as you have it in Hebrews 1:3, to stoop to match himself to a creature; surely, I say, it were a great condescending. But since he was so pleased to condescend so low as to match himself to a creature, he might well have chosen the highest lineage and most noble stock of creatures, he might have matched himself with angels, but this makes his condescension more admirable; he descended lower, "he took not upon him, {saith the apostle} the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." {Heb.2:16} And beloved, were it to creatures and the lowest simply, the condescension had not been so great. There may be some beauty in a country maid, though homely attired, as well as there may be in a great personage in richest apparel, of great stock and portion. Had there been beauty, though there had been no lineage, nor noble blood, this were something; but as the blood became ignoble and traitorous, in respect of the first father's rebellions and treasons, so this traitorous blood could not contain itself within its bounds; but as the prophet Isaiah speaks, "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." {Is.1:6} Even such as "none eye pitied" but "wast cast out in the open field," to the loathing of their persons; {Eze.16:5;} that Christ should take such a nasty beggar, such a beggar, as stinks above ground, as we may say, in regard of its filthiness; that hath no sound part, being full of blotches, and sores, and putrefactions, running over all parts, from head to foot; I say, that Christ should take such a creature, and no place should serve it, but his bosom, his bed; and no communication, but the nearest that possibly may, or can be imagined; even a communion that extends itself to a kind of oneness, and highest degree of unity.

Oh, the astonishing greatness of the love of Christ! They are said to be one flesh, as Christ and his church are set forth by the Holy Ghost, in the union between man and wife; so that, beloved, the church, as she is the spouse of Christ, is made one flesh with him. You have some monstrous births in the world sometimes, that have had some deformed parts growing unto them; as you may see at this time, in some place about this town; a young man with another youth, as I may say,

united to him at his belly, whereby he is exceedingly deformed, and very much troubled with the burden of it, and almost poisoned by the noisomeness of it; whereby, the life of him that bears it, becomes worse than death to him. Beloved, such were some of us; nay, such were all of us, by nature; when Christ first took us, we were such monsters, filthy, loathsome, and ugly. And, though we were thus by nature, yet Christ has admitted us, not only into his house, and now and then into his presence, but to sit continually before him; yea, to be his spouse; he makes us "flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone;" what a condescending is this! It is true, beloved, Christ covenants and accordingly he hath done this; namely, cleansed this person, after he coupled himself to it; but, I say, to take persons before this change, in such a loathsome, filthy condition, and make them one with himself, is so strange a condescending, that all the world is not able to parallel it? No, not come near this act of Christ! A king may, peradventure, fancy some worthiness, beauty, something or other, that may be pleasing to him in a beggar, and marry her, for that he fancies to be of worth and delight in her; but, beloved, how could Christ cast his love on such persons, whom he knew were such filthy ones; who, even when he came in the sweetest and fairest ways to woo, spit poison in his face, being full of enmity, stubbornness and rebellion, even bitter enmity against him; flinging from him, as the greatest enemy in the world? Beloved, by nature, every person, till Christ himself tame him, hath a spite against him, and fights against him, and is so full of malignity against him, as to cast dirt even in his face; and yet for all this inequality and disproportion between Christ and him, he makes this loathsome, wretched person, this rebel and traitor, his spouse.

Now, beloved, if the Lord but open your spirits, to look into this inequality, and see not only the distance, but even the extreme contrariety between Christ, considered as he is in himself and you in yourselves, how can you but break forth into admiration, even to astonishment? It is a notable expression, "behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." {I Jn.3:1-2} John begins with this note of admiration, "Behold," and follows it with an interrogation, as not being able to answer it

himself, "what manner of love is this?" Why, wherein expressed; "that we should be called the sons of God." This is a great love, and yet ye know, that sonship is a relation below a spouse; how then should we break forth, if it were possible, into a higher admiration than ever he did, and say, "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we, poor miserable creatures, should be called the spouse of Christ! Now, we are the spouse of Christ; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

It remains to consider, the privileges of this relation, and therein see the great loving-kindness and unsearchable goodness of our God, that is pleased to match his own Son unto us, and by such a match, to make us partakers of such excellent and glorious privileges and immunities. I will but name a few of them.

As we are the spouse of Christ, so we are the children of God; he that marrieth the king's daughter, becometh the king's son by that match; but, that is not all; for by this match, we become heirs; if sons, then heir's, heirs of glory, joint-heirs with Christ; a great privilege, if you consider all the wealth and riches you have in and by Christ. This relation entitles the spouse of Christ, to all that ever he hath; to all his honors, and to all his communicable titles. This relation secures the church, the spouse of Christ, from all arrest, from actions, and all suits; let the debts be never so great, the creditors cannot come near her for one farthing; the consideration of this will add also to the exalting and magnifying of the exceeding riches of the grace of God in Christ to men, to show what a blessed condition this spouse-ship is, to those that are strangers unto both; hearing the love of the church, to be the chiefest of ten thousands, may, by the power of the Spirit of the Lord, be one to seek after him. It was the very same case in the Canticles; the daughters of the world say unto the spouse of Christ, hearing her so extol her love, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" {Song 5:9} Oh, saith the church, "my beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousands;" when they had heard of the excellencies of Christ, they began at last to have their affections taken too, and to say, "whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?" Even so it may please God, when by my endeavour, the excellencies

of the privileges of the spouse of Christ are set forth, and the gloriousness of the privileges of the gospel manifested; I say, when these appear, and when Christ, as the chief of ten thousands, is declared; some may seek after him, yea, and embrace him with joy. But, I cannot stand now to speak of them; but hereafter, God willing, if I shall have further opportunity.

42 Christ The Head Of The Church

“And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” {Col. 1:18}

The apostle, after the superscription and direction of this epistle, wherein he makes mention of his commission, for the exercise of his apostolic office; and after his apostolic benediction, comes to give an account of the cause of the writing of it; namely, he had received comfortable intelligence and information from Epaphroditus, a minister of the gospel, that had labored among these Colossians, of their receiving the faith, and of their love to the brethren. This was glad news to the apostle; and therefore he tells them, that he was not unmindful, or backward, to return thanks and praise to the Lord, for so good a work begun in them, and for the joy he had received by it; and also to pray for them, making mention of many particulars he sought of God, on their behalf; namely that they “might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;” {vs.9;} closing up in thankfulness, {vs.12,} in remembrance and rehearsal of the fountain and rise from whence all that grace and goodness received, flowed and sprung, and that is the dear Son of God. Having thus let himself into his own way, namely, the mentioning of the dear Son of God; he takes the opportunity, from an apt connection, to go on according to the main discourse of this epistle, wherein he first sorts his materials, and then falls upon his business. The two main matters he is upon, are the foundation, and that is the Son of God, expressed; and the structure raised upon this foundation, and that is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Here is the distribution of his matter. Now, by and by, having sorted his materials, he falls to work; beginning first with the foundation, which he puts such a lustre upon that it shines even like the sun;

yea, more glorious than the sun in beauty; he sets forth Christ, the foundation, in so many amiable considerations, as to ravish the world; and at verse 15 & 16, begins to show his faculty and expertness in this great work, that Christ entrusted him withal; namely, to be a wooer in his behalf, to win people to him, as in a former discourse upon this place, I have told you; and therein, I say, the apostle most rhetorically holds forth everything that is of a winning and desirable nature, to draw forth the love of people unto Christ. If people look for beauty, and that catch men, he tells us here, that Christ is an admirable piece of beauty, there is none like to him saith the church in the Canticles, Christ “is the chief of ten thousands;” but, behold the beauty he mentions here, Christ “is the image of the invisible God.” In Hebrews 1:3, the apostle speaks more fully to the business, Christ is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” Here is a face for you, if you be enamored with beauty, there is none like him. Yea, but some look for parentage, one of noble blood, and of a great house; as they would have beauty, so they would marry into all honorable families. Well, the apostle will tell you, here is a match for you with a witness; here is beauty, and a good face too, Christ is not only the express image of God, but he is the first born of God, “the first begotten of every creature,” {vs.15,} nay, the dear Son of God; here is a stock for you of the highest kindred in the world, he is the heir of glory, the heir apparent, that if you will match for honour into a great house, here are beauty and honour too. Yea, but you will say, it may be, he may be in disgrace, or hath no authority and power; we would have such a one. Christ is such that the whole sovereignty of the world is at his command and disposal; as you would have it to be, so you have it. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him;” {vs.16;} as much as to say that everything is subject unto him, everything bows their knees to him. Christ hast a “name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” {Phil.2:9-11} Tell me one that hath greater power and authority than Christ.

If you will therefore match with advantage, here is a match for you. But some will say that he may have honour enough himself, but it may be he is a niggard, hard and poor enough; is he bountiful and free? Beloved, the apostle tells us, first, what he hath, he is not only honorable, but rich, for in Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” {Col.2:9} What is that to me, some will say? He may hoard it all up, may have little enough of it; no, but goes on to say, that the elect are “complete in him.” He cannot abide to keep anything to himself; in this he is a householder with a witness; he cannot eat his morsel alone, he must impart that he hath; the tender mother, if she have but a bit, the child must have half with her, and participate thereof. And therefore in John 1:14-16, we read that Christ is “full of grace and truth,” {saith the Holy Ghost,} and “of his fulness we have received grace for grace.” What better husband can you desire, than to have his whole purse at your command? You are not at stint and allowance; you may draw till you are weary; there is no shutting up of the chest of his treasure; he is a fountain set open for you.

But to come to our purpose; there are two offices the Holy Ghost is pleased to acquaint us withal, proper unto Christ, as an encouragement to win people unto him. The first is general, in respect of creation and providence over the world; the second is peculiar and special, over the church alone; that is the office mentioned in the text; “he is the head of the body, the church, the beginning.” In the words, you may observe an allegorical proposition, and the exposition of the allegory; the proposition is that “he is the head of the body.” The interpretation of it is, “he is the beginning of the church.” Again, in these note, whose office this is that is here spoken of; it is he that is the head, even the image of the invisible God, the dear Son of God; the office itself, what that is, it is “headship; he is the head of the church;” among whom this office is executed, and for whose use he executes it, that is, the body, interpreted the church, the several members of Christ. I will not set down any other proposition, but what the apostle hath stated in the text, using his own words, “Christ is the head of the body, the church, the beginning.” A head, and so consequently a body, admits of a three-fold consideration; sometimes it is taken naturally, and so proportionally it hath a body politic; but here it is taken spiritually for a spiritual

head, and a spiritual body. Christ is the head, and the church is the body; so that this is here a mystical body; and it is called a body, not that it hath a completeness without a head; but in reference to the head, it is called a part of the whole. A body and a head are but a complete body indeed. Sometimes the body goes for a part, and sometimes for the whole. Here it is taken for a part only; but that we are to insist upon is to take into consideration, who is this that is the head; what this office of headship imports unto us; and how this head is furnished to the office that is proper for a head to a body. And then, as time will give leave, we will have a word or two of application.

Who this head is; you will say, we need not ask the question, it is confessed by all that it is Christ. It is true, it is so; but yet there is a mystery in it, and, peradventure, the thoughts of many persons are something more confused in the apprehension of him, as he is head, than haply they might be; and it may be there might be a more clear apprehension of Christ considered as such, than yet there is among us. I will therefore, as clearly as possible state unto you, under what consideration Christ is to be considered, as head of his church, or of his members. Note, for the making way to this, that there are five very distinct things in Christ; and all of them, as you will hear, concur together in him as head of the church.

1. In Christ there is the one only divine nature; there is no God, but the God that Christ is. This is worth your consideration, for the minds of men are apt frequently to distinguish so between God and Christ, as if God were one, and Christ distinctly another, and not God; when, the truth is, there is no other God, but what Christ himself is; “my Lord, and my God,” said Thomas. {Jn.20:28} And in, Col.2:9, the apostle saith, that “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” {Jn.1:1} Christ is God; there is but one God; therefore you are never to separate in your thoughts God from Christ; always as you look upon Christ, so look upon God; or, as you look upon God, look upon him no otherwise than as he is in Christ, not as if there were another God, besides what Christ is; for there is no such thing.

2. Besides the Godhead, there is the eternal, ineffable personality in Christ; as he is God, so he is the Son;

and in this, though we cannot fathom the difference, yet certainly there is a personal difference between the Father and the Son. There is but One God, as I said before, but the persons are three; the Father is one, the Son is another, and the Holy Ghost is another. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." {I Jn.5:7} Now, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are not all one personally, but the Son is the Son, and the Father is the Father; but the Godhead of the Father and of the Son is one, that is the true meaning; there is a difference between the person of the Father, and of the Son; but this matter is not to be pried into by human wit; for this, of all the mysteries in scripture, is the pure object of mere faith; there is no human way to illustrate the difference between the Eternal Fatherhood and the Eternal Sonship.

3. In Christ there is a distinct human nature; that is, as this man is not that man; such a distinct individual human nature Christ hath, having a peculiar soul and body of his own; that which was born of the Virgin Mary, and suffered upon the cross; distinct, I say, from our individual souls and bodies.

4. In Christ there is to be considered an ineffable and incomprehensible hypostatical union of the divine nature of the second Person in the Trinity, and human nature in one person. There is a difference between the being of God, and man, considered severally, and the being of Christ as Mediator; the Godhead of Christ is not the Mediator simply, nor his manhood; but God and man in one Person, as we call it, is the Mediator.

5. Christ is to be considered not only personally, as he is God and man, being one individual person by himself; but collectively, that is, he is not only Christ, as he is one person of himself but as he himself in that one person is united to the persons of all the elect; he and they make up but one collective body.

In brief, there is a kind of triune union in Christ; the divine union, which makes the Father and the Son one; the personal union, which makes the divine nature and the human nature one; the mystical union, which makes Christ, the Mediator, God and man, one with all his members. In respect of the last consideration, Christ as he is collectively considered, consists of his own person as head, and of all the elect as members; so that in some sense he cannot be said to be separated, but hath his members knit unto him; a headless body,

or a bodiless head, are equally imperfect. If the church be separated from Christ, or Christ from the church, he should, in the last consideration be imperfect. Now in this text, the apostle speaking of Christ understands him in the last consideration; namely, as God the Son united to the human nature, or rather uniting the human nature unto himself; as these two natures in one person are united unto the church, or members of Christ, so Christ is the head. It is true, sometimes you have expressions of Christ's own, by way of subjection, "my Father is greater than I;" and, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" which phrases being not rightly understood, occasion, in the thoughts of men, some conceits as if God were a distinct being from Christ; that Christ makes God greater than himself; whereas the truth is, there is, as I said before, no God but what Christ is. Christ never acknowledges, that the Godhead of his Father is greater than his own; for, the Father and the Son are but one in the Godhead; and, therefore, when he in his speech hath reference unto God, it is unto the divine nature that is united unto his humanity; and the very nature of God is within himself, and there is no other; therefore there is no distinct God in the world, but that God, that is become man, and is now called Christ; therefore you are never to look upon Christ, but as he is the complete only true God.

What need all this discourse, you will say? I answer, you must have Christ set forth in this consideration or you will never be able to reach that he is the head; therefore the consideration of the second thing will clear the usefulness of the first, what this headship is; the text saith, "he is the beginning," that is, the root and spring from whence things have their first being. Now, mark beloved, either the apostle must speak false, when he saith, "he is the beginning," or else you must consider Christ as the only God. All the world grants God to be the beginning of all things; therefore if there be any thing that should be the beginning of being besides Christ, he himself cannot be the beginning of all things; therefore, for the maintenance of this prerogative of Christ being the beginning and fountain, he is to be considered always as the only God. Now, this word "beginning" imports unto us, that Christ is first the beginning of being; and, secondly, the beginning of well-being. Christ is the beginning of being in general, "all things were made

by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” {Jn.1:3} As here, “all things were created by him, whether visible or invisible, principalities and powers, thrones or dominions.”

The main thing the apostle drives at is that Christ is the beginning of the church; that is, of them, being members of himself; every member of the church of Christ received his first being from him. Consider the original beginning of them, even in eternity itself, if it may be properly called a beginning, as it hath its being from Christ himself. Mark the apostle in, Eph.1:3-6, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” This expression may seem to some, to import a difference between God and Christ, or something distinct one from the other, as if Christ were the subject in whom, and God the author by whom, persons are chosen; but, beloved, properly there is no such thing as Christ distinct from God, so as if he were not God; if God be in Christ, then it is Christ himself, as he is God, that doth it; therefore, if you mark the expression well, you will see that it is Christ himself that hath chosen us. I confess, the words may have a double reference, either to the Father, or to Christ; and according to this second reference, Christ may be conceived both the object and the fountain too, in whom the elect are chosen; and the expression, perhaps, will bear both; “according as he hath chosen us in him;” that is, according as he in him chose us; but, however, all comes to one effect, the Father and the Son being one God.

To come to particulars; Christ is the beginning of a present possessive being, as persons are members of him. He is the beginning of a possessive being, or being in possession. Consider the first thing in the being of a member, that is life; which as spiritual, and so peculiar to a member, hath its first rise from Christ himself; mark the expression, Eph.2:10, “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we

should walk in them.” The elect are created of God in Christ Jesus to good works; or, God in Christ hath done it. The very self-same phrase the apostle useth, II Cor.5:19, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” The truth is, it pleased the divine nature to unite the human nature to itself, and so to manage the affairs of the church in those two natures so united; not as if God gave out some of himself to the human nature, and reserved some of itself to itself; but the whole divine nature gave up itself, though only in the second person. “God was in Christ,” as much as to say, whole God; the divine nature assumed a human nature, and so makes up a Christ; and thus God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. You see elsewhere, that the beginning of life in a member of Christ flows from him, “your life is hid with Christ in God.” {Col.3:3} It is such another phrase as the two former; that is, it is hid in that God, who, by being man, is become Christ; for that is all the difference between God and Christ; between God simply and absolutely considered in himself, and considered as ineffably united to the human nature. God, thus united, becomes Christ; and in such a union is reconciling the world unto himself, and takes the church, who is his body. The apostle tells us further, “now I live;” but he presently checks himself, “yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” Christ is the soul of the body, and as the body without a soul is dead, so a person without Christ is dead.

I will not enter into that needless dispute of the philosophers, whether the soul be seated in the head principally, or in the heart; but this I am sure of, the life and soul of the church is in the head of it; “I am the way, the truth, and the life;” Christ is the life of the soul of man; as the body without the soul is dead, even so, if thence could be such a thing as the body, the church, without Christ, it would be a dead thing; it hath all animal virtue from him alone; it hath all life in all respects from him; take life in the first fruits, in its sense or motion, all spiritual sense, motion, actions, and activeness, receive being and beginning only from Christ. “He is given for a covenant to open the blind eyes.” {Is.42:6,7} All eyes are blind till he opens them; there is no seeing till the body receives sight from the head. The head causeth us also to smell, as well as to see, the sweet savor of the ointment of Christ that makes the virgins to love him; “because of the savor

of thy good ointments, therefore do the virgins love thee.” Now, this savor, being as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed, to smell this, is the sole work of Christ himself; also the spiritual taste, to taste how good God is, to relish the sweetness of the spiritual wine well refined upon the lees, is all by the power of Christ, and hath its being from him; so all our feeling, to feel comfort, joy unspeakable, and glorious, all is from Christ; he opens our eyes, bores our ears, and causeth us to smell.

You will say, all this is the work of the Spirit; why do you say it is the work of Christ? Mark what John saith, chap.16, “he {that is, the Spirit,} shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” {vs.14} The Spirit himself, as he deals with the members of Christ, is his agent proceeding from Christ, communicating that which is his to them. So that the Spirit is, as it were, the conduit-pipe, through whom the fulness of the fountain conveys itself, and runs forth to every member. The Spirit is as the nerves and veins in the natural body. The blood, you know, hath its fountain from the liver; but the veins carry it into every part of the body; and as the natural eye cannot see, except the nerves feed it with visive spirits; so neither can any eye behold the secrets of the Lord, the hidden things of Christ, such as he thanks his Father he reveals unto babes, while he hides them from the wise of the world, {Lk.10:21,} except the Lord Christ feeds the members with his own spirit. It is not the eye that sees of itself, but the spirits that come from the head, cause sight by it; for there may be an eye, and no sight, where the want of these spirits is. Look over all the book of God, and you will find, that there is no action that comes from the Spirit, but Christ is the head and spring of it; you will find the strength and hearts of people fail when he withdraws himself; it is he that is the strength of them forever; “fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” {Is.41:10} There must needs be miscarriage for want of power, except Christ come with his strength and power to uphold. Therefore, when Paul exhorts those to whom he writes, to work the works of the Lord, he gives them this counsel, “my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” And again, “put on the whole armour of God.” {Eph.6:10,11}

Now, it is a vain thing to think of taking up of arms, except there be strength to manage them, Saul thought David to be a puny, when he was to fight with Goliath, and had no regard to him, although he might have good armour on; he was too little a man; and what Saul thought of David, is true of all the whole armour of God, it is to no purpose, except men be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. And therefore, when Paul was in a strait, he begged, and begged again, to have strength given; though he had not an answer to his mind, yet God told him, “my grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness.” All are weak, but as they have strength in Christ; yea, there is no strength but what is his, and is sent by him. I beseech you, consider, they that have Christ for their head, have an infinite advantage above the closest hypocrite in the world, though he go never so far; for all he doth is but from a weak principle; and Christ is not the principle of that he doth; but he that hath Christ for his head, hath a spring of fulness. The Holy Ghost tell us that Christ “is full of grace and truth;” and, “in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” and that it “pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell;” so that you may plainly see, that the preaching of Christ as head, and setting up all his glory, is not the preaching of licentious liberty to men. He that can win a person to be a true member of this head, Christ brings that person into a fat soil; he transplants him from a barren, a rocky one, into a rich one; whereby he comes to abound in all manner of fruitfulness. And certainly, beloved, fruitfulness will be more abundant, as the soul can apprehend itself by true faith, to be a part of this head; for, the head will communicate, that the soul itself cannot contain itself in its own bounds. “The love of Christ constrains me,” saith Paul, he can do no otherwise; he that is driven must needs go; Christ drives and makes himself a way into his members; he breaks his own way into them, and so sets them on, and puts them forwards.

Then again, Christ being the beginning of all our being, is also all prerogatives and privileges whatsoever the church hath; they have no privilege, but as it flows from him; as first of all, even justification itself comes from Christ. It may be, you will object, that the text saith, “that God justifies the ungodly;” and how then doth Christ justify them? I say still, that which God doth, Christ doth; God is still in Christ;

he doth nothing, but Christ doth all things. All the Father hath, he hath given to the Son; "the Father judgeth no man, an hath committed all judgment to the Son." The meaning, I take it, is this; God as he is simply one divine essence in himself, doth not, in this simple consideration of himself, manage anything in this kind; but all in his Son; and that, as he is become man. So that whosoever is justified is justified by the Son; and whosoever comes to the knowledge of justification, attains to it also by Christ. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." {I Cor.2:12} Now, this Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; so then, the knowledge of the things freely given us of God, is by the Spirit. Nothing can acquaint the soul, and satisfy it of an interest in Christ, and being a member of his, but the Spirit of God; that must resolve the case at last, do what you can; everything is dumb and silent, but as he speaks; the word of God, even the word of grace, is a dumb letter, but as the Spirit speaks in it, or with it; and so of all things; and therefore, beloved know, you run into those two great evils, the Holy Ghost speaks of, Jer.2:13, "for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." While you forsake Christ, the spring and fountain, and go to pump and fetch anything, you take from any besides him; if you run to creatures, you make not Christ the beginning.

You will say, you suppose and believe Christ to be the beginning in all. But, I say, is this good, shall he be but supposed? And shall services be set up to take up all the affections, suits, and pleadings of your hearts? How hath Christ all the priority? In, Col.1:18, Christ is said to be the head of the body, the church, "that he might have the preeminence in all things." Why do the people then run to other things, and magnify and extol them, while Christ shall not have a good word? Nay, they are afraid to speak out of things that are his, for fear of giving liberty to sin, and charge people to take heed of the setting forth of Christ, and grace by him, as a dangerous doctrine; so seldom daring to speak of his excellencies, and of the excellent privileges and benefits that come by, and from him; nor of the freeness of those things that are conveyed unto us, in and through him. And why so? Oh; this will make men

run into all manner of licentiousness and profaneness, without control; and so Christ shall be suppressed, for fear of giving liberty, and, in the meanwhile, other things shall be set up above Christ; the divine rhetoric of repentance, and humiliation; the prevalency of tears to wash away sin, and our conscionable walking to commend us to God at the last day; here must be a magnifying of man's righteousness; and when these things come to be examined, they are but rhetorical expressions. Beloved, God grant that our rhetoric may advance him, that is to be advanced, and keep all other things in their own places, that are to be kept low, that nothing may bare the pre-eminence of Christ, he being the head and beginning of all things; that the people of God may go with their buckets to the wells of salvation, and draw waters of life from thence, and not run to muddy puddles. The zeal of the Lord Christ, who hath so magnified the riches of his grace to the sons of men, should eat up your spirits, and raise up your souls against everything that raises itself up, to exalt itself above him. If Christ be not the beginning, but something else, let that have the pre-eminence; but, if he be, let him have it. As Elijah once said to the idolatrous Israelites that had forsaken the Lord, and set up the works of their own hands instead of him, "if Baal be God, then worship him; but if God be God, then serve and worship him;" so I say unto you; if you will acknowledge Christ to be the beginning, let it appear in setting him up above all other things in your hearts and thoughts; make him your sanctuary, and refuge, wait upon him for all things. Why are your hearts so cast down? It may be that corruptions prevail within you; fear not, is not there enough in the fountain to refresh thee, and supply thee with strength against them? Doth Satan seek to overcome you by his temptations, and like a roaring lion, to devour you? He is able to tread down Satan under your feet.

Beloved, will you starve ye in a cook's shop, as they say? Is there such plenty in Christ, and will you perish for hunger? You will answer, it may be, you would close with him, you would go to him for supply with all your hearts, but you dare not, for you are afraid he will reject you, if you come to him. Beloved, come to Christ, and he will not cast you off. Would you have joy and peace? Come to him, and the God of peace will fill you with all peace and joy in believing. Would you have your iniquities subdued? Come to

him, and sin shall not have dominion over him, for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" {Rom.6:14,15;} for it is the grace of God that brings salvation from sin, as well as from wrath; and "this grace of God, {saith the apostle,} will teach you to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts." {Tit.2:12} There is no greater motive to encourage man to venture upon anything that Christ puts him upon, than that he hath him to enable and lead him through it. In the meantime, give me leave to put one caution to you; Christ, I say, being the head, and as the head being the beginning, the supplier of all things pertaining to life and godliness; if there be any person that either now, or at any other time, make these most desperate conclusions from anything that they have heard, as that they may continue to sin, and go on in iniquity, Christ hath died for them; let them sin as much as they can, they cannot out-sin the death of Christ; if there be any person that charges any such untruth upon any minister, and will collect such blasphemies from the doctrine of the gospel of Christ, let them know, that God will either bring them to see the greatness of their folly, and to be ashamed of it; or, for ought I know, they may have their deserved portion in the lowest part of hell. I dare be bold to say, there is no people, who are so prejudicial to the gospel of Christ, as such stumbling blocks are; nor unto trembling hearts that would fain close with the free grace of God in Christ, as such persons that take liberty to sin, that grace may abound; causing the gospel to be evil spoken of, and detested, and that scandalous name to be raised upon it, that it is a doctrine of liberty. Beloved, "as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;" {I Pet.1:15;} and he that hath called you, will make you holy, as he is holy.

In a word, here is matter of exhortation; if Christ be the head and the beginning of all things, look up to the head, suck at it, draw from it, let nothing draw you from that.

And here is matter of consolation to all the members of Christ; as long as the head hath in itself, the body shall never want. Such a head Christ is, that hath all fulness in him, he can never be drawn dry; he is not as the springs that Job speaks of, brooks that fail in summer, but this spring is of such excellent nature, that he makes an everlasting spring in the heart, where into he pours himself; so saith he, "but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never

thirst, for that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." {Jn.4:14} Know assuredly, and be confident of it, God must cease to be God, before there can be a lack of supply of what is useful for you. Christ is head, and as such, he is God, as well as man. God himself then must be drawn dry before you shall want anything that is good for you; therefore, let Satan and all the world set themselves against you, you shall never have cause to say, all the springs are dried up, now there is no hope of any more supply; for certainly the Lord will maintain and continue that which he hath undertaken; "for I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." {Mal.3:6}

43 The Blessedness Of Believing Without Sight

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." {John 20:29}

Our blessed Saviour out of tender pity to man; man so sunk in his own filth, and stuck so fast, that he could not possibly crawl out; undertook his recovery, by making his soul an offering for sin, "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, because a necessity lay upon him to compass this work of redemption in so ignominious a way, as by the cursed death of the cross, which was likely {as he knew} to prove a sore stumbling block of offence to the little faith of his disciples; therefore, whilst he remained with them, his great care was to remove it out of the way before hand, by declaring the expediency, nay, the necessity of such humiliation; by working such strange miracles as might fully satisfy them of his all-sufficiency; especially those latter miracles of restoring sight to the man born blind, and raising Lazarus after he had been four days dead; and by declaring his raising up of himself again the third day after his death, of which his miracle on Lazarus was a sufficient evidence; he having been dead four days, when himself would lie dead but till the third. All which arguments were little enough, it seems, to keep their faith from tottering, being assaulted by the principles of sense and natural reason; for the faith of them all reeled, none of them stood fast, until Christ, through condescension to their weakness, settled them again with the crutch of sense; appearing again unto them, and manifesting himself to be risen. It was the lot of Thomas, being

before absent from his fellows, to be last in believing; not so much because his faith was weaker than theirs, but because it was not his portion to see him when they did; for when the women told the eleven that Christ was risen, before they saw him, Luke tells us, that the words of the women “seemed to them as idle tales,” and so they believed them not; therefore, although Christ immediately before my text, upbraids the weak faith of Thomas in particular, yet hath a secret fling at the weakness of the faith of them all who staggered until they had seen him; so that although he did bear with, and overlook the present weakness, yet here he acquaints them and us, what is the best and most blessed faith, namely, a believing without sight.

This text, for the kind of it, is doctrinal, sweetly mixed with consolatory matter; the doctrinal part unfolds the proper way and working of faith, namely, to believe without sight. The ingredient of consolation mixed herewith is the richest cordial a soul can take, namely, blessedness to all that so believe. We will not alter this receipt of Christ, but give it you as himself hath made it; only that you may the better be induced to take it {because the outward hue of it doth not promise the sweetness it contains, it seeming to a careless natural eye a very paradox} we will, therefore read you a brief lecture on the most material particulars therein contained, for your better satisfaction in what is hidden, and not clear enough to common apprehensions. Two things here are of most moment to be considered; what it is to believe, when and where there is no sight; and wherein such believing makes a man blessed.

For the clearing of the first note, that there is a three-fold sight mentioned in the scripture. 1. Corporeal. 2. Rational. 3. Spiritual; all very pragmatic, and ready to thrust their oars into faith's boat, though they endanger the sinking of or the putting it farther from shore; for faith rows backward to get forward, as boat-men; when these will be rowing with the face forward, thinking faith's way madness.

1. The corporeal sight is taken sometimes properly, for the natural operations of the bodily eye; sometimes synecdochically, for the exercise of all, or any of the senses, such as hearing, feeling, and the rest. We need go no further than the text and coherence, to know that sight in the latter and larger sense is not only used in scripture, but also intended in this place to be

sequestered from believing. Thomas will not believe, except he see the print of the nails in Christ's hands, and thrust his hands into his sides; which exceptions, when granted him, both in seeing and touching him, he puts both into the word seen, “because thou hast seen, thou hast believed, blessed, &c.” But for further clearing hereof, you must note, that although this sight and touching of Christ's body risen, be principally here intended, by reason of the occasion offered from Thomas's unbelief, yet our Saviour intended his speech should extend further, to all natural sense in any other cases; for he speaks not so restrictively in the text, as to limit in only to the present occasion; then he should have added to seen, {me or my body,} and should have mentioned Thomas only here, and not said blessed is he in general, which includes all believers. It is therefore to be understood, that the corporeal sight here intended to be sequestered from a blessed believing, implies all such visible and palpable natural things, which men are naturally apt to fly unto, and rest on, to keep them from staggering at Christ's promises especially, without which their faith is very wavering.

For the further clearing of our Saviour's intent, about the mixing of natural sense with faith to support it, I will illustrate it in two sorts of instances; in personal cases, and in cases that concern the church in general.

That which Christ aims at in personal cases is, when we find any promises of the good we desire or want, he would not have us judge of the likelihood or unlikelihood of their accomplishment, by the probability or improbability of concurring sensible means. For example, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee;” when wind and tide are all with us, when outward things are all flowing towards us, we suspect not, nor are anxiously disquieted with doubts or scruples of miscarriage, but believe; but when God takes away these sensible crutches, and leaves nothing in the eye but his promises, we are presently troubled; a thousand objections then arise, and makes us reel to and fro like a drunken man, and we are even at our wit's end. It was David's weakness, for whilst he knew of any holes or holds of safety to secure him from Saul, he staggers not at the promise of the kingdom; but when Saul had hunted him out of all, then his faith reels, and, as he confesseth, “he said in his haste,

that all men were liars,” even Samuel himself. And again, in his staggering, he cries out, “I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.” Examples are infinite of this kind; such are, Moses in the matter of food in the wilderness, and fetching water out of a rock; the prince on whom the king leaned when the famine was in Samaria, and the prophet foretold a sudden plenty; and the disciples about the few loaves and fishes for the feeding so many thousands. Now our Saviour in this place and case would have our faith abstracted from these sensible means, and not lean a jot to them, but settle on the promise alone as its sole bottom; yet not as if we should wholly neglect the use of such means as he puts into our hands, but faith must not lean to them as a lame man on a crutch.

For the church in general, Christ promises, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;” and that “no weapon formed against it shall prosper.” Here he would not have our faith consult with sensible probabilities or improbabilities, for quieting or satisfying of us in the truth and accomplishment of these promises. For example, whilst a church, or this our church, hath the concurrent hands and voices of great patrons to support or raise it, and we see their activity, wisdom, and power, working that way, we conclude, with a settled security, that it shall “stand fast like mount Zion,” and shall mount up; but if the tide turns, or storms arise, her great patrons withdraw, or are scattered by might, and great politicians lay siege against her, when hopeful means are dashed, and former likelihoods come to nothing; then for all the promises we hang the lip, and grow desperate; this is to join sense to faith, which our Saviour here would have separated from it, intending that the failing and disappointing of such and such sensible means, shall not a jot alter our confidence in the promises, or cause us to be the more jealous of them. A notable illustration of this you have in God’s people, Ezek.37:1-11, who seemed to themselves as dry bones, because they saw no refuge to fly to; therefore he shows a notable vision of dry bones, raised to a mighty active army; intimating that God’s promises to his church, are never put to straits by the greatest natural impossibilities, and that therefore our faith should not be brought to so uneven, deceitful, and rusty a beam.

2. As natural sense, so natural reason is to be sequestered from believing; where, let us consider;

what the sight of natural reason is; {for that there is such an eye I need not stay to prove;} and, what it is to sequester it from believing; for the former, it is in general no more but a certain evidence of the truth of things, and of their coming to pass, so far only as by natural principles, and dependence of effects on their causes that the discourse of reason can demonstrate and infer. For the clearer illustration of this, {because it is very common to call this natural reason to counsel, whereon we are apt to rely much for the certainty of things to be believed,} know more particularly, that a man is said to see things by natural reason, when knowing what effects natural causes will produce, and what not, he concludes of such effects accordingly. For instance, a man by rational sight knowing that fire naturally burns, but cannot cool a thing; hence he concludes certainly, that such or such a thing cast into the fire must needs be burnt. So also knowing that lesser might is overtopped by greater, certainly concludes that the weakest must needs go to the wall. Now further consider, that where reason cannot find or pry into the adequateness of a cause, to produce such or such an effect, let who as will affirm, it shall be produced, it will not be embraced. In brief, such an adhering unto the evidence of things only as reason can make by its natural discourse, rejecting all things else, at least as doubtful, which it cannot dive into, this is properly a rational sight.

This will be more clear in considering what it is to sequester rational sight from believing; for clearing whereof, you must not conceive that a man must be an unreasonable creature, or cease to be reasonable when he believes; there is a necessary use of reason in believing, insomuch as creatures without that are not capable of it. It would not therefore be amiss, to understand what sight of reason is necessary, and what must be separated. Note, that inferring conclusions from adequate causes known, which is the special work of reason, is necessary unto faith; for example, when God saith, “I blot out your transgressions for mine own sake;” it is impossible to believe this without the use of reason. For the thing must be understood by an intellectual faculty; natural idiots cannot believe. 2. There must be some ground or reason of believing it, something that must draw the soul to be persuaded of it; namely, because God speaks it, who is able to make it good, and the Spirit by the word persuades,

that it is he that speaks it, and that he is able, faithful, and true. The apostle tells us, that “we must be able to give a reason of our hope,” or faith; therefore we must have reason for it. You will then say, what sight of reason must be separated from believing? I answer, whereas natural reason judges and concludes of events according to the efficacy, or inefficacy of natural causes, as if a thing could not come to pass except the womb of nature could afford it; this principle must be denied in believing divine truths, and an infinite efficacy must be allowed to an infinite supernatural cause; God himself being infinitely beyond all natural causes; the truth is, that the judgment of natural reason about heavenly things, from the efficacy of natural things, secluding supernatural, is worse than a blind man’s judging of colors, which although he see not himself, yet he is apt to judge as seeing men do; whereas natural reason is peremptory, and will not yield one jot beyond its dim sight. You may observe it an ordinary thing, when God makes promises of greater things than nature produces, then natural reason is called to consult and deliberate, nay, to give its vote to such promises; as in those cases of Moses before mentioned; “Ye rebels, must I fetch water out of a rock?” He consults with the rock, what efficacy it had to give water, and so staggered; and with the barren wilderness, what it had to afford food; they pleading impossibility, his faith staggers, which lost him the temporal Canaan. See it in Sarah, consulting with her old age, and the deadness of her womb, whether nature could produce the promised seed from them; which they denying, she laughs at it. Nicodemus also, about the mystery of regeneration, reasons with nature, whether it could receive a man, being old, into his mother’s womb again, and so, instead of believing, cries out, “how can these things be?” And the disciples consult with death and the grave, whether they could send their guests away alive again, as Thomas here did, so believes not the resurrection of Christ. On the other side, see how Abraham sequesters the sight of reason from his faith in the promised seed; “he considered not his own body being dead, nor the deadness of Sarah’s womb;” that is, he stopped his ears, and would not hear the reasons nature would suggest of the impossibility of the thing. So the three children would not hear, nor mind what the nature of fire could say to deter them, but stick to this, “our God is able, and will deliver us,” let fire, say

what it can. Now the faith which Christ commends here, is such as must be abstracted, both from the encouragements and discouragements which natural discourse of reason can suggest; that is, it must neither lean nor venture any weight on the one, or be startled or unsettled by the other; but without regarding either, stand fast on its own bottom only, to wit, the self-sufficient authority of divine truth, never asking, no, nor yet regarding how likely, or unlikely, it is to reason that such a truth should come to pass.

There is also a spiritual seeing of things mentioned often in the scripture. Now, the question is, whether this spiritual sight must be abstracted from believing? For the full answer hereof you must first distinguish of spiritual sight as before of the bodily. It is used oftentimes strictly, for a sanctified understanding, knowledge, spiritual discerning God’s revealing unto, and acquainting the soul with the secrets of his divine mysteries, according to that prayer of David, “open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things of thy law.” Likewise, it is taken sometimes more largely, for spiritual sense, or experimental feeling of God’s comfortable presence and power, according to that of the psalmist, “taste, and see how good the Lord is.” So likewise are those passages of God’s “lifting up of the light of his countenance,” and “showing his face,” to be understood of a spiritual sense, or experimental perception of God’s love, yet expressed by “seeing his face.” Now, to resolve the question, I answer, that the former, to wit, a spiritual understanding, or insight into the mysteries of the gospel, is absolutely essential to believing, without which it hath no subsistence; for, without knowledge the heart is not good; and therefore cannot be a believing heart, from whence it obtains that denomination of goodness. Therefore it is, that knowledge is sometimes spoken of in scripture instead of believing; “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Whereas salvation comes by faith; men must hear, and by hearing must understand before they can believe; so Paul tells us, that “faith comes by hearing.” This single eye is that which makes the whole body of faith full of light; whereas, if this be dark, that must be full of darkness. A blind faith led by a blind man must needs throw the man, {blind in both these eyes,} into the ditch. But this sight must not be in the basis of faith, but the thing known; else we fetch

the rise of faith from within ourselves.

As for the other branch of spiritual sight, namely, experimental spiritual sense, I shall desire you to mark the resolution of this exactly, which that I may perform the more clearly, I shall endeavour to show you. What this experimental spiritual sense is; and how far it must be shut up, and not regarded in the act of believing. For spiritual experimental sense, you are to consider it present or absent. Spiritual sense present, is an actual feeling within one's self, God kissing and embracing the soul, and that sensibly satisfied and refreshed with actual joy and solace therewith; a feeling the virtue and power of the gracious promises of the gospel actually diffused into the soul, and their energetical or powerful workings, together with the several graces of the Spirit, sensibly flourishing as green bay-trees, sending forth continually plentiful, large, and beautiful fruits; so that the stomach is not more sensible of the comforts and repairs by meat eaten with an hungry appetite, than the soul is with the digested bread of life. For example, when a person feels the enlarged workings of the spirit of mourning, prayer, and mortification, so that by them it mounts as with the wings of an eagle, it runs and is not weary; this, and such like, is a present experimental spiritual sense; when all this, and the like, is absent from the soul, so that God stands afar off, seems to thrust away, and will not give a good look, the promises seem to fail; as David complains, as if they were like a spring in drought, quite dried up, or a dry breast, that not a drop of sweetness will come, suck the soul as hard as it can, in regard of the exercise of grace, the soul seems as a channel from whence the feeding spring is diverted, all dry; or as a tree in the winter, so naked, as that it seems dead; tears and prayers are dried up, mortification and self-denial are of leaden heels, and the soul seems as bound hand and foot; this, and the like, is a case wherein spiritual sight, or sense, is absent.

Now, to come home to both these conditions of spiritual sense and senselessness; I say, where God is pleased to give the present operative virtue thereof, it should be cherished with all joy and thankfulness, as being a taste of heaven, and a comfortable means of an abundant glorifying of God. Yet, I say, it is very dangerous to faith to lean on this spiritual sense for the certainty and stability of promises which concern

future time. My meaning is; if such a one, thus possessed of spiritual sense, look upon promises for further good, and to be quietly settled about the due accomplishment of them, shall build on his present experiences, and not mind a sure foundation of the settling of the spirit; nay, if he set but one foot on this experience to rest his faith on, he shall totter sooner than he is aware, though the other foot be on the firm ground of God's truth and faithfulness. It is with such a one, as with a man that hath one foot on firm ground, and the other on a loose, or floating board; when that slips or falls, he will hardly stand fast, how firm soever the other foot stands. Who knows not the ebbings, as well as flowings of spiritual present experiences, the risings and settings of them? Let David speak for all; one while his heart is ravished and enlarged, it is full sea with him, as his spiritual sails are filled; by and by his sun is set, his channel is dry, the wind is turned into the teeth of him, {as I may say,} and he is roaring and crying out of God's forsaking him. You that have been wrapped up with him, have you not been in the bottom with him too? Hath not it been April weather with you, now a fair sunshine, anon a great storm tails, and this with a frequent vicissitude? Now, can that be good ground for any part of a foundation to be laid, that is so sinking? Suppose the most of the building of your confidence be on the rock, God's faithfulness and power; yet if but one corner be built on this experience that will give way, will it not endanger the drawing of the whole confidence at least aside? You will say, may I not gather confidence from former experience? No, not from the experience itself, but God's manifesting his faithfulness in fulfilling former promises. You will say, I do no otherwise; I answer, there are many who think they do no otherwise, yet do; for if God's faithfulness were the settlement of thy faith, in thy full tide of experience, and not the sense itself, how is it that he no sooner hides his face, but thou art troubled, and thy faith is tottered? Hast thou no more questioned or staggered at promises, being down, than when thou wert up? If so, why is it thus? Were the whole building of thy faith on the rock only, {that changeth not with the change of thy sense,} there would be no more cause of doubt, or suspicion, than there was before. The true cause indeed is that too much weight was ventured on that thawing ice.

Beloved, you had need be wise, even you that are

in Christ's wine-cellar, now stayed with his flagons, and comforted with his apples; for if you depend too much on these love-tokens, and judge of love by the flowings in of them; God seeing himself robbed of the dependence due to him, may on purpose withhold, that you may learn not to trust on the uncertain experiences, but on the living God; and it may be, if you be not wary, it must cost you dearer than you would; the wisest may happily learn some wisdom; I doubt not, but that Christ who gives light, will guide by his Spirit into the needful truths he teacheth.

So I come to the second thing considerable about spiritual sense; namely, the absence of those spiritual experiences before mentioned. Here many a fearful soul is a most bitter advocate against itself; nay, and a misled judge too. When spiritual experiences fail, and their flourishing sappiness is sunk out of view, they do not only plead against believing promises, and urge vehemently what may be objected, but proceed to a fearful sentence, that it is presumption to depend on the promises, as long as it is so bad with them, and that they belong not to them, because they are at so low an ebb in spirituals. Before I enter on the clearing of this know, that it is far from my purpose to justify any defects in grace, or to rock any asleep in a naked condition; but rather by this discourse to set them in the right way. I say, it is not only no presumption, but the blessed faith which our Saviour and the Holy Ghost everywhere commend, to believe in Christ, and apply the promises to themselves as their own; even when spiritual experiences are vanished quite out of sight or sense. For example, such a one, for the present hath not sweet tastes, or sensible embraces of God's love, but rather the contrary, feeling the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, and the like; I say, for such a one in this case to believe God to be his God, is a blessed faith. This seems at first a very paradox; but stay a while, and I shall make it a manifest truth, both by scripture, example, and precept. You know Job's case, what a terror God was to him, how {at least as he thought} God took him for an enemy, and wrote bitter things against him, making him to possess the sins of his youth. He was as low as man could lie, in regard of God's sensible favour being hid from him; yet as low as he was, his faith was not dashed herewith; for "though he kill me, yet will I trust in him," saith he; and his meaning is, though these terrors of the Almighty

exhaust his soul, so that he die without the sense of God's favour, yet he will trust still. Dare any say that this was presumption in him? Nay, that it was not an heroic act of faith? And why mayest thou not say, and do as well as he? There can nothing of moment be objected against this instance that I know. I will name but one more without all exception. You know how Christ himself complains, that God hath forsaken him; yet even then he saith, "My God, my God." If you say, these are rare examples, not to be reached, {although that be not true,} see God's charge to believe even in this case; "who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." {Is.50:10}

But many are apt to think, if I were sure he was my God, I might trust in him without sense. Now though this is a very common objection, yet who sees not the vanity of it? What is it to be sure, but to have the sense of his favour? Now the case we have in hand, supposes this sense removed and gone, and no appearance of it; so that the objection is but this, if I had sense, I might believe without it, which is either nonsense, or a contradiction. But it will be further objected, that if men must believe that have no experience, then wicked and unregenerate persons may believe the promises. I answer, that whilst they are such, they neither will, nor care to believe them one with another; indeed, they cannot believe them, {whilst such,} for it is not yet given them to believe or mind them. But, I answer, that wicked men may, if they can, believe the promises before they have experience; nay, I say further, that no man shall ever have experiences, until he believe without experiences. Doth not God justify the ungodly, even whilst he is so? Doth he not find him so, and at that time cast his love on him? It God doth so, what impropriety or incongruity it is it to believe he doth so? You will say this is at first conversion; but I answer, is not God's love as free afterwards to rise anew after some setting? Doth not God return for his own name sake only? And if he does, must not our faith be on that name only? The truth is, man's nature is apt to look after some loveliness or beauty in himself to win God, and therefore, when he can find no such thing, he is out of heart. This popery is natural, the fine-spun distinctions to evade it are mere fig-leaves, not able to cover the nakedness of it; he that comes to God and

his promises with a blind-folded faith, {I mean a faith that takes notice of nothing in himself whether good or evil,} is God's most welcome guest.

But some will say, they look not after anything of their own, but God's work in them; this they would find; but I would know, to what purpose? If to rejoice therein, or to glorify God thereby, it is good, but nothing to this purpose of believing in Christ and his promises; for if you would find them for encouragement to believe, know that God's way is the nearest way to believe, whatever you think of any other; his way is for faith to go alone, and not with such crutches; for the Lord knows that they hinder the pace of faith, and often lay it in the dirt. Know that you must not be your own carvers. Thomas thought it a far easier way to believe Christ to be risen, by seeing him, than by running to the promises without sight of him; and we all naturally follow him the same way, it being the readier way to our poring hearts; but Christ saith in my text, the other is the right and blessed way. You will further object, if want of spiritual experience may not keep men off from believing, then a man may live as he list, and yet believe the promises. This indeed is a great objection, which I doubt too many make too much use of to their own destruction. For the more full answering of it, therefore know, that neither Christ nor his promises must be divided, for men to pick and choose what they list, and leave the rest; men must take him and them one with another. I know licentious persons would be glad of salvation from wrath by Christ, and of temporal good; and they are apt to assume a liberty from this point, that their faith is good, and the promises shall be performed to them, though they have no goodness; but have they any heart to believe other promises as well as these, those of mortification of sin, and holiness of life, that God in the attendance on his ordinances will subdue their iniquities, and cause them to walk in his testimonies? These are no bits for their palate. Now they that truly believe, having no spiritual sense, embrace all sorts of promises, and as eagerly pursue mortification and holiness promised, as deliverance from wrath; they would as gladly have Christ to reign in and over them, as to blot out their transgressions. The text imports so much in the generality of the expression, not believing some few culled things out of Christ and his promises, leaving the rest, but believing in whole Christ, and all

sorts of his promises. In brief, let not wicked men's snatching at what they cannot catch, hinder any bleeding, panting soul, that fain would, but dares not, embrace Christ and his promises, from receiving this gracious speech of his, and the like expressions of scripture, that although sense fails, yet in believing when it fails, they are blessed.

Consider we now, what blessedness that is which attends such a believing as secludes sight; as there is a three-fold special blessedness attending it.

A blessedness of present sweet repose, or rest, in all conditions without disturbance, I need not contend, I know, to make this good, that it is a blessed condition indeed to sleep on such a pillow as evaporates all cares out of the head, and drives away all anxieties of heart, and dispels all tossing turbulent fears; so that he who lays his head on it, can sleep as securely in a storm as in a calm, in a prison as in a palace, in the most pinching penury as the greatest plenty; now such, yea, and far more excellent a pillow is this faith in Christ alone. Faith mixed with sense, comes not near it in this great privilege, which I shall clearly illustrate by many evidences. Compare this unmixed faith with that which is mixed with corporeal sense, and see the difference. One man believes God loves him, and leans too much to his prosperous state of health, wealth, liberty, and the like; another believes and minds not this at all. Oh, what rest hath this last beyond the other! The first is no sooner sick or held under, or like Job, cashiered of all; or, like David, exiled; or, like Paul, imprisoned; but, Oh, how is he, like David, presently troubled! You might know David's disease by his pulse; "I said in my prosperity, I should never be moved, thou hast made my mountain strong; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." It is plain that he leaned too much on his prosperity. Too many find the same truth by woeful experience. Oh, how are they daunted, nay, even dreaded with crosses, losses, and such outward mishaps; nay, often questioning God's love now, which they suspected not before! And as such, changes are frequent, so vexations, distractions, and agonies of heart come thick.

On the other side, look on the unmixed faith, such as Job's, that he would trust though he were killed; see how still he is all the while his sad messengers follow one another at the heels, the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord," is all the

disquiet he shows; nay, the Lord affirms his temper to be such, that in all that change "Job sinned not." Jonah cannot lose a gourd, but he frets as if he were undone, whilst Job sits still with the loss of all; Paul and Silas sing in prison, while their sides are torn with whips; Peter's heart is at his mouth when Christ speaks of the Jews cruelty, and out of fear tempts Christ, for which he was well reprehended for his labour. I will give but one instance suiting with the times. Suppose two persons believe God's goodness to restore liberty to his church; the one hath his eye too busy on the means, suppose the Parliament; the other only on Christ's love to it, and the faithfulness of his promises of this nature. Now see the difference of the quiet rest of these two; the first, how anxiously solicitous is he for daily news! How disquieted if he cannot hear! How dejected and daunted if suspicions be but whispered! And how dead his heart, even as Nabal's, if such a hopeful means be frustrated and dissolved! Like David, as you heard before, when Saul had hunted him out of all his holes, there is no hope left then, he shall perish. But he that hath both feet on Christ, hath as much joy as the other in the prosperous success of fair means, and is moderate in his enquiry; his copyhold is not touched if the means fail; his footing is fast still, and therefore his heart stands fast. See an excellent instance like this in Mordecai, when the Jews were in a desperate case, the decree being gone out; Esther, the queen, was a likely means, as he tells her, to compass the deliverance; "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" {Esther 4:14} Therefore he makes use of her, but yet he leaned not to her; for he tells her, that if she altogether held her peace at this time, yet enlargement and deliverance should arise to the Jews from another place. Such know that God hath a thousand ways to make good his word which they know not of, and therefore are no more troubled at the breaking of one string, than he that hath a dozen more to his bow. Such was Abraham's quietness and rest, when thousands would almost have broken their hearts with the task God set him; but he looked on this, that God was able {though he knew not how} to raise him {his Isaac} from the dead again. The like difference may be seen betwixt such as mingle natural reason with faith, and those that banish it. See this difference between Moses and Abraham; the former is passionate, and

speaks unadvisedly, the other staggers not. The same difference may as plainly be seen betwixt such as trust only in the name of the Lord, without regard to the presence or absence of spiritual experiences, and those that consult with them. How common is it to see the latter sort roaring for disquietness, breaking forth into pitiful agonies, not only for the sinfulness of the defects and failings they are conscious of, which is requisite, but with distractive fears of God's utter departure from them. Oh, what a mountainous task is it to settle and quiet such people again! The ebbings of their unsettled restless spirits, are double to the flowings of their comforts; nay, the still water of their spiritual rest is but for a moment in a manner, the least wind of failing {if their hearts be tender} sets them trembling like aspen leaves; and because such blasts of failings are as frequent as the stirring of some winds, they have as little rest as such leaves; but if a soul build on the rock alone, looking always upward for security, neglecting experiences for such an use as to prop up faith, the Lord himself must sink before they real; he must crack under them, before their hearts rise to their mouths; he must call in again what hath gone out of his mouth, and unseal what he hath sealed, before they will suspect their titles to him and his promises. In a word, he must change, before they can be made to believe that they shall be consumed. These sleep securely, whilst others, pouring on present storms with half-dead hearts, look every moment for swallowing up. What blessedness were it to a soul to be so thoroughly resolved when all conspire against it, and come with open mouth upon it, and yet it stands still and sees the salvation of the Lord? Certainly such establishment is not to be had, but where men believe without fetching their corner-stones from sensible experiences.

In such an unmixed faith, refined from sense, there is a transcendent blessedness in regard of the more abundant glory such a believing soul brings unto God. You know that speech, "it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive." Now; although properly and really we cannot give God anything, all being his due, yet he is pleased to account the glorifying of him "a giving of glory to him," which he takes more kindly than men do the greatest gifts given to them. See this fully cleared in an instance fit for our purpose, in Abraham, when God promised him a son by Sarah;

observe his faith, how abstracted it was from sense, "he considered not his own body now dead;" and thus, "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." {Rom.4:19-21} If any ask what glory such an abstracted faith gives to God? I answer that it gives him the glory of his absolute independent power; it makes the world to see that they care not for any the least co-adjustors to help him out with his own work.

This glory did the faith of the three children, in Daniel, give God, which wrought strangely on that heathen king, "we are careless {say they} to answer thee in this matter; our God is able to deliver us;" whereas a faith mixed with sense robs him wonderfully of his glory, as I might easily show, but it is too obvious. So, it gives God the glory of his faithfulness and truth, by showing to the world that he is so good, that they care not for the best security in the world to be bound with him when he hath but passed his word. You know, that among men it makes much for a man's credit, that his only word will be taken for great sums, and further security is despised; so doth this taking God's word only, much advances his credit in the world. Christ inveighs bitterly against that adulterous generation that did seek a sign; intimating, how much they endeavored to impair his credit, that he could not be credited without a pawn. Paul, by this faith, gives this glory to God, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." {II Tim.1:12}

On the other side, where faith hunts after sense, how pitifully is God robbed of his faithfulness? When men are not well, except they bare two strings to their bow, is it not manifest they suspect one? When men cannot sleep if they have but a man's own bond, they do not account such a one of small credit? And is not this a wounding him in his reputation, especially if they make it public? I might instance in many other particulars, wherein this single eye of faith glorifies God, which is the greatest blessedness to a soul upon earth.

In such an unmixed faith there is a great blessedness, in regard of the more abundant and comfortable fruition of the things so believed. The more and more abundant fruition of things promised,

you grant, doth cause the more abundant blessedness. Now consider what abundant fruition this faith hath beyond a mixed faith. You know that frequent reply of our Saviour to such as came out of need to him; "be it unto thee according to thy faith." But more especially, they that have the unmixed faith, possess good things promised more firmly and securely than such as have a mixed faith. A mixed faith hath the fruition of the promises but by halves; in their own eye they possess but as tenants at will; I mean as such, who look and fear to be turned out again at every manifestation of displeasure; yea, and often through such suspicion are turned out and left homeless; whereas the unmixed faith possesses things promised as a freeholder does his estate, wherein his propriety is unchangeable; though the Lord's displeasure grieve him, yet he suspects not dispossession, his title being as sound and good as he can make it. Thus doth a single faith possess promises.

They possess things promised far sooner than the other; for no sooner see they the conveyance, but they take possession presently, before they reap the crop; as Christ said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad." He took possession of Christ as soon as he found him promised. On the other side, a mixed faith stays a great deal longer, and hath no possession till the bird be in the hand; promises to such, are like birds in the air or bush, until they be fulfilled; they cannot comfortably say, such a promise is my own, till they have tasted and drank of it.

They possess far more good things promised than the other. More for kind and more for measure. Where sense is made a support of faith, it oft leaves faith fast in the mire. Now, where faith fails, accomplishment of promises fails. On the other hand, where faith leans not at all on the adventitious succor of sensible experiences, though they fail with respect to the fulfilling of such or such, or their fulfilling in such a measure, yet faith fails not, but applies the promises, and enjoys the things promised.

44 Christ The Chiefest And First Mercy

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32}

The apostle having in the foregoing discourse excellently amplified the large spiritual privileges of

Christ's members, conveyed by his Spirit into them, in the closing up of this sweet subject, endeavors to establish and settle the reeling hearts of weak believers, that they might have the more joy in believing, by sundry clear convincing arguments. The first is in the preceding verse, taken from the security which God's presence and side-taking with them, gives, in respect of his being infinitely too hard for whatever may oppose them. The second argument is in my text; where consider, the argument; the evidence, that is, the thing he would make good and clear, and the argument he useth for that purpose. The thing he would clear is the certainty of future supply of whatever is needful, in the last clause. The argument to prove this is a far greater mercy than all that which is to follow already bestowed in the former clause; which is a determining argument indeed; it is like this, he that hath given a man a field, how can he deny him a bush in it to stop a gap? Only there is an infinite disproportion between the things in this and the apostle's argument. The sum of the argument is, that Christ, the Son of God, is the dearest thing in his Father's eye; if ever he would have stuck at anything, or been loath to part with it, here he would have stopped and made a stand, when he was to make the soul of his Son an offering for sin; all things else being inconsiderable with God in comparison of him, who was daily his delight, his beloved in whom he was well pleased. But now having broken through this iron gate, {as I may say,} or so undauntedly waded through such a bottomless deep as this, all other passages must needs prove but shallows to him, where he need not put off anything to get over. In delivering up of his Son for sinners, he was fain to put off all he could possibly put off, and strip himself as naked as could be; in all other passages of mercy, God walks dry-shod, {as I may say,} only here he wades. An admirable argument it is to silence the strongest objections of the most subtilized spirit, prompted with the most acute sophistry of hell; for the devil suggests tormenting wit enough to rack the afflicted soul.

That which we will observe out of this golden sentence of scripture, is that God bestows Christ himself, the chiefest of all his mercies, first unto sinful men. That all other mercies necessarily follow. In handling the first, I shall endeavor to make clear unto you, that Christ himself is the chiefest of all God's mercies bestowed on sinners; how he is said

to be the first of them; the end, or reason, why he bestows him first; all which will make excellent way for a profitable and comfortable application of the point in hand, whereby I hope our labour shall not be vain in the Lord. First, to make it clear unto you, that Christ himself, bestowed on sinners, is the chiefest of all God's mercies to them; the strength of the apostle's arguments lies in this; as will appear fully, if you consider, Christ given, as he stands in relation to God the Father, who bestows him; the value of the gift; what Christ is that is bestowed; the usefulness of this gift to those to whom he is given; and the manner how he is bestowed on sinners.

1. I say, Christ bestowed will appear to be, by far, the chiefest of all mercies, if you consider Christ given as he stands in relation to the Father giving him. Mercies, you know, are greater, or less, as the giver is more or less interested and endeared in what he gives; the nearer and dearer any thing is to the giver, the greater price is put on the gift in his parting therewith. As you know, a kingdom being of nearer and dearer concernment to a king, than a cast of his countenance, or such like, the giving of the one is a greater gift than the cast of the other; and, if he have nothing dearer than it, the gift thereof must be the chiefest of gifts from him; this illustration will give some light to our purpose; Christ given to sinners, is the nearest and dearest thing to the Father; he is his Son, his begotten Son, his only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased. Thus he stands in relation to him; as the second person, being equally God with himself; and as he is God and man in one person, the Mediator of the covenant. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" {Heb.1:5} So also is he the nearest and dearest to the Father of all things beside; no creature so like God as he; the apostle calls him "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" {Heb.1:3;} no creature advancing God as he, none compassing his great ends as he, so pure and conformable to his mind as he; he is the first-born of many brethren, the heir of all things, the co-worker with God in the framing and managing of all things, to whom God gave all power both in heaven and in earth. Now, what can be found so near, so dear to God, as this Christ? All other things of God, are of our inferior rank to him,

whether thrones, dominions, or angels, they are not daily his delight as the Son is. In parting therefore, with this his Son, and not sparing him, but delivering him up, he parted with the nearest and dearest thing he had, and therefore, he must needs be the chiefest of all his mercies to men; not only the chiefest he hath bestowed, but the chiefest he could, having no better thing to bestow.

2. Christ given will appear to be the chiefest of mercies, if you consider the value and worth of Christ himself. Mercies are not only rated according to their esteem, but also their value and greatness of worth. Affection or fancy may make mean things of high esteem, but where there is real worth, as well as high esteem, in gifts bestowed, this adds much to the greatness of them. Now, for Christ, he hath more real worth than all the world besides; and this is plain, because when weighed in the balance with divine justice, it was found too light to counterpoise it; all together could not make up the full sum or value that should satisfy that; no man, nor all creatures, could make an agreement for man; it must cost more to redeem a soul; but Christ could and did pay the utmost farthing. He is a mass of treasure big enough; the travail of his soul did satisfy; therefore the church might well call him, "the chiefest among ten thousand;" and Peter calls his blood "precious blood;" in that, therefore, Christ alone, and nothing else, amounted to such an infinite value, he may well go for the chiefest of God's mercies bestowed on sinners.

3. If you consider the usefulness of Christ, to those on whom he is bestowed. Nothing in the world, nay, the entire world could be as useful to sinners as he is. Without him, men should have lost their souls; "and what profit is there in gaining the whole world, and losing them?" Mercy is valued as it stands a man in stead, and serves his turn; things of value may in some cases be useless, when things of little value may be precious; as bread to the hungry will do more good than a mouthful of gold for that purpose; that indeed is the chiefest mercy, that will do a man most good; now, what is so useful, or can do a man that good, that Christ can? What, but he, can reconcile God to man, ingratiate man with God, pay all his debts to him, make all things work together for good, heal all the agonies, torments, and horrors of spirit, suck out the suffocating venom of corruptions, vanquish sin, death,

and hell, raise the moldered carcass from corruption to incorruption, and invest it with a state of eternal glory, in the highest heavens; wiping all tears from the eyes, and filling with fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore at his right hand, in that kingdom which shall never fade? There is nothing, except Christ, but is dry to many purposes, and leaves men destitute; he only can abundantly satisfy, and filleth all in all; therefore he is the chiefest of all mercies.

4. Christ is the chiefest of mercies, in regard of the manner of bestowing him. Not any of all God's mercies strained him, {if I may so speak by an anthropopathy,} as the making Christ so useful a mercy as he is, or cost Christ so dear. Other mercies God gives, and there is no more ado but giving and taking; but, before Christ could be such a mercy as he is, the Father must bruise him, and take pleasure in it; give him the bitter cup of his indignation, and be inexorable to his strong cries; nay, withdraw himself, and forsake him in his sorest conflicts. Christ also must endure an examination of his divine glory, and bear an eclipse of that excellent majesty; he must strip himself of all repute and esteem in the world, be despised and rejected of men, and become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; be mocked, scourged, crucified, and slain by miscreants; yea, wrestle with the wrath of his Father, even as much as all the sins of his people deserved, "the Lord must lay on him the iniquity of us all," and proportion his wrath thereunto, that "by his stripes we might be healed." All this, and a great deal more there must be, before this mercy in Christ could be ripe and fit for our use; so that here is not only Christ given, but prepared in such a manner for our good as that it is hard to say, whether the substance, or the circumstances, contain the greater mercy. It is certain, that no other mercies cost the Father of Christ himself so dear. All which particulars put together show how far this mercy, in giving Christ thus, exceeds all other mercies, and by far the chiefest.

Now we come to consider, how Christ is said to be the first of all mercies God bestows on sinners. That he is so, is plain in the text; having {to wit already} "not spared him, how shall he not give all things?" Intimating that other things remain to be given, when he is given.

Christ is the first, as "all things were created by him, and for him," as the apostle tells us, Col.1:16;

that is, for his sake, as well as use; so that all creatures are beholden to Christ for their being. Had it not been for him, nothing had been made. God's love is primarily fixed on Christ, and secondarily on the creature; as through Christ he takes content therein, and gives content to him thereby; especially his love to man originally runs through Christ; not only to create him such as he is, above all other creatures, but also from all eternity to elect him to eternal glory. The apostle tells us, that "we are elected in Christ," and that all Christ's delights were "with the sons of men." {Prov.8:30,31} And Christ himself being daily the delight of the Father, it pleased the Father for the satisfying of Christ's desire, to make the sons of men his delight also. Thus you may understand that voice from heaven, Matt.3:17, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" that is, I am well pleased with mine elect in Christ, for to them I conceive the word "well pleased" is to be referred; his well pleasedness to his Son being sufficiently expressed in the word "well-beloved." God would never have cared for man, especially as a sinful wretch, but in and for his Son. Thus Christ is the first mercy bestowed on man, as he is the first, nay, sole moving cause to stir bowels in God to him. But, and principally, Christ is the first mercy, {not in respect of common, but spiritual mercies,} and not only as a mover to other mercies, but as God doth actually convey Christ himself first, before he conveys any mercy; he gives sinners a full interest and propriety in him, before he shows any special love to them; he makes Christ himself first thine and mine, before he pours out, or sheds abroad his love in the heart, or communicates any sanctifying grace, comfort, or spiritual privileges whatsoever; this you see fully cleared by the prophet Isaiah {42:6,7} who brings in the Lord speaking thus to Christ, "I the LORD will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." First he gives Christ, then afterwards he opens the blind eyes by him; and he doth not first loose the prisoners, and then give Christ; but first gives him and then loosens them by him. The same expression, this prophet uses, {49:8,9} "thus saith the LORD, I will give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest

say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." Peter, speaking of Christ as he is mentioned, {Psal.118:22,23} tells us, that "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, we also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." {I Pet.2:4,5} Men come first to Christ, then grow up and do acceptable service by him. Learn this well, for it is of great use, as you shall hear anon; only let us first consider the last thing propounded, why God gives Christ first before other mercies?

1. That we may be more fully assured and satisfied, that he will not withhold succeeding mercies; this is the main reason why the apostle mentions it in this place. God knows how apt we are, upon every surmise, or at least slip, and his withdrawing awhile, to be full of jealousies and sad doubts, that now the Lord "will be gracious no more, and hath shut up his loving-kindness forever in displeasure," as Asaph pitifully complains in his doubting fit. {Psalm 77} For this cause God at first leaves a pledge, or hostage in our hands, that looking thereon it may check our suspicious, and put us in mind, that whatever thing it is we suspect he will not grant, we may see we have in possession from him already, that which is of far greater value than what we now pursue. He deals as able men do with suspicious creditors, who leave pawns of far greater value than what they owe, which may pay all that is behind, that so poor souls may be at rest.

2. Christ himself is the first mercy, {I mean still when God effectually calls a sinner,} because, Christ is the soul to animate, or the principle of all spiritual life and motion, and therefore he must be first given, or else there can be no such life; as a dead body must first have a soul infused into it before it can live; when God had formed Adam's body, "he breathed into him the breath of life, {that is, a soul,} and then he became a living soul," or person. You know, when a soul is separated from a body, the body is a lifeless carcass; now, that Christ is this soul or principle of spiritual life, is most plain, in that he calls himself "the life," {Jn.14:6,} and tells us, {chap.6:33,} "that he gives life to the world," and that {chap.10:10,} he came "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly;" and Paul saith, "I live, yet not I, but Christ

liveth in me.” {Gal.2:20} Hence it is that Christ is called the head of the body, because all the animal, sensitive spirits, which actuate the whole body with sense and motion, flow thence as from a fountain; intimating Christ to be the spring of all spiritual understanding and activity; for the same cause he is called the root, which is to the tree as the soul to the body, and the foundation on which the house rests for support and stability, and therefore is first laid before men attempt to raise any building. All this demonstrates the silliness of imagining that there can be any work of grace in a heart, before Christ himself be given or received, who brings all that is, or can be, along with himself, and finds nothing but a dead carcass as unto spiritual activity when he comes. For this, Christ is also called the everlasting Father, for that “we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Now you know there must be a father present to beget, before there can be a son begotten.

3. Again, Christ must be first given, because he is the prince, or prime author and principle worker of peace; so the word prince signifies; “he is our peace,” saith the apostle, {Eph.2:14,} which caused the choir of angels at his incarnation, and coming to dwell among men to proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” {Lk.2:14} Now you know, that all grace from God follows peace with him; he first must be reconciled before he will show kindness; therefore the apostle tells us that “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses,” {II Cor.5:19,} first reconciled, then he forgives sin; and this order he observes in Christ; he must therefore first come and settle a peace, before there can be hoped any fruit or manifestation of his gracious love.

Therefore if Christ be the chiefest of all God’s mercies, then let Christ himself be chiefest in your pursuit. Men usually aim at the best of things, as near as they can reach; the best wives, servants, grounds; if anything be better than other, that is meat for their mouths; he that contents himself with the refuse of things, it is because he can go no higher. Christ, as you have heard, is the chiefest and best of all God’s mercies, therefore single him out from other things, and press hard after him. The prophet {Is.55:2,3,} hath a notable expostulation to this purpose; “wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and

your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” All other things are not bread in comparison of Christ; they are lean, dry things to him, who is oily fatness. O you that “cumber yourselves about many things,” like Martha, that waste and tire yourselves, that set thoughts and cares on tender hooks, to compass a little muck, or spot of earth, you labour for that which satisfies not; say, are you satisfied? Mary hath chosen the better part in sticking close to Christ. Paul saw so much pre-eminence in Christ, that, as learned as he was, he “desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified;” nay, he desires to be dissolved to be with him; and so would you, if so be you could but taste, that is, believe, how good the Lord is. None but Christ, none but Christ, wouldst thou then say as the martyr at the stake; how much better is thy love than wine! Silver and gold are not to be compared with him, say they that have found him. He is the treasure hid in the field, the jewel above price; wilt thou then sweat and melt thy grease in following a vein of clay, when a mine of the richest gold, and of diamonds, is in thine eye? Wilt thou glean after a churl that hath raked his field, when thou mayest be allowed to carry whole sheaves, nay, shocks, away at once? Wilt thou glean for fitches, when thou mayest glean pure wheat? Wilt thou cast thyself on a lousy beggar, when the king will take pleasure in thy beauty? Shall the treacherous world have all thy kisses and embraces, whilst Christ stands at the door and knocks? Oh, come to thyself, poor soul, {the Lord in mercy awaken thee, nay, quicken thee; that thou mayest,} and think what a game is in chace; savory meat indeed, such as thy soul will be satisfied with, when thou hast tasted; and lose not this present advantage to hunt after butterflies like silly children, which though when enjoyed are poor nothings, yet take their wings and fly away.

Furthermore if Christ be the first of all mercies, then they begin at the wrong end, that think to wind any graces from God first, and then seek after Christ; therefore no marvel if they make nothing of their work, but turn and toss, and make many a stop and broken end; whoever will go smoothly on, and make

good riddance, must begin at the right end, and get Christ himself, before ever they expect to be a jot better than corrupt nature makes them; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Beloved, you may pump at your own hearts until you break them, before you can fetch up a drop of grace, {so dry are they,} unless Christ himself be first poured in; as you will first pour in a bucket of water into a dry pump, before you will attempt to dry up water. Many poor souls lie hacking and hewing with their own blunt and dull spirits, to grub up their tough corruptions; they plow with a wooden coulter and spade, to turn up the clods of their own fallow hearts; or rather put a dead horse to tear them up, whilst they toil in their own strength. Know that you must first get your spirits keened by Christ; when men begin to plough up their hearts, they plough upon rocks, and therefore Christ must come first and soften them, before you can so much as enter; it pities me to see how many poor souls are ignorant in this spiritual husbandry, therefore toil to no purpose. Is it not madness to begin to rear a roof first, and hope that then the foundation will be laid sure; I mean to erect a structure of grace, and then go downward to lay Christ the foundation? Alas; poor creatures, how will they get up, unless they lay Christ the foundation first, and by him go upward? He brings faith itself along with him; men do not get faith first, then Christ, but he brings itself. The apostle tells us expressly, that he is the author as well as finisher of our faith, by whom we believe; and again he tells us, that "faith is the operation of God."

You say, how can a man apply Christ without faith? I answer, he cannot; but yet faith comes not before Christ, but he comes and brings it, and delivers it to the soul, whereby it takes him. I cannot illustrate this better than by Jeremiah's getting out of the dungeon. Ebedmelech {a type of Christ} comes from the king to Jeremiah being sunk into the mire of the dungeon, and brings cords and soft rags with him; these he lets down into the dungeon to him, and bids him put the rags under his arm-holes, fastening them to the cords; which he did, holding the cords fast; then Ebedmelech herewith drew him forth. Now the cords came not before Ebedmelech, neither did he draw himself to Ebedmelech with them; but he brought them, and drew him up by them unto himself. Ebedmelech represents Christ, the cords and rags faith, Jeremiah

the convert or saved sinner, the dungeon the deep pit of sinfulness and misery in which he sticks; Christ brings faith, and gives one end to a sinner to hold fast by, and keeps the other end in his own hand, and so draws the sinner towards him, who comes by the hold-fast of the cord immediately; but originally and principally, by the strength of Christ's own arm. In brief, you must conceive Christ graciously present whenever faith is. Now, if faith itself, the radical grace, come not before Christ, much less other graces that spring from it. The apostle tells us, from Christ, that "we are sanctified by faith," and that "faith purifies the heart." Do not therefore, put the cart before the horse, nor foolishly think to draw the horse with the cart. Some may say, we thought that we must first be humbled, changed, renewed, and then come to Christ. I confess too many go backward in this manner, and catch many a fall and bruise; I would we had not some blind leaders of such blind, who are both like to fall into the ditch; have I not cleared the contrary way to you by manifest scripture? I come not to you in my own name about this business.

You will say, until there be some such good beginning, I shall stink in Christ's nostrils with my filth and rottenness. But, you must know, that Christ comes and justifies the ungodly; he doth not find them godly, or stay till they be, before he justifies them; but takes them as they are, ungodly, and justifies them then. As the father of the prodigal stays not until his tattered lousy son had shifted himself, and washed off his filth, but sees him afar off, falls on his neck, and kisses him, then calls for the best robe, and covers his nakedness; a notable parable, whereby Christ sets himself forth to poor sinners. Christ is not so squeamish as men are, nor doth he affect as men do, who look for comeliness or loveliness to stir their affections. Ah; do not then stumble at straws, and make bug-bears to fright thyself from coming to Christ; they are none of his setting up. If ever you partake of any spiritual mercies, whether of grace or comfort, you must begin with Christ himself.

What is it to take Christ first, may some may say? I answer, when God opens the heart, as he did the heart of Lydia, while Paul preached the gospel {and as it may be he doth of some now} to come to thyself, and sadly to think that thy present way is not right, that there will be bitterness in the end of it; and, therefore, thy heart is fully resolved to turn over a new leaf, let it

cost what it will; when thy heart thus checks and spurs at once, then, without any more ado, seal the covenant with Christ, take Christ with all that he is, and hath, for thine own; though thy hands be never so foul, stay not the wiping of them, but take him unworthy as thou art; for he will wash and make thee clean himself. Do not stumble at this, it is not too good to be true; it is ratified in heaven, and proclaimed in the gospel, “and when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” {Ez.16:6,8}

I say, as before, when thy heart is opened, then pray for faith to look unto Christ, that so after thoughts of returning from backslidings may have life and power from him, and be supported by him; then are they like to prosper, else they will prove but faint velocities, or like the early dew, and become but a flashing spiritual qualm; but having, at the first dash, committed yourself and change to Christ’s management, he will go through stitch with it, and make good riddance indeed; for the “pleasure of the Lord,” on thy heart and life, “shall prosper in his hands.” And therefore, it is a foul slanderous calumny, cast by ignorant, if not malicious hearts, on this sweet gospel, to say it makes void the law, and opens a gap to licentiousness. For nothing establishes the law like it, or binds souls to good behavior, as it doth; as you may easily see by the little hint I gave you even now. If you go this way, to begin with Christ himself, you may plow with his heifer, and so untie many a riddle, that will else puzzle your brains; by this means you shall have a strong and impregnable hold to retreat unto upon every occasion of danger; you shall carry a spring of aqua vitae about you always, against fainting; you shall have a wise Counsellor to direct you, or a north star in your eye, by which you may steer your course; a mighty champion, not only to order, but also to fight your battles, whilst you may “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” By this means you shall never repent of your leaving Egypt, though you come to straits; for this angel of the covenant, going before you, shall level your way,

and make it smooth, shall scatter and tread down the mighty that come against you, shall still and quiet the jealous risings of your heart, and so feed you with present earnest and first fruits, as shall draw you on with a longing, until you attain the full possession, both of grace and glory. “You have run well,” saith Paul to the Galatians, speaking of the times when they embraced Christ first without works. There is no such progress in holiness, as where Christ enters and sets a soul at work, who oils the wheels, who fills the sails with a full and prosperous gale.

(45,46,47,48) Free Grace The Teacher Of Good Works

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” {Tit.2:11,12}

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy;” lest after the sweet invitations and wooing of you in Christ’s name, that you might be espoused unto him; lest, “as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty,” namely, bewitching her to a presumptuous licentious adventuring on God’s gentleness, whilst she tasted of the forbidden fruit; “so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” {II Cor.11:2,3;} by presuming too much upon him, and adventuring to continue in sin, in hope that grace may abound. For the prevention of which dangerous miscarriage, which hath been the unhappy lot of many thousands, I thought good to step in with this text, which I am persuaded will prove a seasonable warning to some at least. It is a reason, or argument, whereby the apostle Paul enforces and strengthens what he had formerly delivered, having given proper rules unto several distinct offices and ranks of persons, as ministers, {Tit.1:7,} aged men, {2:2,} aged women, {2:3,} young women, {2:4,} young men, {2:6,} to Titus himself, {2:7,} and to servants, {2:9,} in all which he suits his doctrine to their several conditions. Now that these several precepts might receive entertainment, he tells them, that God therefore manifested his grace that brings salvation.

In the words themselves there are two general things observable, the free bountiful love of God unto

man, {2:11;} and the end of this love, {2:12;} in the former observe, first, the fruits of his love, or the thing wherein he manifests it, salvation; secondly, the cause of it, the grace of God bringeth it; thirdly, the means of participating thereof, appearance; and fourthly, the persons to whom it is manifested, to all men.

The end of this love of God, here expressed in general, is our sanctification, consisting of two branches, mortification and renovation. Mortification is here specified under two heads, answering the two tables of the law; the first is an abnegation of ungodliness, which comprehends the branches of the first table; the second is a denial of worldly lusts, which comprehends the branches of the second table. The second branch of the end of the grace of God is renovation, specified under three heads; the first respects a man's self, he must live soberly; the second respects our neighbors, righteously or justly; the third respects God, godly. This end is amplified two ways; from the means of attaining it, the teaching that the grace of God brings with it; and the time it teacheth, and we must put this end to practice, "in this present world." From the former part of the text, observe, that it is the grace of God appearing, which bringeth salvation to all men.

This doctrine being the corner-stone of the whole gospel, and the rock whereon the anchor of faith must fasten, to preserve soul and body from shipwreck, had need be handled carefully and soundly; for an error in the foundation is of far greater consequence than in the superstructure, wherein I shall endeavour to be as cautious as may be; and, because it is the well-spring of comfort, and the grand charter that comprehends all our prerogatives, which have their dependence hereon, I will labour to make it as plain and manifest as may be; to this purpose some particulars are to be discussed for the unveiling of their obscurity. 1. What is meant by the grace of God. 2. What the appearing of it is. 3. What it is for this grace appearing to bring salvation. 4. Unto whom it brings salvation.

1. Grace, in the scripture, is diversely taken; sometimes it signifies comeliness, or that which makes a thing illustrious; so Solomon useth the word, "my son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head;" {Pv.1:8,9; so, 3:22 & 4:9;} but so it is not here. Grace, in the scripture, is sometimes

divine qualities in a believer; so the apostle takes it when he saith, "therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also; {II Cor.8:7,} speaking of liberality. And thus grace and works are all one, and therefore this cannot be the grace here mentioned, by which we are to be saved; for the apostle opposeth these two, "by grace ye are saved, not of works." {Eph.2:9} Sometimes, again, grace signifies free unmerited favour, which hath no other impulsive or moving cause, but the good pleasure of God's will, Eph.1:5,6, and so it is taken as oft as grace and works are opposed; thus the apostle expounds the meaning of grace, "being justified freely by his grace," Rom.3:24, and thus we are to understand it in the text; sometimes {for a punctual illustration of it} grace signifies that good pleasure of God's will which is revealed in the gospel; as it is recorded of Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:3, when they preached the gospel at Iconium; "the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace;" so Paul commends the elders "to the word of his grace," Acts 20:32, "which is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance;" and so it is opposed to the rigor and severity of the law, which stands on these terms, "do this and live;" which yet is the good pleasure of his will. Finally, the grace of God is taken most strictly for the free favour of God revealed in the gospel, appointing Christ his Son to compass our justification, sanctification and redemption; for this cause it is that the grace of God is so oft called the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," I Pet.1:10, because through him, "we have access to the grace wherein we stand," and this comes to us by him, according to that of John, Jn.1:14-17, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The sum of all is, that it is the mere free motion of God's own will and pleasure, to show undeserved favour; for, by Christ, this is the grace of God here mentioned; this is the sole fountain from whence, as all other our comforts; so this, in special of salvation flows. Whatever is annexed thereto, as an adjuvant cause, is so far from helping, as it makes void the efficacy of this, whereof I shall speak more fully hereafter.

2. This appearance of grace, or free kindness, and love of God our Saviour, for our reconciliation and salvation, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy hath he saved

us,” Tit.3:4, 5, is nothing but the bringing of the same to light, or a making of it manifest; which that you may the more fully understand, note, that the appearance or manifestation of God’s grace, and free favour, is to be considered two ways. 1. When it is made visible and discernible. 2. When it is actually seen and discerned. In the first consideration it appears in the gospel published, wherein all may find this favour; and thus it is apparent even to such as shut their eyes and turn from it; and of this manifestation Christ speaks, saying, “light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than light,” Jn.3:19, even as a king’s mind and pleasure is apparent, when it is extant in his statutes, proclamations and charters, though some men will not regard it. But this is not all the appearance of the grace of God that brings salvation, although without this it could never have been found; it must not only be visible, but also actually discerned.

Now the grace of God in Christ is actually discerned two ways. By a mere intellectual perception or vision; or by a cordial apprehension thereof. It appears by an intellectual perception, when men understand the freeness of God’s grace and bounty aright; what it is which is only an appearance to the knowledge, which, by the common principles of natural reason, is attainable where the gospel is published; for when any rational man hears plain sense, he may easily understand it, and perceive the meaning of it; in this sense the grace of God appears unto all attentive persons that have the use of reason; thus it appeared to the Pharisees, for had they not understood what Christ meant, when he taught this free grace of God, they would never have raged so against him; for distaste always presupposes some fore-knowledge; had he spoke altogether beyond their understanding, they could not have conceived any cause of indignation; this, therefore, is not the appearing of grace here intended; for, instead of bringing salvation, it became an occasion of their farther condemnation. It is the cordial manifestation and apprehension of the free grace of God, understood aright, that was manifested in the gospel, that brings salvation; and then the grace of God appears, when God opens the heart, and sets up the lustre of it there, with such a clear brightness, that it apprehends it as it is.

Now this differs as much, if not more, from a mere intellectual apprehension, as a blind man’s knowledge

of the sun, and a good sighted man seeing of it with his eyes; for a blind man may know, by discourse, what kind of a thing the sun is, but he cannot be certain whether there is such a thing or no; but he that hath a cordial apprehension of free grace, is as sure there is such a thing as he that sees the sun, I mean out of the case of desertion. But, more particularly, the appearing of free grace to the heart, is such a manifestation thereof, as leaves its own savor there, and so enamors it with the excellency and usefulness thereof, to supply its own overgrown defects, that it pants after a propriety therein as the dearest thing in the world; it sees so much in this grace, as that it concludes it to be the one thing necessary, and is willing to embrace it upon any terms; such a winning appearance, which enters into the soul that brings salvation; for then the soul makes after it, and is not at rest till it closes with it; for this is the end God aims at, in proclaiming and delineating his free grace to the view of the world, to draw men to a love and desire of it; and therefore, to who whosoever he intends to communicate it, he persuades the heart so effectually, that it cannot choose but be ravished with the glorious and comfortable appearance of it. So that salvation then comes to a man’s heart, when the free love of God in Christ appears so lovely and useful, as that all things seem but as dross and dung in comparison of it; therefore nothing is desired and prized like unto it; for then, and only then, it appears in its own lively colors; when thus much is not seen in it, the main of it is yet hid, and appears not. There are many in the world who understand the meaning of the doctrine of free grace, yet see but the shell of it, no beauty nor savor in it, and therefore in heart say of it, as the strangers to the church concerning Christ, the subject of free grace, “what is thy beloved more than another beloved?” So they say of free grace, what is in this doctrine more than in ordinary matters of discourse? But the church sees more in him, and in it, and says, “my beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand.” Thus free grace appeared unto Paul, “but what things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ; yea, {saith he,} doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and count them but dung that I may win him;” Phil.3:7-9, “and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.” The same apostle tells us, “that in the ages

to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” {Eph.2:7}

3. What is this salvation which the grace of God appearing brings? To understand it aright; note, that this word is diversely taken in scripture, for sometimes it signifies, deliverance out of temporal dangers and afflictions, so Ps.74:12, “for God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” Sometimes Christ himself, Lk.1:69, as Zacharias sings thus, God “hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” So sings old Simeon, Lk.2:30, “for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,” having taken Christ up in his arms. Sometimes the whole state of grace, or conversion; so Christ says, speaking of Zacchaeus, Lk.19:9, “this day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” So Paul, Rom.11:11, “salvation is come unto the Gentiles,” speaking of the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles. And, II Cor.6:2, “now is the day of salvation.” Sometimes the blessed estate of the saints in heaven, Heb.1:14, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;” and, Heb.5:9, when Christ is called, “the Author of eternal salvation.”

So that salvation is temporal, spiritual and eternal; all which may be very well understood by it here ascribed to the grace of God appearing; for it is the efficient cause of all; no supply of temporal good comes either by chance, or man’s wisdom, industry, or power, but only from God’s free grace and bounty. “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” {Ps.75:6,7} “For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.” {Ps.44:6} “Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.” {Ps.60:11,12} “There be many that say, who will show us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” {Ps.4:6} And again, “our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” {Ps.124:8} In a word, that all comes by grace, appears in the caution Moses gives Israel in the wilderness; “speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out {the Canaanites} from before thee, saying, for my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in

to possess this land...not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land;” but that the Lord “may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” {Deut.9:4,5}

So likewise the work of conversion, in respect both of justification and sanctification, which are the salvation of God, are of mere grace. The apostle tells us, Rom.3:24, “we are justified freely by his grace,” not of ourselves, it is the free gift of God; “the free gift is of many offences unto justification.” {Rom.5:16} Therefore pardon of sins is called forgiveness, which is the free acquitting of a debt, without any payment; and as justification, so sanctification is of grace, or free bounty; so saith Paul of himself, “by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” {I Cor.15:10} Run through the several branches of sanctification, and you shall find that every particular is begun, continued and perfected, through the favour and bounty of God in Christ. “My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever;” {Ps.73:26;} saith David. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;” {Is.40:29;} saith Isaiah. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;” {II Cor.3:5;} saith Paul.

So, likewise Christ our salvation is brought unto us of mere free grace, “for unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” {Is.9:6} So speaking of that Son, he saith, “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” {Is.42:6} So the apostle tells us, Eph.5:2, that “Christ hath given himself for us,” and what is freer than a gift? “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” {Jn.6:51} Finally, eternal salvation is of grace and free bounty, according to that of John, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;”

{Jn.10:28;} “I will give thee a crown of life.” {Rev.2:10} “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,” what of rewards; no, but which “the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” {II Tim.4:7,8} Thus you see what the salvation is that grace appearing brings, and that it is all of grace.

4. The last thing considerable in this point is, to whom the grace of God appearing brings salvation, “all men.” Now that you may understand what is meant by all men, note, that the apostle here means not {by all} every particular man in the world, {for it is manifest, that all shall not be saved,} but some of all sorts of men, as the coherence plainly shows; for this text is produced as an argument, to enforce, or encourage those several ranks and degrees of persons, to wit, ministers, old, young, servants, to have a care to do the several duties pressed on them; the strength of which argument lies in this, that grace brings salvation to the believing in every rank and degree; even servants and young folk have their share in this grace, as well as ministers and old people. This “all” in scripture is many times interpreted by some, as Christ “wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;” {Rev.5:9,} “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” {Rev.7:9} That is, of all nations, tongues, people, and languages, Jews, Gentiles, bond, free, barbarian, Scythian, and the like; for Christ is all, and amongst all, {Col.3:11} to whom “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” is sent. {Eph.1:13} “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” {I Cor.12:13} “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” {Gal.3:28,29} It were endless, to multiply places to this purpose; in a word, therefore, this general phrase of all men, must

be understood as that passage of Peter, when he saw Cornelius, a Gentile, with his house, received the faith; “of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” {Acts 10:34,35} The sum therefore, is briefly this, the free bounty of God, truly apprehended as it is, brings all good, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, to men of all degrees, ranks, and qualities, that so apprehend it.

From hence you may learn whereunto to trust, and whither to go for all manner of salvation, even this fountain of God’s free grace and bounty in Christ; all other refuges are but broken cisterns, that cannot hold this water of life. Now, because this is the tree of life, and well-spring of salvation, of which whosoever receiveth is nourished to eternal life; therefore hath Satan ever stirred all his wit and strength to divert the sons of men from it; some by terror, persuading them they have no part nor portion in this matter, and so drives them away, at least as far as he can possibly, till the Lord himself break in upon him, defeats him, and so draws them in, and by a holy winning violence fastens this his grace upon them; others he deludes with fantastical dreams, that they are already filled with grace, when they have never yet tasted of it, and persuades them no more to look after it; others again, he deals cunningly withal, {such especially in whom he sees and finds an eager pursuit of salvation, not to be withstood,} and persuades them, that this is too easy a way to be safe, for that salvation is of more worth than to be had for nothing; and therefore puts them upon an establishing of their own righteousness, and a purchasing of this salvation, by the works of the law, and by these means gulls many thousand souls; in the meantime, having misused and misled them, he makes himself merry, and laughs at them in his sleeve; for he knows well, so long as he can mislead men out of this path, his prey is sure enough.

But, beloved, be not ye children in understanding, seeing the Holy Ghost here teacheth you better; let him not make such fools of you, but put down the bucket of faith, and draw up salvation out of this well. This grace is the fountain of living waters; do not trouble yourselves about broken cisterns that will hold no water; suck not at dry breasts, that can give no milk, but at this full breast of consolation. You will say, this spring indeed is comfortable to those, to whom it

is set open, but to me it is a fountain sealed. This is a common objection of many poor souls in desertion, which wonderfully afflicts and torments them; but let me reason with such a while. No man ought to lay an accusation against another, but what he can sufficiently prove, much less against himself; and it is lamentable to see what power Satan hath got over faithful persons, to make them such zealous accusers, and false witnesses, to the overthrowing of themselves, when nature itself, without grace, is so tender of a man's own welfare; but, beloved, you that are so eager in your accusations, and so peremptory, muster up your proofs, and see how you can make this accusation good; for you must know, that all proof which is not fetched from the scripture is false, and where can you find one proof there, that this fountain is sealed up unto you? I am sure you do not find your names recorded in God's black book, as I may so call it, of his rejection. But you will say, I find by general descriptions of such to whom God will show no favour, that these reflect on my condition, and so grace and favour belong not to me, and consequently there is no salvation for me; for I am worse than you think I am, and no unclean thing can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. I answer, if sin can exclude persons from salvation, then who can be saved? "For where is he that liveth and sinneth not?" You will say, I have not only sin in me, but it reigns in me. I answer, it may be in this thou art a false witness against thyself, for many accuse themselves in this particular, who cannot prove it; nay, if they would judge deliberately, upon due search they must confess the contrary. You will say it reigns, for I cannot keep it down, but it breaks out in spite of me, do what I can, though I pray against it, and resist it. Will you call this the reigning of sin? Then it reigned in the apostle Paul, when the "good he would do, he could not, and the evil he would not do, that he did." {Rom.7:19-25} Yet he quits himself thus, "it is not I, but sin that dwells in me," and he gives thanks to God for it. Then also sin reigns where the spirit lusteth against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit; then it also reigns in all believers who in many things sin all. For doubtless they strive against it, and sometimes are foiled; but you must know, that an invading enemy never reigns till the field be quit; nor then neither, so long as new forces are raised, and make a fresh onset. It is not every fall that loses the victory, much less

the fall of some few soldiers, whilst the commander stands his ground; it may be thy mind is taken, and hood-winked, and some members are led captive to evil; but the commanding will with fightings and denials holds out, and will not yield; here indeed is a loss to be repaired, but not of the battle, so long as the heart remains carefully steadfast and upright; besides, if the heart with some violent overcharging should be taken, yet it gives the slip, and musters up all its strength again, and falls afresh to combating, the reign of sin is yet prevented. Know, in a word, that as long as souls fight Christ's battles, though they get many a knock, yet they are his warriors, and not under sin's regiment. You will say, but I cannot fight against sin. But, what means then this lowing of the soul, this inward fretting and chafing of spirit, these groans and sighs? Do you call these consent to sin? When Moses came down from the mount, Joshua tells him, that he hears the noise of war in the camp; but Moses answers him, it is not the noise of them that cry for being overcome, but the voice of them that sing, do I hear. So, I say, frettings and out-cries of heart are the noise of war, but singings and mirth the noise of consent to sin; as the people, when they crowned Solomon king, made great shouts of joy. Moreover, though it be most true, that salvation belongs not to such as give themselves full scope to continue in sin to the end, yet it may belong to one, who at the present is under the full power of sin, otherwise could no man be saved; for when they are called, God finds them polluted in their blood, and wallowing in their mire; he enters then into covenant with them, and spreads his skirt over them, and they become his. {Ez.16:1-13} So that man's filthiness is no hindrance of God's gracious call; he justifies the ungodly, or none; for he can find no other on earth. In the text you find, that salvation is brought to all sorts of men; do but consider the parable of the prodigal, the most lively picture of a convert; his father sees him first, nay, the consideration of a father, who hath enough, when he is ready to starve, is the first moving cause of his returning, though he had run riot, and therefore might justly expect nothing but severity. "And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the LORD is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him." {Is.30:18} The father spies him afar off,

he stands ready to welcome a sinner, so soon as his heart looks but towards him; he that will draw nigh to them that are afar off, will certainly draw nigh to them that draw near to him. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God." {Jer.31:18} Nay, the father had compassion on him, his bowels yearn towards him, whilst he is afar off; nay, he runs to meet him, he prevents a sinner with speed; mercy comes not on a foot-pace, but runs; it comes upon wings, as David speaks, "he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind; {Psal.19:10,} as Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly to bring answer to Daniel's prayer. {Dan.9:21} The son's pace is slow, he arose and came; the father's is swift, he ran; the son had most need to run; bowels moving with mercy, out-pace bowels pinched with want. God makes more haste to show mercy, than we to receive; whilst misery walks, mercy flies; nay, he falls on his son's neck, hugging and embracing him. Oh; the depth of grace! Who would not have loathed such a person to touch or come near him, whilst he smells of the swine he kept? Could a man come near him without stopping his nose? Would it not make a man almost rid his stomach, to smell his nastiness; yet, behold, the Father of sinners falls upon the neck of such filthy wretches; mercy and grace is not squeamish; the prodigal comes like a rogue, yet the father embraces him like a bride; he falls a kissing of him, even those lips that had lately been lapping in the hog trough, and had kissed baggage harlots. A man would have thought he should rather have kicked him than kissed him; yet this token of reconciliation and grace he gives him, with this seal he confirms his compassion; nay, he calls for the best robe, and kills the fatted calf for him. The son's ambition was to be but as a hired servant, and lo, he is feasted in the best robes. God will do far better for a sinner than he can imagine himself, "above all he is able either to ask or think." How then does poverty, nakedness, emptiness, pinch thee, because of thy riot? Canst thou see enough in thy father's house, and therefore begin to pant in heart after him? Wouldest thou fain have admittance? The Father of mercy is ready to deal thus with thee, therefore object not unworthiness; for who more unworthy than such a son?

And so we come to the second branch of the text, to the end of that free love of God, in giving

salvation, or the inseparable fruit, which follows this grace; it teacheth to deny ungodliness. And, before I fall upon the particular fruits here mentioned, it will not be amiss to observe something in general from the connection of God's free grace, and the fruit that follows. Let us therefore take this general point into our consideration, that wheresoever the grace of God brings salvation, it is not bestowed in vain; but inclines the heart to new obedience, and makes him fruitful in his life, in all well pleasingness. By the particulars mentioned in the text, you plainly see how natural this general doctrine ariseth from it; which I have rather pitched upon, that I might prevent that licentious soul-destroying misconceit, which even in the apostle's time, men were apt to infer from the free grace of God bringing salvation; which he observing, strikes at it with a holy vehemence and indignation; their inference was this; "if we be saved by grace, then we may continue in sin, that grace may abound," Rom.6:1-3, which conclusion carnal reason is very apt to raise from the premises; but the apostle answers it first with a warning, "God forbid;" and then with strong arguments, "how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein;" and so goes on. The truth is, the doctrine of free grace, by the devilish cunning of that old serpent, who knows his own bane and ruin is contained in this sovereign antidote, hath been marvelously abused divers ways, in all ages; some, as before mentioned, overthrowing it with licentious inferences; against which presumption, as the apostle in many other passages, so in the text especially, opposeth himself; others abuse it, by establishing a righteousness of their own in the room of it; against which he contends vehemently, especially in the whole epistle to the Galatians.

It will not be amiss, therefore, before we make good the point in hand, to evacuate these abuses, by vindicating and setting the doctrine of free grace at liberty; and to this end you must understand in what sense good works, or inherent righteousness, are necessary attendants on free grace; necessary indeed they are, not causally, but consequently; not to be substituted in the room of free grace for attaining salvation, as if that was a licentious doctrine, not to be allowed; as disagreeing with the mind of the Holy Ghost, and therefore should rely only on them. For if God be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who can

stand, "seeing no man liveth and sinneth not?" Nay, seeing that all our righteousness is as a filthy rag, and when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; and therefore cannot claim salvation as a debt due for them; neither are our works of righteousness necessary attendants on grace as co-assistants, as if they concurred with free grace to produce salvation; and that salvation is not attainable by the favour of God alone, but by works of ours, to make up what is wanting in that to effect it. Against both these conceits of the necessity of our righteousness, the apostle bends all his strength, Eph.2:8, "by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." {Rom.11:6} "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." {Gal.5:4} The whole fourth chapter to the Romans is nothing but a clearing of this, as all the epistle to the Galatians; so that it is manifest, that our righteousness or obedience, hath not the least stroke in justification, or salvation, efficiently. You will say, that salvation is promised unto good works. I answer, that even from the promises of salvation it is manifest that obedience has no causing stroke, for then it were due to it of debt, not of promise, or grace; the promise of it is a sufficient argument that it proceeds from bounty, otherwise we need not expect it by promise, but claim it as due. You will say, to what purpose serves our inherent righteousness then? Doth grace make works void? Some indeed, as I said before, err on this hand, as others do on the other; but know, that we, with the apostle, do not by grace make void obedience, but establish it rather; for the grace that brings salvation teacheth obedience also; only we endeavour to abolish that sinister dangerous end, which some propound to themselves in obeying; whereby both Christ is robbed of the glory of his all-sufficient merits, either wholly or in part, by annexing our obedience thereto, as not sufficient without it; as also our obedience becomes vain, and of none effect at all; for, in justification, works serve for no use, nay, they damnify, being brought in for that purpose, as they evacuate that grace, which only can serve it. You will say then, wherein consists the necessity of obedience? I answer, works are necessary.

1. On one side only, they necessarily follow the free

grace of Christ, in that God in Christ hath engaged himself to establish and set up obedience in the heart and life of such on whom he entails salvation by grace, as appears in Isaiah, chapters 35, 40, 41, and in Jeremiah, chapter 31 & Ezekiel, chapter 20. Now where God himself hath inseparably joined salvation, and a holy life, and hath promised the one as well as the other, they must of necessity go together; for what God hath joined together, who can separate? No man can disjoin what he hath united.

2. Obedience is necessarily annexed to free grace; that is, there is a proportion and con-naturalness between free grace and holiness, that they mutually clip each other, as the psalmist speaks; "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." {Ps.85:10} That is, God's mercy and truth in our inward parts; his peace with us, and our righteousness towards him, agree in one; it is a certain rule, and natural response. God's love to his selected ones hath an assimilating virtue to win love to him again, as the heat of one coal kindles another; the loadstones do not more naturally draw iron after them, than the divine loadstone of God's free love draws our love; "we love him, because he first loved us," saith John; kindness begets kindness.

3. Finally, obedience is necessary, on our part, in regard of ourselves. In respect of employment, our condition being a state of subjection to the will of God, therefore we obey him, because then we are warrantably employed, as a servant follows his master's business, because he is a servant; we must be in action, and obedience is the proper action that best suits our condition; therefore we must needs obey; if we were our own, and not under authority, we might choose our own business; but being under command, we must do the will of him that is over us. Likewise, in respect of thankfulness for what we have already received; so far our obedience is necessary; God hath set us free, given us his Son, made us heirs, settled heaven on us, made both our present and future happiness, having undertaken to furnish us with all things useful; so that our improvement thereof in holiness, is not our business for the furthering any good to ourselves, God having reserved the whole provision of grace to his own care; therefore all we can do, must serve to express our thankfulness unto him, who hath so loved. This Paul intimates, saying,

“ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” {I Cor.6:20} “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” {I Cor.10:31} The end of obedience must be the setting forth of his praise, or the magnifying of him, showing forth the glory of his grace, which is the end why God redeemed us. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” {II Cor.1:20} But most excellent to the purpose is that of the apostle, “knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God; for which cause we faint not.” {II Cor.4:14-16} What higher or better end can a man aim at, seeing his own turn is already served by Christ? Therefore all our obedience ought ultimately to level at the exalting of God, who hath exalted us. This increase he expects of the talents he commits to us; so that our care must not be so much what becomes of ourselves, but that God be honored; yea, though it occasion tribulation, yet therein rejoice, for that he will care well enough for us.

So, in respect of our own present comfort; we rejoice in the way of obedience. Doth Paul rejoice when the church doth well, and stand fast? Much more then may they themselves rejoice; “I will run the way of thy commandments, {saith David,} when thou shalt enlarge my heart;” {Ps.119:32;} for as nothing cuts the heart more than a benumbed straightness and dullness, and uncouthness in duty; so nothing cheers the hearts of God’s children more, than a free readiness of spirit to do the will of God; because their delight is in the law of the Lord; it is sweeter than the honey-comb; it is meat and drink to them that do his will; so that meat cannot glad the hungry more, than enlargement in obedience makes glad the panting soul.

Again, in obedience, God speaks comfortably, he speaks peace, and commends with a “well done, good and faithful servant;” so he commended Abraham, Moses, David, and others; and now God’s good word and countenance bring much more joy with it, than the best commendation a prince can give his subject. Moreover it is a comfortable evidence that we are in Christ; for our fruit will show upon what root we grow;

the Spirit then bears solid witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, if the fruit be right. Now, I need not tell you, what joy there is in such sweet testimonies, which silence all heart-cutting fears. Observe that admirable passage of Isaiah, who having published the promised help of God to cure lameness, dumbness, and faintness in God’s service, concludes thus, “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.” {Is.35:10} And in chap.41:10, saith he, “fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” I might add that holiness must necessarily attend grace in respect of others. Our light must so shine, that they might see our good works, and glorify our Father; {Mt.5:16;} that we may be examples to win them, or convince them of their evil, by our holy conversation in Christ; that the weak may not only not be offended, but also built up, of which the apostle Paul is very cautious; and that the enemy may not blaspheme, and be encouraged, or hardened in an evil way. Thus you see what ends obedience serves for, and what not; and how the doctrine of free grace and obedience must go hand-in-hand together, and kiss each other.

The use of this general doctrine, we shall have fitter occasion to apply in handling the particulars; first, let us observe this position of the apostle; the grace of God teacheth, such as are saved by it, to deny ungodliness. For the better apprehending whereof let us take into consideration these particulars. 1. What ungodliness is? 2. What it is to deny it? 3. What the grace of God, teaching this, is? 4. Why this must be denied? 5. Why the grace of God must teach a denial of it?

1. This vice of ungodliness is well ranked in the first place by the apostle, being the capital ring-leading mother-vice, that begets and brings forth all other; let God for dependence on his will be once cast off, and it is the opening of the sluices for all manner of evil to overflow; as you see it notably verified in the Jews in Jeremiah’s time, who shows what an inundation overflows from the leaving of God; but thou saidst, “there is no hope,” there is the casting of God off; then follows, “no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.” {Jer.2:25} He harps on the same strings in

chapter 18, as they said, “there is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.” {Jer.18:12} But that you may the better perceive what this ungodliness is, note, that it consists of two branches, privative and positive. The privative ungodliness in the apostle’s phrase is a “living as without God in the world,” and this is twofold also, in judgment and in practice. A privative ungodliness in judgment, is plain and proper atheism; of which kind the psalmist speaks, “the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.” {Ps.14:1} Such are the grossest sort of ungodly, who have put out the common light of nature. “Ye worship ye know not what.” {Jn.4:22} The privative ungodliness in practice, is such a life as hath no regard unto God, either to fetch anything from him, or to return anything to him; when men live solely upon, and unto the creature, as if there were no God, being put quite out of the thoughts of men; of which the psalmist speaks also, “the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.” {Ps.10:4} The Lord’s “judgments are far above out of his sight.” {vs.5} There you may see the fearful knit of it also; of this sort it is that the apostle means in the passage abovementioned, “being without God in the world.” {Eph.2:12} These two branches made up a privative ungodliness completely; the one hath always the other attending it, but so as to live in defiance of its power; for many will not deny a God, but yet will live as without God. In this latter branch is included all omission of worship, reverence, fear, and confidence, and love of him, whether for matter, manner, or other requisite circumstances; all such omission in privative ungodliness, which is not confined unto his person, but extends also unto his divine will; in brief, this privative ungodliness is due to the lack of spiritual knowledge and divine perception; as it hath respect unto God himself.

Positive ungodliness is more than a bare being without God, or want of that original rectitude required; there is something positive in it, and it is a contrariety, whether in judgment or practice, unto God, and his will revealed. I will touch the nature of this kind of ungodliness, with its difference from the former. And first in the judgment; it is one thing not

to know or understand that there is a God, and who he is; another thing positively to determine judgment that there is no God, or that he is not the true God, who is revealed; this latter is positive ungodliness in the highest degree, wherein there is an intellectual act of contradiction; so likewise for the judgment to affirm, that anything else is God save the Lord; for a positive ungodliness may be either negative or affirmative; in a word, all reasonings and disputes, which either resolve the mind, or raise doubts in it against the nature, person, attribute, or will of God, are ungodliness in judgment. Positive practical ungodliness is, when in our wills and lives we do not only not embrace him, nor follow his revealed will, but actually reject him, and his will, and embrace something else in his room, and walk contrarily to him; namely, if we set up another god instead of him, admiring it more than him, ascribing more to it than him, esteeming it above him, being over-ruled by it rather than him, standing in more awe of it than him. So likewise when he commands worship and reverence, we refuse to give it him, or such as he requires, behaving ourselves saucily or unmannerly towards him; when he bids us hearken, or obey, we stop or deafen our ears against him, and pull in the shoulder, are stiff-necked with iron sinews, and walk contrary unto him, profaning and polluting his worship, name, and Sabbaths; finding our own pleasures, and doing our own works on his holy day, and instead of offering pure sacrifices, we offer the sacrifices of fools, even halting, blind, proud, and filthy services. Thus, you see a summary of the ungodliness that must be denied, as it hath reference to the first table, for hereunto I conceive it is limited by the apostle in this text; for that the breaches of the second table are contained in the other branch of worldly lusts; although I deny not but that ungodliness hath a longer extent in many other places of scripture. But I come to show.

2. What it is to deny this ungodliness. Here by the way, the apostle saith not, that the grace of God, for the present, utterly abolishes and destroys all ungodliness, but teacheth us to deny it; intimating, that ungodliness may consist with the grace of God, in respect of its being, so it do not reign but be denied; a comfortable note to such as are exercised with buffetings of temptation, whereby they may find matter of greatest comfort, in which usually they

feel most anxiety; because of buffetings, commonly troubles of soul arise, like beating waves, whereas the opposition is the work of the grace of God in them; for denial, {which the grace of God teacheth,} in general, is not only a not consenting, or agreeing to ungodly motions, but also a bending of all a man's force and might against such resurrections; of these two things doth a divine denial of ungodliness consist. I say, there is not a yielding or consenting to the motion; that is, although the beloved of the Lord with Paul, are violently carried captive sometimes into some ungodliness; yet all the rhetoric or threats of the devil, or the world, shall not overcome them, so far as to like and take pleasure in ungodliness; well may they hold them a while by force under ungodliness, but to affect it, embrace it of choice to prefer it before godliness; they can no sooner be won to this, than a bird pent up in a cage can be won to prefer the cage more than the open air, or a fish to prefer dry land rather than the water, which yet by force they may be held unto. Paul was never brought so far as to say, "the evil I would do, that do I," but hold here, even in that captivity of his, "the evil I would not do, that do I." It is true, there is something of the will in every act of ungodliness; namely, a not sufficient willing of that act, which is a defect in the will, for that it should imperiously over-rule all sinful motions, and have them under command; there are also sometimes some broken velocities in the will of God's beloved ones to some ungodly motions; but then the judgment is mistaken, and so the affections are misplaced for a time; but these are distempered fits, or disturbed motions out of their place. In a word, if the will at any time incline to ungodly motions, there is a more predominant act of it to the contrary side; for although there be some remainder of a corrupt will, yet is it in a great measure captivated to the power of the renewed will; whilst that is mutinous, this sways the scepter, and suppresses the mutinies; some renitences in the corrupt will against the renewed, do not infer an agreement unto ungodly motions, with consent and choice. And this is the first branch of denying ungodliness.

In denying ungodliness, there is more than a bare refusal; there is also a repulse given to some ungodly motions upon the soul; which assault is the enforcement of some ungodliness, either by bewitching baits or alluring enticements, or terrifying

threats, apt to awe the soul, that it dare not say nay. When the soul is thus hard pressed, a repulse given hereto is properly a denial; fair promises made to the embracing of ungodliness, cannot equipoise those made to godliness, which are true and certain; therefore in a godly denial, the believer takes notice, that ungodliness offers too little to win him; therefore he bids it away, and sends it packing. On the other side, in a holy denial of ungodliness, the believer sees, that whatever ungodliness threatens, if it be not admitted, though it could execute so much fury as it pretends; yet being weighed in the balance with the fruit of departing from godliness, its threatenings are found but flea-bites, in comparison of the weight of wrath ready to fall on such as depart from the living God. Suppose the denial of ungodliness cause the destruction of the body, which is the most and worst it can do; what is that to the casting of soul and body into hell-fire forever? If a man must suffer, what side soever he takes, it is no more than even natural instinct will teach him to choose the least of evils. These and such like considerations in denial of ungodliness, cause a repulse with distaste and offence. Many wicked men depart from ungodliness sometimes, but it is like the parting with intimate friends, with yearning of heart after it, sore against their minds, it is a great trouble and grief to them; but the godly man's heart leaps within for so good a riddance of so troublesome a guest, like the plucking of a thorn out of a man's foot, or the voiding a stone out of the bladder, which caused pain and anguish; for the troublesome assaults, and restless solicitations of ungodliness, are as pricks in his sides, and thorns in his eyes.

Besides this distaste in denial, there is perpetual struggling, and heaving, with all a man's might, to get rid of ungodliness. There are strong cries, and many times tears of moan and anger against it, joined with inward wrestlings for mastery, and fightings within, as the apostle Paul speaks of himself; one while by prayer, imploring aid from heaven against ungodly motions, that they may not prevail; another while laying at them by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, after Christ's example; another while cutting off all provision to weaken or starve them, that their strength may abate and decay; yea, if need be, there is, in this denial, fasting and beating down a man's own body, when treacherously it begins to take part with

ungodliness. In a word, every stone is turned, every ordinance is tried, every opportunity is laid hold on for advantage in denying ungodliness, to discomfit and give it the overthrow; so you see what the denying of ungodliness is. But these are harsh reruns, you say; you told us before of salvation by free grace, and now it seems there must be firm tugging and fighting for it. All this hinders not, but that salvation is of free grace. This is first made sure by grace, and this denial of ungodliness follows, as the matter of our employment in this life. Some will say, if salvation be made sure first, then this toil and labour may be spared. But let such know, that he who settles salvation upon men, also teaches them this lesson of denying ungodliness. Seeing therefore, God will not have this labour spared, it must not be spared. But, it may be said, I cannot, for my heart, deny ungodliness; it is so bewitching, I cannot say nay. Indeed, this denial of ungodliness is an impossible thing to man; strength of nature cannot reach it; flesh and blood neither reveals it, nor works it; nay, the law of works though it reveal this denial, yet works it not; it is attainable only by that grace of God which bringeth salvation. So much is intimated by that expression, "it teacheth."

3. Now what this teaching is we will briefly open. For the clearing whereof, consider, that two things are required to teaching. A diffusion of sufficient light from the teacher to enlighten the ignorant; and such a manner of revealing it as suits with the capacity of him that is instructed; both which imply, a sufficient ability in the teacher to teach; and a dexterity, or faculty to wind himself and his notions into the apprehension of him that is taught; so as that he communicates his own skill unto the other. Improperly a man may be said to teach, when he explains and opens hidden notions, though hearers learn not; but teaching being a relative term, a man cannot properly be said to teach, except some be taught.

To come to our purpose, the free grace of God in Christ, that is, Christ through God's free grace teacheth, when having sufficient light in himself to know how to dissipate ungodly motions, and withal a notable dexterity, or faculty, to know how to reveal this his skill to men; that although they are dull of capacity, yet he can so make them understand, as to participate in the selfsame skill, in kind, though not in perfection. Simply to have the theory of the same skill to deny

ungodliness, is not to be properly, or fully taught of Christ; for it is with divine teaching as it is with human, the teaching is diverse as the matter taught. In human teaching the teacher instructs either in scientific or mechanical arts, either such as concern the theory or the practice. Now in teaching the liberal sciences, as logic, &c., it requires no more but instilling the same notions he hath, into the understanding of him that learns, who is then taught when he truly, understands these sciences; but it is otherwise in teaching mechanical arts, to wit, handy crafts; for the teacher in imparting his skill, must bring the learner to be able to do as himself can, else he hath not taught him. Thus is it with divine teaching; Christ hath his doctrinal truths which properly concern the understanding; as that there is a God, who he is, and what the mystery of the Trinity is, and what the incarnation of Christ, with the like; so far as the knowledge of these is required, Christ's teaching is no more but a distilling of a clear and right apprehension of them; but then there are some practical truths of his, wherein to be skillful requires his teaching also; about these Christ not only reads his lectures of them, but infuses a sagacity to act, or his skill to work; as the scribe doth not only open the mysteries of orthography, but guides the scholar's hand also in writing, till he can guide it well himself; so Christ teacheth practical divine arts; he leaves not his scholars till they can do themselves {though not of themselves} as he instructs and teacheth them.

For the farther clearing of this note, that this teaching is instrumental or original; the former kind of teaching is imperfect, the latter complete and effectual; the instrumental is by outward means, the original and effectual teaching, which proceeds from God's favour in Christ is the immediate act of God's Spirit; many attain the former who come short of the latter; the external teaching is either by the word itself, or by the ministers of it. The teaching of the word itself is by its own arguments, or by the ministers, by explanation of the word, and the arguments thereof; which, by a common light, may teach unto conviction to rational regarders; but, of themselves, they cannot effectually infuse the christian skill of denying ungodliness; for as neither Paul's planting, nor the watering of Apollos gave increase; so neither can the letter of the word, without the Spirit, which is the animating or quickening soul of the word. It is the internal teaching

of the Spirit, which alone gives efficacy to the denial of ungodliness; neither word nor minister avail anything, but this Spirit. If you ask how this is wrought by the Spirit of Christ? I answer, that Christ, having merited salvation and sanctification for the elect, takes order, and provides such a guide, as is every way complete for the perfecting the saints, that is, his Spirit; and because they are rational creatures he is to deal withal, he deals with them, not by a compulsive violence to forsake ungodliness, but persuasively to win them; God shall persuade Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; {Gen.9:27;} so that the work of the Spirit must be teaching, not forcing, as irrational creatures are forced and necessitated. Now, because there is such a stubborn refractoriness in the hearts of all men naturally, to be ruled and persuaded, and such natural crossness; all the difficulty lies in winning men to be willing, or to be persuaded, which no created power can reach unto; the main teaching therefore of the Spirit, is to instill so much into a vessel of mercy, as shall win him to a willingness to deny ungodliness; so as not to be able to say nay, through the resolute bent of the will thereto.

Now, how the Spirit doth this, we will consider a little; the Spirit makes manifest to the soul, partly by restoring sight, partly with the clearness of light, what horrid loathsomeness there is in ungodliness; and that not with some obscure glimmerings, but with a full delineation and anatomizing of its hidden ugliness; not with an itching, rhetorical strain to captivate the fancy, as man's wisdom sometimes may do, which the apostle calls enticing words, but with such an evidence as is attended with demonstration and power; so that though he leave the heart without an absolute necessary compulsion, {for so a man cannot deny ungodliness,} yet he so convinceth, as that all whatsoever pleads for ungodliness is silenced, and the pleadings of the Spirit against ungodliness, with the decipherings of it, are so prevalent, and carry such a weight along with them, that the soul thus taught by the Spirit, cannot choose but be overruled freely to agree with it; which is such a drawing of the Spirit, as sets the soul a running upon ungodliness with a holy violence. Such a necessary, yet voluntary tractableness, by the prevalency of the Spirit, was fore-prophesied and promised by Christ; "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes;" and "they shall be all taught of God."

This latter passage, our Saviour established by his own mouth. In brief, the Spirit of Christ, hath such a prevailing power on such as it teacheth, with the clear light and conviction it brings to the heart, as that it stirs up such a necessary, yet voluntary antipathy and indignation against ungodliness, as there is in men naturally against poison, or desperate mischief; who are not by any compulsion forced to shun them, and yet of necessity they cannot choose, but shun and fly from them; and yet it is as voluntary and free an eschewing thereof, as any free choice a man can make.

4. There must of necessity be such a denial of ungodliness in all that shall be saved by grace, because the Lord hath coupled them together; so that for the same reason that we expect salvation freely from him, we must conclude, that this denial of ungodliness must be practiced; for the ground of both is one, even the same good pleasure of God's will. If any conclude a certainty of salvation, because God hath revealed his good will therein {which is the only ground of expecting the same} whereupon a believer may safely build; this will of his being a firm rock that cannot fail, he must, by the same reason, conclude an equal certainty and necessity, that ungodliness must also be denied, there being the same will of God revealed concerning it. If his revealed will be of force to conclude one thing, it is of like force to conclude another that is equally founded on it. If a man imagine that God may, and will dispense with, denying ungodliness, after he hath declared his mind, that ungodliness must be denied; he hath no ground to think but he also may, and will, dispense with his own promise, of saving by grace, though he hath preemtorily declared himself herein; and so he must become changeable, and so there can be no footing to depend on the dispensing with his word; for he that will be false in one thing, may be so in another, and what trust can there be reposed in such an one? But God is far from such changeableness; his revealed will hath an universal stability, and cannot totter. To whom the promise of salvation is made, it is impossible but it shall be performed, and they shall be saved, because he hath said it; and so who are thus saved, it is impossible but they must deny ungodliness, because he hath said that also.

Ungodliness must be denied, because it is a manifest fighting against God, which procures not only his displeasure, but also incenses him as an

enemy. A consent unto, and practice of ungodliness, is more than a breaking of his bonds in sunder, and casting off his cords from us; it is a kind of lifting up the heel against him, and of persecuting him, as Christ proclaimed from heaven to Paul, when he practiced that ungodliness, enraging against the truth. Now Gamaliel, Paul's master though he was of the wicked council of the ungodly persecutors, yet this inconveniency he saw, in opposing the godliness of the disciples, they would be found to fight against God; and therefore very pithily persuades them to desist from this course, and to take heed to themselves in this matter. {Acts 5:34-39} Now, what the issue of this lifting up the heel against God will prove, hear the Lord himself speaking by the psalmist, "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." {Ps.2:4,5} Our Saviour tells us, that such enemies as shake off his yoke, and will not have him reign over them, must be brought and slain before him. "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." {Lk.19:27} So that they do but "kick against the pricks;" {Acts 9:5;} and therefore, in this regard, there is abundance of reason to deny ungodliness; and if this were not the bitter fruit of the enmity of ungodliness, yet it is but reasonable to deny it, for its enmity against God, seeing all his kindness, especially this of saving by grace, deserves better than such an unkind requiting of such evil for his good with an ingenuous spirit. This is a most piercing argument to deny ungodliness. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." {Rom.12:1} "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." {II Cor.7:1} Who spits not at the villainy of Judas in betraying so good a master? And who abhors not the conspiracy of such a subject, whose life his prince hath spared of mere grace? If Ezra's argument be of such force to restrain ungodliness, namely, "seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments, and join in

affinity with the people of these abominations?" {Ezra 9:13,14} How much more should this argument work, seeing thou, our God, hast crowned us with glory and dignity, and hast done marvelous things for us, should we practice ungodliness against thee, and not deny the same?

The denying of ungodliness is necessary, because not denying it brings many a woe, and breeds much trouble in this life, as may be seen in David's case, who caused the enemy to blaspheme; you know that it is ungodliness that separates God and man, and causeth God to hide his face. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." {Is.59:2} Observe the truth hereof in other examples, as the church in the Canticles, {chap.5,} and Manasseh, Hezekiah, and old Eli, yea, all the whole nation of the Jews, from their infancy to their expiration. It is the practice, and not denying of godliness, that ushers in the messengers of wrath, and puts dismal denunciations into their mouths, as you may see in Moses, Nathan, and all the prophets. Now, if it were certain there were no miscarriage in the world to come for ungodliness; yet the dear rate to be paid, even in this life, for it hath argument enough to a judgment, not wholly blinded, to convince of the necessity of denying ungodliness; who would buy David's sin at his rate, or Francis Spira's denying of Christ, when he verily thought there could not be worse torments in hell than what he felt in this life, which soon scorched up his flesh, and consumed his vitals?

Now finally, this denial of ungodliness must be taught by divine grace, because it is impossible for flesh and blood to attain the skill and dexterity of this mystery; "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" {Rom.8:7;} and therefore "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" for these are only "spiritually discerned." {I Cor.2:14} It is a military discipline, neither naturally infused, neither learned of the principles of reason; the doctrine of this mystery, and the sagacity to learn it, are of God alone; and it is so hidden a thing, that the world derides it as vanity and folly, yea, amongst such as go for wise men in the world. So our Saviour affirms in his prayer to his Father, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from

the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." {Mt.11:25} This being so, how is it possible to attain to denial of ungodliness, but from a teaching that is divine; especially considering, that besides the imparting notions of the mysteries of this art, there is also required an over-ruling power to draw us to the things revealed, which are so harsh and contrary to our inclinations, which are so corrupt, and that not by compulsion, as I said, but persuasively; for when the heart is known, it makes so much against the natural inclination of a man, that he rather distastes the practice of this mystery of denying ungodliness, than affects it. It is so against the shock that the trade will seem an Egyptian bondage; let men but observe their own dispositions, and this will be too manifest; for example, consider when you are in necessity, what dependence is there upon the creature, and what diffidence in the Creator! What fear is there of men, and what presumption upon God! What fondness of the world, and contempt of God, and his ordinances! What irreverence, wearisomeness and dislike of God's worship; which are all ungodly, things. Who is able to deny and put off these things from himself? Nay, who naturally can find in his heart to disclaim and renounce them, and make it his daily trade to pluck down ungodliness? Alas; they are strong holds which the heart of man builds and fortifies, out of his natural enmity against God; it must, therefore, be God alone who is mighty, who must pull down and demolish these strong holds. Will, skill, and power, must come from him, or it will never be done.

Use 1: Doth divine grace teach all to deny ungodliness that shall be saved? Then must I read the fearful doom of all who have not learned this lesson, and are not yet taught it of God; even that harsh censure Peter passed on Simon Magus, that such are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity;" {Acts 8:23;} and have not their part in this matter. I say, as yet, this is their fearful condition; and if they continue thus untaught this lesson, there can be no salvation by grace for them. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." {Mt.7:21} When to such as the Lord opens not to, he will say, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." Men commonly dream of a strange kind of gospel, that never came into

God's mind; that seeing Christ hath died, they may live as they list, fighting against God and godliness, letting themselves loose to all impiety, and yet go to heaven. Certainly, had God opened such a gap to let in such an inundation of impiety, he could never have justly complained of the deluge of it, that overflows the world; far be it from the holy God, whose purity abhors it, to allow such licentiousness to men; no, no, God's aim was at the damning up the fountain of sin; Jesus Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." {Tit.2:14} Not because we are holy, but that we might be holy.

Some licentious ungodly wretches, I know, reply, though to their own ruin, {for to such the gospel proves a stone of offence} that Christ justifies the ungodly, and we are saved by grace without works; but, alas; they observe not how cunningly the devil equivocates to lull them asleep in their ungodly practices. It is true, indeed, that Christ justifies the ungodly, that is, he finds them ungodly when he imputes his righteousness unto them; but he doth not leave them ungodly, "but teacheth them to deny ungodliness;" he affords no cloak to persistence or perseverance in ungodliness, but will come in flaming fire "taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." {II Thes.1:8} He that denies not ungodliness, him will Christ deny before his Father which is in heaven. Why then wilt thou be deluded with such gross sophistry, in so clear a sunshine of the gospel? Is not the light so bright that thine own heart checks thee? And if thine heart condemn thee "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." {I Jn.3:20} It is true also, that we are saved by Christ without works, but here also Satan equivocates as grossly as in the other case; for although faith only saves without works efficiently, yet not consequently, as I said before; that is, though faith only saves, yet that faith must not be alone that saves, but must be attended with its fruits, to wit, denying ungodliness; else it is so far from saving, that it is but a dead faith, and he is but a vain man that hath no better, as James well affirms. The person believing will deny ungodliness, though this denial works not his salvation; as the apple makes not the apple tree, but the apple tree brings forth the apple, and not the apple the tree, yet the apple tree must bear apples, or else it

is no true apple tree. Our Saviour speaks to the same purpose, “a good tree bringeth forth good fruit;” he doth not say, the fruit makes it a good tree, yet the good fruit is inseparable. I speak not of quantities, or degrees, as neither doth our Saviour, but of the truth, to wit, a real and sincere denial of ungodliness. It is very certain, as thorns and thistles bear no grapes, or figs, so neither do true vines or fig trees bear thorns or thistles. Some accident, either inward distemper, or outward temptation, may indeed putrefy or wither their fruit. Some again, sufficiently convinced of this truth, are apt to think there is time enough yet to deny ungodliness; one of the enough there is indeed, time little enough. It may be thou art plummeting into the grave with age, and thy sun is setting, and all thy time past thou hast walked in ungodliness; God hath not been in all thy thoughts; insomuch that thou art even tanned with ungodliness now, and accustomed to do evil, it is become a second nature to thee; and is it time enough yet to deny ungodliness? Is not the mastery of it exceeding difficult? Is it not too deeply rooted? And canst thou cast it out at pleasure? Can such an old familiar, with which thou hast had so long acquaintance, and taken so sweet content, be so easily shaken off? Though delays of this nature are to all men dangerous, yet to none so dangerous as to those who, being old in age, are old in ungodliness too; they are apt to think themselves too wise to be caught, and count it a shame to turn over a new leaf; which will proclaim all their former wisdom to be but folly; but whilst they think themselves so wise, I am sure they become fools, in thinking there will be time enough yet to cast off the viper of ungodliness, which may destroy them, God only knows how soon; but, unto all procrastinators of ungodliness, let them know, they are warned in time, God yet knocks and calls; how soon he may withdraw himself, who knows? Remember what he said to Ephraim, that he “is joined to idols; let him alone;” {Hos.4:17;} and what he saith to the same people of the Jews, by the prophet Isaiah, “why should ye be stricken anymore; ye will revolt more and more.” {Is.1:5} Again, “make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” {Is.6:10} It grieves me to read so sad a lecture, but the security of many constrains me, lest

they should perish in their ungodliness.

Use 2: Hence gather also, that if any man would deny ungodliness, he must go to the school of grace to learn it, whereby he may discern one notable and comfortable difference between legal and evangelical righteousness; in matter they agree, for as the law, so the gospel expects a denial of ungodliness; but the law leaves a man to shift as well as he can for himself; as for help, besides his own wit and strength, he must look for none, and the law exhibits none; the tale of bricks must be delivered in, or they must bow down their backs to the smiter; as for straw, and other accommodations, they must seek it where they may, none shall be given; and therefore well may the rigor thereof be accounted a burden, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear; from which insupportable burden, our dear Lord and Saviour hath purchased our glorious liberty at no mean price; even this liberty, that by grace we shall be taught and enabled to the denial of ungodliness, under the gospel. God is not so hard a master as to expect a crop where he sows not, nor increase where he doth not give a stock of talents to trade; nor sends us on a warfare at our own provision; but first he steels us against the adversary with skill, courage, and fortitude. Augustine had sufficient ground to pray as he did, *Da, Domine, quod jubes, et jube quod vis*, {as the Lord that sets us on work enables and furnishes us to do the work;} which yet is no new gospel, but as ancient as a visible church, typified in God’s fore-furnishing Noah with an ark, that he might be saved when the world of the godly perished, and left him not to his own wit to shift for himself; so also requiring a sacrifice of Abraham, he provides him a burnt offering; in his sending his people Israel on that tedious journey from Egypt to Canaan, he divides the sea, and Jordan, for them to make them a way; and to supply them, he sends manna from heaven, and water out of the rock; and when Joshua is to enter upon the conquest of that land, he appears in a vision to him, and bids him not fear nor be discouraged; for {saith the Lord,} “I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” {Jos.1:5}

Whenever he requires anything of such as are in covenant with him in Christ, he will take order there shall be no lack of anything that may accommodate them to the performance of it, “it is God that girdeth me with strength, {saith David,} and maketh my

way perfect;” {Ps.18:32;} “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me;” {Ps.57:2;} “through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.” {Ps.108:13} “My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” {Ps.73:26} Christ tells Peter that Satan hath desired to sift him as wheat, “but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” {Lk.22:31,32} “I laboured more abundantly than they all; {saith the apostle Paul;} yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” {I Cor.15:10} “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” {Phil.4:13} It is observable, that whereas, according to the nature of covenants, each party covenanting mutually bind themselves by the covenant of their several parts; but, in the new covenant of the gospel of free grace, betwixt God, and those that are justified by grace, it is otherwise; God indeed binds himself “to blot out their transgressions, and to remember their sins no more;” but whereas we should bind ourselves to remove away our stony hearts, and to walk with soft hearts before him, to get his law into us, and never to depart from him, which is our part of the covenant, it being our duty to God; yet, he undertakes by promise to furnish us out of his own store with all this. “I will sanctify my great name - I will take you from among the heathen - I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean - a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.” {Ez.36:23-30} Which answers this clause in the text that the grace of God shall teach us to deny that ungodliness which he expects to be denied; and therefore unto this grace must we fly for sufficiency to denial, if ever we attain it; the power is not in our own hands, nor the skill; ungodliness is a devil which will not be cast out, but by seeking aid from above, from whence comes every good, and every perfect gift, even from the Father of lights. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;” {Eph.6:10;} seeing in denial of ungodliness you “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” {vs.12} You shall indeed faint if you draw not living water from this well-spring of life; but this shall renew your strength, as is typified in Samson, fighting against the Philistines, who after he had with his jaw-bone slain a thousand of them, he fainted, until God opened or “clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water there out; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived;” {Judges 15:19} Let me therefore urge you, as once Jacob did his sons, when the famine was in Canaan, and no food was to be found at home, “why do ye look one upon another; {saith he;} behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.” {Gen42:2} Or, as the famished lepers that went to the camp of the Syrians; who “said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?” {II Kings 7:4} In like manner, I say, why stand you still, looking either carelessly or remorsefully on yourselves, or on one another, when all strength in the world fails to vanquish ungodliness, which devours worse than a famine. You have heard, as well as I, that there is spiritual food for strength in the gospel; go to it then, and fetch from thence, that you may live and not perish; this bread though in the Father’s house sends the enfeebled, half-starved prodigal thither, seeing he could subsist no longer of himself.

You may say, how shall I partake of this skill and help of God to deny ungodliness? I answer, be in God’s way, and come to his school, {as I said,} where he teacheth to deny ungodliness. They that never go to his school, or put themselves under a master that cannot teach, shall never know letters or be skillful in any art, but will ever be to seek; and it is not every one, but he only that is skilled that way, that can teach the ignorant; they that know not letters themselves, and are not skillful in a mystery, can never teach others; therefore it is but vain to seek to such. The Spirit of God alone hath this skill, to teach the denial of ungodliness; all the world besides is to seek in it; the popish masters, like vaunting fraudsters, have set up a school of their own, and devised new rules out of the forge of their own brains, to compass this; to wit, single life, whippings, monastical solitariness, hideous phantoms, and the terror of purgatory flames,

with crossings, and holy water, and a world of trash; by all which they rack and cruciate poor souls, and leave them desperate; for all this will never do it, because God is not with it; these being lessons that he never gave, neither did they ever come into his mind. Indeed their school is erected, and rules devised, not so much to teach, as to make a gain of their proselytes. Go therefore to Christ's school, where are ordinances instituted by himself for the purpose to teach; but go not to human inventions, though ever so specious or probable. The blind men, you know, recovered their sight, and had their blindness cured, when they lay by the way-side where Christ came; at other times, when they were out of Christ's way, some flashing they might have, but no cure; so the lame man, lying at the gate of the temple, gets his limbs, and is made to leap. This makes the church in Cant.1:7,8, {being yet powerless,} to move this seasonable query to Christ, "tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside?" Whereunto Christ makes answer; "if thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." They that shun the means, and come not to God's ordinances, must needs remain ungodly persons, and be mere strangers to the denial of ungodliness; though I do not say, that the mere coming to them, and living under them, is sufficient to be taught this.

There must be a concentrated attendance on these ordinances, which is a serious and earnest bending of the mind, with all a man's might, to the lectures of the Spirit. To make one a scholar, is requisite, not only going to school, but also minding his book, and his master's instructions; he that gives not his mind to it, shall never attain it; much more is this giving of our minds to the teaching of the Spirit requisite, that we may be taught by him, all the lessons being supernatural, and above the reach of common reason; they are all paradoxes to nature; they are mysteries of so high a strain, that will put even teachers of Israel to a stand; the very disciples of Christ, as well as Nicodemus, were at a loss; when Christ reads his lectures, they are very riddles. Now you know that the more mystical and intricate any science is, the more wary and heedful must the mind be that will

learn it; hence it is that the Lord so often inculcates an attending, "lest at any time we should let them slip." {Heb.2:1} You find likewise, that such as have been taught by the Spirit, have been still attentive; as the Jews in Nehemiah's time, when the book of the law was distinctly read, and the sense given, so that the people were caused to understand. The text saith that "the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law;" so "they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." And that "all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law." {Neh.8:3-9} So when God opened the heart of Lydia, the text saith, that the Lord opened her heart, so "that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." {Acts 16:14} So Christ's hearers were very attentive to hear him, or did hang upon him, as the margin reads it. This attentiveness is sometimes called, an inclining of the ear, sometimes a regarding and marking, sometimes a comparing of things together, or pondering, or weighing of them, which was the attention of those of Berea, who made a scrutiny or a search, according to Scripture, "daily, whether those things were so." {Acts 17:11} Certainly this careless heedlessness, and not minding either the outward or inward lectures of the Spirit, but {according to the proverb} having a wool-gathering mind, is one great cause of so much non-proficiency in the school of Christ, and of such idiotism in the mystery of denying ungodliness, and in all other divine mysteries; so that of many we may say, as Paul of some of the Hebrews, whereas for the time they might even be teachers, that have yet need that one teach them "again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." {Heb.5:12} Even as careless boys hardly get beyond their letters in the time they might have been able to read well, had they but minded their books. Would you then be taught this lesson to deny ungodliness? Regard and mark well, with a busy mind, what the Spirit saith to the churches; for that is properly to have an ear to hear; ponder, therefore, and lay up his saying in your hearts; thus was Mary taught. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." {Lk.2:19} The letting of the thoughts be scattered, and forage in every bye corner; gazing on every object that is presented, leave but a sottish carcass in the place, as

far to seek as at the first; thus attention is necessary to teachableness, but it is not sufficient; for many attend, but receive not instruction.

Therefore, to be taught this lesson to deny ungodliness by the Spirit of God requires submission, not to contradict his principles, or rules, but to subscribe to them, and take them for settled principles. He that will be still caviling with his master, saying, this is not a true rule, and that will not hold current, he shall never be taught by him till he will yield. There are too many in the world of this troupe, that will deny principles, either contradicting them, or they will not receive them, except they be proved; now it is impossible that such an one should be taught; for in all sciences there are some principles that can have no other demonstration than a native light, or good authority, by which matters depending in that science must be confirmed and proved; therefore, it is a rule in all arts, *contra principia negantem non est disputandum*, {against one who denies the principles, there can be no debate,} there is no dealing with a man that denies principles; yet in human science the firmest are but natural principles, which in respect of nature's obscurity and mutability, may possibly be subject to error; nevertheless they must be received, because they are instructible, or else there is no learning such a science. Much more necessary, therefore, is it, that the learners of divine mysteries {and this of denying ungodliness among the rest} that they contradict not, nor reject divine principles, nor yet expect any rational demonstration of them; for no science builds on faith as divinity doth; partly because the authority on which they depend, to wit, the Lord's own appointment, is infallible, and cannot deceive, so that for this cause they are more free from exception, and more firm, than what hath ever so manifest demonstration in itself.

For example, the shield of faith quenches the fiery darts of ungodliness, and purifies the heart from it. Godly sorrow works up a zeal against it, and stirs up indignation and vehement desire to be rid of it; the word of God is "quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword," to clip it from the soul, and to rip up the odious poison of it, being applied by faith against it; these, with others, are infallible principles, taught by the Spirit of God; and he that will learn this lesson, must not dispute the certain efficacy of them, much

less contradict or reject them as vain and frivolous; if learners will take upon them to control, or teach their teacher, the Spirit of God, they may be ever learning, but shall never come to the knowledge of the truth, or be skillful in divine practice; for the loose despising atheist shall remain an atheist still; and the proud deviser of new, though more rigid courses, leaving the principles of the Spirit of Christ, may rack his brain, and macerate his body, but ungodliness shall dwell with him still. The humble learners of the Spirit of God are the greatest proficient, for "the meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way." {Ps.25:9} "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." {I Pet.5:5} Doubtless our Saviour, when he tells us, that "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" {Mt.18:3;} principally means an un-contradicting teachableness; with whom all go for unquestionable maxims taught; as they never dispute whether they be right or no. I say not this as if every word that ministers speak must go for an oracle, but what the Spirit of God speaks out of the word of God.

Be not discouraged at the harshness and uncouthness of the lessons the Spirit sets you at first; in all sciences, the first lessons are hardest, they seem to be an indissoluble knot; the way is more tedious, because the path is yet rough, and not trodden, after a little use, it will be a great deal more easy; even as Greek seems a harsh language, almost impossible to be learned at first, yet in a little time it comes on smoothly. In like manner, the instructions of the Spirit to deny ungodliness, seem very crabbed at first; flesh and blood cannot brook them, as they are rough in the handling like new tools, till a little use hath made them plain and smooth; and so the rules of denying ungodliness were thus uncouth to all, even the best proficient, at first; none ever learned the art, that break not through the first and sharpest brunt with difficulty; it was a galling yoke at first, but in time Christ made it easy to them, and so he will to thee. If mere use can make harshest lessons easy, heavy burdens, not only tolerable, but lightsome also, and often treading, makes the roughest ways smooth; as long imprisonment will take away much of the bitterness of it, and the like; much more will the divine supernatural help of grace, make the harsh lecture of denying ungodliness easy, nay, a recreation. Fresh

soldiers at first take arms with heavy hearts, but after a little experience, the sound of drums and trumpets calling to battle is music in their ears; especially when the general makes them see the certain advantages, then they set light by the brunt, or a few knocks.

The next point that the text affords to us is this, that the grace of God teacheth such as are saved by it to deny worldly lusts. We shall be the more brief in opening this point, because many branches hereof were fully opened in the last; here we shall have no more to do but to consider, what are worldly lusts, which are to be denied. In the clearing whereof John will give us light, who reduces them to three heads; to wit, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" and these are not of the Father, but of the world; {I Jn.2:16;} so then, to know what worldly lusts are, we must search a little into these three particulars.

What is meant by the lusts of the flesh? The flesh, when lust is ascribed to it, is taken three ways; sometimes mystically for the whole corrupted part of man, or so much as lies under the law and power of sin, and is opposed to the regenerate part of man, which is renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; so the apostle understands it in that passage, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." {Gal.5:17} The lusts of the flesh, thus understood, are all inordinate and irregular inclinations and motions whatsoever, springing from the fountain, man's depraved and polluted nature, and are opposed to injections from without, whether of Satan, or any external objects; for some sinful motions have their original immediately from a man's self, without derivation or dependence from, or upon, any other cause; and in some respect, or in regard of some inordinate inclination, man is a cistern that receives polluted waters from other heads; as when Satan tempts, or outward baits entice; but most sinful inclination have their seeds within a man's self and many weeds grow up from the nature of that soil, without any sowing. An exact distinguishing of these internal natural lusts of the flesh, from Satan and the world's injections, hath not yet been reached by any that I can find, because Satan doth so mix his injections with our natural inclinations. But James is very clear in the thing, that the flesh hath proper lusts of its own, "every man is tempted, {saith he,} when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." {Jas.1:14} Now these kinds of lusts, as well as others, may be well

called worldly; partly, as they are worldly men with whom they reign; partly also, as they have their being in this world only. The denial or resistance of these, the grace of God teacheth to such as shall be saved.

Sometimes again, flesh is taken synecdochically, to wit, a part for the whole. And so the flesh imports that branch of corrupt nature, from whence spring, in particular, inordinate, unclean motions, or lascivious inclinations to adultery, fornication, and such like; so Jude takes it, speaking of some that gave "themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh;" that in so running "these filthy dreamers defile the flesh;" {Jude 7,8;} that is, they defile themselves with uncleanness. More plainly Peter, speaking of men that walk after the lusts of uncleanness, that "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness." {II Pet.2:18} Flesh thus considered as the fountain of uncleanness, the lusts of it are unclean inclinations, desires, delights, and pleasing contemplations therein; thus must our Saviour's speech be understood, "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" {Mt.5:28;} only note, that an inclination to propagation is not simply sinful; for God himself makes marriage, simply considered in itself honorable, and therefore reposes not all such desires absolutely sinful, but the inordinate desires, or lusts after the flesh, doth the grace of God teach to deny.

Flesh sometimes is taken naturally for the body of a man, and then the lusts of it are all inordinate desires, after such things as please the body, as meat, drink, raiment, means of health, and welfare of it in any kind; this inordinate desire is not of the Father, but of the world; this lust of the flesh our Saviour labors to suppress, "therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat; or, what shall we drink; or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" {Mt.6:31} And take "no thought for the morrow;" {vs.34;} that is, be not either over solicitous with distraction, to the excruciating or disquieting yourselves hereby; or be not excessively greedy of these things, or for anything more than is needful. So that this kind of lust consists of these branches, when our desires and cares are so extreme and turbulent about these things as make us neglect, forget, or slight better things; or when they become a burden and torture to us; and when they keep not

within any fit limits or bounds. As for example; this is the lust of the flesh, that is, of the world, when our heart is so taken up with the desire of food, raiment, health, that we disturb ourselves about them, and mind nothing so much, or so eagerly, as making provision for them; neglecting or undervaluing the spiritual food, raiment, and health of our souls; so likewise when our desires are not content with food and raiment that is convenient, but are aspiring to superfluity, even to more, for quantity and variety, than will serve the turn; or, to what is better, finer, and more delicate, than what is needful; so a gluttonous, drunken and voracious desire, comes under this kind of the lusts of the flesh; as also impatience in sickness, both in respect of the continuance of it, or the lack of such remedies, or means, which we conceive may recover us.

Another sort of worldly lusts to be denied are, as John speaks, “the lusts of the eye;” and they are conversant about the things which by the eye the heart is over affected with; and they are things that are our neighbor’s, and not our own; or things that are our own. These, as they are conversant about our neighbour, or anything that is his. Perhaps thine eye beholds the beauty and conveniency of thy neighbor’s house; the goodly, useful, rich furniture; the rarity, pleasantness, fruitfulness, good situation, and abundance of his lands; the plenty and variety of his fare; the strength, good qualities, and serviceableness of his attendants; the amiableness, good disposition, meekness, helpfulness of his wife. Now there may be a twofold lust of the eye. Enviousness of heart at him, because of these good things which thine eye beholds. The apostle tells us of the spirit of a man, that lusts to envy, and this envious lust of the eye must be denied, and grace alone will teach the denial. Or, the eye lusts after these when the sight of them stirs up a wishing them to be his own; so Ahab lusted for Naboth’s vineyard, and Absalom for his father’s kingdom.

Another sort of worldly lusts, he calls the “pride of life;” now this is thinking of ourselves above what is meet, for anything in the world, spiritual or natural gifts; as knowledge, utterance, skill, feature, proportion, strength, or the like; or riches, friends, parentage, place, titles, office; when any bear themselves loftily, scornfully, with overtopping conceits, slighting others; this is a kind of ambitious lust, seeking its own

exaltation above measure.

Now grace will teach, though not utterly to vanquish, yet to deny these; it will teach as a monitor or a remembrancer, when they begin to stir; and be as a secret voice, giving warning of an insurrection in the soul, that it may prepare for an encounter at the beginning of the mutiny, before it hath got a head. Again grace teacheth to deny these, by infusing divine skill to get the best advantages of them. There is no worldly lust, but hath a fair pretext to cover its vileness; as covetousness is called good husbandry, drunkenness good fellowship, pride is handsomeness, oppression is seeking a man’s own, uncleanness is called love, and the like; whereby the soul is got asleep, as Delilah did Samson, till it is betrayed into the hands of Satan; but, through grace, the Spirit of God discovers this mask or visor of lust, and leaves it open in his own ugliness. They that are taught of God cannot be cozened with all the cunning insinuations and fair glosses lust covers itself with; they appear through the thickest mists, what they truly are, for the lambskin shall not be able to hide the wolfishness in lust. The Spirit gives them such a quick piercing eye, as to see through all the seemingly genuine pretenses, which insight all the world is not able to procure, but only the Spirit of God, through grace; even as none but the Lord discovered the wife of Jeroboam to Ahijah the prophet, when she came to him in a disguise. {I Kings 14:5,6} We descry and discover in our ministry the secret treachery, and hidden poison of lust; but not one of a hundred takes notice thereof, or will believe our report, but only such, as {besides that} hear, and are inwardly convinced by the secret illumination of the Spirit; which is as great an advantage as the Israelites had of the Syrians, when the prophet still revealed the consultations their king held in his bed-chamber. {II Kings 6:12}

Again, the Spirit, by grace, gives this advantage by teaching where the strength of lust lies; what provision pampers and fattens it; how every lust hath its proper fuel or pasture, to keep it in growth; and that the deceitful heart and treacherous porters the senses, are secretly in league with lust, to steal out at every opportunity, to forage for its provision, and to bring it in. As for instance, the Spirit discovers, that unclean lusts have strength from excess of meat or drink, too much familiarity with loose persons, filthy discourse, wanton dalliance, obscene books; this will make a

spark grow to a flame, and a hunger starved lust grow fat and mighty; and that the filthy heart by musing, the lustful eye by prying, the wanton ear by listening, bring in this fuel. I say, the Spirit of grace makes a full discovery, that by these means lust comes to be so strong, and in so full plight; some glimmering fancies men may have hereof, without the effectual work of the Spirit, but a convincing and affecting discovery is only by that. But he stays not in discovering where the strength lies, but teaches how to weaken it; namely, by cutting off this provision, and shortening lust of his allowance, and keeping a strict guard and watch over these treacherous favourers of it; as the grooms taking away a horse's provender, soon makes him lean and abate his courage; so the Spirit puts the soul on this practical part of policy, as a general not only tells his soldiers, they must intercept the provision that may feed the besieged city, and fall on the convoys; but he marches out before them, and puts them on the project, and breaks the way for them; and as Delilah taught the Philistines how to weaken Samson, herself breaking the ice for them, cutting off his locks. All the rudiments in the world are not sufficient instructions to bereave lust of this strength, but the Spirit. Some austere spirits have dealt very rigidly with themselves to weaken this strength of lust; witness Jerome, who relates his case himself, speaking of fasting, and other harsh means, for weakening lust, he says, by his own bitter experience, that of themselves they have no efficacy, but only rose and increased the more. Nothing therefore, no not the use of God's own means, can avail to the weakening of lust, except the effectual operation of the Spirit strike the stroke; and from this must the effectual discovery and abatement of the strength of whatsoever lust be fetched.

We have done with the two great hydras, ungodliness, and worldly lusts, whose heads grace takes off for such as are saved by it; which having thus cleared the coast, and made the passage free from devourers, the same grace leads them to God's green pastures, that therein they may be fat and flourishing; where it takes care of three things, that they may be complete. 1. In respect of themselves, that they may lie down quietly without disturbance. 2. In respect of others, that they may not be offensive, but useful to them. 3. In respect of God, that they may be fit for their Master's use, and delightful in his eye.

The first care of the grace of God, which concerns believers, is to teach and win them to sobriety, whereby they may undisturbedly enjoy themselves with comfort. The doctrine is, that the grace of God teacheth such, as shall be saved, to live soberly; wherein let us consider. What sobriety is; what it is to live soberly; and how grace teaches it?

Sobriety sometimes is taken strictly for a temperate and moderate use of meat and drink, without excess, and is opposed to gluttony and drunkenness; but, most frequently in scripture, it is of a far larger extent, and is understood of a general moderation in all things we have to do with; thus Paul understands temperance, which is all one with sobriety; "and every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate {or sober} in all things." {I Cor.9:25} In this general sense it is to be understood in this place; for the apostle you see accumulates all which concerns a man's self in an orderly conversation, under this one virtue, sobriety. In general, it is an universal moderating a man's self, or keeping himself in due limits, in all things whatsoever he hath to do with; and it answers that rule of the apostle, "let your moderation be known to all men," which he expounds in the next verse, "be careful for nothing;" that is, be so indifferent in the use of all the things of this world, that nothing may distract you. This sobriety, or temperate moderation, is twofold; internal; and external. The former is a sobriety of the mind; the latter of the conversation. Give me leave to clear these, that the latitude may appear; and first for the sobriety of the mind. Note, for the foundation of what I have to say, that the apostle is very clear, that there is a sobriety in the mind, and that he intends such in the text. For in verse 7, he requires sober-mindedness, and the text is an encouragement to it, from the efficacy of grace to compass it. Writing to the Romans he speaks to the same purpose, "for I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." {Rom.12:3} Now thinking, {you know,} is an act of the mind; consider we therefore, what the sobriety of the mind is.

It consists in the moderation of its inquisition; that is, the mind in its search or enquiry into things keeps itself within due limits, and wades not deeper

than its reach. As the eye is not satisfied with seeing, so {many times} the mind is not contented or satisfied with prying into hidden or concealed secrets; but it is a good rule, *noli altum sapere*; {that is, do not be high-minded, but fear.} The Holy Ghost gives a good reason of it, “the secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” {Deut.29:29} A man may be too saucy, and go beyond sobriety, in attempting to uncover either the things of God, which he hath locked up in the hidden closet of his own breast; or the things of men, which are fit to be reserved to themselves. For example; the unity of the divine nature, and trinity of persons; the eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Ghost; the conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost; the election and reprobation of particular persons, clasped and sealed up in the reserved books of life and death; these, and many the like, are secrets, wherein the sobriety of the mind, as an awful bridle, should hold in the career of man’s inquisitiveness, and bound his itching sense which would be prying. The setting bounds to the mount where God descended and the charge to the people not to dare to make an approach was a type of this sober-mindedness. Howbeit many will not be satisfied, but are so given to enquiry, that faith must be jostled out by sense and reason; nothing is true with them but what by rational search they can find out to be so; but one of the ancients suits such un-sober minded men well, *scrutator majestatis imprimatur a gloria*; {that is, he that pries too far into the majesty, shall be confounded with the glory;} a man may look so boldly on the sun as he may not only dazzle but blind his eyes, or unawares fall into a ditch; let this then be the first branch of sobriety of mind, to be moderate in our enquiries, and be content to search only into things allowed to be known, being what is revealed.

Sobriety of mind consists in the moderation of our judgment; this stands in the deliberateness of it. Deliberate judgment is opposed to a rash or over-hasty one; when a man will conclude things before he hath well weighed the premises, or circumstances, inferring such a conclusion. It is a kind of drunkenness in men to make a judgment hand over head, or blind-fold; but sober minds judge deliberately; they will see

good cause for what they determine; they will do a thing so, as that they may not be forced to undo it again for lack of consideration. A sober judgment is according to knowledge; when a man judgeth no further of anything than he can understand. As it is the property of drunkards to do they know not what, so is it of a drunken mind void of sobriety. What Jude saith of speaking, is as true of judging evil; he tells us of some, whom he ranks with brute beasts that “speak {and judge} evil of those things which they know not.” {Jude 10} A man hath a sober judgment when he is not too peremptory and stiff in his opinion, but submits to better judgments. Sobriety of judgment stands in thinking of a man’s self, and others, according as God hath dealt to every man; in this Paul declares the soberness of his mind or judgment; “for we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves.” {II Cor.10:12} “We will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us.” {II Cor.10:13} All high thoughts and over-weaning of a man’s own parts, or gifts, above what is meet, together with all undervaluing of others, are void of sobriety; but a true sobriety is apt to think better of another than himself, because he sees more defects of his own, than he doth of another; but I make it not a rule; for a man may know something of himself, and others, that may, with sobriety, admit of thinking better of himself.

A sober mind consists in the moderation or good temper of the heart. Now the heart is thus sober when it keeps itself in a mediocrity, and breaks not out into excess; as a man is said in the vulgar sense to be sober, when he drinks not excessively, but only as much as will suffice. This sobriety of heart stands in the moderation of his will and affection; there is a kind of drunkenness in the heart of man, when it is insatiable; and that, in the arrogance of it, that it must not be crossed in anything, but will swallow all that is pleasing to his appetite, though it be never so unreasonable and harmful. A sober mind will confine itself to things lawful, honest and expedient, and bridles in itself to what agrees not therewith. So, the heart is drunk and insatiable, when the desires thereof are excessive; namely, when they are turbulent, disquieting and distracting the heart; as a man is drunk when he drinks so much as distempers the body. It was drunkenness

in Rachel's heart, that she was so turbulently desirous of children, so that she cries out, "give me children, or else I die." {Gen.30:1} So of Ahab, that was so desirous of Naboth's vineyard, that he is sick for it. {I Kings 21:1-7} Sober desires are such as leave the heart in a quiet temper. Drunken desires of the heart are, when they are never satisfied, nor know when they have enough; but the more they have, the more they crave; which is a right property of vulgar drunkenness. Sober desires {I mean of earthly things} sail so low, and aim at so few and short marks, and that with such indifference, as that a very little satisfies and gives contentment. A sober heart is far from enlarging her desires, as hell, the grave, or a barren womb, which ever cry, give, give. Likewise, the desires of the heart are drunken when they are impatient and outrageous, if crossed; as none more mad than drunkards, if they cannot have presently what drink they call for; when men fret, and chafe, hang the lip, are sullen, and malcontent if their desires are frustrated, such are drunken desires, that heart is not sober. I might as easily show you a like drunkenness in all the affections and passions; but it shall suffice at present to consider, that affections so far swerve from sobriety, as they are transported beyond their bounds, in any excess whatsoever.

There is an external sobriety, and that is of the conversation, which consists in a moderate, temperate use of all things; for clearing whereof, note, this sobriety is not so much a mere abstinence from excess, as a refraction or restraint of a man's self from all manner of excess; which implies some appetite or inclination to break out beyond bounds, and a curbing a man's self by a kind of compulsive restraint, which is self-denial. There is a great difference between abstinence and forbearance of a thing, which a man hath no inclination or power unto; and sobriety, as it is a virtue which presupposes a vice, enticing the contrary way. For example, suppose wine be loathsome to a man, his abstinence is not sobriety properly; but being inclined thereto, and strongly enticed, he puts a knife to his throat, and forces himself to forbear, in spite of all provocations; this is a virtuous sobriety; this certainly is that which the grace of God teacheth; for teaching implies a man is yet to seek, and hath not attained the thing to be taught; whereas there is no need of teaching that which a man cannot naturally choose but follow. This sobriety consists of many branches, as,

the bridling and moderating a man's appetite, having provocations of excessive eating and drinking, which our Saviour calls a taking "heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life." {Lk.21:34} Of this Solomon speaks, "when thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee; and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." {Pv.23:1,2} Likewise, "be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." {Pv.23:20,21} This sobriety of the appetite is a moderate use of the creature; that is, such an use as serves for health, and the better disposing and enabling a man to all good and lawful offices towards God and men; and it stands in the midst of two extremes, defect and excess. The defect is the pinching a man's self, not allowing himself what is needful. Such, though they think themselves the soberest men, being remotest from excess, yet they err too much on the other hand to be sober men; it is a certain rule, in medio consistit virtus {that is, the excellence of things is in the middle.} The other extreme is excess, much more in use than the former, and that in quality or quantity; excess in quantity is eating or drinking more than is meet; in quality, when men content not themselves with that which is good and wholesome nourishment, befitting their several ranks and places, and are grown over-dainty, and despise that which is not rare; sobriety in this kind hath no certain stint, but extends or dilates, according to the diversity of men's tempers and ranks; one man of a weak brain and sickly stomach, may exceed the bounds of sobriety in use of the same quantity of meat or drink, which another of a stronger temper may use with sobriety; that which will but quench the thirst of one man, may make another man's head light; that meat which will but satisfy one man's nature, and harden it for labour, may overcharge and dull another; that variety and daintiness which doth but besem a man's table of ability and good rank, is profuse lavishness and wasteful expense to a meaner person. In sum then, a man exceeds sobriety, either when he useth the creatures beyond that conveniency his temper requires, or the means God hath given him.

Besides this vulgar sobriety, there is a sobriety also of speech, whereof Paul speaks in his defense before

Festus, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." {Acts 26:25} This sobriety consists, in soft words; few words; and in seasonable words. Add hereto a sobriety in behavior, which is a mild and grave carriage, without either loftiness, or vain levity. Finally, there is also a sobriety in a man's dealing in buying and selling; in buying, when a man keeps within his compass, and wades not beyond his depth, either of skill or ability; and in selling, when a man is moderate in his gains, and works not on the necessity of persons; but these heads shall suffice, that we may keep some moderation in handling of this point.

The next thing to consider is, what it is to live soberly. This phrase intimates an activity of sobriety; living here is put for exercise; it is not enough to have power to be sober, though that be necessary, but this power must be reduced into act, as occasion serves. To live soberly intimates a continuation in sobriety; this, and the whole life must go hand-in-hand together, or a man must be sober all his life; one act doth not make up a living soberly, as one swallow doth not make a summer; and it should be as precious to a man as his life; if any solicit him to intemperance, he should say, bereave me of sobriety, bereave me of my life too; what will it avail me to live and not live soberly?

The last thing to be considered is, how grace teaches to live soberly. To clear this; note, grace teacheth, by instruction, giving rules for the thing, clearly making us to understand and know, that sobriety is a duty enjoined, and must be observed. Philosophers, it is true, from the glimmerings of natural light, gives rules to teach this, as well as other moral virtues; but they fail in the ground work or foundation of their rules, making right reason the foundation, and deriving the power of sobriety from the hero-like resoluteness of man's spirit; whereas the will of God is the ground-work, and the power to be sober is from his might alone. They fail in the end of sobriety, making that the ultimate, which is but the subordinate, wholly neglecting the chief end, being ignorant thereof. Their chief end is, by moderation, to enjoy themselves, and the praise of men, whereas it should be the glory of God. In these two things the teaching of sobriety, by grace, differs from the natural teaching of it; for grace makes God's will the ground-work of it, and his power, in man's weakness, the efficient cause of it, and

the glorifying God the final inducing cause of sobriety.

Grace not only teaches it, by giving good rules, but also by such a winning rhetorical illustration of the excellency of sobriety, as to catch her learners with an enamored love thereto; in teaching, it makes her learners, though enemies at first to such doctrine, say, {as once the catchpoles that were sent to trap Christ,} "never a man spake as he speaks." The lips of grace, through a secret divine eloquence, drop honey; not only by enamoring, but by drawing also. The teaching of grace hath the virtue of a magnet that draws adjacent metal to fasten to itself; it is like the power reported to be in the Sirens Songs, which will make a man leave all to dance after their notes. In this, especially, it goes infinitely beyond the most acute teaching in the world besides; for her learners cannot, for their hearts, say nay.

Use 1: Seeing grace hath appeared, or is come into our quarters, teaching to live soberly, let us show our breeding by our proficiency under so excellent a tutor. The excellency of skill and parts in a tutor adds much to the shame of a dunce, or non-proficient, that hath been trained up under such an one; for that it is expected they should excel answerably according to the extraordinary helps they have had. Shall philosophers, and moral heathens, that have had their breeding, but in the twilight of nature, be more exact scholars in sobriety than Christians that have lain at the right fountain and been bred in the academy of grace? Shall persons living in darkness, without any light of the gospel shining unto them, live more soberly than they to whom the light of the gospel shines most gloriously? What a shame is this! If a clown, or ignoramus, should sham a university man in the arts he hath been long bred up in, would it not make him blush?

Much more may they blush who have been long tutored by grace, to see untutored poor souls that never scarce heard that ever there were any such thing as grace, yet to excel them in sobriety. Christ's verdict is, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." {Jn.3:19} Paul tells us, "they that be drunken are drunken in the night," and adds, "ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness." {I Thes.5:5}

Use 2: Doth grace teach to live soberly? Then are they graceless wretches, or come short of the grace of God, that do not live soberly; nor can they rightly claim a part or portion in the great privilege of salvation which grace teacheth. It is a fearful sentence, and dismal doom, I confess, though too true; and too few, whom it most concerns, lay it to heart; if they would, it might be a happy bridle to restrain all immoderate excess. Oh; that such, who give themselves to excess, would but turn their eyes unto, and seriously ponder, in their hearts, the many fearful words pronounced against them by that word which shall judge them at the last day! As that of Solomon, “who hath woe; who hath sorrow; who hath contentions; who hath babbling; who hath wounds without cause; who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” {Pv.23:29,30} He doth not say, they that are stark drunk, as men now count drunkenness, but they that tarry, long at it, though they have strong heads to carry it away; at least he saith, “it bites like a serpent.” The prophet Isaiah seconds him, and takes off a foolish excess of men, that think themselves out of Solomon’s gun-shot, because they drink not wine; “woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!” {Is.5:11} And, “woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.” {vs.22} He scatters his woes among all sorts, whether wine-bibbers, or strong drink-bibbers. The prophet Habakkuk makes up the peal, and meets with another sort of excess, “woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” {Hab.2:15} What canst thou now say for thyself, O poor wretch, that leavest not only Christianity, but also manhood in thy cups, and transformest thyself into a beast, nay, worse? Wilt thou say, Christ is thy Saviour? Alas! This text takes thee quite off from this hold; for that grace of his, that brings salvation, teacheth to live soberly, and this thou learnest not; therefore canst thou not lay claim to the other. O, be wise betimes, and consider the desperateness of thy condition, as God himself judgeth of it, and be not deluded with the daubings of such as count thee a good fellow.

Use 3: It is then a most fearful presumption for any person, in confidence of his own strength, to adventure

himself into the mouth of danger, where he may be induced, or tempted, to exceed the bounds of sobriety; for if sobriety be of grace, then is it not of man’s own strength. There are too many so conceited of their own abilities, as that they fear no colors; they will warrant you they do well enough, and can keep themselves within compass, and therefore dare put themselves into any hazard. Some think themselves so wise, as they fear not to wade into God’s secrets too deep; they can stint their reasonings and thoughts at pleasure. Some dare loosen the reins, and let them run career, fondly dreaming they can curb them at will, phaeton like; they can dote on the world, and think that it cannot enthral them; they can let their rage loose like a fierce mastiff and chain it up again at a beck. Others are so confident of their power to contain, that though they let their eyes loose to look on a maid, their tongues loose to obscene filthy ribaldry, their ears to lascivious discourse and solicitations, to bewitching dalliances, and their thoughts to contemplative uncleanness; yet they have such a strength of continency, that no such pitch can defile them; they are not so weak or so silly as to be trapped in the snare; and therefore, they will not abridge themselves of such liberty. In a word others are confident of the strength of their brain, that none can fox them; but let such consider, that to live soberly is not in man’s power, but only of grace; and therefore, it is just with God to give up such to be overtaken for neglecting his aid, as be served Noah, David, and others. Hence the apostle Paul advises to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his {not our} might;” and when he speaks of his ability in moderation, namely, that he is “able to do all things,” he concludes that it is not by his own strength, but Christ’s that strengthened him. Blessed is the man “that feareth always,” that is, himself; suspecting his own shallowness and weakness, considering the bewitching insinuations that are in temptations of this nature. Know therefore, that whoever is endued with a sober mind and behavior, it comes with all other good gifts from above, and he is kept herein by the power of God, and the sufficiency of his grace, without which he is as impotent as the weakest; therefore in this, and in all other matters, let every man commit himself to the custody of God, and the power of his grace, and not lean to his own strength. Though Paul was a man full of the Spirit, and had attained a great measure of

moderation, yet dares not rely thereon, but entrusts God and his grace to keep him, “not I, {saith he,} but the grace of God which is in me.” How frequently doth he close up his epistles, after all his endeavors, with this epilogue, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.” “Grace, mercy, and peace, be with you from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus.” Implore grace, therefore, in this behalf, which shall be sufficient, “for its strength shall be perfect in your weakness.”

The next point is, that grace teacheth to live righteously. This is of a large extent, comprehending the whole duty of man to man, and in substance is the same with that of our Saviour, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” which love he calls “fulfilling of the law.” There are two main branches of it, justice and mercy; justice is a rendering to everyone his due, or an upright inoffensive walking towards every one, without partiality or fraud. Give me leave to anatomize this branch of righteousness, that you may the better see the lineaments thereof; for as he cannot be a good physician, or surgeon, fit to apply apt remedies to distempered parts, or set bones, that is not well instructed in anatomy; so neither can a man aptly apply cures to distempers of injustice, that is not somewhat indoctrinated into the parts of justice; he must know the proper joints of justice, that in case of dislocation, he may reduce them to their proper place again. Know therefore, that righteousness, so far as it branches itself into justice, is diverse, according to the diversity of men’s relations of superiority, or inferiority, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, parents and children. The righteousness of a magistrate stands in an impartial and equal rendering rewards, or punishments; all unevenness, either too much rigor, or too much lenity, is injustice. Subjects are to yield obedience, both internal and external, to their lawful commands, and quiet suffering their penalties, if for conscience sake you cannot obey their commands; “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, and openeth not the mouth.” So for ministers, their righteousness is in withholding none of the counsel of God, being instant in season and out of season; giving everyone his portion, with soundness of doctrine, cheerfulness of spirit, humbleness of mind; patient waiting, if God will at any time bring men to repentance; and not for filthy lucre. The people’s justice is to seek advice and

help of the minister, to unbind their consciences when sin hath chained them up, in attending upon all the ordinances of God; giving them due respect, praying for them, that they may do their work powerfully and fruitfully.

The husband’s justice is “to love his wife, as Christ loved the church;” to govern wisely as a head, not imperiously, much less tyrannically; to provide for his wife; as a covering to shelter her. The wife’s justice stands in love also; in subjection to all lawful and expedient things he requires; in helpfulness in all things she can reach unto; in covering infirmities; and in reverencing him as the head.

The master’s justice is in imposing no more labour on his servant, than his strength can bear; to inflict no more punishment than his offence deserves; to detain no maintenance requisite; as food, rest, refreshment, and wages; to encourage them in well doing; to instruct them in the knowledge of God, and endeavoring to bring them to his ordinances.

The justice of servants is in doing their utmost, without laziness, in their allotted business; in not wasting or purloining; obeying all lawful commands; being faithful in what is committed to their trust; patiently bearing punishment, though wrongfully inflicted; not so much as answering again; a contentment with their wages; not stealing away their master’s time for their own occasions without license.

The justice of parents is to provide for their children, both soul and body, in a moderate way; not to provoke them to bitterness; to correct them in measure, and in due time; and the justice of children is to honour their parents; to become subject to them, as Christ did; and to be obedient and dutiful.

Finally, there is an occasional justice, and that is an upright behavior toward all men, with whom we have to do, as in buying or selling, lending or borrowing. Now all this is privative or positive; in innocency, in offensiveness, peaceableness; so in doing right, and giving to everyone their own. Innocency stands in a harmless conversation, or, in the apostle’s phrase, “a walking without offence;” which consists in offering no violence, in purpose or act, either to a man’s person, goods, name or whatever is his, though a man hath power, opportunity, or provocation thereunto; nay, though some occasion may be given, according to our Saviour’s rule, “render to no man evil for evil, or

reviling for reviling; but rather bless them that curse.” This innocent justice consists in not defrauding or overreaching, but in fair, honest, and true dealing, without undermining, or smothering evil under fair pretenses; in laying aside all malice, envy, and hatred, false surmises, hard conceits, backbitings and all evil-speaking. In a word, it consists in doing no manner of harm, but a blameless walking, such as was commended in Zachary and Elizabeth.

Peaceableness, which is another branch of justice, consists in making peace, and endeavoring to reconcile differences, not blowing coals that are kindled, which is the property of a make-bait; and to this our Saviour pronounces blessedness. “Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.” {Mt.5:9} It lies in entertaining with readiness terms of peace, though with some disadvantage; being apt to reconciliation without turbulence, contention, needless suits, or inveterate implacableness; this our Saviour commends to his disciples, “my peace I leave with you.”

Of this kind of justice is putting up of injuries, and loving enemies; justice it is, for it is a debt in the apostle’s judgment, as well as our Saviour’s, who tells us to “owe nothing to any man, but to love one another.” And it lies in living peaceably, without either giving or taking occasions of quarrel, as much as in a man lies, as the apostle says, “as much as in you lies, labour to have peace with all men.” Finally, this justice lies in doing right to all men, giving to everyone his due, tribute to whom tribute is due; love to whom love is due; fear to whom fear is due; and honour to whom honour is due. {Rom.13:7} You see of how large an extent the first branch of righteousness is, to wit, justice.

The second branch is mercifulness to men; and this is internal or external. Internal consists in compassion, or pity, which is opposed to hardheartedness; this is a kind of fellow-feeling, or a being affected with another’s distress; “for we are all members of one body;” therefore, as members naturally sympathize one with another, so should we; which mercy, the apostle much urges, and our Saviour presses in the parable of the good Samaritan, that had compassion on the wounded man. This tenderheartedness is a commendable virtue, and such as human society can scarce be served without; and lies in devising liberal

things, which the prophet Isaiah mentions, “the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.” {Is.32:8} Two things are worth our observation in this internal merciful righteousness. It consists of a free and large heart to do good and to show kindness. There are niggardly, as well as contracted hearts in the world; when men think every little too much, it is cutting to the heart to part with anything. It comes from them gradually, and the heart murmurs and repines, when an occasion happens that he cannot handsomely avoid some charitable expense, which was the foul and killing error of Ananias and Sapphira; but a liberal heart is glad of opportunities to do much good; and is as well pleased in scattering plentifully, {according to ability, without corrupt or parsimonious pretenses,} as to reap abundantly; for which temper of heart, David gives public praise to God; “but who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort; for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.” {I Chron.19:14} This heart deviseth liberal things, it is projecting and contriving how to be liberal, when, where, and to whom to show kindness.

External mercy is the venting of kindness, and this is either passive or active. The passive consists in long-suffering, or patient putting up of injuries; when a man will be hardly provoked and easily entreated, he lets go advantages offered of requiting evil for evil, being ready to forgive offences. Active mercy is an actual distribution as a man’s own ability, and another’s necessity requires; this mercy, in the apostle’s phrase, is “a doing good to all, especially to the household of faith.” The bounds of it are large, extending to all in need; and even enemies must not be excluded, “if thine enemy hunger, give him bread; so shalt thou heap fire on his head.” It is excellent mercy to requite good for evil; only there is some difference to be observed, with respect of the persons to whom good is to be showed; for the apostle adds, and “especially to the household of faith;” wherein he intimates that God’s faithful ones are to be preferred before others in showing mercy; their failings are especially to be borne withal, to be favorably constrained, and their necessities and wants, are especially to be relieved; they must have the priority of mercy, and greatest share of relief; this mercifulness of man is so acceptable to God, that many times he will dispense with his own peculiar right to

make way for it. "I will have mercy, {saith God,} and not sacrifice;" and he takes kindness showed to his, as done to himself; "in that you have done it to the least of these, {saith Christ} you have done it to me." Finally, note, that this merciful righteousness spreads itself wide; it fastens on the soul, to communicate light to it, and heat; endeavoring to snatch some, as fire brands out of the fire, by instruction, admonition, or warning; by reprehension, exhortation, and consolation; and all this with long-suffering and meekness; "if at any time, God will give them repentance." It descends also to the body to supply it with food and raiment convenient, with other helps that concern the health and strength of it; it proceeds to the credit, covering infirmities, vindicating from calumnies, publishing deserts, that the name of a good man may be "as ointment poured forth." It runs on to a man's substance, mercy will be helpful to his very beasts; yea, the beast of his enemy, which the Lord enjoins, by Moses, to bring it home, and to lift it up if sunk under a burden. Thus have you the righteousness branched forth which grace teacheth. To live righteously is the same as to live soberly; grace teaches this. To wit, magisterially, as a master teacheth his scholars, by rules and arguments; imperiously, as a prince his subjects, with a binding authority; persuasively, as a most skillful winning orator; and irresistibly, infusing the thing taught.

Use: Doth grace teach to live righteously; then learn to disclaim that selfishness that too many adhere unto. There is an unsociable inhuman proverb in the world, too prevalent everywhere, "every man for himself and God for us all;" whereas the very heathens, by the light of nature, confess, that we are not born for ourselves; non nobis solum nati sumus, {that is, not unto ourselves alone are we born,} saith Tully; our country, prince, parents, children, challenge a just right to what lies in our power; the members of the body are not more engaged one to another, than men are to men. Learn therefore, to render to every man his due, and "keep a conscience void of offence, as well towards men, as towards God," which the apostle joyed in.

The next point, that grace teacheth, is to live godly. As all arts are subservient handmaids to divinity, and therefore are first learned; so all the former lessons of grace serve ultimately to make grace scholars complete in this last lesson of godliness; therefore grace teaches this last. This lesson comprehends the whole duty of

man to God, whatever is contained in the first table of the Decalogue, which is exceeding large. That we may be the better versed in this lesson, let us consider, what it is to live godly; why; how; and when.

1. To live godly, requires that the main end and scope of all our actions must be fixed principally on God, for the advancing his glory and honour; thus the apostle expounds living godly, when he tells us that "none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." {Rom.14:7,8} Now, as a servant is said to live unto his master, when his eating, sleeping, recreating, and the rest, are intended for the fitting him for his master's business, or the furthering his credit, or benefit; so a man lives to the Lord, or lives godly, when all he doth is for the Lord; such a godly life is intimated to us in the talents the master gave to his servants, expecting a return with increase. {Mt.25:14-29} "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God." {I Cor.6:19,20}

For the better illustration of this branch of godliness, I will show you what it is to aim at God in our ways, how far it is requisite, and those who err herein. It is nothing else but to do, or suffer, for God's sake; making his good pleasure and glory the main loadstone to draw us forth to employment, and the great weight to set all the wheels of our several faculties and members a going. The philosophers say truly, omne agens agit propter finem, {that is, everything that acts, acts for the sake of an end,} especially man, who hath his particular end in his choice and eye; whereas other creatures incline to their end by a natural instinct; you shall have no man go about anything, but he can tell you some purpose or end he aims at. Doth he sleep? His end is rest and ease. Doth he eat? His end is to satisfy hunger. Doth he toil in the world? His end is gain. Now when a man in sleeping and eating propounds to himself the repairing of weakness, and the making him fresh to serve God; when God is so in the eye, as his glory is the wind that fills the sails; then doth he live godly, or unto the Lord; which is the godly life the apostle requires, "whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God." But, some may say, doth a man live ungodly when he propounds, or aims

at any other end, than God and his honour in his ways; as namely, if he doth aim at gain in his labour? Let it be considered, that there are ultimate and subordinate ends of men's actions, the one subservient to the other; and so of intentions, in which case the subordinate are a step to the ultimate. For instance, a man hath a dull knife, and sharpens it, there are two ends; the next and subordinate end is to make it keen, the ultimate and special end is to make it serviceable; here one end destroys not the other, if so be a man aim at each in its order. So for a man's eating meat, or taking physic, the chiefest end of them is the fitting of persons in God's work; now, because health and nourishment are requisite thereto, therefore the first subordinate end is health; seeing then there are these two ends, it is not ungodliness to aim at the subordinate end, as well as the ultimate; but godliness, as it hath both in its eye, so it makes that which is chiefest in its own nature, the chiefest in a man's aim and intention. There is a double error against this branch of a godly life; as when men put the cart before the horse, as I may say, preferring natural subordinate ends before supernatural and ultimate; namely, when men sport for pleasure sake, more than to quicken dull spirits for God's work; when men exclude the principle end, and make the natural end of things their sole loadstone; namely, to work only for gain, to give alms truly for praise, to perform outward duties only to satisfy man's law, or to be seen without any regard to God himself; and when men aim at sinister, base, and corrupt ends, as unlawful gains, accomplishing their lust, and the like.

Use: He then that would live godly must ever fix his eye on the right mark, and take his aim to "the glorifying of God in every action." A man only so far lives to the Lord as he thus aims; and therefore should both fix his thoughts hereon, and contrive the fittest means hereto.

A godly life is to prefer God before all things, making them give place to him; which was David's godliness, when he said, "whom have I in heaven but thee, &c.," and the churches, when speaking of Christ her beloved, she saith, "my beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand." For illustration, consider we what this preferring of God is; for it may be considered simply or comparatively, preferring God simply before other things is no more but this, that he hath the utmost extent of reverence, respect, esteem, love, and

submission that the soul can possibly extend unto; for if any of these be so scanty to him, as that anything else can possibly have more, he is not actually preferred before them; but the point will be more clear, by considering it comparatively, when we set any thing by God, and we can perceive, that God hath more of us than it hath; as when we rather turn from it, and leave it, for his sake, than leave him and his will. For example, suppose a man hath done thee some notable good turns, his person is very amiable, his society very sweet; now compare the temper of thine heart towards God and such an one, whether such an one finds more sensible respect? More ready compliance? Most care to please? Strongest desires of friendship and familiarity? Most jealousies of giving distaste and causing some breach? Most cutting of heart in case of displeasure manifested? Most gladness when favour and respect is renewed? And any thing is done that produces a manifesting of good liking? Compare this, I say, the temper of thy spirit, and it will manifestly appear whether God be preferred before such a one, or no? For, in such like, consists this preferring of one thing before another. Do the like with any other thing, as husband, wife, child, goods, sports, liberty, health, life, or what else is dear; if God outstrip them, and more be spent on him than them, then he is preferred before them. For preferring is no more but the setting of one foremost, or before another, so that the other comes behind.

The other branch of preferring God is in the case of competition, when God and his will stand in such opposition against anything, that either his will or it must be rejected. Now, in this preferring God before such a thing, is a foregoing such a thing rather than him; as in a tempest at sea, when a man must either cast his goods over board, or inevitably hazard his life; life is preferred before goods, when for life's sake he chooses to cast his goods away. So when God will not admit such or such a thing to stand with him, but his will, or that must sink, he is then preferred when we are contented to part with that for the preservation of his will. Example; Abraham's case, either God must be denied and put by, and Isaac live; or God's will stand, and Isaac die. Now Abraham's choosing to part with Isaac, rather than cross God's will, manifestly prefers God before Isaac. On the other side, consider the rich man in the gospel; either he must sell all and give it

away, and so follow Christ; or keep all, and leave him. Here Christ and his wealth, stand in competition, one or the other must be parted with; so “this man went away sorrowful, because he had much riches;” that is, he chose rather to lose Christ than his wealth, and so preferred the world before him. These are extraordinary cases, in force only, when God reveals himself, that he stands in competition with such things. Doth God call for thy wealth to be given to such and such uses? Wilt thou not part with it, or do it by half, as Ananias did, or do it grudgingly? Wilt thou make shipwreck of God’s revealed will to save thy purse? Then thou preferrest it before him. If you will prefer God, all these things must give way and stoop to him. Hear our Saviour’s own doom of the case, “if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” {Lk.14:26} You see what a preferring of himself he requires.

Living godly is to serve and worship God in his own way, or according to his own will, which our Saviour briefly comprehends in two words, “in spirit and in truth.” The former points to the subject, how we must be dispensed in serving him; and the latter at the matter of his service. To serve and worship the Lord in spirit, imports, that the whole spirit of a man be rightly disposed in his service; that we serve him with understanding, knowing whom we worship, what we do, and how we do it; and by this our Saviour distinguishes between the false worship of the Samaritans and the true of the faithful Jews. “Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.” {Jn.4:22} A blind devotion cannot be a godly service. So Paul tells us, “that he will pray with the understanding.” {I Cor.14:15}

We worship with attention of spirit, with our spirits fixed upon it, seriously minding the present business, without roving, gadding or wanderings of heart about impertinent matters; as David, “my heart is fixed, O God, I will sing and give praise;” and the apostle calls this a “giving of earnest heed, least we let slip the thing.”

We serve him wisely, projecting fittest times and best means for the better dilating our spirits, and more exact and complete perfecting of the service, and the removal of impediments. “Wisdom is the principal

thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding.” {Pv.4:7} It both facilitates and graces the work. The apostle exhorts, that “the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” {Col.3:16}

That we serve and worship him willingly and freely, and with an inclination of spirit to his service. John tells us, “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.” {I Jn.5:3} When David had offered abundantly to God’s house, he is thankful in a special manner, that God gave him a free and willing heart. The Lord doth not brook sullen, wearisome services that are tedious, even to men; God must be served of choice.

All service must spring from love. “The love of Christ constraineth,” {II Cor.5:14,} saith the apostle; no service is acceptable but what is set on fire by this coal; the apostle requires that “all things be done in love,” much especially God’s worship; this makes the main difference between filial and servile service; hence it is that the Lord reduces all service to love, and calls love “the fulfilling the law;” because it is the primum mobile, {that is, first moved,} to set the whole frame of service in their several motions. We must pray out of love to prayer, so also hear, receive, and meditate upon God’s word out of love thereto.

God must be served for conscience sake, not with a reserved liberty whether we will serve him or no; as if it were an arbitrary matter, as walking abroad to take the air, which we may or may not do at pleasure. Men must not think God beholden to them for vouchsafing him their attendance; a necessary tie of conscience lies on them. This service for conscience-sake the apostle requires to men in authority, much more is it due to God himself.

God is to be served with a concurrence of all the powers and faculties of the soul together, each must be doing, as in a well ordered family, every servant is stirring to dispatch business. As many hands make quick work, so every faculty must put a helping hand to dispatch God’s service. As David speaks, when he set upon praising God, “my soul doth praise the Lord, and all that is within me praise his holy name.” Thus must the Lord be worshipped or served, in spirit, of those that will live godly.

Again, to serve God, according to his will, we must serve him in truth, and this in two ways. In

sincerity, with a real upright heart, which is opposed to hypocrisy; and when we serve him according to the pattern which he hath given, both for the matter, manner, and time, &c. The matter of God's worship consists of such divine exercises as he alone commands. Some are public, some private, and some secret; the public are such as are required in the congregations, or public assemblies; the private in families; the secret by one's self alone; in all which true godliness hath regard to all that God enjoins, and only that; so that will-worship is no true godliness, "but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments {or traditions,} of men." {Mt.5:19} This is not holiness to the Lord, though it may be never so zealously performed, and with never so good a meaning; for it is only God's warrant and commission that can make worship authentic. As for human rites of time and place, what tends to decency, they are not any parts of the worship itself, but only conveniences; if men should make them essential, then would they defile worship.

The public exercises of God's worship are. 1. Reading the scriptures; so Paul testifies in a sermon of his at Antioch, where he tells us that the prophets were read every sabbath day. {Acts 13:27} The like you may see in our Saviour's practice, "and he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." {Lk.4:16} This must be done audibly and distinctly. 2. Preaching the word, which is an opening the word; that this is an exercise of public worship is plain by the fore-mentioned practice of Christ, who, after he had read, preached on that text of Isaiah, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me;" from which many gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, as the Holy Ghost affirms; the like you may see in Ezra, the priest, who stood in a pulpit of wood above the people assembled, and read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand. {Neh.8:8} 3. Attention to the word read and preached, for which see the two former examples; "and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law;" {Neh.8:3;} "and he {that is, Christ} closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him." {Lk.4:20} This attention implies not only a giving

ear, but also a pondering of the sayings, as the virgin Mary; {Lk.2:19;} and a hearing with good affection, as did Peter's converts, "who heard him gladly," {Acts 2:41,} and with application, as the same hearers and the jailer. 4. Baptizing must go with teaching, as Christ commanded, and John Baptist practiced. 5. The administration and receiving the Lord's supper. "The disciples met together to break bread." 6. Prayer, in respect of the public-ness of it, the house of God is called, "a house of prayer;" and Paul, after he had preached at Troas, &c., "kneeling down, and prayed with them all;" in which exercise it is not sufficient to be present, but to join with them in spirit. 7. Praising God, with singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, with melody in the heart, and that frequently as David did; or other ways publishing the Lord's praises, by declaring his marvelous works, and exalting him in the great congregation. "Come and hear, {saith David,} all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul;" {Ps.66:16;} and for this cause did he pen so many psalms of praise that God might be publicly praised. 8. Add to this fasting.

The matter of divine private worship in families apart, or believers among themselves. 1. In searching the scripture, which is commended of the men of Berea, after they had heard the apostle preach, who receiving the word with all readiness of mind, searched the scriptures daily; {Acts 17:11;} which implies these things. Reading the word; so as to find out the true meaning of it; and a comparing of scripture with scripture. 2. Another branch is, private conference about divine things; such was the practice of the two disciples that went to Emmaus, when Christ joined himself with them; "and they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" {Lk.24:32} 3. Wholesome holy advice, exhorting one another; rebuking, encouraging, and comforting; to this purpose serve those passages of the apostle, "exhort one another daily," {Heb.3:13;} "have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," {Eph.5:11;} "comfort one another with these words." {I Thes.4:18} 4. Private prayer with the family; herein was Cornelius's godliness, for which the Holy Ghost commends him, he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always;" {Acts

10:2;} which although it have no special stint for the time, yet the apostle's general rule, "pray continually," and Cornelius's practice, always, is rule enough.

The matter of sacred godliness consists. 1. In a daily constant meditation in God's word; thus David describes the blessed man as one that "meditates in the law of the Lord day and night;" which exercise is sweet to a godly man. 2. In self-examination, or an inward diligent trial of a man's own ways, by calling himself to an account, and ransacking his heart and life; so the apostle enjoins, "examine yourselves, prove yourselves;" and the prophet Jeremiah, in his Lamentation, "let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD." {Lam.3:40} 3. In secret prayer, which our Saviour enjoins, "thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." {Mt.6:6} This is either by ejaculation, which is a lifting up of the soul to God in some short earnest request, and hath no stinted time or place; or a prepared setting of a man's self to seek the Lord more at large; such was Daniel's prayer three times a day.

As for the time of living godly the apostle expresses it in the close of this text, namely, "this present world;" so that there is no minute of time wherein we are exempted from any of these lessons which grace teacheth, when any occasion of practicing them is afforded. What Job speaks of his change, must be every believer's practice about godliness; "all the days of their appointed time" must they wait, and be in readiness to exercise godliness, righteousness, and sobriety, with the denial of "ungodliness and worldly lusts." In brief, this time imports perseverance in well doing unto the end. To begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, makes the latter end worse than the beginning. If any faint, and give over the race, they lose the prize; therefore the apostle admonishes, "so run that ye may obtain." We must be flourishing trees in the courts of God's house, as well in old age, as in our prime. Besides, this present world points also at the impediments, which yet must not hinder in the race set before us; as if he should say, although you live in this present world, which wholly lies in wickedness, and is at enmity with Christ and you, and lays many snares to trap you, many baits to allure you; and casts floods of persecutions, cares and fears, to swallow you up; yet, in spite of all, you must stand fast, and keep

on your course of godliness. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore." {Eph.6:13,14}

49 A Sermon Outline For The Preparation For A Fast

July 8, 1640.

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." {Amos 4:12}

When bodies are distempered, that nature in its ordinary course, cannot make its own way to uphold it, men usually seek to a violent course of physic; which, although it be very troublesome to nature for a time, yet for the purging out of dangerous rooted maladies, men will not stick at the present disquiet. Now, wise physicians deal with such bodies, as surgeons do with teeth they would draw; they first loosen them before they give the main pull; so they give preparatives a day or two before a purge, to make way for the better working of it, when it is taken. You are not ignorant, that within these few days, this whole nation hath a great purge prescribed; even a solemn day of humiliation in an extraordinary manner, by reason of many good rooted dangerous distempers, both of sin and misery, wisely and providently observed by our great physician of church and state, the king; which our ordinary way of seeking God stirs, not; and, that we may be prepared for it, he hath published a royal decree beforehand. In my deepest thoughts of contriving this great work for the best advantage, I find that seasonable directions for a wise and religious preparation, will much further the happy desired issue of it. I have, therefore, allotted this opportunity to put you upon a seasonable and useful preparation for that fast, from this text; in which you see expressly, that, in case of provocation, God doth not only expect that his people come forth and meet him, but also that they prepare themselves for such a meeting.

In furthering you to a preparation I shall endeavour to show you what is requisite for a due preparation for a fast; of what necessity such a preparation is, and then apply it. Two things are mainly requisite unto a preparation for a solemn meeting of God, especially by fasting; preconsideration and redisposition.

Some things, concerning the fast, are to be considered, or thought on beforehand; without which the business will prove but a rude, confused, and vain labour. Now, these are, the nature of the business we are called to that we may know what we have to do; the end of it; the need of it, and the means how it may be well done.

A fast is more talked of, I mean a religious one, than well understood, and therefore most sordidly kept of too many, who cannot forecast what to do, because they are ignorant of it. Be therefore, attentive to hear, and understand what a fast God requires. There are divers sorts, as natural, compulsive, civil, and religious; our business is with the last, which is either ordinary or extraordinary; this last is when it consists of many days, as that of Moses, Elias, Christ, and Daniel; ordinary is that one whole day, and this is our fast. Now, although in the strict signification of the word fast, it imports simply abstinence, yet in all religious fasts, there is something positive as well as privative. For the privative part, it must not be only abstinence from meat and drink, which is all that the vulgar regard, but a universal abstinence, as well from all natural and useful things of the world, as from sin. Note, how the scriptures express a fast; "blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet;" {Joel 2:15,16;} here implying a matrimonial abstinence. Men must also put off their ornaments, they must not stand trickling and trimming themselves, but must show a kind of neglect of their attire. Of old, they rent their garments, and put on sackcloth. There must be abstinence from common labour, pleasure and talk. The latter is little observed by most that fast, but you find all this strictly required. Ponder Isaiah the 53rd chapter for must needed instruction. But, besides this, there must be the internal abstinence of the mind; the mind must fast from all worldly contrivances, thoughts and affections. In brief, the whole man, in fasting, must forbear all things, which concern not the furtherance of the positive work in fasting, for the former is but subservient to the latter; that is, to the positive work, either public or private.

The public fast is a timely joining with the

congregation, both with outward reverence, and inward intention of mind; but most specially there must be each man's several confession of heart in the public confession. So of application of all things, in praying, reading, or preaching, which concerns him in particular; and this joining must be constant throughout all. It must be an affectionate working like physic, making the soul sick; for which cause it is called a day for a man to afflict his soul. {Is.58:5} The private business is a recollection of the public reasons and concerns; and a supplying in a man's thoughts, what most concern his particular case, either not sufficiently enforced, or not met withal; as day-laborers, when the task is over, will do a little for themselves. About this matter must the meditations, confessions, supplications, and humiliations of the soul be employed. This business of the fast must we rub up and survey, as men do against a training day; they will take down their arms, and view them over.

We should pre-consider the ends of a fast, why God looks for it; he that hath not the mark in his eye before he shoots shall never hit it. The ends to be considered of are, the humbling of the soul; the pleasing of God; and the averting of God's wrath. In this we should ponder what wrath is on foot, or breaking out, whence it proceeds, how it may be pacified. We should pre-consider what end there is of fasting, both with respect to the public and other private concerns; as what sins abound, and with how high a hand that God calls for it, and hath oft made it effectual for much good. We should forecast the means of fasting; we should do as workmen, that look out and lay in readiness their several tools before they fall to work, so that each may be in readiness at need; as that prayer may frame the spirit and secret self-examination; but especially, there must be recourse to the promises of the Spirit for assistance.

The second branch of preparation follows; predisposition, and that of other affairs; of a man's own spirit, and of the work itself. He that will not be curbed in the work of fasting, must take such an order beforehand, with other common occasions, that they may not lie in his way to stumble at them, which without predisposing, he shall never avoid. Now this is no more but a provision of what is needful, that it may not be left to be then provided; and a dispatching things, that they may not be then to be dispatched;

that so the world may not encroach upon this time, but keep within its own bounds; as ordering journeys, bargains, payments, and such like, that they may not be troubled with them that day. You may say, things of necessity, or dangerous, which cannot be avoided, may be then done. I answer, consider whether the careless want of fore-disposing cause the danger and necessity, if so, the fault is in defect of preparation; but more especially a man's own spirit must be prepared by a predisposing of it to this work; and that you may so do I will show you, what this predisposition is; how needful unto a fast, and show how it may be done.

This predisposition is nothing else but such a breaking of spirit beforehand, as to make it frame unto this yoke, and to draw handsomely at the time. Our spirits are like wild heifers to any service, especially to such a self-tormenting exercise as a fast; they will be rising and kicking even at the forethought of it, and grumble at the tediousness of it; and certainly we shall find them very sullen and deadish at it, if we rouse them not to it beforehand. Why so? Because it is an unbeaten and unusual road, a work seldom handled; therefore men will be to seek, as suppose a man be to do business he is not used to do, as mowing, it will be harsher to him than daily work; for use makes perfect. Because it is a longer lesson, a great deal than usually is set us; this being as long as the whole day, others being but an hour long. Because a more thorny, prickly work, and requires much more labour of the soul. Because it cuts deeper, and launches wider, and ransacks more narrowly than other service. Now this disposing of our spirits is no more but such a skillful winning of them, as to make them pliable and apt to the work; and this is necessary to be set about beforehand.

Because a little time and labour will not break them; as it is not an hour's work that will break a colt for the saddle, that he may be pliable when he is to be rid; and our spirits being naturally more wild than colts; he therefore, that would not be thrown, or disappointed of his journey in the fast, must take his spirit to task beforehand. The more dull a boy is, the more time he must take to learn, especially an hard and long lesson, if he mean to say it perfect.

The fast-day is a day of arraignment, our day of trial. If we expect to come off without loss, had we not need to get our wits about us beforehand? To bespeak our judge? To get all our plea in readiness? Without

preparation, something or other may be forgot, or neglected, which being then to seek, may mar all; as the foolish virgins were cast for lack of preparing oil before-hand. It is a good rule, praemonitus, et praemunitus; that is, forewarned is forearmed. Now if our minds be a wool-gathering, and we be as bad husbands, that leave their cause at sixes and sevens, till the very trial, whilst the adversary is fortifying his accusations against us; shall we not then be left speechless, and be foiled? If men be but to travel a journey, will they not provide over-night? If to wash or brew, will they not get things in a readiness beforehand? How much more in so weighty a matter? When horses are to run a hard race, will not men pull up their bellies, and diet them before, that they may not fail in the race? If men be to make speeches, will they not whet their wits and study beforehand? In brief, are men unfit for anything of moment, till they consult and pause afore-hand? And can such a work, as a fast, be done without predisposition?

But how shall a man get his spirit fitly disposed? Let him take a survey of the present indisposedness of it, whether it be ignorance, faintness, or averseness; let him give an evaluation of his corruptions, by which he may feel what rooting they have. Let him resolutely tie himself to the work. Let him enter the plough of examination and humiliation. Let him earnestly seek Christ to bring his Spirit to it; to mortify his corruptions, and to quicken his own spirit.

50 Of Self-Denial

"Then Said Jesus Unto His Disciples, If Any Man Will Come After Me, Let Him Deny Himself, And Take Up His Cross, And Follow Me." {Mt.16:24}

{This Sermon was Preached at Martin Abbey, and afterwards at Oxford, Anno 1639.}

Our blessed Saviour having inquired of his disciples, as to what they thought of him, who he was; wherein Peter, according to his wonted forwardness, answers for himself, and the rest, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" {Mt.16:16;} upon this confession of their faith, he takes the present advantage to break to them that doleful tragedy which should ensue; to wit, of his sufferings, "from that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised

again the third day." {vs.21} Here Peter, as before, steps and shows as much weakness now, as he did before, advising Christ to spare and pity himself, "then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee;" {vs.22;} which cowardly counsel Christ had sharply rebuked in him, as "he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." {vs.23} Thus, he takes occasion from this selfishness exposed to lay down an infallible conclusion, which all his followers must embrace, namely, if they will come after him, they must deny themselves. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." {vs.24,25} Wherein I might note, the seasonableness of our Saviour's counsel; he plucks at the weed so soon as it peeps above ground, before it hath time to root itself; he observes the physicians rule, *princiipiis obsta*, {that is, resist the beginnings or nip the bud,} for delays are dangerous where poison hath fastened. I might also observe, that men often betray their own infirmities by the counsel they give to others; that self-denial is then seasonably urged, when faith is first planted, and hath taken root; else instead of a lure it will prove a scare-crow. It is true, if no self-denial, no part in Christ; but it is as true, that we must first be believers, before we can be able to deny ourselves. Christ's method can have no danger in it, but may serve for a sure pattern. But I hasten to the main thing.

The point is, they whom Christ embraces, must deny themselves. Christianity is no lazy life. There must be bustling in it, as well as in the world; which to the blinded, that understand not the gospel, is a stone of offence; insomuch, that from that time that they hear thereof, {though before, perhaps, they look after Christ,} they go backward, and will walk no more with him; as appeared in the young rich man in the gospel. Now, because this is a necessary sequel of confessing Christ, not to be separated, and yet so offensive to many, let us consider what it is to deny a man's self; why we must do it; and how we may attain to it. For the first, two things are to be enquired into. What a man's self is; and what this denial is.

A man's self in scripture is considered three ways, natural, corrupt, and spiritual. This distinction is very needful for understanding the point in hand, and will give light to resolve many doubts, which we may meet with in due place. Let us see how this distinction is bottomed; what these several 'selves' are; and which is meant in the text. The two former go together; natural self is nothing else but personal subsistence, consisting of a reasonable soul and human body united; in which self we conclude, all the natural faculties of the soul, and members of the body; in this sense each man is himself, as he is distinct from any other, which betokens his individuality; thus Peter takes it, saying, "stand up; I myself also am a man." {Acts 10:26} And Paul speaking to the jailor, "do thyself no harm." {Acts 16:28} Sometimes this natural self is taken more largely than for the subject only; it imports often all things that conduce to the being, and well-being of nature; as food, raiment, life, liberty, and the like, because they are all appurtenances to nature, to preserve it. So you may understand that text, "do no harm to thyself;" that is, to thy life, for he was about to kill himself.

A man's corrupt self is nothing else but so much in his nature, as is contrary to the rectitude of God's revealed will. To wit, ignorance, errors, vanity, conceit, false reasonings in the mind, stubbornness, frowardness, willfulness, deadness, deceitfulness, and such like; with all sorts of inconsistent, impertinent, vain, loose, ungodly, unrighteous thoughts; all misplaced, misguided, excessive, inordinate affections, or any other way; all sleepiness, brawniness, unskillfulness, and base cowardliness of conscience; all unruliness, and predominancy of the fancy to divert; all masterfulness, looseness, offensiveness, and brutishness of the senses and members; all false erotic, self-dependence, and self-sufficiency. This I say, and such like, is man's corrupt self; and this corruptness in man is often called himself. The Lord speaking of one that hates instruction, consenting with thieves, and partaking with adulterers; at last tells him that, God kept silence, and he thought him to be such an one as himself. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." {Ps.50:21} "For I know that in me; that is, in my flesh, {saith Paul,} dwelleth no good thing." {Rom.7:18} The text opposeth man to himself.

A man's renewed self is no more but so much of man, whether in his spirit, soul, or body, as is molded, and hath the stamp or impression of Christ upon it, and is reduced to submission or resignation of its self to his will. The scriptures plainly speak of such a self; as our Saviour speaking of the prodigal that broke out, and then growing weary of that condition, thinks of returning home to his father again; this inward consultation Christ calls a coming to himself. The apostle speaks fully to the same purpose, "if then I do that which I would not," "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;" for "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." {Rom.7:14-25} There is nothing more frequent than the mention of these two latter selfs, the one the old, the other the new man; one flesh, the other spirit.

In this diversity of selfs, you will ask, what 'self' Christ here means? I answer, not every self absolutely; the last must not be denied, but maintained, yet not so as to be made our justifying righteousness; for it is Christ's own work, and this must not be denied, but confessed; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, {i. e. Christ's,} and, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." {Rom.10:10} For the former, to wit, the natural; neither is that simply to be denied as the corrupt self, only so far forth as it stands at any time in opposition to some special trial of God, which extends not to a universality; for the apostle said to the jailor, "do thyself no harm," for he would have been *felo de se*, {that is, a felon of himself.} The mind of God, in general, is for our preservation of this being, and the furthering of the perfection of it, yet so as he reserves a liberty to himself to sequester when he sees cause, even natural good; nay, the best of it, even life itself, from his people; so that this must be denied only when such occasions happen, as would set God and his people at variance, that one must be left. As for a man's corrupt self, it must be denied at all times, universally, in all parts of it, with all a man's might.

Let us consider now what this denial is, that God requires. This self-denial supposes self-solicitation, which is a kind of begging, or earnest importunate wooing; wherewith the natural, or corrupt self, entreats either the embracing or sparing of somewhat, which is suitable to it, without which it suffers damage. There is no self-denial, strictly, where there doth not precede

a temptation; mere abstinence from things, whereto there is not an actual inclination, or some secret desire of reservation, is no self-denial. Men do not deny a thing which is not first moved to them, or urged upon them; as Christ did not deny the sparing or favoring himself, till Peter first moved him to it.

In denial, the thing sued for, or begged, though it seems never so plausible and good, yet it appears to him, that is solicited unto it, to have a greater weight of evil than good, which bears the sway; so that the self-denier must be a clear-sighted man, able to discern things in their proper colors; yea, and a man of faith to believe that they are worse than they appear to sense, because God hath pronounced so of them; for men cannot possibly deny things that appear only good, or better embraced than rejected; for *bonum est objectum appetitus*, {that is, it is the object of appetite or desire,} yea, and he must see {all things considered} that there is an over-topping good in the want of such things as he denies; that this is far better than the other. For example; consider life itself, when God calls for it; he that will deny his life, must see {how glorious a show soever life carries, and how many great and good things it propounds, yet then} the sparing of it is both the loss of it, and that which is far better, God himself, and an eternity of bliss; and that the denial of his life is of necessity in order to find and save it, yea, and to find bliss. The sight of faith must be the spring of self-denial; and these previous requisites preceding it stand. In a man's inexorableness to such solicitations, though they be urged with such subtilty of natural arguments, as he cannot well repel; yet, he holds the conclusion, not to be swayed by them, or moved to entertain them, but still turns the deaf ear unto them; so far as self-solicitation staggers a man, so far self-denial is shaken. See this branch of self-denial excellently shining in Paul, who, to spare himself, and not go up to Jerusalem, was solicited thereto by the danger and misery that would ensue; "but {saith he} none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, &c." {Acts 20:24} So David, much provoked to wrath by the loud cries of injuries, sustained from his enemies, mark how he expresses the denial of himself, "but I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." {Ps.38:13} You will say, doth not a man deny himself, although fleshly, or

self-solicitations, move him, who can choose but be moved with them? I answer, that by moving, I mean not that the self-denier must not be affected in any kind therewith, for it is impossible; all occurrences have some impression on the affections, much more these; but, by moving, I mean drawn, or inclined to yield to such solicitations. But it may be said, peradventure, a man may be startled by the nearness of such solicitations, especially such as concern his being, or well-being. I answer, that, in self-denial, it is with self-deniers, as with the needle in the mariner's compass, it being touched with the magnet, much jogging may make it stir this way, and that way, awhile; but, at last, it will settle towards the north-pole, and it cannot be moved to settle elsewhere; so, though self-solicitations may make a believer stir a while, yet nothing can make him settle from his north-star; which is Christ.

Besides the deafness in self-denial, there is also contradiction, which stands in two things. A direct and flat gain-saying, without any secret reservations or cautions, no ifs or ands. A man that denies himself, doth not only slacken his pace, but stops himself; he doth not only cut short the allowance, but takes it quite away, every jot of the motion is rejected. So then, when a man wholly disclaims his own righteousness, and deny and contradict every motive the flesh uses, that neither one nor the other can change him; but he sings the same song still; I will not consent; this or that shall find no favour. The execution intended shall stand firm as the laws of the Medes and Persians, irrevocable, although his ears be filled with never so many out-cries; such contradiction, being direct and flat, is a real denial. It is also a peremptory one; that is, it is the more stiff, by how much the more it is plied to a flexibleness, as in Christ's denial of Satan; a while he lets him argue, and Christ answers him; at last, finding him over importunate, he deals peremptorily with him, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." {Mt.4:10} So Paul, being solicited not to go up to Jerusalem, denies them peremptorily, "what mean ye to weep and to break mine heart; for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, the will of the Lord be done." {Acts 21:12-14} In this kind of denial there is a vehemence or ardency.

In self-denial there is struggling, and resistance, in which struggling note, first, that such self-solicitations exasperate or provoke anger and indignation against the flesh that will take no reasonable answer. Nay, as when beggars will not be gone, at last they will make the people of the house angry, being over solicited. What saith the denying soul, can there be no quiet? Then begins anger to rise, and the blood to boil, which produceth threatenings; but that's not all, it sets to buckle and harness itself for resistance, and calls out for Christ, it's good neighbour, to come and aid; and so lets fly a main at himself, to beat down his own body, as Paul did, even as when thieves beset a house, the master of the house gets his ammunition ready, calls neighbors and discharges upon them; and thus denies them with powder. If the first denial will not serve, to wit, inexorableness, then must flat and peremptory contradiction, with vehemence, break forth; if self-solicitations regard not that neither, nor will be gone, then must it stand a combat, and be cast out.

Consider next, why such as come after Christ must deny themselves; for it seems hard measure to many, but to the wise in heart it will appear very reasonable and necessary.

It must be so, because we are not our own, but are bought with a price. Is it reasonable that hired servants, much more ransomed slaves, should neglect their master's business, to serve their own turn, and work for themselves? This reason Christ intimates in the text, by the phrase of coming after him he tacitly gives to understand, that such are his servants; whoso takes notice of this his relation, cannot but take notice of Christ's demand, and of the equity thereof.

Because we are in a crazy distempered condition, and therefore not fit to be our own carvers. Shall it be well in an ignorant man, out of self-will, or self-conceit, to go his way, say his guide what he can; that knows what thieves and quagmires lie in that way? Shall an illiterate rustic stand stiff against a judge in a law case? May a sick man choose his own diet, that which only pleases the palate, whatever the physician saith; is it like to go well with such persons? Nay, is it not madness, and the desperate way to ruin? A foolish man, indeed, is apt to think the brat of his own begetting is fairest, though it be a deformed monster; as the aguish man cannot be persuaded that abstinence is better for him than cold drink; though indeed, instead of eating, it

enrages the disease, as sound men know, and his own experience, when it is too late, will tell him. This is certain, whatever Christ requires us to deny, or reject, is our poison, though it look never so lovely, or taste never so sweet. You will say, is not wealth useful, liberty sweet, life dear? Are not parents to be loved, and obeyed? How then can a yielding to enjoy them be poison? I answer, that which at sometimes is in itself good and wholesome, in its own nature may be, at another time, a man's bane, if he then use it; as in the case of an ague before mentioned; so may these things, though sometimes useful, yet at other times they may be poison; as "he that will save his life, shall lose it;" and, "he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall find it," saith Christ. But how shall I know when things are useful, and to be embraced; and when baneful, and to be denied? I answer, by the advice and opinion of Christ, the skillful Physician; in those cases wherein he saith they are baneful, we may conclude them so. Now, in general he concludes them so, when they stand in competition with him and his will; so that not the denial of them, is the denial of him, and his will; when men choose rather to keep them, and reject him and his will, than to adhere to him by forsaking them. They being therefore thus prejudicial, it is but reasonable to deny ourselves in all such things as Christ requires to be denied.

This denial is reasonable, because the contrary is an un-sufferable affront to the Divine Majesty; yea, shamefully injurious to divine goodness. Not denying of ourselves, is a casting away of God's cords from us; every refusal or denial, where God calls for it, infers what Pharaoh spake, "who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." {Ex.5:2} And what the wicked say, in Psalm 12:4, "with our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own, for who is Lord over us?" Which is a kind of dethroning or disrobing of God, as much as in a man lies; is it seemly, nay, tolerable, for a servant, when his master bids him forbear to do this or that, to say, {because his fingers itch after it,} I will not? There is nothing levels more directly against Divine Majesty, than persistence in a man's own way against divine authority; so that not to deny ourselves is, Crimen lese majestatis, {that is, injuring majesty or royalty; or high treason,} and therefore capital. Besides, it injures divine goodness, not only

as it is a churlish requital of former kindness, but also, as it misconstrues present intended favour in the command. What can be more injurious, than to deem a man an enemy in that wherein he only aims at good, and by which it must be compassed? What can be more distasteful than to deem that poison, and therefore to be rejected, which out of a skillful tenderness is delivered for the best cordial without which it were impossible to escape miscarriage? Christ may well take up Paul's complaint, "am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" {Gal.4:16}

Use: Is this an inseparable attendant of coming after Christ, to deny a man's self? Then are all such grossly mistaken, and far beside the mark, who think they may humour themselves, and yet have a part in Christ. As the standard is the trial of gold, so is this revealed mind of Christ, the discriminator of those that have interest in him from counterfeits; thy faith, therefore, that humoureth thyself, is a mere dream and delusion; that which thou fanciest to be faith, is but vain and dead. As cockering parents by humouring their children, and giving them the reins, never crossing them, prove in the end their ruin; so giving the reins to thyself, not checking and controlling thine own itching humours, not bridling thine inordinate judgment and affections, dost suck in thine own poison and bane; all thy stay is, that Christ will show thee mercy; but hear what he saith himself, "but whosoever {instead of denying himself} shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." {Mt.10:33} You will say, Doth not Christ take men in their blood; and doth not Christ alone, without works save? I answer, that as this is a cornerstone to those that rightly understand it; so it is a stone of offence to all those that abuse it. Know therefore, that although Christ finds men in their blood when he enters into covenant with them; yet he leaves them not in their blood when they become his, but covers their nakedness, washes them from their blood, and puts jewels upon them, and that not by imputation only, but by infusion also of actual grace. {Ez.16:1-14} When God converts Ephraim, he was a "bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," but afterwards he became "God's dear child." Paul going with fury to persecute, is met with by Christ; but, when Christ had yoked him for his own turn, he puts him into a better tune; he makes him deny his former attempts,

and stoop to him, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" As for justification, by grace alone, without works, in the apostle's sense, it is true; but, in many a man's own sense, it is false. It is faith alone which justifies; works have no hand in that business. Yet, that faith justifies alone, stands not alone without works, as if there could be a faith in men, and no renovation of life. Now, such as wrest the scriptures to their own perdition, dream of a faith that hath no fruits, and James calls them vain and dead; for certainly true faith will make a man deny himself for Christ. Dost thou then establish thine own righteousness, and not deny it, saying as in Isaiah, "it is all as filthy rags?" Dost thou maintain thine own judgment of things, and conclude according to it, and not according to Christ's? Dost thou not deny thine own lusts, but make provision for them to fulfill them? Dost thou not deny thine own passions and affections, but thinkest thou dost well to give them the reins to that inordinateness they have got? Art thou not contented to part with anything, when Christ calls for it? If not, but continue a self-maintainer, then hear thy doom; "Christ shall profit thee nothing;" for every one of his must pluck out his right eye, and cut off his right hand, {Matt.5:29,30;} that is, deny or reject what is dearest to him, standing in competition with Christ, if he will not go to hell.

But because some say, they deny themselves, but do not; others that they do not, and yet do; that neither the tender, jealous soul may be snared, nor yet the self-deceiving soul be deluded, I will endeavour to make the case plain to both, or at least to so many as will regard it. Something, for this, may be gathered from what I have spoken for the unfolding of self-denial.

Besides note, that the thing denied, is, as it were, a man's self, and yet is not favored; the trial of denial is in that which is dear and pleasant; as Abraham's, in his denying himself in his only son; such a denial as, were it not for God, a man would not be wooed or hired to part with it. Now bring this home, and make trial by this rule; suppose thy master delight, thy minion that hath ravished thine heart; suppose all thy wealth and substance, thy parent's wife, and children, lie whining and making moan, when Christ warns them away; they beg and make piteous crying, do they not only melt, but overcome thee to spare them? If thou wilt not, and dost not contentedly part with them, then dost thou not deny thyself; doubtless an eye,

or an hand, would make shrewd moan to be spared, if designed to a violent disjunction; yet a denying, or stopped ear, must be given to such outcries. The denying soul doth as the Israelites, that made their sons pass through the fire; they got divine music to fill their ears, and deafen them to such outcries; many, out of common courtesy, may deny some superfluity, that may be well spared for Christ, {and yet but few of them neither,} but his own self knows no stint. If Christ say, sell all, men must part with it; it is matter of life, and therefore being less than life, it must go; as the richest lading in a ship, though a man's whole stock be freighted in it, over-board it shall go, when the spring of it is the ruin of life. Some may say, I know not what to do in such choice cases, not having been put to it. I answer, thou mayest know by this. How is it with the cases that are already on foot? How dealest thou with a present lust arising, and wooing for harbour? Canst thou not for pity deny them? When a naked, hungry, undone member of Christ calls for a more than ordinary portion of relief, how canst thou part with it? If God call for wife, husband, child, dear friend, sends losses, and crosses, how bearest thou them? If in these smaller things thou stick with Christ, surely when the price is raised, thou wilt not leave him.

But some will say, {being fearful every bush is a thief,} sure if this be true, I do not deny myself, and why? Because they find themselves very loath still to part with anything against the hair; therefore fain they would have this and that spared. I answer, if this be all, it makes not void self-denial, nay, it necessarily presupposes this, as you have heard; there is no denial where there is not first solicitation, and the dearer a thing, the loather a man is to part with it; if at last he can say, for all that, it is for Christ and he shall have it; the denial is so much the stronger, and the love to Christ appears to be the greater. Consider, therefore, at parting, after all parties betwixt flesh and spirit, about things that Christ calls for; is it, I say, at last left to Christ's pleasure, or hath the flesh reprieved it, overcoming by its importunity? If the last sentence be for Christ, this is self-denial; if the flesh over-rule, then is it wanting.

Use: If this denial must be, then buckle thyself to it, and let it be universal, as the apostle's rule is, "to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts;" be not partial; favour neither small nor great; say not of this, oh, this

is but a small one or of that, it doth nobody any hurt; but be alike resolute, cast out small and great, quench the sparkles as well as the great coals, the covered fire as well as the flame; for a spared sparkle may set the whole course of nature on fire, as well as the greatest coal, and consume all to ashes. Say not, it will go out of itself, for the least sin allowed, or the allowance of anything that is against the will of Christ, is as a sparkle lighting upon tinder; such is man's nature, therefore, likely to out, but to grow. The very Gibeonites only being left, and all the rest of the Canaanites destroyed, prove pricks in the sides, and thorns in the eyes. One knot of couch-grass being left in the ground, will soon overgrow, and choke the choice herbs.

Let this denial be constant, do not begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; be not weary of this well doing; so run in this way, that you may obtain. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," saith Paul. {II Tim.4:7} You see he fights not a while only, but even till he finished his course. And let it be done in sincerity, with good will as unto the Lord; lay aside all base sinister respects, which will poison the best self-denial; it is as a dead fly in a box of precious ointment. You will say, may I not aim at mine own good in denying myself? I answer, that a man may, in subordination to God and his will. Now, a man's own end is subordinate to God, when the will of God is the *primum mobile*, {that is, first moved,} that sets a man at work to deny himself. When it is *finis ultimus*, {that is, ultimate end,} unto God's glory. In brief, a man may take notice of his own good that shall ensue his self-denial, and thereby be further moved thereto, and rejoice therein; but, because it is special service that Christ requires, he must not expect his own good as the wages thereof, nor desist when Christ only shall get the glory thereby; because we are not our own but must work for our master, not for ourselves.

Many are the encouragements to this self-denial, whereto you may reduce the reasons fore-mentioned; besides although at first it seem a yoke, yet Christ hath promised to make it easy; which encouragement he adds to that command, "take my yoke upon you, for it is easy;" difficulty is the usual discouragement of men in this case; there is a lion in the way, this makes men recoil; but, Christ you see takes it out of the way, he will make self-denial as easy as what is most natural. You

will say, I cannot find it so. I answer that peradventure it is for lack of use; for after a little treading the path will be smooth. Or it may be you take not Christ actually along with you in your denial, but go about it in your own strength; and no marvel if it be harsh. If you took him with you, you would be able to do all things, and that with ease through his strengthening you, whereas of yourself you can do nothing.

Another motive is, this self-denial issues in peace and quietness. Peace with God, whose work is done there; and consequently peace of conscience, which will not only be silent from accusations and condemnations, but also will speak peace and comfort; for God, saith conscience, will say, "well done good and faithful servant." It will afford quietness from inward disturbance; as when an enemy is in a man's house there is nothing but brawling, quarrelling, and confusion; but being cast out of the house, it is in quiet; so while self swaggers within, the heart cannot but be grieved and troubled with this master of misrule, that turns all upside down, and brings all out of order, and sets all on fire; but when it is cast out, then the occasion is taken away, and the soul returns to its rest, it falls to its wonted solaces, and freely and uninterruptedly enjoys its communion with God.

Another motive is that this self denial invites Christ and his Spirit not to withdraw; where Christ abides, he will have the government upon his shoulders, he will not be over-topped. He that will not deny any usurping thing which would set above Christ must never look to have him remain, and be as an underling. If the people will set up Absalom, David will fly from them; {II Sam.15:14;} David indeed for his own safety, but Christ and his Spirit for their prejudice that shall set up anything in his place. Now, when all such things as are offensive to Christ are packed out of doors, then he manifests himself; many a time hath Christ hid himself, when corruptions have been harbored, as when the church was in her sluggishness, not being willing to shake it off; so long as corrupt self is denied, Christ sees a faithfulness to himself, and delights to attend there.

But how shall I attain this self-denial? Answer, get a true estimate of that self of thine, that is to be denied; nothing but self-love makes self-denial difficult, and self-love proceeds from self-admiration, and an apprehension of self-usefulness; so that if a man could

grow out of love with that self, it were easy to deny it; but, here lies the difficulty, to grow out of love with it. The way hereto is to sift this self impartially, and to sound it, and hereby a man shall find this self to be but a serpent in his bosom, in human shape. If a man marry a woman of great beauty, it may be it is death to him to part with her; but if he find her to be a devil in a woman's shape, then will he kick her out of doors with indignation. Men, I confess, are hardly persuaded that themselves are become monsters in nature, vultures to themselves, sucking out their own heart's blood; but so they are, and so must men be persuaded of themselves, before they will deny themselves; that they are so is plain. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," {Rom.8:13;} the members thereof are weapons of sin unto death. If men would receive this, then self-denial would come on easily, for it could not but work enmity and hatred; for it is an easy thing for an Amnon to deny the greatest importunity of a Tamar, though he loved her never so dearly before, when once he hates her. But, I confess, it must be God, and not man, that must discover effectually this deadliness, or mischievousness of a man's self, and he must put enmity between the seed of the serpent in man, and the seed of the woman; therefore God must be sought to in it; and because the thing is a promise founded on Christ, we must put him upon the suit.

51 The Use Of The Law

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." {Gal.3:19}

Having, as near as I could, followed the apostle in extolling Christ, and reducing persons to him alone, for comfort and strength, I suppose some conceive I aim at abolishing the law; a jealousy which the apostle himself had in this text; I have therefore, on purpose, pitched hereon, to show the use of the law to believers, which the apostle comprises in these words. Now that you may the better observe his drift and meaning, consider that his watchful eye found the Galatians straggled by the seduction of the false apostles from the gospel of Christ, to the works of the law; hereupon he takes them to task, to reduce them back again to faith in Christ alone for justification; his main argument to prove justification by faith in the

promises of Christ, is taken from the priority of them to the law; they being made before it, the strength of the argument lies in this; that God, to whom nothing can intervene, after he hath done an act, to make him recall it again, doth not make void the promise by the succeeding promulgation of the law; hence follow the objection and answer in my text; where the apostle shows an excellent use of the promulgation of the law, although it be not contrary to the promise.

The text consists of an objection, and an answer; the objection hath picked out of the premises a nullity of the law; the answer clears the premises from such gross absurdity. The objection imports, if life must still come by promise, in vain did God publish the law; the answer suggests, that though life be not the end of the law, yet there are other sufficient uses of it, requiring its promulgation; which uses the apostle mentions in that answer, showing that the law was published to be an appendix to the gospel, giving the reason why it was added to it, "because of transgression;" and then he adds the continuance of this use of the law, "until the seed should come, unto whom the promise was made."

The apostle's own conclusion, in his own terms, shall be all the doctrine we will observe from the words, which is this; "the law was added because of transgression, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Because of the obscurity herein, let us examine, what the apostle means by this, "the law was added;" what he intends by, "it was added because of transgression;" what is his meaning as to the duration of this use of the law, "till the seed should come;" and we shall then see how far forth the law stands in force to believers.

The addition of the law to the promises of life by Christ, imports a priority of the gospel to the law, both in its being, and its proper office; that is, that God at first established Christ by promise to be our life, and righteousness, before the law was on foot; for the addition of one thing to another supposes the thing to which the other was added, was in being before; this the apostle expressly affirms, when he saith, "that the promise was four hundred and thirty years before the law;" and from priority he infers, that the law, when it was delivered, was not promulgated in opposition to the promise, as if the law were to contest with the promise; for, when God hath once said a thing, he

never contradicts himself; neither doth one act of his annihilate another; for he is not a man, that he should lie. Now if the law did contradict the gospel, they being both the voice of God, the matter would infer a lie, or falsehood in the former. If any say, that by this argument the ceremonial law must not be abolished, because it is God's act; I answer, that God ordained that to abide, but till Christ came, the promise was established for ever; besides Christ contradicts not the ceremonial law, but is the complement of it.

This addition imports a principality in the promise of life by Christ, above the law; that is, the law was published for the gospel's sake, to be subservient, or as an handmaid to it, not the gospel to the law; as additions to a house are for more conveniency and benefit of a house, the house is not made for the conveniency of the addition; the gospel is the end of the law's publication, not the law of the gospel. Now, by how much the end of a thing is more noble, than the means conducing to the better accomplishing thereof, by so much hath the gospel a principality above the law; for Christ promised, as the apostle speaks, is the end of it. He is the end, not only in execution, but also in intention; that is, not only the end of it, fulfilling it, but also the ultimate end, at which the law points. It is true, it points indeed at wrath; but that is by accident, or as a second end; namely, if it fail of making men run to Christ.

This addition imports a consistence of the gospel, and of the law; that is, that they can well stand one by the other, without destroying each other, as additions can well stand by their principals. Their natures are not so contrary, considering the true use the law was intended for, but that they may well agree together, and both abide without destroying each other. In brief, by this phrase of addition, the apostle intimates that the law and promise are of different uses, but not contrary; therefore they may well stand together, to let us now consider what use it serves for; "it was added because of transgression." I confess there is an obscurity in the expression, for the phrase imports, that sin was before the law, which seems a strange speech, because where there is no law, there is no transgression; but I will clear it as fully as I can. Note therefore, the apostle speaks not here of the being of the law, but of the promulgation of it by Moses, which was a long time after the being of it. The law

had its being from the time it was enacted, which was at the creation; and every aberration from that was a transgression, before this publication. But to come to the use of the law intended in this expression, {because of transgression,} this expression imports that, therefore; God published the law anew, because, before Moses, it being only written in man's heart, through his corruption it began to be so obliterated, that a little more would quite have defaced it; so that transgression would not appear to be transgression. Therefore God revives the law, that, by making it so conspicuous, transgression also against it, might be apparent in its proper hue; for, when the law comes fresh, sin revives. Hence it is that God did not only publish it anew, but also wrote it in tables of stone, that it might last fresh perpetually; this, then, is one use of it, to show man his transgression, which he could never take notice of, but by looking in this clear glass, that represents all his wrinkles and spots to the life.

It is added because of transgression; that is, it is set up to keep men from transgression, for *rectum est sui index et oblique*, {that is, justice defines both the just and the unjust.} Now, supposing the law almost obliterated, were it not revived, man should not be able to distinguish what is good and what is evil; now the law renewed, propounding to man what is good and acceptable to God, by looking hereinto he shall see what will please, and what displease; when he doth well, and when he fails; so that it serves for a rule of life, and a discernor of aberrations.

It imports, that the law was added, that when man transgresses, he may know what to expect from it, if he have no other refuge; to wit, the curse attending every person that continues not in all things written therein. The sum is, it serves to revive sin, to be a rule to avoid it, and to discover wrath to sinners; all which may, and doth well consist with, nay, is subservient to the promise of Christ; for Christ will not seem worth anything; nay, men will turn away their faces from him, the law discovers them to be transgressors, yea, and subject to God's wrath for it; as, blood-guiltiness pursued, made the city of refuge acceptable, and the man-slayer to hasten thereto, which otherwise might have stood as a neglected place; Christ, as a physician, is only welcome when need calls for him.

Again the rules and precepts of the law are very subservient unto Christ, as they adorn the life with a

conversation beseeming a companion of Christ, who calls us not unto uncleanness, but holiness. Now had we not directions from the law, men would live as they list; believers would be rather monsters than men; the law, in the tales of it, being holy and good, maintains a part fitting our communion with Christ. Some may say, if that be transgression still, which the law makes so, and those the rules of duty still, and that curse in force still unto such breach of those precepts, seeing, in many things, we all transgress those rules, the curse also lies on us still, and then where is life by Christ?

I answer, that, in respect of those that are still under the law, all this is true; so saith the apostle, "they are under the curse." {Gal.3:10} But so many as are within the covenant of grace, the law propounds but the desert of such transgression it intends, not the execution of it upon them; for then it should directly contradict the covenant of promise before made, which proved to be impossible. You will say then, that the use of the curse of the law is made void. I answer, that at the second publishing of the law, the execution of the curse could not be intended, because of the contradiction before mentioned in the first institution. Indeed it was intended, but Christ hath borne it; and so, though he hath not utterly avoided it, because he endured it, yet he hath translated it from us; as a Surety, by paying a debt, discharges the principal. But, yet there is some use of the curse intended in the second promulgation, even to those whom the covenant of grace belongs; namely, to drive them quickly out of themselves to Christ, as the fire that was coming to Sodom, though it was not sent to destroy Lot, yet it served to hasten him out of Sodom.

I come next to examine the duration of the law, in the uses before mentioned, which the apostle expresses thus, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." There is some obscurity in this expression, for it seems by this, seeing Christ is the seed, therefore this law must remain but till he come; whereas the apostle profeseth, that he seeks not to make void, but to establish the law by this doctrine. Let us therefore, consider, what he means by this, "till the seed should come." The seed of Abraham, in respect of the promise, whereof the apostle here speaks, is taken two ways, for the person of Christ; "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" and for the children of Abraham, according to faith; to wit, the

company of all believers to the end of the world, "I will be the God of thee, and of thy seed after thee." Now, if you understand by the seed here, the person of Christ, then conceive the meaning thus; that the law in the utmost rigor of it, is in force against man, till Christ come, and take it upon himself; but, by seed here, we may understand Christ mystical, consisting of himself the head, and the faithful his members; and so the law continues till that come; that is, till the whole body of Christ be made complete, by an actual subsistence of every member in him. Now this seed will not be wholly complete, till the consummation of all things. Indeed, the words immediately following gives no little intimation that he understands seed thus; for it is the seed to whom the promise, to wit, of justification and life by Christ, was made; which cannot be understood of Christ personally, but of his mystical members; so then the law continues to point out the wrath due for transgressions; for so long as Christ hath any seed upon earth, the law is to hunt men into Christ, their rock of safety; and, another end is, for a rule to order their conversation in him.

Some, it may be, will object, that all this while it seems that Christ hath not freed us from being under the law, whereas the apostle saith, "ye are not under the law, but under grace." I answer, that in respect of the rules of righteousness, or the matter of obedience, we are under the law still; or else we are lawless, to live every man as seems good in his own eyes, which I know no true Christian dares so much as think; for Christ hath given no new law diverse from this, to order our conversation aright by; besides, we are under the law, to know what is transgression, and what is the desert of it. You will say, what then is the liberty which the apostle there speaks of? I answer, having thus showed how far the law is in force, I will now show you what liberty we have from the primary intention of the law. The law, as it was a rule of life, so was it the only way to life; a long and hard way, nay, through man's fall, an impossible way, insomuch, as there can be no access to life by it; and this end of it is abolished by Christ, who now is the only true way to life; so that none comes to the Father, but by Christ alone; a believer is not tied to seek life by his obedience to the law, but by his faith in Christ. The law was an executioner to avenge itself on trespassers; it had a curse like a sting in the tail of it, but Christ

hath redeemed his from this curse, being made a curse for them, enduring the severity of that wrath, which their sins deserved; so that although in many things they offend all, yet God lays on Christ the iniquities of them all, by whose stripes they are healed. The law stood upon exact and perfect obedience to every jot and tittle, for matter, measure, time, an end of every particular duty required; so that if there happened but the least error, though out of mere forgetfulness, or any kind of weakness, it would not own or take notice of the most exact care and endeavour, but all must he quite lost. The rigor also hath Christ taken from the law, insomuch, as weak performances, if they be sincere, are accepted in Christ the beloved. The apostle making use of that prophecy in Isaiah concerning the acceptable time when the Redeemer should come, applies it thus, till the time that grace comes. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." {II Cor.6:2}

So again, showing the excellency of Christ's gospel above the law, he concludes, "wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" {Heb.12:28;} and in Rom.14:18, the same apostle saith, "he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God." So again, having said, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things;" {Rom.11:36;} he tells us in chapter 12:1, that the presenting of our bodies a living sacrifice, which is one reasonable serving of him, is both a "holy and acceptable service unto God;" for "in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me; there will I accept them;" there "will I accept you, with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen;" {Ez.20:41,41;} which is a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ.

The law meeting with the corrupt nature of man, though in its own nature it be holy and good, yet, accidentally, it had an irritating and enraging power; man's heart would be the more upon sin, because of the restraints of the law, as a wild bull in a net; nimitur in vetitum, {that is, we try to get what has been forbidden for us, and we always want whatever we have been

refused,} the more we are prohibited, the more by nature do our fingers itch. But Christ so crucifies the flesh, that he kills this itch, which made Paul say, "I am dead unto the law;" not only the condemning, but also the irritating power of it; instead of hankerings and shifts, and propensities to sin, Christ raiseth indignations against what the law forbids.

The law calls for bricks, but allows no straw; for obedience, but supplies no succor to help our infirmities; it saith, "do this, and live," but leaves a man to shift as well as he can, the work being infinitely beyond man's reach, it is impossible but he must sink under the burden; this is that which makes duty so harsh, uncouth, and unsavory to many; for they look on it as a tiring thing; but this rigor hath Christ also taken away, promising never to fail; "fear thou not; {saith Christ;} for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." {Is.41:10} Christ will cause the lame to leap, the dumb to sing; he will carry the weary in his bosom, give them wings to mount, and strengthen them when they faint; he furnishes with talents to trade with; he affords seed where he looks for a harvest.

52 A Funeral Sermon

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." {Gal.1:8}

{Occasioned by the Death of Mr. Oliver Brunsell, Vicar of Wroughton, 1642.}

You may marvel, upon hearing this text, what mean, to fall upon such a subject, on such an occasion as this, which seems altogether incongruous unto it; and no marvel, for I marveled as much at it, as any other can do; but to satisfy any curious inquisition, the occasion hereof was.

This burning light, {whom Christ, I am persuaded, to the comfort of many,} set upon this hill, or in this candlestick, and who now hath wasted himself in giving light to you; having some time before his death singled out this text, for what special reasons I cannot say, nor could learn, sent earnestly to speak with me, and desired this last kindness of me that I would discharge the world of him, and solemnize his funeral with a sermon upon it. I confess, I was at a stand so

soon as I understood his mind, not as being unwilling to do this last office for him; but, because I could not know his mind herein; neither could he well impart it to me, by reason of his infirmity, which had bereft him of his wonted faculties; howbeit his deserving abilities and labors, besides mine own interest in him, challenge so much respect to his worth, as to fulfill his desire, although I know not whether I shall attain his aim or no, whereunto I should willingly have framed myself, could I have pumped it from him. I shall not need to say much to you of him, I say to you, with whom he so travailed in birth, as that he died in travail; his constancy of labour, yea, till he could scarce creep to this place; his extraordinary zeal in his ministry, with other commendable excellencies of ministerial parts and gifts, are so notorious, that all rhetorical expressions would be but as the lighting of a candle to give light to the sun.

This our zealous, indefatigable, and invincible spirited apostle of the Gentiles, who laboured in the work of the gospel more abundantly than they all, by the grace of Christ, {among the churches, successfully planted by him} had, with no small diligence and care, reared a hopeful nursery from the ground among the Galatians, rooting and establishing them in the faith; but not long after his departure, the envious one takes the advantage of his absence, and sends subverters among them, to turn them from the faith, once given to them; whereof no sooner had the apostle notice, but, as a bear bereft of her whelps, his blood grows hot, the zeal of this people even eats him up, he cannot contain himself; and therefore he breaks out very pathetically in this his epistle to them, “who suffers, and I burn not?” He is like a tender mother, when her child hath got a fall she startles, and is almost freighted; so this apostle, after a very short salutation framed, answerable to the occasion thereof administered, begins very roundly with them {a far different strain from all the rest of his epistles} in chapter 1:6, “I marvel {saith he} that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel;” wherein he intimates the sad occasion of his writing, namely, the sudden seduction of them, by white devils, as Luther calls them, whom their master had transformed into angels of light, like himself; pretending an evangelical ministry, even whilst they undermined Christ, the foundation.

In managing of which business he follows God’s order, which he observed when our first parents were seduced, who began first with the ringleader; so the apostle first falls very foul on the seducers, whatever they be, thundering out the most direful execration against them. This he doth in my text, wherein we may, by a transverse order, observe, the execration; the ground of it, and the apostle’s impartiality in the denunciation of it. In the execration you may observe, the matter of it, and the manner of the denunciation. The matter is anathema; which, in the apostle’s sense, is a delivering up unto Satan. The manner is by way of imprecation, let him be so; he arrogates not the act or the power of cursing to himself. The ground of this execration, is equivalent to the bitterness thereof; namely, a preaching another gospel besides and different from, what Paul and his companions had before preached to them. What that preaching was, we must consider anon. Here is also the apostle’s impartiality in this execration, which shows itself in his not exempting himself and his companions; “no, not an angel from heaven,” if they should be guilty of this fact; wherein he shows he hath no fling at any particular men’s persons, in that he would not spare himself. From whence I might note, that the purest planted churches, are subject to errors, yea, and that in matters of faith, as this was, which hits the heart of infallibility. That the best care of ministers cannot prevent seducers from sowing tares to choke wholesome doctrine. That seducers deceive, by specious cloaking their poison, under the name of gospel, whereby they get securer entertainment. That the reverence of men’s persons, or the excellency of their gifts and parts to win men, is no warrant to take anything on their own credit. But the scantiness of time will not allow us the scope these points require, I will therefore confine myself to this general proposition; that whoever they be that preach any different doctrine, though under the name of gospel preachers, from what Paul had before preached to the Galatians, are under the great curse. In the handling of which, all the difficulty lies in finding out what this gospel is, which Paul had preached to them, from which, and what that doctrine is, to which they were seduced; for they are neither of them mentioned in the text; yet this is our sea-chart by which we must steer our course, if we mean to reach our port, least whilst we

speak of seduction, we ourselves be seduced from the scope of our text. That which is his gospel, we must pick out of this epistle; for he nowhere delivers a set discourse of it as we find, only by way of redargution, from chapter 3, to the end of the epistle, he gives us some hints what it was. The fullest expression of the gospel, which he had preached to them, he here vindicates, with an execration to the opposite, you may find in chapter 2:16, namely, that we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, which he expounds to be a believing in Jesus Christ; not intending, hereby, utterly to abolish the law, as some slandered him; only to exclude it in the matter of justification, as being altogether un-useful therein. Now the contrary doctrine he so much disclaims against, is not the utter abolishing of Christ, which the false teachers did not attempt, but the superstructure of the works of the law; as if Christ could not profit unto justification, but by the addition of the works of the law unto faith in him. This is the sum of the matter; and the whole epistle spends itself in maintaining, with much zeal, his own doctrine, and with like zeal confuting the contrary.

Whosoever then preaches a doctrine different from free justification, by faith alone in Christ Jesus, without the concurrence of any of the works of the law, is under the great curse, though he goes for an angel from heaven.

Some may say, this is an unseasonable point, not only in regard of the present occasion, but also of these present times; for that we have none among us who preach justification by works, and not by faith alone in Christ. As for the present occasion, I have spoken to that already; and for the present times, I know you are not ignorant, that this contrary doctrine to the apostle's, is one of the corner stones of the Church of Rome; anathematizing the apostle's doctrine, and maintaining the merit of good works; which subject hath filled many volumes of theirs. But, it may be said that this doctrine hath been long exploded in this our church, it being the main cause of our separation from them. I know, you are not ignorant how many among us, yea, and of the uppermost form {bishops} have warped of latter times, and have turned their faces to return back to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and have been nibbling shrewdly at this colewort; not fearing to affirm, that we are not now so angry with Rome,

as in the first heat of our zeal. But, besides these gross Romanizers, we have zealots who advance works, yea, in the matter of justification, very much, and exceedingly diminish and derogate from the free grace of God in Jesus Christ; who are, therefore, near unto cursing; nay, so zealously affected are they this way, as that they stick not to revile, and with an heart-burning indignation, speak evil of that ministry, which extols and presses the acceptance of Jesus Christ by faith; though men be in the most sinful, and loathsome condition, as the most sure portion of such, if they can but lay hold on him, and come to him in that condition; taxing such ministers, as if they were the ministers of licentiousness and libertinism, and as opening too wide a gap unto men. I speak what I know, and what I have felt. At present I shall spare to speak of that gross contradiction of the apostle's gospel, by the Romish faction, and factors, being sufficiently manifest, and shall confine myself to the latter sort of contradiction, being more subtle and prejudicial to God's people amongst us; and herein discover how some join works to the free grace of God in Christ, unto justification, and how contrary it is to the apostle's gospel.

It is a common doctrine among the rigid troublers of the Israel of God that men must have many legal preparations, and they must sensibly find them wrought in themselves, before they may dare to apply Christ by faith for justification, otherwise their faith is mere presumption. For instance; suppose a sinner hath lived in all manner of licentiousness {as Mary Magdalene} before he may believe that Christ hath justified him, he must forsake and find, by reflection on himself, that he hath forsaken all his former evil ways, and must be stricken with inward terror, and feel the pangs of the new birth, as they call it; and be, I know not how much or how long, {for their expressions intimate a strange depth,} under the bondage of a kind of hellish conscience tormenting and racking them; nay, more, they must be changed too, and find a delight in the law of the Lord, and a ready cheerfulness in obedience thereunto; and that not by a fit, but constantly, till they find all this, and much more of a like nature. Their time of believing in Christ is not come, and that, before this, their faith is but a dream, and skinning over the sore; all which, occasions so much fear, as keeps many poor souls in bondage all their lives long, suspecting still, that the

humiliation is not deep enough. Is not this to put the cart before the horse, or rather to send the cart a going, and the horse must come after?

To have men sanctified before they can be justified. If men must be thus qualified, before they believe to justification, how can Christ be said to justify the ungodly? By this rule he rather justifies the godly. The time of man's being in his blood, is not the time of God's love when he enters into covenant with him, {by this rule,} but rather the time of his comeliness when he is adorned, which is carnal doctrine, and a measuring God's way of love by man's. Is not this an adding of the works of the law to the righteousness of Christ for justification? If not, why may not a man be justified without all this addition? And if he may be justified without these works of the law, why may he not apply it? Some may say that they make none of this the cause of justification, but a preparative to it. I answer, they will not allow men to be justified without these works, and that justification belongs not to them, they may not apply it till it be thus; whereas the apostle's gospel is that we are justified by Christ, his righteousness, without works; which he proves out of the 32rd Psalm, "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile;" {Ps.32:2;} so that works must not come in under any consideration, in the matter of justification; this sophistry will not have weight enough when it comes to the apostle's balance.

These men contradict the gospel of free justification by faith without works, whilst they not only require the being of such works before justification, but also make them a main, and immediate ground of believing it; for they usually affirm, that such who apply Christ without such qualifications, their application is groundless, and built upon the sand; but being thus wrought upon and changed, the groundwork is laid, they have a foundation, and therefore they need not fear; as if any foundation, or groundwork for justification can be found, saving Jesus Christ himself alone. He that hath any ground to believe besides Christ himself, doth he not make Christ imperfect, by adding some other thing to him? If they say they make not these works the ground properly, but the reason of believing; I answer, that as there is no foundation, so no reason without Christ of believing. It is that these works sincerely wrought in a person, may serve as reasons, that they

do believe; but they cannot be reasons, that they may believe. If any ask, why the apostle is so bitter against such as interweave works with faith in Christ? I answer, because they bring men into bondage, and keep them in it, laying heavy burdens upon them; and this reason the apostle gives himself in chapter 2:4,5, "and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Here, speaking of these seducers, he calls them false brethren, who came to spy their liberty in Christ, and to bring them into bondage, to whom he would not give place an hour; therefore he earnestly urgeth these Galatians in chapter 5:1, "that they stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Some may say, he speaks this of circumcision, which was a ceremony to be abolished; but not of works of righteousness. I answer, that he gives this but for one instance; for the seducers fell upon their keeping of the law of Moses, and circumcision both, as is plain by that expression of his in chapter 3, where the apostle disputes about the moral law in matter of justification. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" {vs.2} "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." {vs.10} So also in that dispute which was brought before the apostles at Jerusalem, which I suppose was occasioned by this seduction, whereupon that prime council was held; as in Acts 15:5. "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses." Now this destruction of Christ's freedom they counted intolerable, and Peter saith in verse 10, 11. "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."

Another reason of the apostle's bitter execration against those that mingled their works of the law in matter of justification is because this mixture tends to

the frustration of the free grace of Christ, and to make it of none effect. This argument the same apostle useth in Rom.11:6, "and if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace," intimating, that where any works come in, grace ceases to be grace. So, in Gal.5:4, he saith, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

The apostle anathematizeth those that bring in works towards justification, because this brings Christ much out of request with men, and works into a far higher esteem than him; for you will observe, where such legal observances are required to application of justification, there is an hundred times more poring on such qualifications, than on Christ, and his free grace; the thoughts, cares, and passions, are infinitely more racked and intense about them, than him; their absence or presence, work more strongly by far on the spirit and affections, than his presence, or his absence; Christ in a manner is forgotten and neglected, in comparison of them; almost all comfort, and all peace, stand upon their presence. Whereas the apostle's doctrine is, that being justified by faith, we have peace with God; and his prayer is that they might be "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" he doth not say, that they may be filled with all joy in the presence of works. Now what greater derogation can there be to Christ, than for him to be so much passed by, and to be so rarely and coldly frequented, whilst works bear the bell away; whilst one answers from works, pro or con, works more, and stirs more the spirit of a man, than twenty from Christ himself. Let but such as are trained up under the bondage of works speak, if it be not just as I say.

Some may say, what use is there then of works, this is the way to bring them out of request? I answer, this is an old cavil, and was made in the apostle's times, and is as hot now as ever, as if works could serve for no purpose, unless they be preferred before Christ. Works were made as fire was, to serve, but not to rule; they were made to glorify God with, not to rob him of his glory; they serve for the ordering a man's conversation aright, not to get, no, nor to prepare acceptance with God. Coming to Christ is all that is needful to justification. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." {Jn.1:12}

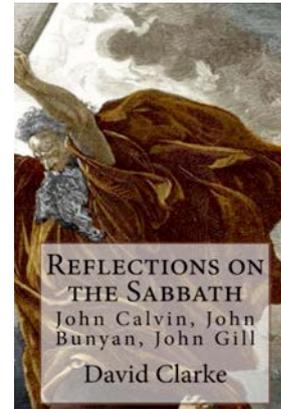
It matters not in what pickle; and this very coming is by the Father's drawing. "No man cometh to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." If a person can truly see Christ, the chiefest among ten thousands, all fair, and for that cause choose and close with him; neither good nor bad works have ought to do in this business, to hinder or farther justification, or acceptance of such a person by Christ. The truth is, this gospel is the only establisher of good works as it sets bounds to them, as to their right ends; as it shows the way to be enabled to do them, and as it shows their place and rank.

Use 1: This text should serve as a fair warning to us, the ministers of the gospel, to take heed of running on this desperate shelf of preaching a different doctrine from the apostle's, which will swallow up all such mercilessly; and let us choose rather to lie under the heavy censure of men, with the apostle himself, than to lie under his curse, by giving the freeness of grace its own due dimensions, without stinting it to the pleasure of men, for fear of a licentious abuse of it. In Paul's time men were as apt to wrest and abuse free grace to libertinism, as now; yet he feared not to impart to them to the full, the good pleasure of Christ for all that. Some while they are busy with the whip to keep off dogs, fetch blood at the hearts of children with their causeless cautions, and then rejoice to see them in their spiritual afflictions, which methinks is an inhuman cruelty. Some say, men grow very presumptuous by such liberty preached; but children must not want their bread for fear of dogs, or have gravel mixed with it, least they should surfeit of it. I grant, that we ought not to preach continuance in sin, that grace may abound, which cannot be truly inferred from this doctrine; for there is a vast difference betwixt Christ's showing grace in the worst condition, and an allowing men to wallow in sin still; the apostle's gospel necessarily infers the first, but contradicts the last.

Use 2: This may serve as an item to all God's people. Not to censure the doctrine of free grace, lest they fall into the same condemnation, as partaking with the sin of seducers. Thankfully to embrace this doctrine, and hold it fast whatever others preach different. To beware of men that come in sheep's clothing, pretending to lay a sure foundation by laying it deep, as they call it, whilst indeed they are ravenous wolves, tearing and racking poor souls, freighting and torturing their poor

consciences, about the matter of justification. I speak not against the utmost discovery of the sinfulness of sin, to make it odious to men; but, for requisites, and I know not what qualifications, {besides faith alone in Christ,} to justification; I say, beware of them, lest you receive the true gospel of Christ in vain; lest Christ himself grow into contempt and neglect with you, and works become more glorious in your eye than he, and so you be turned aside from him, who calleth you from darkness to his marvelous light, and lest he shake off the dust of his feet against you, as a self-willed and self-conceited people.

Reflections on The Sabbath



By David Clarke

Since the Reformation in England men have had access to the scriptures and were able to read for themselves the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These scripture were able to free men from the bondage of Rome and give light as to the way of salvation through Christ alone. In the early Church there were men who taught the Law of Moses must be kept in order to be saves but the Apostle Paul stepped in to show clearly that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the rule not life for the believer and not the Law of Moses. A conflict arose among those who advanced certain days were to be kept holy and their views were to bind others to their practice.

This book seek to take the reader through the developments in Articles of religion since the early 17 Century, stating with the first London Baptist Confession 2nd Edition 1646, through to the Gospel Standard Articles of 1878.

These has continued in the Christian world conflicting views on the Sabbath and this book sees to identify the development of thinking among those seeking to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

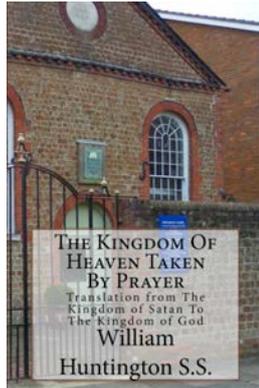
In this book the author relates from his personal experience a conflict relating to the Sabbath which resulted in him being informed he would not be accepted as a member in any Gospel Standard church due to his scripture views on the Sabbath and Law of Moses.

ISBN-13: 978-1533130983

ISBN-10: 1533130981

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The Kingdom Of Heaven Taken By Prayer



Translation from The Kingdom of Satan To The Kingdom of God

Authored by Wiliam Huntington S.S.,

ISBN-13: 978-1533619624

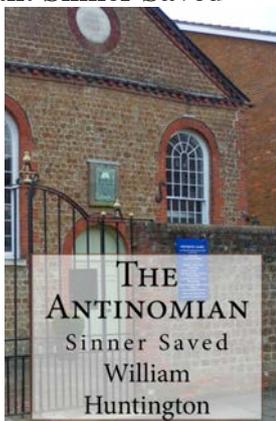
ISBN-10: 153361962X

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / Calvinist

This work, 'The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer' tell of the translation of the author from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God. He leaned that the Law of Moses was not help in bringing him into a knowledge of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ and that the new birth, justification by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ was his only resting place. The Law of Christ or rule of Christ became his rule of life and not Moses.

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The Antinomian: Sinner Saved



Authored by Rev. William Huntington s.s,

ISBN-13: 978-1533550569

ISBN-10: 1533550565

BISAC: Religion / General

William Huntington was born in 1745 near

Cranbrook in Kent, and was given the name William Hunt at his baptism there five years later. It is said that his father was Barnabus Russel—his mother's husband's employer—despite his mother's marriage to William Hunt. He was the tenth child of Elizabeth Hunt and the only male to achieve maturity. He had an unsuccessful romance with Susannah Fever, from which a child was born. He left the Kent area and changed his name. Now William Huntington he was free from his financial obligation, but not his conscience as he tells in this account. He changed his surname to Huntington in 1769; his rationale was that the "ing" represented the present participle in words representing sinful activities, such as "stealing" and "swearing"; and "ton" referred to his being "a vessel of the Lord". Later that year, he married Mary Short, a servant; they moved to Mortlake in Surrey and Huntington resumed his gardening work. Nevertheless, he was still very poor.

He did attend a number of schools, but it was always as a result of charity. He said himself that he was frequently hungry. He was the son of a farm worker and he undertook work that was unskilled or semi-skilled, such as driving hearses and coaches, gardening and heaving coal. He also spent some time as a tramp.

In 1773, Huntington and his wife moved to Sunbury-on-Thames in Middlesex. Soon afterwards he reported that he had been contacted by Christ. The vision, which appeared as a bright light from which Christ's bloodied body emerged, told him that he was brought under the covenant love of God's elect. He became dissatisfied with his existing religious beliefs, and began to associate with Baptists, Methodists and Calvinists in various Surrey and Middlesex towns. He became known locally for his Biblical knowledge and preaching, and he established his first congregation at Thames Ditton in Surrey, where he was a Baptist. He then had an independent group in Woking, also in Surrey. By the 1780s, Huntington preached at a large circuit of chapels across Surrey, Sussex and London; for example, he was involved in the early days of Bugby Chapel, a Calvinistic chapel founded in 1779 in Epsom. His ongoing poverty, exacerbated by the loss of his coalheaving job, forced him to walk long distances every week. He controversially claimed that Divine Providence alleviated his poverty at this time

by occasionally supplying money, food and a horse.

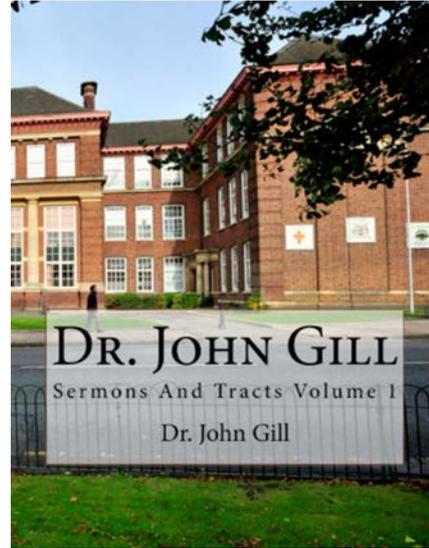
Moral Law the Ministration of Death

In 1782, he received another message—prophecy upon the thick boughs—and moved to London, where he established a chapel on Titchfield Street. Providence Chapel was consecrated in 1783, and became very popular: hundreds or sometimes thousands of people attended his ministry, including Princess Amelia and members of the nobility—although Huntington himself preferred preaching to poorer people. His preaching style was evangelising, and he was known for preaching that the so-called moral law was the “ministration of condemnation” (2 Corinthians 3:9) rather than the rule of life for believers, for which he was accused of (Antinomianism). Huntington has been identified as the “most egregious” proponent of Antinomianism.

Huntington died in 1813, after which various preachers tried to take on St Bartholomew’s. (The church was finally destroyed during the bombing of London in the Second World War.) Huntington was buried at the Jireh chapel in Lewes beside Jenkin Jenkins who had died in 1810. The inscription, which he composed only a few days before he died, reads “Here lies the coalheaver who departed his life July 1st 1813 in the 69th year of his age, beloved of his God but abhorred of men. The omniscient Judge at the grand assize shall ratify and confirm this to the confusion of many thousands, for England and its metropolis will know that there has been a prophet amongst them.”

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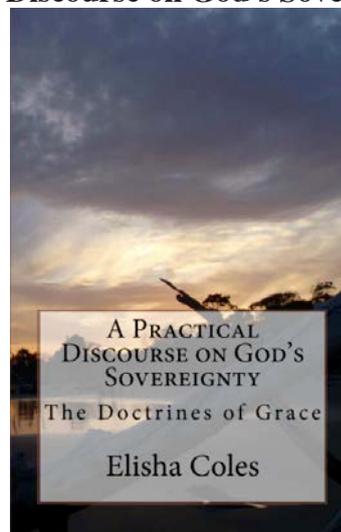
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The doctrines in this study have exercised the thoughts and best abilities of many learned men. The opposition made against them by the Pelagians of old, excited many good preachers and theologians to their just defense. Here they received the light and power of their truths, the church remained in a quiet possession and belief of them for many ages. However, lately, the Jesuits, and Socinians, and some others, conspired against the doctrines of grace to overthrow them and they would have, probably, prevailed even now if the Lord had not stirred up the spirit of many and great writers to fight for the truth of His established covenant. We should notice, though resent, how zealously affected some men are

in behalf of such doctrinal points that stand in direct opposition to the grace of God, and their own eternal happiness. These men do not spare anything against those godly men who uphold the very truths that make up the mystery of godliness. These wicked men even scandalize and suppress the truths themselves as if reason and learning were given to them so that they could simply vilify the true religion of God. Also, how consistently addicted men are who have taken hold of the Arminian points, and thrive on the most fatal consequences of them. These points of error are so far away from the principles of truth that they do not yield any effectual influence towards holiness, or well grounded peace, even though the Arminians pretend that they do. I could prove this, but I must be brief. Whatever the ends of these men are, or their interest in defaming the wisdom, sovereignty, and grace of God, God allows it even though their ends may be wicked. God will use it all for good; the Lord's ends in permitting them are always holy and good. We are assured that he would not put up with those dangerous errors and allow them to invade his church. He will not allow his glorious truths to be so roughly treated. He will order their further conquest.

It is easy to see that the writer of this work used the Bible alone and did not consult with many books on the subject. I mention this in order to magnify the grace of God that was with him. If this point is understood as amazing, then anyone would understand that to accomplish a work like this is due to humble submission to God, and by a serious and diligent study of the Word of God. This study on grace demonstrates the great importance, best use and surest means of instruction. It touches the mystery of God's will with an orderly and flowing connection of the divine attributes for recovering apostate creatures from their dreadful lapse into sin. It places them in a condition transcendently better than their first state. The author, in making this study, reduces the Pelagian articles to nothing.

There are some very important advantages which come out of this study. First, that it is founded and built on the testimony of God alone whose authority and truth are the only perfect rule and immovable basis of divine faith. It is its best benchmark. Secondly, that the doctrines being declared and vindicated here is through the best use of them to excite and influence

our hearts and lives according to the genuine tenor and import of those truths. This is in opposition to what the contrary doctrines have ever pretended to be themselves. It may be a supplement to other books, where the same truths are worthily contended for, but may be defective in this application of the truths to the Christian life. So, it is not only a work of good use in and of itself, but it also rescues these doctrines from one of the worst scandals that they have been derogated in. Various other reasons might be mentioned for reading this study.

We hope that the book may be entertained by men according to its deserts, and blessed of God in the ends it is designed and suited to, is, and shall be the desire of,

JOHN OWEN

SAMUEL ANNESLEY

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Tobias Crisp was a preacher of the gospel in England in the 17 century. He was born in 1600 and died in 1643 at which time these sermons were published.

He lived at the time when the First London Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 was published and it is clear from these sermons he taught Calvinists truths.

He preached the doctrines of grace and was charged with being an Antinomian and provoked opposition from various quarters.

Dr. John Gill republished these sermons along with comments, in his defense, showing that Tobias Crisp clearly taught the truths of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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