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Adieu my Husband. mother dear
of my dear children pray take Care
their Souls. I doe to God commend
whoes mercy lasts. world without End

Oh Death thou has conquerd me
I by thy Dart am Slain
but Christ has conquerd thee
and I shall Rise again

altho my life has been so long
Still troubles did Encrease
but now at Length my Race is Run
& I lie down in peace

O now my mourning friends Adieu
I cant with you remain
O make Gods word. your Rule of Life
and we shall meet again







A
COLLECTION
OF
SERMONS
ON
Several Subjects.

PREACH'D

Some by the Rev. EBENEZER ERSKINE, M. A.
Minister of the Gospel at *Stirling* ;

AND

Others by the Rev. RALPH ERSKINE, M. A.
Minister of the Gospel at *Dumfermlin*, and
Author of the GOSPEL-SONNETS.

WITH A

Recommendatory PREFACE,

By the Rev. Mr. THOMAS BRADBURY.

VOL. I.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN OSWALD, at the *Rose and Crown* in the
Poultry, near the *Mansion-House*. 1745.

Where may be had the AUTHOR'S other Sermons and Works.

COLLECTION

238 MONS

Several subjects



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P R E F A C E.



ONE of the reverend authors of these sermons has endeared himself to me by some poems, which he published under the name of *Gospel-Sonnets*. This being a word very old in the *English* tongue, and never, as I remember, used in religious matters, I cannot but fear, that as the title was not well understood, that excellent work will be less enquired for. I would therefore take this opportunity of recommending what I have so much admired, those hymns and *spiritual songs*, for the sweetness of the verse, the disposition of the subjects, the elegance of the composition, and, above all, for that which animates the whole, the favour of divine and experimental knowledge. As poetry has very often no more in it than *great and swelling words of vanity*, distorted images, and monstrous allusions; so it is a pleasure to see the things of another world delivered without any heathenish figures and phrases, but in such an *adorning* as becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ.

THESE sermons were printed at several times in *Scotland*. They are collected from a greater number, and I could have wished they had been ranged in such an order as would agree to the times of preaching; and had I seen them

them before they were committed to the press in *London*, I would have taken the liberty either to have alter'd or explained some phrases that are never heard in the *South*, tho' not only common but very expressive in the *North*.

THE reader may be surprized at the familiar enlargements that seem to draw out these discourses to a greater length ; but that will be no offence, if he considers, that not one of them was ever designed for the press, nor writ out by the author in that view. These are only a transcript of his original preparations by some that were able to read his short-hand, which he looked over, and then left them to the disposal of particular friends. He himself never made a collection of them, tho' without his knowledge they have had several editions.

THE same account may be given of Mr *Ebenezer Erskine's* sermons. They, with several others, were designed for a large unlearned audience, and have been greatly blessed to the edification of many, especially *the poor of the flock*.

I am told by the author, (Mr. *R. E.*) that he and his colleague have their work among seven thousand persons, whom they examine. And as these sermons were preached on sacramental occasions, it may be proper to acquaint the reader with their method, because it is so different from what obtains among us here. For almost a year, there is a particular examination of all those who propose themselves to be communicants ; and, after the ministers are satisfy'd about their knowledge, the names of
the

the persons are read over, that there may be a proper enquiry into their conversation ; and so they are either rejected or received by *the voice of the people*.

IN most places the ordinance of the Lord's-supper is administer'd but once a year, in the summer, which makes a great confluence of hearers and communicants, and especially where the solemnity is served by *those* who have contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ; so that by a circulation of these meetings they have an opportunity of frequent eating that bread, and drinking that cup, during the season. The people who live in neighbouring congregations do usually meet their own ministers in the place of general concourse, or otherwise they bring tokens along with them from those who are satisfy'd in them.

THE numbers on these occasions are oftentimes so great, that they are obliged to have a tent set up on the outside of the church, for the service of such as could not find room within.

THE first of these discourses, as they now stand, was delivered in three sermons on *Saturday, Lord's-day, and Monday*, and thus it was in most of the rest. These things I thought proper to be mentioned, which I do upon the best information.

THE sermons have no need of my recommendation. You will find in them a faithful adherence to the design of the gospel, a clear defence of those doctrines that are the pillar
and

and ground of truth, a large compass of thought, a strong force of argument, a happy flow of words that are both judicious and familiar.

MAY the Lord of the harvest long continue such faithful labourers; and encrease both their numbers and their successes; that though it is not likely I shall ever *see the faces* of these brethren *in the flesh*, I hope our hearts may be comforted, being knit together to the acknowledgment of Christ Jesus; to whom be glory for ever and ever.

London, March 3:
1737-8.

Thomas Bradbury.

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The main Question of the Gospel-Catechism, What think ye of CHRIST ?

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The Substance of some SERMONS preached at
Portmoak, &c. on a Sacramental Occasion.

By the Revd. RALPH ERSKINE, M. A.

MATTH. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ ?



Y friends, if you have any regard to the voice of the Son of God, speaking to you in this text, then, to be sure, the application of it is begun, before ever we come to the explication of it. And indeed, if the Lord himself would open and apply it to you, you would see more in it than we can tell you. Perhaps many that are here, when the minister reads his text, turn up their bibles, and put a mark upon the place of scripture : very well ; but then they think there is the minister's text, and so no more of it ; as if it were only the minister's concern, or at most, that it is only the minister's business to speak to his text, and their business to hear what he says. But, my friends, you ought to know, that you have here more than a

A text ;

text ; and it is my business, at this time, not only to read you a text, but to ask you a question ; and I cannot resume my text, without proposing it, *What think ye of Christ ?* And it is your business, not only to hear seriously what is said, but to answer solemnly before God what is ask'd, namely, *What think ye of Christ ?* If you understand it simply as my text, you will think your selves little concerned with it ; but if you apprehend it as Christ's question to you, then your concern is great. It is not my question only, but as Christ proposed it to the *Pharisees* here, so your hearing it repeated to you in Christ's name, and from his word, makes it his question to you, *What think ye of Christ ?* At such solemnities as this, you have occasion to hear much of Christ ; but now the question is, What think ye of Christ, of whom you hear so much ? Many people, the more they hear of Christ, the less they think of him ; like *Israel*, when they had the manna so plentifully rained down about their tent-doors, they thought very little of it : but woe will be to you, who hear much of Christ, and yet think little or nothing of him. If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, say the apostles, if he have no esteem of him, let him be *Anathema Maran-atha*. If you have the sacramental supper in view, you know Christ hath ordered you to search and try beforehand, saying, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat*. And now, if you would examine to purpose, I cannot see a more short and substantial question in all the bible to try your selves by, than this is, *What think ye of Christ ?* Solomon says, *Prov. xxiii.*

7. *As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he ;* where he declares the man's state to be according as the thoughts of his heart go. Now, so it is here ; truly according as you think in your heart, especially concerning Christ, so are you, and so is your state in
 God's

God's sight : according as you think highly or duely of Christ or not, so are you either a gracious or a graceless man, either a believer or unbeliever, either a man fit to go to a communion-table, or not ; and therefore inquire into it, *What think ye of Christ?* The trial here comes to a narrow point, wherein God only can be the witness, who will be the judge. You may deceive men with your words and works, which is all we have to know you by ; but here you are called to try your selves by your thoughts, before that God who searches the heart, and sees the thoughts, *What think ye of Christ?*

The occasion of Christ's propounding this question, was this ; the *Pharisees* had proposed several questions to him concerning the law, by which they thought to have exposed him, while yet they did but expose themselves ; particularly from *verse* 15, and downward, thinking to intangle him, they sent forth their disciples with the *Herodians*, saying, *Master, what thinkest thou ? is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not ? what is lawful ? or, what says the law concerning this ?* Christ answers the question to their astonishment and confusion. Again, from *verse* 23, and downward, the *Sadducees*, who denied the resurrection, came to him with a question on that head ; and they start a difficulty out of the law of *Moses*, which they thought was irreconcilable with the doctrine of the resurrection : but Christ answers that also, and puts them to silence. Again, afterwards, from *verse* 34, and downwards, the *Pharisees* finding that the *Sadducees* were silenced by him, they gather together their forces to puzzle and tempt him ; and one of them that was a lawyer, comes with another question to him, saying, *Master, what is the great commandment in the law ?* Now, they having asked so many questions of him, and he having answered them all, it was time for him to ask

them a question ; and he does it while they are gathered together in confederacy against him : tho' their forces were unite, and every one present to help another, yet he puzzles them ; for God delights to baffle his adversaries, and conquer his enemies, when they think themselves strongest, and have all the advantages they can desire. Now Christ asked them a question which they could easily answer : it was a question in their own catechism, What think ye of Christ ? and, Whose son is he ? They answer truly according to scripture, that he was the son of *David*. This they were taught from *Psal.* lxxxix. 35, 36, and several other places, shewing, that the *Messias* was to be the seed of *David*, the rod out of the stem of *Jesse*. But now Christ starts a difficulty upon their answer, which they could not easily answer ; nay, which silenced them, and all that sought occasion against him, *verse* 43, 44, 45. If Christ be *David's* son, how then is he *David's* Lord ? Christ did not hereby intend to insnare them as they did him, but to instruct them in a necessary truth which they were to believe ; namely, that the expected *Messias* is God as well as man, *David's* Lord as well as *David's* son, and so both the root and offspring of *David* ; *Rev.* xxii. 16. Now, herein they were puzzled, and put to silence. Many are proud of their knowledge, because they can answer some questions of their catechism, as the *Pharisees* here did in general ; but yet they have reason to be ashamed of their ignorance : when the question is opened up, they cannot abide by the truth which they assert, nor reconcile one truth with another, no more than the *Pharisees* here could ; by which it was evident, that tho' they answered, yet they did not understand his question, which he proposed, (1.) More generally, What think ye of Christ the *Messias* ? (2.) More particularly, Whose

What think ye of Christ?

Whose son is he? It is the question, as proposed in general, that I confine my self unto, yet not excluding the other branch of it, as the subject may bring it in. When Christ proposed this question to the *Pharisees*, *What think ye of Christ?* no doubt they reckoned their thoughts of the *Messias* were sound and right every way, while they thought he was the son of *David*; but like the damnably deluded *Arian* doctors of our day, they did not think so highly of him, as to apprehend him to be the Son of God; they did not think so honourably of him, as to own his being the supreme God, equal with the Father: for all their knowledge, there was more in that question than they understood, *What think ye of Christ?*

The *Pharisees* had asked Christ several questions concerning the law, the great precepts of the law; and now it was fit that Christ should ask them a question concerning the great promise of the gospel: they were so taken up with the law, they had no thought of the gospel; they thought so much of *Moses*, that they had no thought of Christ; therefore says he, *What think ye of Christ?* Many are so full of the law, that they forget him who is the *end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Here is a question to check the pride of legalists, *What think ye of Christ?* There is a depth in every place of scripture, which tho' it seems to be very plain to the carnal eye, yet the spiritual depth thereof cannot be sounded without the help of the Spirit of God: there is also a great depth in this question; angels cannot sound the depth thereof, they pry into it, and cannot think enough of Christ; they can never think too much of him: and what shall men say in answer to it, *What think ye of Christ?*

To divide this text too critically, would, I suppose, be the way to confuse it; but I think every word

word of it hath an emphasis in it. 1. There is an emphasis in the interrogative particle *what*, What think ye of Christ? what place do you give him? what value do you put upon him? what grandeur and glory do you ascribe to him? what esteem have you of him? And so, 2. There is an emphasis in the verb *think*: some think not of him at all; God and Christ is not in all their thoughts; some think meanly, some think basely, some think dishonourably, some think hardly of him: but what think ye? what is your judgment of Christ? what is your opinion of him? what is your sentiment about him? what is your apprehension of him? how stand you affected towards him? and what consideration have you of him? 3. There is an emphasis in the pronoun *ye*: What think ye of Christ? ye *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, what think ye of Christ? ye that are so busy in starting of questions about the law, what think ye of Christ, the end of the law? ye legalists, and self-righteous persons, what think ye of Christ? Yea, tho' it was put to the *Pharisees* in particular, yet it concerns all in general. The trying question that is proposed for the conviction of hypocrites, and to find them out, is useful for the consolation and confirmation of believers, and for discovering their uprightness. While the daughters of *Jerusalem* think no more of Christ than of another beloved, saying, *What is thy beloved more than another?* the spouse of Christ thinks him to be the *chief among ten thousand*. Therefore it comes to you all, What think ye of Christ, believers and unbelievers? Surely, *to them that believe he is precious*. 4. There is an emphasis in the object or matter of the question, *Christ*: What think ye of Christ? what think ye of the *Messias*? what think ye of the anointed of God, the Christ of God? It is remarkable, Christ says not here, What think ye of me? but, What think ye of Christ?

Christ? that is, God's anointed, and the Messias promised to the fathers: and hereby it is intimated to us, that as Christ loves to magnify his office, as the sent, and sealed, and anointed of God; so we cannot have right and becoming thoughts of him, unless we apprehend him in his saving offices, to which he is authorised of the Father: and so, when he says not, What think ye of me? but, What think ye of Christ? he does not simply commend himself, but his father also, who anointed him to that office; and himself, as bearing his father's commission, and invested with his authority to save sinners: what think ye of Christ? Here is the proper object of esteem of rational creatures, and especially mankind sinners, on whom their thoughts ought to terminate. It is not, What think ye of God absolutely considered? for God out of Christ is a consuming fire. It is not, What think you of *Moses*? You magnify *Moses* and the law; but a greater than *Moses* is here, even he by whom the law is magnified, and made honourable. It is not, What think ye of ministers and their sermons? O! they are nothing but the image of death without him; but the question is, What think ye of Christ? The word itself is but a dead letter without Christ. It is a remarkable saying that Christ hath to that same purpose, *John* v. 39, 40. *Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me: And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.* You think you have eternal life in the scripture, but the scripture testifies of me; yet ye will not come to me, tho' the scripture testifies that eternal life is only to be had in me. *Christ is the true God and eternal life, 1 John* v. 20. *And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, ver. 11.* Seeing then that the scripture testifies of Christ, that eternal life is in him, in vain do men think to have

have eternal life, even in the scripture, while they will not come to Christ that they may have life. People may think respectfully of the scripture, and yet perish in their ignorance, and die in a delusion, while they do not think respectfully of Christ, in a suitableness to the testimony that the scripture gives of him ; therefore the great question is still, *What think ye of Christ ?*

OBSERVATION.

That the great question of the christian catechism, by which the people are to try themselves is this, What think ye of Christ ?

Here, you see, Christ, who is the catechist that puts the question, is also the catechism, the matter of the question. It is to this same purpose that Christ demands an answer to this question, both with respect to the people in general, what they thought of Christ ; and also with respect to the disciples themselves, what they thought of him, *Luke ix. 18, 19, 20. Whom say the people that I am ?* What is the sentiment and opinion of the people about Christ ? It is answered for the people, that some took him for *John* the Baptist, some for *Elias*, some for one of the old prophets : they had an esteem of Christ, but not according to his worth and excellency, his grandeur and glory. Well, but says Christ to his disciples, *Whom say ye that I am ?* What is your thought and judgment ? *Peter* answers in the name of the rest, saying, *Thou art the Christ of God.* Believers only can answer this question to purpose, *What think ye of Christ ?*

The method which I would here endeavour, as the Lord may assist, to prosecute, shall be, I. To premise some general remarks for clearing of this doctrine. II. To shew what is the import of this question

question in the several parts thereof. III. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, shewing why this is the leading and trying question in the christian catechism. IV. Deduce some inferences, and so make application of the point, for informing of our minds, trying of our state, and directing of our thoughts and affections concerning Christ.

The *first* head proposed is, To offer some general remarks for clearing of the doctrine.

1st Remark. That man is a thoughtful or a thinking creature. God created him with a thinking faculty, capable of discursive thoughts and ratiocination ; capable of rational cogitation concerning God, and spiritual objects, and celestial things, which beasts that have some sort of thoughts, yet are not capable of. I need not insist upon this ; for some of you know, that even pagan philosophers are acquainted with this, and that heathen poets have infer'd it from the very frame and structure of the human body ; as *Ovid*,

*Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit : cælumque tueri
Jussit, & erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.*

Man was endowed above beasts with a faculty capable of celestial contemplation. It is peculiar to the creatures called men and angels, to think of God, and to think of Christ ; other creatures are not capable of such thoughts : this is plainly supposed in this question, *What think ye of Christ?*

2d Remark. That man's thoughts, together with all the faculties and powers of his soul, have got such a dash by the fall of *Adam*, that they were set a wavering after other objects besides God, the chief good : yea, the fall, in a manner, dash'd out his

brains ; and his head being broken, God went out of his head, and the creature came in. Since that time, he never could have a right thought of God in his head ; yea, *God is not in all his thoughts* ; but innumerable other things fill up the room which God should have. He created man upright, but they have found out many inventions, insomuch that now, *every imagination of the thought of his heart is only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. The world, and the lusts thereof, do monopolize and ingross all the thoughts of the children of men, and God is thrust out of them ; there is no room for God, or the Son of God. This wrong sett of the thoughts is also here supposed in the question, *What think ye of Christ ?*

3d Remark. That whatever confused thoughts and dark apprehensions men may naturally have, now in their fallen state, concerning God and his law, like the confused chaos, Gen. i. 2. *without form, and void, and darkness upon the face of the deep* ; yet, thoughts of Christ, or of God in Christ, are what no man could ever have the least glimmering idea of, by nature, without divine gospel-revelation. *Adam* fallen, retained some awful and terrible thoughts of God ; but no thought could he ever have had of Christ, unless God had revealed him as the seed of the woman that was to bruise the head of the serpent. This is the mystery that was hid from ages and generations. *The great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself*, could not enter into our thoughts. Some natural impressions men have of God, as a law-giver, standing upon terms of obedience with them, according to the first covenant, namely of works, made with the first *Adam* ; but God in Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, and fulfilling the righteousness of the law in the sinner's room, is such a hidden mystery, so far above the natural thoughts

thoughts of man, that even where the objective revelation of this mystery is made, without the subjective, internal, saving illumination in the knowledge thereof, men cannot have, or entertain any due apprehensions of it, but remain doting upon their legal dreams and imaginations concerning God; as in the old covenant-relation to them. This was evident in the *Pharisees* here, notwithstanding of the gospel-light they had, both from the old-testament prophecies and promises of Christ, and from the rays of the sun of righteousness himself, now arisen among them; still they were doting upon the law, and had some dark thoughts of God, with relation thereto: therefore Christ, to direct their thoughts in the only way to God, he leads them to himself. And as the disciples themselves, being but partly enlightened herein, need to be directed in their faith and spiritual thoughts of God, that they be not legal, terminating upon God absolutely, but evangelical, upon Christ, or God in him, *John* xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*; so much more do blind *Pharisees* need to be directed to the right road, as here our Lord does. Ye think of God, but, *What think ye of Christ?*

4th Remark. When Christ is revealed, people may think of him, and yet think amiss, unless their thoughts be spiritualized by a supernatural change of the mind, and a saving illumination of their understanding in the knowledge of Christ. Thoughts may be considered as either rational and speculative, which is just the work of the brain, and lies only in a bare theory of divine things; or as practical and spiritually operative, which does not rest in the head, but affects the heart, and sets the affections in motion towards divine things, and raises the spiritual estimation thereof. Now, whatever thoughts of Christ the natural man may have in the former

sense, yet no suitable thoughts of Christ can he have in the latter sense, till a supernatural change be wrought by saving illumination. It is as impossible for a man in the black state of nature, to think upon Christ or spiritual things in a spiritual manner, as it is for a man that was born blind, to judge of colours, or to be taken up with their beauty and lustre ; 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God ; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.* This discerning he cannot have, till he be translated out of darkness to God's marvellous light, and till the God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shine into his heart, &c. 2 Cor. iv. 6. People then may think of Christ, and yet think amiss, without this saving illumination. This is also supposed here in the question ; for the *Pharisees* did not want some thoughts of Christ the *Messias*, and partly right thoughts too upon the matter, while they thought he was the son of *David* ; yet they were so far from being right thoughts of Christ, as God-Man, and as to the manner of their thinking of him, that they had no esteem of the true Christ ; nay, he was *despised and rejected* of them, *as a root out of a dry ground, and as having no form or comeliness*, Isa. liii. 2, 3. And thus he is still undervalued of multitudes, who yet judge they have right enough thoughts of Christ ; they think of him, but think amiss : and therefore the question is not merely concerning the act of thinking, but the quality thereof ; it is not, Have you any thoughts of Christ ? do you ever think of him ? but it is, What think you of him ?

5th Remark. That man's thoughts are within God's jurisdiction, and under his authority. The commands of God extend not only to the outward, but the inward man of the heart, and consequently
further

further than ever any earthly command could go. Where was there ever a monarch that could give out such laws, as would bind the heart and thoughts of men? If any mortal should make a law, that his subjects should not dare, upon their peril, to welcome a traiterous thought against his royal person, otherwise he would be avenged upon them; really such an one would deserve to be laughed at for his pride and folly more than *Caligula*, who threatned the air, if it durst rain when he was at his pastime, and yet durst not look upon the air when it thundered. It were the height of madness for any crown'd head in the world, or potentate on earth, so far to forfeit their reason, as to think that the thoughts of mens hearts were within their territories or jurisdiction: but behold, they are all under the authority of God; for his name is *καρδιογνώστης*, *the searcher of the heart, and the trier of the reins of the children of men.* Think not that thoughts are free, any more than your words or actions before God. It is his prerogative to lay bands upon the inner man, and to judge the secrets of men, *Rom. ii. 16.* by Jesus Christ, who is here the catechist, putting the question to you; and he is the fittest hand, for he knows what course your thoughts are driving; He is the witness, and will be the judge of your thoughts, which are all under his jurisdiction. Therefore it is his unquestionable right, to call you to an account for your thoughts; thoughts are as visible and evident as actions to him, *Heb. iv. 12. 13.* *The Word of God, the essential Word, the Word that was made flesh, is quick and powerful, &c. a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* He knows our thoughts afar off, even before we think them, and thoughts are actions before

before him ; heart-thoughts are heart-acts, and real deeds in his sight ; the adulterous thought is adultery before him, and will be judged as such ; the covetous thought is idolatry before him, the malicious thought is murder, and the unbelieving thought is unbelief, the contemning thought of Christ is contempt itself : he is an infinite spirit, that sees your thoughts better than men see your actions ; and therefore answer for your thoughts to him, What think ye of Christ ?

6th. Remark. That as men may expect to be catechised and examined of God with respect to their thoughts, as well as their actions ; so especially about their thoughts of Christ. And as God will judge us by the thoughts we have of Christ, so we ought to try and judge our selves by this rule ; for as our thoughts are, so are we ; yea, God's thoughts of us are according to our thoughts of Christ. If we think nothing of Christ, God will think nothing of us ; if we think highly of Christ, God thinks highly of us in him : For as God's thoughts of Christ are very high and honourably, he being the father's darling and delight, *Isa.* xlii. 1. so, when our thoughts of Christ in some measure agree with God's thoughts of him, and we think highly and honourably of him, as God does ; surely it is evident, that we have the spirit of God, and that as God is well pleased with Christ, so he is well pleased with us in him. Now, if our thoughts and hearts condemn us in this matter, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things ; but if our hearts and thoughts condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God, 1. *John* iii. 20. 21. It is true, the natural consciences of men, and their thoughts, may accuse or excuse, and so condemn or justify them, according as they do good or evil, *Rom.* ii. 15. and to be thus condemned or justified,

stified, is no evidence of the man's state before God ; for this only shews the work of the law, written in our hearts by nature, even the covenant of works, which says, that the doer of the law shall be justified, *verse 13.* and the breaker of the law shall be condemned. These are some of the beams of nature's light. All men may find themselves condemned here ; and they that think themselves justified here before God by their good deeds, they but discover their ignorance of the law, which condemns all vain and evil thoughts, as well as evil deeds ; and therefore no man can have his heart and thoughts justifying him before God, nor a good conscience or confidence towards God, till once he come to think duly of Christ, from whom the law hath got full satisfaction to all it's commands and demands, and by whose blood the fiery law is extinguished. The conscience being sprinkled with that blood, and so purged from dead legal works to serve the living God, the man hath confidence towards God according to the measure of his faith, and regular thoughts of Christ. The more a man thinks upon the law, the more his thoughts condemn him, if he understands the spirituality of the law ; but the more he thinks of Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, the more will his thoughts and conscience smile upon him, and give him confidence towards God ; for we have *boldness to enter into the holiest*, and come to a holy God, *by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. x. 19. They that think much of themselves, and think little or nothing of Christ, they are least in the kingdom of heaven, yea, they are not of that kingdom at all ; they despise Christ, and God despises them ; but they that think little of themselves, or think nothing of themselves, but think of Christ, and think every way highly and honourably of him, they are great in the kingdom of God ; Christ is great

great in their eye, and they are great in God's eye, being accepted in the beloved : therefore the great question is, *What think ye of Christ ?*

The *second* head proposed, was, To shew the import of the question, *What think ye of Christ ?* That people may not deceive themselves with transient thoughts they may have of Christ I would more closely open up the meaning and import of the question ; and this being the main head upon the doctrinal part, we must explain the several branches of the question, and so shew the import of it, I. *Objectively*, with respect to the *object*, Christ. II. *Actively*, with respect to the *act* of thinking. III. *Formally*, with respect to the *quality* of the act, what sort of a thought it is ; *What think ye of him ?* IV. *Subjectively*, with respect to the subjects, *ye* ; *What think ye of Christ ?*

First then, I am to consider the import of this question, with respect to the *object* or matter of our thoughts, namely, Christ ; *What think ye of Christ ?* And here I own it is impossible for me to go through all that I thought might be said here. There are so many things in Christ that I found to be the matter of the question, he being All in all, and all the fullness of the Godhead being in him, that before ever I was aware, there were more than a hundred questions occurred to me, that might be put upon this one particular ; and therefore I found a necessity of restricting myself. And tho' if the time will allow, in the application, I may thro' grace insist upon some of these ; yet at present I shall confine myself to what I judge precisely to be the scope of my text and context, and the intent of the Spirit of God in this question, *What think ye of Christ ?* That is, 1. What think ye of his righteousness ? 2. What think ye of his pedigree ? 3. What think ye of his person ? 4. What think ye of his anointing ? These four I suppose, we shall find to be the special import of the question here.

First,

First, What think ye of his righteousness? This I place first, because I judge from what goes before, as the occasion of this question, that the great design of Christ therein was to lead off these self-righteous *Pharisees* from the righteousness of works and of the law, about which all their questions were put to him, and to lead them to another righteousness, even to himself as the Lord their righteousness, the end of the law. You think to be justified by the deeds of the law; but how is that possible, since by the law is the knowledge of sin? *Rom. iii. 20.* If ye will stand close to these old covenant terms with God, then let the law itself catechize you: where is your righteousness of nature and practice, that the law requires? Where is your righteousness of thought, word and deed, that it requires? Where is your righteousness of affection and action that it requires? Where is your perfect, personal and perpetual obedience, your righteousness internal in heart, external in life, and eternal in duration, which the law requires? *For, cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, Gal. iii. 10.* The law will tell you that tho' you keep it wholly, and yet offend in one point, you are guilty of all, *Jam. iii. 20.* Now is there no point wrong in your state, nature, heart, or thought all your days, not to speak of your words and actions? If there be, then you're guilty of all; and since by the law is the knowledge thus of your sin and guilt, how can you be justified by the law? Can that holy righteous law pronounce you just and righteous? No, no; in vain do you think of righteousness by the law: Therefore, what think ye of Christ the Messiah? who is called *Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness*, *Jer. xxiii. 6.* It is he that came to fulfil

the righteousness of the law in his own person really and actively, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us imputatively and passively, *Rom. viii. 4.* Is not this the only righteousness that magnifies the law, and makes it honourable? You magnify your own righteousness, which does but disgrace and dishonour the law: but what think ye of Christ? Do you magnify and honour him as the Lord the righteousness? Ought not you to magnify that righteousness that magnifies the law, seeing it is more than an angelical righteousness? It is not the righteousness of a man only, or of *David's* son; but the righteousness of God, and of *David's* Lord. If you think no more of Christ, but that he is *David's* son, no wonder then you be hankering after the law, and a poor pitiful righteousness of your own; you have never seen the glory of Christ's righteousness: but if you think duly of Christ, you'll see him to be the Lord Jehovah, and his righteousness to be a glorious divine righteousness, so as you will *count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him, and to be found in him, not having your own righteousness that is after the law, but the righteousness which is of God in Christ by faith, Phil. iii. 8. 9.* Let all your questions about the law then, might Christ say, give way to this great question, What think ye of Christ, and his law-binding righteousness? Your righteousness will not abide the first fire of the law, when it comes to be discharged against you, and to exact obedience and satisfaction; but Christ's obedience unto death answers the whole charge of it's precept and sanction both to the full: therefore, what think ye of Christ, and what think ye of his righteousness? This is the first thing imported in this question as it stands here.

Secondly, What think ye of his pedigree? That
this

this is imported in the question, appears from the connexion also, *Whose son is he?* What think ye of his pedigree? They thought it was easy to answer that question, by saying only, he is *David's* son. They might have known it was not so easy to answer that question, if they had considered the question of the prophet *Isaiah*, chap. liii. 8. *Who shall declare his generation?* And the description which the prophet gives of him, *Isaiah* ix. 6. that the name of the *Messias*, the child born, and son given to us, should be *wonderful, counsellor, and the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace*. What think ye of his pedigree as he is a man? No doubt this was partly implied in the question; for Christ did not disapprove their answer, tho' it was but to the least part of the question: He is *David's* son, say they; and it is right to think of him as the son of *David*, clothed with our nature. Here was the *great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh*. It was no mystery for the *Pharisees* to think only that he was the son of *David*; *David* had other sons, and a numerous seed: and if that be all, that he was the son of *David*, they might thus think of Christ, and yet think nothing of him. But it is another thing to think of him as God in our nature. If we think duly of Christ as the son of *David*, or in his human nature, then must we not think that God is come very near to us, so as there is a natural relation betwixt him and us, he being *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*? Must we not think, that he wonderfully emptied himself of his divine glory, and humbled himself unto death? Tho' he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he suffered himself to be divested of his glory, clothed with rags of our flesh: God calls him the man that is his fellow, yet he was made a fellow to thieves and malefactors, and a murderer

preferred before him, tho' he was the prince of life, yet, as the word may be rendered, he evacuated or emptied himself unto death; and yet to them that know him, he is most lovely, even in his greatest abasement. What think ye of Christ as man, as the son of *David*, the son of man, a man of the same infirmities with us, except sinful infirmities? He was made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted: he became a poor man in all outward respects, a distressed man, *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*; a tempted man, tossed and tempted of the devil sometimes, he going thro' all the ages of a man, first conceived, then born, then a babe, then a youth, and at last the perfect stature of a man: he became a mortal man, and accordingly was put to a painful and shameful death; yet a holy man, a wonderful man, a God-man: What think ye of the man Christ Jesus? But the main thing imported in the question here, with relation to his pedigree, is, what think ye of his pedigree as he is God? What think ye of Christ in this respect? For to separate Christ from God, is to make him no Christ; therefore the question is, What think ye of Christ, whose son is he, with respect to his divine nature, as well as his human? That this was the import of his question, appears from his reply to their answer; *How then does David call him Lord?* He is Lord *JEHOVAH*, the only begotten son of God, the brightness of the father's glory, &c. by whom all things were made; *John* i. 3. *Heb.* i. 2. It is the *Arian* blasphemy to affirm him to be no more but *ομοιου* *ᾧ* *Patři*, but not *ομοιου* *ᾧ* that is, like unto the father, but not the same essence and substance with him. He is, according to his God-head, arrayed with all glory. All the creatures are to him as the drop of a bucket; yea, as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity;

nity ; he hath a name above every name, and all the creatures are but shadows to him, who is the substantial image of God : he is the eternal son of God by ineffable generation ; whatever *Arians* and *Atheists* think of Christ, yet Christ himself thought it no robbery to be equal with God, *Phil.* ii. 6. therefore, What think ye of Christ ? Is he no more but the son of *David* ? The *Jews* looked upon Christ, as an ignorant clown will look upon the sun, and, it may be, will think it no bigger than his bonnet, or, at most no larger than a millstone ; so did the *Jews* : The *Pharisees* looked upon the son of God, saying, *Is not this the carpenter's son ?* But their highest thought was, that he was the son of *David*, they did not see him to be the son of God. What think ye of Christ ? Do ye see all the attributes of God to be in him, and all his actions, as mediator, to be dignified with infinite virtue and value ; that he was able to satisfy infinite justice ; that he is able to save to the uttermost ; that he is the adequate object of divine worship, and a full suitable portion for an immortal soul, because he is the son of God as well as the son of *David* ? All this is imported in the question, *What think ye of Christ ?*

Thirdly, What think ye of his person ? This question is also plainly imported in that, what think ye of Christ, namely, as he is God-man in one Person, and the second Person of the glorious Trinity ? It is plain, that Christ speaks of himself here as personally considered, and as having two distinct natures in one person. Now, the human nature of Christ is not a person distinct from the divine ; tho' the natures are distinct, the person is one. But the answer of the *Pharisees* to this question shewed they had no distinct knowledge of this mystery ; for they answer, he is the son of *David*, without know-

knowing that he was the son of God, as well as the son of *David* in one person ; which made Christ here to declare his sovereign Lordship and Godhead as well as his manhood. The mystery of the question then, which they did not understand, was, What think ye of that wonderful person God-man, in whom the human nature is advanced to such an unspeakable dignity, as to be united to, and of the same personality with the son of God ? Here is matter of thought to the intelligent mind : what think ye of the wonderful manner in which sinful men may come to be partakers of the divine nature, even by the holy son of God, his being a partaker of the human nature ? Here is a glorious subject for thought and contemplation. What think ye of the wonderful way that God in his infinite wisdom hath taken to bring God and men together, even in and through him, who is both God and man, and partaking of both natures in one person, is fit for bringing both God and man into one, and to lay his hands upon both parties ? what think ye of such a glorious person as finite and infinite, time and eternity, creator and creature joined together ? *John i. 14. The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth.*

Fourthly, What think ye of his *unction* or anointing ? This I suppose must also be the import of the question objectively considered, as it is here generally proposed ; for Christ signifies *Anointed*, in the *Hebrew*, it is *Messias*, in the *Greek* it is *Christ*, and in our language, it is the *Anointed* : And this being the main word on which the weight of the general question itself lies, it is the more necessary that this be particularly opened. The question then comes to this in general, What think ye of his father the Anointer ? *John vi. 27. For him hath*
God

God the father sealed : How ? See *Psal.* xlv. 7: *God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* How much pains is Christ at, in the gospel, to recommend his father, as sending and authorising him to his mediatorial work ! Again, What think ye of his office, to which he is anointed ? He hath not taken the honour of the mediatorial office upon him, without being called of God, and anointed of God thereunto, *Heb.* v. 5. We do not think honourably enough of any of his saving offices, unless we at the same time apprehend his divine unction thereunto. Again it comes to this, What think ye of his spirit, the ointment wherewith he is anointed ? *Isa.* lxi. 1. *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me.* *Isa.* lxii. 1. *I have put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* There is the meaning of the question in general, with respect to this *Christ*, who is the subject-matter of the question : but there is much in this name, *Christ*, and more than we can tell ; I only name some particulars further here imported. (1.) What think ye of his prophecy and teaching ? For, as Christ, he is anointed to be a prophet : who teaches like him, says *Elihu* ? *Job* xxxvi. 22. Other prophets and teachers have no wisdom but what he gives them ; but in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ; other prophets may err, but he teaches infallibly ; for he is truth itself, full of grace and truth : other teachers may be dashed, but he teaches authoritatively ; he speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes : Other teachers may fail in their design, and prove unsuccessful in their work ; but he teaches efficaciously : men work upon a capacity, but he can give the capacity ; the entrance of his words giveth light, he gives understanding to the simple. The excellency of his

his teaching is singular, if we consider his ability and fidelity ; the matter of his teaching is singular, if we consider it as the whole will of God for our salvation ; the manner of his teaching is singular, if we consider it is by his word and spirit, and even by a human voice, he can convey his divine power ; the extent of his teaching is singular, if we consider it extends to all sorts of persons, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and to all sorts of things necessary to eternal life : This anointing teaches all things, 1 *John* ii. 27. In a word, none have authority to teach, but by commission from him ; neither can any other teacher preach himself : we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and to him gave all the prophets witness ; but it is his prerogative alone, to preach himself, saying, *Come to me all ye that labour, &c.* Look to me and be saved ; I am the rose of *Sharon*, I am the light of the world, I am the way, the truth and the life. O then, was there ever any teacher that could compare with him ? The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, says Christ, for he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek : He is the Christ, the anointed prophet ; and what think ye of Christ ? (2.) What think ye of his *Priesthood* ? For, as Christ, he is anointed to be a priest forever after the order of *Melchisedek*. All the *Levitical* priests were but shadows and types of him who was the true priest, the true temple, the true sacrifice, all in one. What high thoughts may we have of his oblation, or obedience unto death, even the death of the cross ? For here was the grand condition of the covenant of redemption or grace fulfilled. The covenant of grace was all grace with respect to God, who of his grace found out the ransom, and with respect to us who are saved by grace : but with respect to Christ, it is a covenant made upon terms and conditions, namely,

ly, his obedience, righteousness, passion, and oblation; *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, &c. Rom. iii. 25.* O what a free, full, perfect, holy, sweet and satisfying sacrifice did he offer up of himself, even a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God, whereby justice was satisfied, wrath appeased, sin expiated, God attoned, death vanquished, hell quenched, heaven purchased, and the devil's kingdom destroyed; for, by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. What may we think of his intercession, grounded upon this oblation? *for he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession.* Here is the antidote against all charges and accusations, *Rom. viii. 33, 34.* the antidote against all temptations, *Heb. ii. 17, 18.* and —iv. 14, 15. an antidote against all the snares of the world, *John xvii. 15.* against all sins, failings and infirmities, *1 John ii. 1, 2.* against all fears, thro' sense of unworthiness, to draw near to God's throne of grace, *Heb. iv. 15, 16.* —x. 19, 20, 21, 22. and against all fears of apostasy and falling away, *John xvii. 11.* O his promise, his power, his prayer, give great security, and greater cannot be given: he hath prayed for the Spirit, and the constant abiding thereof, *John xiv. 16, 17.* See *John iv. 14.* Christ's intercession is founded on his oblation, and the Father is so well pleased with the oblation, that he cannot refuse his intercession; nay, he hears him always: therefore, What think ye of Christ? (3.) What think ye of his kingdom and royalty? The question, *What think ye of Christ?* imports this also; for, as Christ, he is anointed to be a king, *Psal. ii. 6. I have set my king,* or, as it is in the *Hebrew*, anointed my king, *upon my holy hill of Zion.* Is not all power in heaven and earth committed unto him, having on his vesture and thigh this name written, KING of
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KINGS, and LORD of LORDS? He is the King eternal and immortal, the government is upon his shoulders, and of the increase of his kingdom and government there shall be no end. His delivering up the kingdom to his Father, at last, is but a changing the manner of his administration, and delivering up all his members, of whom his kingdom consists, unto his Father, to be eternally crowned and glorified; he will reign through eternity, and the children of *Zion* will be joyful in their king, and sing through eternity. I might here shew what a powerful and peaceable, mild and merciful, wise and holy, just and righteous King our Lord Jesus Christ is; and then ask you, What think ye of Christ? But it is not possible to give so much as a hint at the thousandth part of his glory and royalty: His kingdom is spiritual and internal. If you be his spiritual subjects, his kingdom is within you; yea, tho' you be yet subjects to the devil, he hath power over all hearts, and can soften the hardest, and bind the stoutest, and make the people fall down under him: Yea, as he is able, so is he willing; for he is not only the God of power, but the prince of peace, *Isa.* ix. 6. and therefore, as a *Prophet*, he preaches peace; as a *Priest*, he purchases peace; and as a *King*, he proclaims peace: yea, *creates the fruit of the lips, peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh.* As a powerful potentate, he is able, and as prince of peace, he is ready to save to the uttermost. As he is full of power, so he is full of pity; and his power and peace both are joined together, for the encouragement of sinners to come to him, *Isa.* xxvii. 5. *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.* Perhaps, some poor soul is thinking, O but I have no strength to take hold of his strength. Well, it is right so to think of yourself, and of your own weakness

weakness and wickedness : but no strength comes in by that thought, while poring on your self only ; that is, but the half of what you are to think, when you think right of your selves, as weak and wicked. But what think ye of Christ our glorious king? If you can think honourably of him, as able and willing to help you, O you would find strength coming in with such a thought : and high thoughts of a powerful and merciful King Jesus, is one of the ways of taking hold of his strength. If you suppose that you think he is able and ready, and yet you find no strength coming in, O suspect your own thought of him, that it is but a misbelieving and dishonourable thought : for I assure you, right thoughts of Christ will set the heart all in motion towards him. But now, O there would be no end in speaking of the royalties of King J E S U S, his royal throne, his royal crown, his royal victories, his royal triumphs, and the royal entertainment he gives to his subjects at his table above, and even below, when he brings them to his banqueting house. I shall only add, that as it is said of *Solomon*, there was no king like him, so behold a greater than *Solomon* is here : there is no king like him who is the king of *Zion* ; he hath all other kings under his check and controul ; and what think ye of Christ then? Other kings have their dominions, for the most part, by usurpation, by incroachment ; but Christ is king constitute of his father, *Psal.* lxxxix. 27. *I'll make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth ;* and all this for the good of his people, *Eph.* i. 22. *He hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things unto his church.* This leads to another import of the question ; that is,

(4.) What think ye of his authority and ability, commission, fulness, furniture and fitness for executing of these saving offices? For all this is impli-

ed in the designation of CHRIST, the anointed ; that is, one commissioned and qualified of God, by a super-eminent unction, *John* iii. 34. Behold his excellency here, above all that ever had the like offices. Behold he is anointed, for the concurrence of all these offices, whether general, as saviour, surety, redeemer ; or particular, as prophet, priest, king. Some have been prophets, some priests, some kings anointed ; but never any was anointed to all these, but Christ : what think ye of Christ ? Behold the matter of his anointing ; others have been anointed with material oil, but he is anointed with holy oil, the holy spirit : and whereas others have had the spirit in some respects, therefore behold the measure of his anointing ; others were anointed in measure, but he without measure. They may have a fulness of sufficiency, but he hath a fulness of redundancy ; they a fulness like the fulness of a vessel, but his the fulness of an ocean ; they a plenitude, but he a fountain. Behold and view the duration of his anointing : his saints and servants may have the spirit sometimes working, sometimes ceasing, sometimes flowing, and sometimes ebbing ; but Christ is anointed with an enduring unction, *John* i. 33. The spirit that descended on him, did remain and rest upon him ; see *Isa.* lix. *last*. Hence behold also the equality of his anointing with himself : the spirit given to others, that were invested with any office in God's house, did work with them as mere men ; there was no equality betwixt them and the spirit given to them : but as Christ is anointed with the spirit, as he is mediator God-man, so as God, he is co-equal with the spirit wherewith he is anointed ; yea, the same in substance, equal in power and in glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost. And what think ye of Christ, his authority, ability, and furniture for his work ? In a word, behold the *ef-*
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ficacy of his anointing, and the communicable nature thereof : he is anointed above his fellows, yet so, as he hath fellows to whom he allows fellowship in the same anointing: he hath not received the Spirit of all grace, and gifts for himself only, but *he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, Psal. lxxviii. 18.* Hence, according to his pleasure, he allows the oil to drop down to the skirts of his garment; yea, like rain upon the mown grass, or showers that water the earth, *Psal. lxxii. 6.* It is true, ministers anointed with the spirit, are said to drop, *Ezek. xx. 46. Son of man, drop thy words towards the south:* and *Moses says, My doctrine shall drop as the rain.* But as the clouds from whence the rain descends, have not their water originally in themselves, but from the sea, and moist places of the earth, exhaled and drawn up by the heat of the sun; so no minister of Christ hath a faculty of teaching heavenly and divine things, and saving gospel truths, of himself; but it is drawn up out of Christ, as out of a full sea and ocean of all wisdom and knowledge; and is conveyed unto them by the heat and vigour, not of their own spirit, but the spirit of Christ, who is anointed, to anoint others. And O for a liberal share of this anointing among us at this occasion! In a word, the name CHRIST imports such an anointing, as that he is qualified with all authority and ability, all furniture and fitness for his work of saving sinners; with all fulness of divine perfections, and all fulness of mediatorial gifts and graces: and all this is imported in the question, *What think ye of Christ?*

(5.) What think ye of his aromatical favour? For this is in his name, Christ the anointed. His ointment casts a perfume through heaven and earth. How favoury is he to God? Why, his sacrifice was of a sweet-smelling favour unto his Father,

Eph. v. 2. The stinking smell of sin is extinguished thereby, and the persons and performances of believers perfumed; and hence how savoury also to believers, *Song i. 13. His lips are like lillies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.* What think ye of his savoury name? *Song i. 3. 5. Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.* Were it no more but the name JESUS a SAVIOUR, may it not be so delightful to sinners, as to cause their hearts to leap within them when they hear it, as *John* leapt in his mother's womb for joy at the voice of the blessed virgin's salutation, *Luke i. 44.* O what think ye of the sweet name JESUS! It should even pluck your heart out of your bosom, and transplant it into the bosom of Christ. How delightful is the very naming of a temporal Saviour to them that are in misery, when they hear his ability and readiness to deliver them? And may not your hearts even dance within you for joy, when you hear us speak to you of such a Saviour as saves from sin and wrath? O sweet-smelling name! O have you no sense of smelling: what think ye of Christ?

(6.) What think ye of his beauty and comeliness? This is also imported in his name CHRIST, and so in the question, *What think ye of Christ the anointed? Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart,* says *Solomon*, *Prov. xxvii. 9.* Now Christ is anointed with the oil of gladness, *Psal. xlv. 7.* and a glad heart makes a chearful countenance; yea, oil makes the face to shine, *Psal. civ. 15.* A saint, that hath but a sprinkling of this oil, how will his face shine, and his countenance, like *Hannah's*, be no more sad? How did *Moses'* face shine, when some of this oil was upon him? But O what think ye of the shining glory and comeliness of Christ, who is anointed from head to foot! Is he not altogether lovely?

lovely? Is he not *white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousands*? Is he not a perfect beauty? All God's fulness is in him, all God's beauty is in him, all God's glory is to be seen in the face of *Jesus*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. O then, *What think ye of Christ?*

(7.) What think ye of his worth and preciousness? This is also imported in the name *CHRIST*, and so in the question, *What think ye of Christ*, the anointed? For it is *precious ointment*, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Ointment was reckoned of great worth and esteem among the *Jews*; it was among the precious presents that were sent unto kings, *Isa.* lvii. 9. *Hos.* xii. 1. O how great is the preciousness and worth of Christ! It is the delight and recreation, the study and occupation of elect angels, to pry into the preciousness of Christ, to look upon the frame and fabrick of salvation to mankind-sinners by Christ, that they may therein observe the glorious attributes of God, his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, truth, mercy, all shining and glittering in it, like bright stars in the firmament. Let a profane world think what they will of Christ; let them slight him and his gospel; let them scorn him, and cast him at their heels; let them trample on his blood and passion, as their manner is, making it a common and worthless thing; let them despise his high and celestial mysteries; we need not care for their thoughts; it is enough that God the Father hath honoured and exalted him, that the holy angels do reverence and worship him, and that all the saints do magnify him. *To them that believe, he is precious*: O his blood is precious blood, his promises are precious promises, his love is precious love, and every thing about him is precious, *What think ye of Christ?*

(8.) Again, to add no more here, what think you of his virtue and usefulness? This, I suppose,
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is also imported in the name *Christ*, and in the question objectively considered, *What think ye of Christ the anointed?* For as ointment was and is of manifold usefulness, so is Christ. Especially oil hath a twofold vertue; 1st, A mollifying vertue, and a softening quality; such is the vertue of Christ. Were the heart never so sad, he can soften and mollify it; a drop of that oil with which he is anointed, I mean the smallest saving motion of his spirit, can melt and dissolve the heart, tho' it were harder than a stone or adamant, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26.* 2^{dly}, It hath a medicinal vertue. Hence it is said of the *Samaritan*, *Luke x. 34.* that he poured oil into the wounds of the distressed man. Christ is the tender-hearted *Samaritan*; his blood and spirit is the ointment for curing all the wounds that we got by the old serpent. What wounds, what plagues, what deadly diseases and desperate maladies are among you? Behold, there is no disease out of hell that surmounts the medicinal vertue that is in Christ! O then, *What think ye of Christ?* Is there none here to think highly of him? Now, these particulars that I have mentioned, are imported in the very name CHRIST, and so implied in the question objectively considered, or with respect to the object thereof; *What think ye of Christ?*

The *second* thing here proposed, was, To shew the import of the question, *actively* considered, or with respect to the act of thinking; *What think ye of Christ?* Now, the full import of this question, thus viewed, may comprehend more than people are ready to imagine. It is not a transient thought, or fleeting imagination; we ought not to explain the words of Christ by the motions and notions of our own spirit: we need the spirit of Christ to explain the words of Christ according to the mind of Christ, *1 Cor. ii. last.* We may be sure, as the A-
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postle says, 2 Cor. ii. 5. that we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing, as of ourselves ; our sufficiency must be of God : and if we can think of nothing aright of ourselves, far less can we think of Christ : and as none can speak duly of Christ, nor call Jesus Lord, without the spirit ; so neither can we think duly of Christ without the spirit of Christ. What then is the meaning of this question relating to it's act of thinking ; *What think ye of Christ?* There are these following particulars, which I suppose are implied therein, and which I shall also propose by way of *query*, that you may still search yourselves, and make application as we go along.

(1.) *What think ye of Christ?* that is, What know ye of Christ? what understand ye of Christ? Surely ye cannot have a right thought of that which ye do not know or understand. Have you got the *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ?* Eph. i. 17. Hath the God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ? Hath God revealed his son in you? Gal. i. 16. Have you seen the Son? He that sees the natural sun in the firmament, hath a thought of it suitable to the sight he hath thereof ; but a man that hath been born blind, and never saw the light, he cannot have a right notion or thought of the sun, tho' you should speak never so much of the glory of it to him. I have heard of a man born blind, on whom a great deal of pains was taken to let him understand what a glorious creature the sun was, and what bright beams and rays it sends forth thro' all the world ; but he was so far from having any right thoughts about it, that, after all the pains taken on him, that was possible, he cries, out, *O now* (says he) *I know what it is, it is just like the sound of a trumpet.* Poor man ! there was the best no-
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tion he could frame about it, for he never had eyes. So it is here, Sirs, we are all born blind, having no spiritual eyes, till God opens the eyes of the understanding, and enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ ; we may speak of his glory and excellency ; but the best you make of him is, O he is like a very stately and majestick person as ever you saw or heard tell of ; and so you frame the image of a great man, sitting on a lofty throne, compassed about with so many sparkling attendants in fine robes : and what you have heard with your natural ears of any person, or seen with your natural eyes, or can conceive with your natural understanding or reason, helps you to, or furnishes you with materials for framing such a notion of him. But what is all this ? It is nothing but an image of your own brain, a carnal fantastical thought ; the true Christ is the image of the invisible God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, God-man in one person. Now, have you got a spiritual discerning ? *For the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God ; they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The world cannot think of Christ, far less think much of him, because they do not know him : Like *Æsop's* cock contenting himself with, and thinking more of a barley-corn than a pearl, because he knew not the worth of it ; so the world think more of the barley-corn of temporal good things, than they think of the pearl of great price, because they know it not : therefore the question imports, *What know ye of Christ ?*

(2.) *What think ye of Christ ?* that is, what believe ye of Christ ? Knowledge and faith are like the two eyes of the soul ; knowledge is the discerning and apprehending eye, faith is the applying and appropriating eye. And as saving knowledge is objective

objective faith, and saving faith fiducial knowledge ; so without knowledge we cannot think duly of Christ, with respect to what he is in himself, and without faith we cannot think of Christ with respect to what he is to us, so as to receive the record of God, namely, *That God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his son*, 1 John v. 11. which record *whosoever believeth not, hath made God a liar*, ver. 10. That the question concerns this believing thought of Christ, is plain from the context, wherein Christ shews they had but unworthy thoughts of him, if they did not see him to be *David's Lord*, that is, the *true God, and eternal life* ; in and thro' whom, as the God-man, this life was to be conveyed from God to man. This question then is a trial of our faith, which *faith is the evidence of things not seen*. And, I suppose, one of the reasons why Christ here says, *What think ye of Christ ?* and not, *What think ye of me ?* is, because, tho' now they were speaking to him, and seeing him with their bodily eyes ; yet their faith was not to terminate on what was the object of their sense. We have no more faith than an ox or a horse, if we believe no more than we see and feel. The brute-beasts think they have what they find they have by seeing and feeling ; but what do you, that are rational creatures, think of things that cannot be seen or felt ? *Faith is the evidence of things not seen*. The *Pharisees* here, they saw Christ, they saw his miracles ; but yet for all that, they saw not the true Christ by faith, while they saw not his invisible glory, his invisible Godhead, nor the invisible seal appended to his commission for saving sinners. Therefore it is not, *What think ye of me ?* Your eyes see me, as if I were no more but a man like yourselves ; but, *What think ye of Christ ?* Do you believe no more of Christ than you see ? If so, then you have

no right thoughts of Christ at all, because you have no faith. My friends, the question concerns you also : It is not, what see, or feel you of Christ ? but, *What believe ye of Christ ?* There is a three-fold seeing or feeling, that is to be separate from believing. The *first* is a *corporeal* seeing or feeling : *Thomas* thought it a better way to believe Christ to be risen, by seeing and feeling him, than by running to the promises without sight of him ; and we all naturally follow him : but Christ tells him, that the best and most blessed way was quite contrary to that, *John xx. 29. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Again, 2. There is a *rational* seeing, that is to be separate from believing. Tho' none can believe, without the exercise of their rational faculties spiritualized, and tho' it be the highest reason to believe what God speaks ; yet to make natural reason the rule or ground of faith, is not to believe at all, but the way to doubt of all that ever God said. *Thomas* consulted with reason, and reason consulted with death and the grave, whether they could send their guests away back and alive again into the world ; and so he believed not. If *Abraham* had not separated the sight of reason from his faith in the promised seed, where would his faith have been ? Natural reason might say, hearken you, *Abraham*, is it possible that you and *Sarah* can now have a son betwixt you, when you're both come to such an age, that you're but dead stocks ? But, when reason began to speak, *Abraham* stopt his ears ; he considered not the deadness of his own body, nor of *Sarah's* womb, *Rom. iv. 19. 20. 21. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform.* It may be, reason is whispering into the ears of some here, say-

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ing, O man, woman, you're but a dead stock, a dead stone, do you ever think to be a child of *Abraham*, or that you'll bring forth fruit unto God? But, if you believe with *Abraham*, you'll say, hold your peace, carnal reason; you're but a blind fool in the matters of God: cannot God out of stones raise up children to *Abraham*? And as he is able, so he hath given me many promises in his word, which he allows me to build upon, and commands me to believe. Unbelief builds always upon sense and reason, but faith builds upon the power and promise of God; What *believe* you of Christ? 3. There is a *spiritual* seeing, that is to be separated from faith. It is true, there is a spiritual seeing of sanctified knowledge and understanding, which I spoke of already, that is essential to faith; there can be no believing without this seeing: *He that sees the Son, and believes in him, hath everlasting life.* But there is a spiritual seeing of experience, or experimental sense and feeling, which is to be separate from believing; such as spiritual mourning, spiritual joy, spiritual enlargement, or such like workings of the spirit. Where these are, they should indeed be cherished with thankfulness, as being a taste of heaven, and a comfortable means of glorifying God on earth: but it is dangerous to make them the ground of faith; for they are always ebbing and flowing up and down, it may be, twenty times in the space of one sermon; and your faith that is built thereupon will be up and down therewith. If you believe no longer than you see and feel, no wonder that you are always doubting when you are not feeling. And so you're never living by faith; for you're not properly believing, when you're feeling: faith is one thing, and feeling another. Or, if you build partly on the feeling of God's work within you, and partly on the truth of

God's

God's word without you, then you're like one that would build a house partly on the thawing ice, and partly on a firm rock ; surely that part of the house that was built on the ice, would tumble down whenever the ice melts : but, were the building of faith wholly upon the firm rock, that changes not with the changes of your sense and feeling, you would find no more cause of doubting when you have than when you want, these changeable things : you would be thankful when you have them, and yet not doubtful when you want them. Unbelief, which builds upon things seen and felt, says and thinks, in the want of these, O all is gone, and so raiseth the foundation ; but faith, which is *the evidence of things not seen*, says, even in the want of these, All is yet well and secure ; Christ is what he was, the promise is what it was, the truth of God is what it was, however I be changed. These are the different thoughts of faith and unbelief ; and what think ye ? I true, when the meaning of the question is, What believe ye of Christ ? the most part will find, that either they have no faith, or very little.

Thus *Paul* believed contrary to sense and feeling, when he got the promise of his own life, and the life of all that were in the ship with him, *Acts xxvii. 25. I believe God*, says he, *that it shall be even as it was told me.* See in what circumstances he was, when he thus believed, *verses 15. 18. 20.* their light was gone, the tempest was on them, and all hope from outward appearances was gone ; yet *Paul* was assured and persuaded, that God would do as he had said. Why, might unbelief say, if the sun were shining, and a fair wind blowing, if the sun of righteousness were shining on me, and the wind of heavenly influences blowing, and I were fair before the wind, then I would believe :
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but now, when there is nothing but darkness and tempests, how can I believe? No indeed, you cannot, while you make sense and feeling the ground of your faith, and not the truth and veracity of God in his word of grace and promise. Thus it is in the matter of justification before God. The believer is to look upon himself as righteous, through the righteousness of Christ; to believe himself perfect in Christ, and fiducially to think himself righteous in Christ: no, says unbelief, I cannot think that, because I feel the contrary; I feel my own unrighteousness, sin and corruption. Why, if there were no sense or feeling of sin, there would be no room for faith: if you had a righteousness of your own, and a feeling thereof, then you would have no need of Christ's righteousness; but, now, that you have a feeling of your unrighteousness and sin, there is room for faith; according to such a word as that, *2 Cor. v. last. He hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* The very essence of faith here is to believe the quite contrary to what we see and feel in ourselves, saying, In my self I have no righteousness, no strength; but surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. Now, tho' I should shew no more of the import of this question, *What think ye of Christ ?* but these two, namely, what know ye of Christ? and, what believe ye of Christ? surely it is a matter of eternal consequence to answer this question, thus explained; for if you miss the right answer to these two branches of this question, your doom at the great day will be dreadful, *2 Thess. i. 7. 8. He will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know him not, and obey not the gospel;* that is, who never had such thoughts of Christ, as to know him, and believe in him as the Christ of God. Again,

(3.) *What think ye of Christ?* That is, what love ye of Christ, and what favour have ye for him? As they that know him will believe, and put their trust in him; so they that believe in him, will love him, for faith works by love. It must be a loving thought that Christ hereintended by this question, while in the context he sets forth himself not only as *David's* son, but *David's* Lord, a God-man, and so a glorious object of love, altogether lovely. Were our affections enlarged, wider than the highest heaven, there is loveliness enough in a God-man to fill it; and could our hearts hold an ocean of love, there is infinite loveliness in Christ to bestow it all upon. Every thing in Christ is lovely; and therefore the question, *What think ye of Christ?* must be, what love ye of Christ? if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema Maranatha*, says the Apostle. Surely they are not believers that are not lovers of Christ. It is true, Christ hath many pretended lovers, that love him only for his bounty, but not for his beauty, and that say they love him; but it is not so, if you consider the qualities of their love. *1st*, It is an *easy* love, they came easily by it, without ever getting their natural enmity discovered or broken: they were never humbled for their want of love; such a love is not worth a farthing. Or, *2dly*, It is an *idle* love, it does not lead them to his service, nor draw them to their prayers; his commands are still grievous to them. Or, *3dly*, If it be not an *idle*, it is a *legal* love; it may be, the law comes to them, and says, as *Pharaoh* said to the *Israelites*, ye are idle, ye are idle, *Exod. v. 17.* and so they fall a-doing for their life, according to the DO and LIVE of the first covenant. But it is not doing from love to Christ: it is not a gospel-love to him as a *law-fulfiller*, but a legal love to him as only a *law-giver*, and as if he was still standing upon

pon the old covenant terms with them. Or, 4thly, If it be not a *legal* love, it is a *loose* and *licentious* love they have to him : it is a love with a latitude, allowing as much room for the devil as for Christ, as much room for the world as for Christ, and as much room for lusts. Surely they that have no other love to Christ, but such an easy idle, legal, loose or licentious love, they are not true lovers ; nay, they are true haters of him, and enemies to him. Let them say as they will, that they love Christ, yet they think nothing of him. But, believer, What think ye of Christ ? When the meaning of the question to you, is, Simon, *son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ?* O, can you answer it with an appeal, *Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee ?* Or at least, can you answer it with a sigh, Woe's me that I cannot love him as I ought ? Surely, if you have not a love of delight, rejoicing in him, you have a love of desire, lamenting after him. Sometimes the loving soul goes to communion, and the secret groan is, O let me find Christ at that occasion ! O I must have him, I must have him ! Why *must* you have him ? even because he must have you, *John x. 16. Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; these also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.* He hath said first, I *must* have you, and that hath brought you to say, I *must* have him. Here are two necessities meeting, his necessity and your necessity ; his necessity indeed, is a pure necessity of *love*, but your first necessity was a necessity of *want* : but since he from *love* hath a need of you, as well as you from *want* have a need of him, you must of necessity meet together in love. You love him, because he first loved you ; you seek him, because he first sought you : therefore henceforth, as he seeks you from love, so do you not only seek him from want, that is too selfish ; but also let your

way of seeking him grow up to more conformity to his way of seeking you, namely, from love, saying, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ? Tell him that I am sick of love.* O what think ye, what love ye of Christ ? Again,

(4.) *What think ye of Christ ?* that is, What esteem ye of Christ, or what estimate and valuation have you for him ? This is plainly imported in the question here. Why, might Christ say, ye *Pharisees* are shewing your ignorant esteem of the law, by all the questions you are proposing about it ; but what think ye of Christ, who is the Lord of the law, as well as *David's* Son and Lord ? You have an ignorantly high opinion of *Moses*, but what think ye of Christ ? what honour and respect do you put upon him ? Surely, *to them that believe he is precious ;* or, as the word imports, he is *honourable.* Where there is true knowledge of Christ, there is faith ; where there is faith, there is love ; and where there is love, there is a high esteem. Some things, the more they are known, the less they are esteemed : but it is not so with Christ ; they that know him most, do esteem him most. God the Father knows him best, and he esteems him most highly, *Isa. xlii. 1.* Saints and angels in heaven know him next best, and how they esteem him, you may see, *Rev. v. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.* The more that any on earth knows him, the more do they esteem him ; and only these that do not know him, do not esteem him, *1 Cor. i. 21, 22, 23, 24.* They that are best judges, think highly of Christ. What judge ye, what esteem have ye of him ? There is a fourfold lodging or room that the esteem of Christ hath in the souls of them that duly esteem him. 1. In their *intellective* faculty, that is, in their understanding this esteem lodges, saying, O ! I determine to know nothing but Christ ! O, sirs, if a man had the knowledge

ledge of all the universities in the world concenter'd in him, and yet knew not Christ, he is but a poor silly sot. *Paul*, brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, had a great deal of knowledge and human literature, but as soon as he came to know Christ, O, says he, *I count all but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* 2. In their *elective* faculty, that is, in their choice does this esteem lodge. O, they that esteem Christ, they select and single him out for a head and husband, with whom they resolve to live and die, saying, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee.* 3. In their *prosecutive* faculty, that is, in their affections does this esteem lodge ; these do ardently and vehemently pursue after him. As nothing can satisfy a hungry man but food, so nothing satisfies such a soul but Christ ; hence proceeds their industry in the use of means and ordinances. 4. In their *retentive* faculty, that is, in their memory, will this esteem also lodge ; while their esteem of him makes them remember him, and their meditation of him to be sweet. *When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,* Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. What we love and esteem, will have a lodging in our minds and thoughts. And, where does the strain of our thoughts and meditations run ? is, no doubt, implied in the question, *What think ye of Christ ?* What room do you give him in your heart and thoughts ? Now, these four particulars, namely, 1. What *know* ye, 2. What *believe* ye, 3. What *love* ye, 4. What *esteem* ye of Christ ? are here implied.

The *third* thing here proposed, was, To shew the import of this question, formally considered, with respect to the quality of the act. I have shewed what may be implied in the question, with relation to the

act of thinking : now, the interrogative particle *What*, pointing at the quality of this act, may furnish us with some further thoughts about the import of the question, formally considered. It is the *What* in the text that now I am especially upon ; and besides the general *What* is your opinion of Christ ? *What* is your judgment about Christ ? there is a four-fold *What* here implied. 1. What *good* do you think of him ? You *Pharisees* think much good of yourselves ; who but you, and your righteousness, your alms, your sacrifices, your temple, your zeal for *Moses* and the law ? But, *What think ye of Christ ?* Is he no more in your view than a mortal son of a mortal man ? No wonder then, in this case, you think little good of him. Can you ascend no higher in your contemplation, to apprehend him as the immortal Son of the immortal God, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, the righteousness of God, the gift of God, the true sacrifice, the true temple, the antitype of all the types, the substance of all the shadows, the fulness of all the prophecies and promises ? What, do you think him good for nothing, but to be despised, debased and trampled upon ? What good do you think of him ? (2.) What *glory* do you think to be in him ? Do you not darken his glory, when you look upon him only to be the son of *David*, and not also to be the Lord of *David*, and the Lord of glory, the root and offspring of *David* ; not only the offspring of *David* as man, but the root of *David*, as God ? What think ye of him as the glory of God, and the God of glory, bringing in a dispensation much more glorious than that of *Moses*, which glory was to be done away, 2 *Cor.* iii. 7, 8, 9. Christ as the sent of God, being anointed with the Spirit for that end. If the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glo-

rious? If the ministration of condemnation beglory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. And what glory do you think to be in Christ, who is the glory of all this glory? Do you see Christ to be thus glorious, and me to be the Christ? Tho' now, might he say, this glory is under a vail of flesh, a vail of exinanition and humiliation; yet this mean appearance that I'm making now, as if I were no more but a frail mortal man, was clearly foretold to you by the prophets concerning Christ, even that he should be a man; and a *man of sorrows*: can you see nothing of my glory and excellency under this vail? Is there no glory in the sun, because there is a cloud betwixt you and it? (3.) What *use* do you think he is of? For, if he were only the son of *David*, he could be of no great usefulness to a perishing world of sinners: but, do you think and consider, that herein is the mystery of divine grace; *God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life?* If the brazen serpent which was but a type of Christ, was of use to the stung *Israelites*, what think ye of Christ? can any thing in the world be so useful to sinners as Christ? Of what use is the law, whereof you are boasting? It is but a dead letter, a killing word, a sentence of condemnation, a death-summons, a dead-warrant against them without Christ, who is the *end of the law for righteousness*. Who but Christ can reconcile God to man, and ingratiate man with God? Who but he can fulfil the law, and satisfy justice for them, pay their debts, heal their diseases; justify, sanctify and save them, vanquish sin, death and hell for them, and at last, raise the mouldered carcase from corruption to incorruption, and invest it with a state of everlasting glory in the highest heaven, with *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore* *et*

his right hand? Is he an useles Christ to you, tho' he fills all in all, and alone can give abundant satisfaction to the immortal soul, whereas all things else are but dry and empty without him, and leave men destitute? O dry means, dry ministers, dry ordinances, dry sacraments, dry sermons, and dry prayers if Christ be away! O dry breasts, if he be not the milk, dry branches, if he be not the sap; dry clouds, dry wells, if he be not the water! O what use think ye he is for? What work and service have ye for him? (4.) What *worth* do you think he is of? Your thoughts are employed, might Christ say, how to tempt me with your questions about the law, undervaluing that Lord God that gave the law, and that now is come in the person of the *Messias* to fulfil the law; and is he unworthy to have a room in your thoughts? or, what worth do you think him of? If you judge rightly, and think duly of him, you'll find he hath more real worth than all the world beside: for, put all the creatures in heaven and earth in one scale, and Christ in another, you'll find them all to be lighter than vanity. This is plain, if you consider, that when all the world of men, and angels, and creatures were weighed in the balance with divine justice, they were found too light to counterpoise it, or give satisfaction to it; all they together could not make up the full sum or value that should satisfy that justice: it cost more to redeem a soul, than all that they were worth: *The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceases for ever*, says the Psalmist. But Christ, having unsearchable riches, is a mass of treasure big enough for the purpose; and therefore, when he was laid in balance with infinite justice, he was found of weight enough to poise it, without any creature's help to hold down the scale: nay, *he looked; and there was none to help, none to uphold; therefore*

his

his own arm brought salvation ; and he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with him, Isa. lxiii. 3, 5. Who among the creatures could go thorow, conquering and to conquer, as Christ did, when he had heaven, earth, and hell to grapple with ? What think ye of Christ then ? What worth do you think he is of ? Upon the whole, before I leave this point, let me ask these two questions, to bring home this one, concerning what worth you think Christ is of. The first question is, What price would you buy him at, if you were to buy him ? Surely, if you had a due thought of Christ, and a discovery of the pearl, you would for joy sell your *all* to buy it, *Matth. xiii. 44, 45, 46.* And when all is done, you would see your *all* to be nothing at all, and the pearl to be *all in all*. Indeed this treasure is so great, this pearl is so precious, that it cannot be bought at any price ; and therefore the price of it is, *no money, no price*, altogether free, *Isa. lv. 1.* To buy here, is to beg, and take freely ; yet, if the question be, *What would you give for him, if he were to be bought ?* Surely, if you knew your own need, and his infinite fulness and suitableness for you, the question will suggest some great thought of Christ. O a thousand thousand worlds, if I had them, would I give for him ! Yea, but there are some that hold him at a very low price, they would not give a groat or a sixpence for Christ or his interest ; they would not part with a shilling or a crown for Christ or his cause, Christ or his gospel : nay, they will not part with a beastly lust for him, their idols and the world are of greater price to them. But there are others that know his worth better, and are willing to forsake all for him, *Matth. xix. 27. We have forsaken all, and followed thee.* The holy martyrs thought not their lives and their hearts blood too dear for Christ, *Rev. xii. 11. They loved not their lives.*

lives unto the death, that is, they despised their lives in comparison of Christ ; they exposed their bodies to horrible and painful deaths, their temporal estates to the spoil, taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and exposing their persons to all manner of shame and contempt for the cause of Christ. O but a soul that by faith apprehends the worth of Christ, will chearfully and willingly give all for him ; and, having won a Christ, will go away rejoicing, and think his pennyworth to be very good, very great. The second question is, *What rate would ye sell him at, if ye were to sell him ?* Judas sold him, and the high-priests bought him for thirty pieces of silver, *a goodly price that I was prized at of them*, Zech. xi. 13. It is ironically spoken, *a bonny price indeed for a God-man, Cast it to the potter*, says the Lord. Men of darkned understandings, corrupt minds, and depraved affections, will sell Christ and his cause, Christ and a good conscience, for a trifle ; yea, many betray his cause for some poor worldly consideration. O for such a spirit as I read of in the forty martyrs, that suffered so valiantly under *Licinius, anno 300*, that when *Agricolaus* his deputy, one of the devil's agents, set upon them several ways to draw them to deny Christ, and at last tempted them with an offer of money and preferment, they all cried out with one consent, *ω αιδιότης, αιδιότης, χρημα τα δίδας τα διαμένοντα ;* O eternity, eternity ! give us money that will last to eternity, and gold that will abide for ever, *such as Christ can give us* : they slighted that pitiful wealth which was current only in this beggarly world when coming in competition with Christ and his durable riches ; they would not sell Christ for a world, nay, not for a world of worlds. O at what rate would you sell Christ ! Surely, if you think duly and highly of him, you'll buy him at any rate, but sell him at no rate. It is easy indeed, to frame

a tranſient thought, O who would put Chriſt in the balance with any thing ! But ſtay till a day of trial come, and the queſtion be brought cloſe home, *Now will you quit Chriſt and his cauſe, or will you quit with father and mother, and wife and children, and eſtate and fortune, houſes and yards, and life and all ?* I believe that would be a hard queſtion ; *ſkin for ſkin, and all that a man hath, will he give for his life* ; he will quit all before he quit with his life. Surely, if Chriſt be your life, you would quit all other lives for him, a natural life, a temporal life, a life of pleaſure, a life of honour, a life of eaſe and worldly accommodations ; and if you think much of him, there is ſome life you have quit for him already, at leaſt in part, and in deſire and endeavour ; namely, a life of ſin, a life of ſelf, a life of legal righteouſneſs, that *the life you live, may be a life of faith on the Son of God*. Now, I ſuppoſe all theſe *Whats* are imported in the queſtion, 1. What *good* do you think of him ? 2. What *glory* do you think to be in him ? 3. What *uſe* do you think he is for ? 4. What *worth* do you think he is of, when he is to be bought or fold ? This queſtion bears all theſe in it's boſom, *What think ye of Chriſt ?*

The *fourth* and *laſt* thing propoſed upon the explication of the import of the queſtion, was, to ſhew the import of it ſubjectively conſidered, or with reſpect to the perſons that are the ſubjects thereof, or to whom the queſtion is put, in the pronoun *ye*, *What think ye of Chriſt ?* And under this conſideration we may take a fourfold view of the queſtion, (1.) View it as it was put to the *Jews* in general, for ſo were theſe to whom Chriſt is here ſpeaking ; Ye that are *Jews*, What think ye of Chriſt ? Ye are the people, of whom, concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came, for (as ye own concerning Chriſt) he is the ſon of *David* ; and ye are the people

ple to whom he and his gospel behoved first to come, for salvation is of the *Jews*, *John* iv. 22. Ye are his own people, and what think ye of Christ? Alas! *he came to his own, and his own received him not*, they thought nothing of him when he came; and therefore, as *Paul* says, *Acts* xxviii. 28. *The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles*, and he adds, *They will hear it*. Now, of consequence, Christ and the gospel, and this question with it, comes to you *Gentiles*, saying, What think ye of Christ? O will ye think nothing of him, or will ye make *Paul* a liar, who said ye shall hear it, or rather will ye give the lie to the spirit of God? Nay, whatever the most part do, yet *as many as were ordained to eternal life*, will be brought to think highly of Christ, by getting the saving knowledge, faith, love and esteem of him. (2.) View the question as it was put to the *Pharisees*, a set of hypocrites and self-righteous persons: ye that are *Pharisees*, What think ye of Christ? Ye are strict observers of the letter of the law, and think much of your long prayers, your giving alms of all that you possess, your fasting twice a week, your being no open drunkards, whoremongers, extortioners, nor like this or that publican; but while you think so much of yourselves and your own righteousness, and think nothing of Christ, *publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before you*; therefore, what think ye of Christ the son of *David*, the Lord of *David*, the Lord of the law, by whom alone *everlasting righteousness is brought in*, answering the spirit, and not the letter of the law only? The question then comes to be proposed to all of the same kidney with these *Pharisees*; Ye that are hypocrites and self-justifying persons, What think ye of Christ? Ye that are thinking, O you are an honest man, you have been a good neighbour, just in your dealing, civil in your carriage, and so you fancy

cy yourself to be, touching, the law blameless ; what, man, are you contented to be judged by the law ? then to *Cæsar* let us go, to the law let us go : But only look to the law broad in the face, look not only to the out-side of the law, like a man looking only to the back and out-side of a looking-glass, or to the frame and edge of it, where he does not see himself, but look to the inside of the looking-glass of the law, to the spirituality of it ; set your face to the face of the glass, and as you will see what a deformed filthy creature you are, so you will find it cursing you to your face, and cursing you to hell for every wicked thought as well as action, saying, *Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them ;* therefore you have need to think again, and think better than ever you did, about a law-justifying righteousness, and to think there is need of this question, What think ye of Christ ? (3.) View the question as it was put to the *Sadducees* ; for it seems they were combined with the *Pharisees* here against Christ, if you compare *verses* 23 and 34. Now, these *Sadducees* were a set of people that denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the existence of the spirits and angels, *Acts* xxiii. 8. in a word, they were half atheists, if not wholly so, like the graceless wits of our day, that call themselves *Free-thinkers* : well, says Christ, what think ye of Christ ? Whose son is he ? If you could view him as not only *David's* son, but *David's* Lord and God ; and as the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, not the God of the dead, but of the living ; would you persist in these atheistical tenets, concerning the resurrection of the body, the being of souls ? No, no. The question then is applicable to all that sort of people : Ye that are *Atheists*, *Deists*, and damnable erroneous *Free-thinkers*, O what think

think ye of Christ? No doubt, with *Herod* and his men of war, you set him at nought? But, O, will you think again, and recall your thoughts? Let them fix upon Christ a while, and you shall find all the truths of the bible cleared and vindicated by him who is the truth itself; and that this eternal Son of God is sent from the Father, on purpose to confirm them by his doctrine, death and resurrection. Again, (4.) View the question, with respect to it's general design, which is, (together with all other scriptures) the profit of all to whom it comes, for their *reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. and for convincing of sinners, or confirming of saints: and so it comes to all and every one of us, ministers or people, high and low, rich and poor, What think ye of Christ? And here, I have occasion to look round about me, and ask the question at all and every one that hears me; and indeed we may begin first at ourselves. O we that are ministers, what think we of Christ? Is he the Son and Lord of *David*, the eternal Son of God? Surely, we cannot think, or speak, or preach too much of Christ. It is our honour, if we can say, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and that to us, who are the least of all saints, (may some of us say) should this grace be given, to preach among the *Gentiles*, the unsearchable riches of Christ: but, while we speak of Christ to others, what do we think of Christ, ourselves? To be sure, if we do not think of Christ, as we ought, we will not speak of Christ as we ought: Christ in the heart, and Christ in the mouth make right preaching. If any preach Christ out of envy, as the apostle says, it is well that Christ is preached; but as it must be but melancholy bungling work to such, so they would do well to consider, that the question is not, What preach ye of Christ? but, What think ye of Christ?

Again,

Again, O ye that are the people, what think ye of Christ? Whatever be your state or condition, sex: or quality, the question comes to you; and let none of you dare to neglect the pondering on it: when Christ himself is putting it to you, what think ye of Christ? Ye that are magistrates, or in places of power, trust, and authority, what think ye of Christ? Are you employing your power for Christ, and his cause and interest? Ye that are masters or mistresses of families, what think ye of Christ? Is it the language of your soul, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?* Are you desiring, with *Abraham*, to command your children, and your household after you, to keep the ways of the Lord, and praying for them, and instructing them in the knowledge of Christ? Again, ye that are children under your parents, O what think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? Do you know him to be the Son of *David*, and the Son of God too? And would it not be your great happiness, to be sons and children of God in him? Your father and mother may die: and leave you, therefore it is your best to seek an interest in him to be your everlasting father.

Ye that are servants, what think ye of Christ? Would you have him for your master and Lord? Is it not the greatest honour to be his servants, who is *David's* Lord? He that was *David's* Son, was *David's* Master; and as *David* in spirit called him Lord, so should not all that is within you call him Lord? Serve your masters honestly, but let him who is Lord of Lords be a master above all masters to you. Ye that are tradesmen, what think ye of Christ? Have you no trading with heaven? Does your civil trade in the world take up all your thoughts? Surely it is either an unlawful trade, or unlawfully used, that cannot consist with this christian trade, of giving the chief of your thoughts to him that is the chief

chief among ten thousand. Ye that are husbandmen, what think ye of Christ? Do you think more of your ploughs and oxen, or corn and cattle, and barns and goods, than of glorious Christ? Do you not know, whether you be tenants, lease or freeholders, that you are tenants to him, and hold your all of him? Are you more taken up in thinking of a great crop, or a good harvest, than of him who is the Lord of the harvest, both in a natural and spiritual sense, and Lord of all that you have? Ye that are mean cotters, what think ye of Christ? Woe's me, does your cote-house, and your cow, and your kail-yard, lie nearer your heart, than precious Christ? O! if you were acquainted with communion with him, you would find a mean cottage with Christ better than a princely palace without him. Ye that are poor beggars, what think ye of Christ? To the poor the gospel is preached; to you is Christ and his unsearchable riches offered; but I fear there are some of you think more of a halfpenny than you think of Christ; everlasting poverty and misery will be your portion, if your thoughts be not changed and renewed. You come to communion-occasions only to beg alms, not knowing that then you are at the *beautiful* gate of the temple, where you might get an alms that would enrich you for ever. You have the art of begging from men, and from door to door, but perhaps you never think of begging at Christ's door: O will you begin to think, and to think of Christ, before the door of mercy be shut! Again, ye that are rich, and wealthy in the world, what think ye of Christ? Hath he given you riches, think you, to steal away your hearts from him, or rather to improve them for, and consecrate them to his honour and for the good of others, especially of the household of faith? Men may court your favour, but you are to be pitied, as a poor miserable wretch,

wretch, if you have your portion only in this life, tho' you had all the gold of *Ophir*, without Christ you have nothing but a shadow, you are destitute of the true substance. You that are wise, mighty or noble, what think ye of Christ? May it not startle you a little, that he hath said, *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish, weak, base and despicable things of the world*: you have no reason to despair, for he hath not said *not any* of them; but yet you have reason to think where you are, for he hath said *not many* of them. And indeed, as an evidence of this, look to the great men of our days, you'll see, that the generality of the nobility and gentry of *Scotland* and *England*, they think very little of Christ. You that are scholars, and students, what think ye of Christ? What will all the wisdom and literature, liberal arts and sciences, and best accomplishments in the world avail you, without Christ? They will qualify you to be more eminent servants to the devil, and his interest, if you learn not Christ together with them. You may be students of *Latin*, *Greek* and *Hebrew*, students of philosophy, astronomy, astrology, geography and mathematicks, yea, and students of divinity too, and yet lose all your pains, if you do not study Christ. Ye that are ignorant and illiterate persons, what think ye of Christ? It may be ye cannot read the bible; you were never at a school; your parents died when you were young, or else were poor, and could not, or graceless, and would not set you to the school; or if you can read, that is all: you know not so much as the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and can hardly tell whose son he is. If you could be brought this day to think highly of Christ, then should you know, and follow on to know the Lord. O neglect not henceforth the means of the knowledge of Christ;

if you learn of him, he will make you wiser than the rest of the world, for as far behind as you are, even wise unto salvation. Ye that are old men and women, what think ye of Christ? How many thousands and millions of thoughts have you bestowed upon the devil, the world and your lusts, and idols, in your time, which would have been better bestowed upon Christ, and the concerns of your eternal salvation? And now, that death, judgment and eternity are hard at hand, O how can you think of going down to the grave, and into an everlasting state, without being able to answer this question to purpose, *What think ye of Christ?* You that are young men and women, what think ye of Christ? You are now in the flower of your age; O, shall not Christ have the flower of your thoughts; that, according to the father's promise to him, *he may have the dew of his youth*, by your dedicating to him the dew of your youth, and fleeing all youthful lusts? Ye that are children and little-ones, young men and women, boys and girls, capable to think, O what think ye of Christ? Alas, children, (I would speak a word to you) you may see what ill hearts you have, that make you think more of little plays and trifles, nignays and butterflies than you think of Christ: you mind any thing sooner than your Creator or Redeemer, whom God calls you to remember in the days of your youth. Therefore, after this, when you are playing, will you think more of praying; for God says, *I love them that love me, and they that seek me early, shall find me*: And think more of reading the bible, like young *Timothy*, who, *from a child, knew the holy scriptures*. In a word, if there be any body here that thinks I have mist them, know that the question is to all and every one of you, *What think ye of Christ?* O graceless world! how unworthily do you think of Christ?

Christ? The covetous man thinks more of a groat than of Christ, like *Demas*. Ambitious men think more of a hat than of Christ; like *Haman*, or as *Saul*, who said to *Samuel*, *Honour me before the people*. The voluptuous man thinks more of a base lust, than of Christ. The drunkard thinks more of a hearty cup than of Christ. The glutton thinks more of a hearty meal than of Christ. The proud man thinks more of himself, than of Christ. Pride of righteousness thinks more of prayers, and attendance on ordinances, than of Christ. Pride of grace thinks more of a good frame, than of Christ. Pride of wisdom thinks more of a witticism, or a fine discourse, than of Christ. Pride of beauty thinks more of a skin-deep complexion, than of Christ. Pride of apparel thinks more of a fine suit of clothes, than of Christ, tho' the silly sheep wore it on her back before them. Behold how Christ is vilified and undervalued in the world! But, O, believer, What think ye of Christ? Surely, if you be a gracious person, Christ will be to you a precious person; and you'll wonder at the folly and madness of the world, that sets every thing above Christ in their thoughts and esteem. Why, they are ignorant of Christ, and ignorant of themselves: if they were convinced of their sin and misery, they would think much of a Saviour and Redeemer; if they knew their disease, they would think much of such a physician to heal them; if they knew their nakedness, they would think much of such a garment to clothe them; if they knew their pollution, they would think much of such a fountain to wash them in; if they knew their deep arrears to divine justice, and insolvent state, they would think much of such a surety to pay their debt. Surely, if they knew, they would not thus despise the Lord of glory. However, be it known to all and every one of you,

that this question is put to you ; and you ought to put it to your selves, before God, for discovering what you are, and where you stand. And now, having opened the import of the question, in the several branches of it, I proceed next to

The *third* general head proposed, namely, to offer some reasons of the doctrine, why this is the great leading question in the christian catechism, by which people are to try themselves ; or why this question is put as a touchstone for discovering what metal we are of, *What think ye of Christ ?* Why,

1. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ ?* because, without right thoughts of Christ, there is no right thoughts of God ; and without the knowledge of Christ, there is no true knowledge of God. God is an invisible God, and Christ only *is the image of the invisible God*, Col. i. 15. There are three ways to know, see and apprehend God. One is, by the creatures he hath made, *Rom. i. 20. The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, even his eternal power and Godhead ;* another is by the scriptures, for they make God known ; but the third and only saving way of knowing and apprehending God, is by Christ. Now, the knowledge of God that we have by the creatures, is like the knowledge we have of a man by his workmanship, which he hath wrought. If the workmanship be rare and excellent, and such as hath required great art and strength, then we conceive the man that hath done it, hath been a wise man, a strong man, and the like, according to the nature of the workmanship. So, when we know God by the creatures, we conceive, that the God that made them, must be a great God, a wise God, a powerful God. But next ; The knowledge that we have of God by the scriptures, I mean the literal knowledge, is like that knowledge that one gets of a famous learned
man

man, by reading what he writes : if in his writing he hath discovered much learning, vast sense, and solid judgment, accordingly we conceive him to be a sensible judicious man. So by reading the word, we may conceive of God's excellency, as we do of a man by his writing ; but the knowledge of God, that we get by Christ, is like that knowledge which one gets of a king, by having seen his image, or rather his son, who is as like him as he can look. Now, Christ is so like the Father, and so truly and really his image, that tho' blind *Arians* cannot see the essential glory of the Father in him, yet he says to *Philip*, John xiv. 9. *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.* Now, in the book of the creature we may see the being of God, in the book of the scripture, the will of God. But above all these, we have another book, written as it were, with the rays of the sun, even Christ whom we may call a book, for he is still $\alpha\lambda\omicron\gamma\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ the word of God ; but he is not made with ink and paper, he is a living book, a living picture and representative of the Father, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3. The saving knowledge of God is by Christ, *John* i. 18. and in Christ, 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. And again, hence,

2. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ?* because, without right thoughts of Christ, there can be no religion, and consequently no salvation. There is no coming to God, but in Christ, *John* xiv. 6. *I am the way, the truth and the life ; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.* Without believing thoughts of Christ then we cannot worship God aright or acceptably, *for without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. And I have shewed you already, that right thinking is believing ; and without believing in him, there is no salvation : *He that believes not, shall be damned, for there is no name given under heaven whereby*

we must be saved, neither is there salvation in any other, Acts iv. 12. A man that cannot think of Christ as he ought, cannot perform a religious action as he ought?

As the evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things ; so a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things, Matth. xii. 35.

Now, Christ in the heart, by his Spirit, is indeed a good treasure ; and as natural thoughts produce natural actions, carnal thoughts, carnal actions ; so spiritual thoughts bring forth spiritual actions, and christian thoughts, christian actions. True religion begins and advances with the right thoughts of God. I defy a man, that knows the Lord, to pray, or worship God comfortably, without some due apprehension of Christ ; for as in Christ alone, God is well pleased, so it is in the view of Christ, or of God in him, that the soul is well pleased.

3. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ ?* because it is the best rule of self-examination ; seeing, as mens thoughts of Christ are, so is their state ; *as men think in their heart, so are they,* Prov. xxiii. 7. *If a man be risen with Christ, then his thoughts and affections are set on things above, where Christ sits on the right-hand of God,* Col. iii. 1, 2. If you be christians indeed, then you *have Christ in you, the hope of glory,* Col. i. 27. and if Christ be in you, he will have a high room in your thought and esteem ; and therefore, it is laid down as the best rule of examination, *2 Cor. xiii. 15. Examine yourselves, prove whether you be in the faith, prove yourselves, know ye not your own selves, how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates ? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,* Rom. viii. 9. Now, they that have the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit, the things of God, and particularly the CHRIST of God.

4. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ ?* because this question comprehends all other questions

ons in religion. After the *Pharisees* had done with asking their critical questions about the law, Christ proposes this question, which swallows up all their questions, and comprehends all that is necessary to be known ; and if we could answer this question to purpose, we should be in a case to answer all questions that concern both the law and the gospel ; for Christ is the end of the law, and the sum of the gospel. They that know Christ, they know where to find all the righteousness that the law requires, and all the grace that the gospel promises ; and so this question is the compend of the *christian catechism*, and that not only with respect to knowledge, but also with respect to practice and experience. Christ is the sum of practical godliness, *for without him you can do nothing*, and, *by him strengthening you, you can do all things*. And Christ is the sum of experimental religion also. That experience is not worth much, that hath not Christ for the sum-total of it ; *for it is out of his fulness we receive, grace for grace*. And when a man can say, *beholding his glory, I have been changed into the same image*, it is a rich experience. In a word, all questions that relate to christian experience, may be reduced to this one, *What think ye of Christ?* If the question be, What know ye of conviction ? What know ye of conversion ? What know ye of illumination ? What know ye of regeneration ? What know ye of justification ? What know ye of sanctification ? What interest have ye in Christ ? What part and portion have ye in the son of *Jesse* ? What share have ye of his grace, and what hope of his glory ? All such questions may be answered with the answer of this, *What think ye of Christ?*

5. This question, *What think ye of Christ?* is put, because he would, by this, put a stop, and give a check to all curious unnecessary questions. They

were but curious questions at best, that the *Sadducees* and *Pharisees* had asked of Christ ; but here Christ gives a check to them, by a question of everlasting moment. Some, that are ignorant professors, shew a deal of curiosity in some of their questions, such as, *Who was Melchisedeck's father ?* and the like ; but O here is a more necessary question, Who was Christ's father, *What think ye of Christ,* and *whose Son is he ?* Here is an ocean of wisdom, that you may profitably dive into, and yet never get to the bottom of it ; for who can answer that question about Christ's Father, *Prov. xxx. 4. What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell ?*

6. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ ?* because our thoughts are but lost, if they be not laid out upon him. Till we be brought to think of Christ duly, all our thoughts are but lost thoughts, and vain thoughts : O Jerusalem, *wash thine heart from wickedness, how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee ?* The Lord sees the thoughts of men to be but vanity ; our thoughts are like birds flying from mountain to mountain, and skipping from place to place ; and like children running after butterflies, their pains are lost ; and so are our thoughts lost, while they are not terminate upon Christ.

7. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ ?* because there are so many mistaken thoughts of Christ in the world ; *He is despised and rejected of men.* The world is filled with prejudice against him, saying, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ?* Therefore we ought to come and see, and consider what he is, and whose son he is, that we may not run into the same common mistake with the rest of the world, and that we may not take him for a root out of a dry ground, *Isa. liii. 2. having no form or comeliness.*

8. This question is put to us, *What think ye of Christ ?*

Christ? because we have mistaken thoughts of other things, while we have not right thoughts of Christ. The *Pharisees* had mistaken thoughts of God and his law, because they had not right thoughts of Christ; therefore Christ proposes this question. And indeed, Sirs, we mistake God, we mistake the law, we mistake the gospel, we mistake ourselves, we mistake our duty, we mistake every thing, as long as we are ignorant of Christ. A man may mistake so far, as to think that he is about his duty to God, and yet may be fighting against God, while Christ is not known or thought upon, *Acts* xxvi. 9. *I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, says Paul*; and accordingly he was persecuting Christ in his members; yet he thought he was doing God service, till once Christ discovered himself, and cried to him, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Then he began to think of Christ, saying, *Who art thou, Lord?* Why, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* Whenever he began to think duly of Christ, then he saw he had been in a mistake. People may think verily they ought to do this and that against some of God's children; but if they had other thoughts of Christ, they would have other thoughts of their duty, and would see that verily they ought not to do so. Again, *Paul* thought his own righteousness gain, before he knew Christ; but then he thought it loss: *What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ.*

9. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ?* because thus you may come to understand what are his thoughts of you. It is true, *His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways*; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts. And hence he may have thoughts of mercy towards a poor soul, that thinks there is nothing but wrath in his heart against

it. But this I say, that as to your knowing and understanding of his thoughts towards you ; as on the one hand, a man in a natural state cannot have high, believing and becoming thoughts of Christ, and so cannot conclude that Christ hath any favourable thoughts of him, while he remains thus in unbelief and despising of Christ ; nay, he may know and understand if he remain in that state, thoughtless of Christ, and disregarding him, *that Christ will come in flaming fire and take vengeance on him*, 2 Thess. i. 7. 8. so, on the other hand, the man that hath got such discoveries of Christ, as to create high, spiritual and elevated thoughts of Christ, he may from thence understand, that Christ thinks well of him, *and that his thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give him an expected end*. It is true, Christ's thoughts of the believer are not 'high and low, as the believer's thoughts of him are ; nay, Christ's thoughts are unchangeably the same. But, when the believer's thoughts of Christ are raised, then he is in best case to know and understand Christ's loving thoughts towards him : Why, even as a fountain may be known by the streams, so it is here ; our knowledge, faith, love, and esteem of Christ, are but streams that flow from Christ's kind heart towards us, *We love him because he first loved us* ; we think of him because he first thinks of us. And therefore, by what we think of Christ, we may know what he thinks of us : If you think honourably of him, you may thence know he thinks favourably of you ; if you think much of him, you may know he thinks much of you. O, may a believer say, I have reason to think much good of him, *for he is fairer than the sons of men*, the spotless lamb of God ; but he hath reason to think much ill of me, for I am all black and deformed like hell and the devil. But I'll tell you, believer, that as
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his thoughts of you make you to be in him, what he thinks you to be in him, however deformed you are in yourselves, and see yourselves to be ; yet, I say, as his thoughts make things to be (for he but thought there should be a world, and there was a world ; whenever it was his mind that it should be, then it was ; and whatever he thought it to be, that it was, according to his thought) and as his thoughts of you make you to be in him, what you are in him : so, if you think him fair and altogether lovely, he is not behind with you, for he thinks you fair too. Hence, to the spouse, that was admiring his beauty, he says, *Song iv. 7. Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.* And he does not say any thing but what he thinks, his words express his thoughts ; for he cannot lie, who is the strength of *Israel*. Now, believer, if you cannot think or believe that you're altogether fair in him, because you see yourselves altogether foul in yourself ; know, that if you saw yourself to be all fair in yourself, there would be no need of, or room for believing that you're all fair in him : hence he hath left deformities about you, that there may be room for faith ; therefore let the feeling of your deformity make you humble, but let it not hinder your faith, which must not stand upon feeling, but must act contrary to it upon Christ's word : for, if you ground your faith upon what you feel in yourself, you'll never believe what Christ says concerning your being *all fair*, and your being *made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. and *last*. If your faith then can act so as to raise your thoughts of Christ as altogether lovely, fair and spotless, you have ground to conclude, by that same act of faith, that he hath high thoughts of you, as being all fair and spotless in him, whatever deformity you feel in yourself. Christ is infinitely more to you, believer, than you believe

believe him to be : but, whatever you believe him to be, you may be sure he is that to you, you have all that you see in him ; for faith's seeing and having is all one, even as believing is explained by receiving, and receiving by believing, *John* i. 12. What you believe then you receive, and what you receive you have, and what you have in him, you are in him ; having beauty, and riches and righteousness in him, you are beautiful, rich and righteous in him ; and consequently, when you believingly think he is all fair and glorious, you may know he thinks you all fair and glorious in him, and he thinks no more of you, than what you really are in him. The question then is put, because you may know, by what you think of Christ, what Christ thinks of you.

10. This question is put, *What think ye of Christ?* because we can never think too much of him, who is the God-man, *David's* Son and *David's* Lord, being God as well as man. O what a glorious object of our contemplation is here ! You may think too much of yourselves, and your own righteousness, but you cannot think too much of Christ and his righteousness : yea, when you think any thing of yourself and your righteousness, you think too much of it ; but when you think as much as you can, of Christ and his righteousness, you think too little of him. You may think too much of creatures, but you cannot think too much of Christ. Yea, you may think too much of angels, as the apostle *John* did, when he *fell down to worship before the feet of the angels*, *Rev.* xxii. 8. To think of the nature of angels, with that inward reverence and adoration which we are to have when we think of Christ, would be idolatry ; and to think of Christ, with the same frame of heart, as we do of angels, would be profaneness ; thus we may think too highly and reverently

rently of angels ; but we cannot think of Christ too highly, too reverently, nor too much of him, who is the Lord of angels, and whom we are to honour even as we honour the Father. These are the reasons of the question.

The *fourth* general head proposed, was, To make application of the whole. And it may be applied for these following uses. 1. For *information*. 2. For *conviction*. 3. For *trial*. 4. For *exhortation* and *direction*.

1. It may be applied for *information*, in these and the like lessons following. 1. Hence we may learn, seeing the great question in the *christian catechism* is, *What think ye of Christ ?* Then the sum of christian knowledge lies in this one word, namely CHRIST. It is not in God absolutely considered, by what he is in himself ; but in God relatively considered, by what he is to us, namely, in Christ : therefore, I observe, the question is not, *What think ye of God ?* but, *What think ye of Christ ?* For, as God out of Christ stands in no relation to us sinners but that of an enemy, and a consuming fire ; so the nature, essence, and immensity of God, and what he is in himself, is not the great christian question ; but rather, what he is to us, and so what he is in Christ. All the saving manifestations of God to his people in scripture, were still, not of God, absolutely and essentially, in what he was in himself, and in his nature ; but relatively, in what he was to them : and so it was always in Christ. Thus, when he came to *Abraham*, he said, *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward : I am thy God, and the God of thy seed, which seed was Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. in whom that covenant and promise was established to *Abraham* and his offspring. And when God manifested himself to the patriarchs that came of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, his ordinary way was to make himself

self known upon that ground of the new covenant established in Christ, *Abraham's seed*. Hence, when he came to them, he used to say to them, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* ; that is, he manifested himself to them, not absolutely by what he was in his nature ; but relatively, by what he was to them in Christ the promised seed. If we begin to dive into that question, *What think ye of God ?* we may soon lose ourselves, and come to the philosopher's demand of a day to answer that question, and then a week, and then a month, and then tell it is impossible to answer it : nay, we ought not to be curious in searching into the nature of God, lest we get a dash ; for human philosophy cannot reach it, yea, I doubt if angelical wisdom can. It is the only pleasant, saving and profitable enquiry, to study this question, *What think ye of Christ ?* Here we may find what God is to us. To enquire what God is in himself, absolutely and essentially, is no saving or profitable enquiry. What profit is it for a man, who lives under the north pole, and sees not the sun for one half of the year, tho' he should count the course of the sun all that time that he sees it not ? or, what profit were it for a man to go and count what rent the king of *Morocco* or the emperor of *China* has every year, and he get none of it ? As foolish is it for us to begin and study what God is absolutely in himself, and not what he is relatively to us ; therefore the question is not, *What think ye of God ?* but, *What think ye of Christ ?* And this shews the difference that there is betwixt learned fools and wise christians ; why, the learned fool seeks to know and comprehend what God is, what this mystery of the Trinity is, and the like, and there he mires himself ; he seeks to know what God is in himself, and not what he is to him : but the poor christian is herein wiser

wiser than that learned clerk, for all his wit ; for the christian studies Christ, and so knows what God is to him, better than all the learned *Rabbies* and their curious speculations. Tho' yet the poor soul may otherwise be very ignorant and illiterate, yet he is wise unto salvation, because he knows Christ, and Christ is *made of God to him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. And when he knows Christ, he is upon the surest and safest way to know God ; for he sees God in Christ, and God related to him in Christ, for Christ is our relation as God-man-mediator. And indeed, Sirs, to believe in Christ, is to believe God's relation to us, and God reconciled to us : for, when we look to Christ, we see God in him ; and when we see God in him, we see that he is reconciled in him to us, and well-pleased in him with us, *2 Cor. v. 19. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself*. *Mat. iii. and last. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*. I own indeed, a man may be a believer, and yet apprehend God to be his enemy ; but then he is not believing, he is not thinking of Christ by faith. It is an unbelieving thought he hath then of God ; for a believing thought of Christ would give him another thought of God, even as a friend and father in him. This then, I hope, is an usual inference, that the sum of christian knowledge is Christ.

2dly, Hence see what is the best matter for meditation, and the best rule for self-examination. Here is the most noble subject of meditation, namely, to think of Christ ; and here is the most excellent rule for examination, namely, to ask our souls that question, *What think ye of Christ?* Meditation and self-examination are duties much neglected among us ; they are spiritual exercises, directly cross and opposite to our vain, wandering, idle and unfixed hearts. A man will rather go betwixt the stilts of
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of a plough from morning to evening, than travel betwixt these two duties for one half hour, tho' yet they are like the stilts of that plough, by which the fallow-ground of the heart must be plowed up ; but when the thoughts begin to come in betwixt these two stilts of meditation and self-examination, behold on a sudden, (to speak it in broad *Scots*) they *quit the plough, and run away with the harrows*. No doubt you will know this from sad experience, that your thoughts are in this matter like wild, vicious horses, running mad here and there through the fields, without keeping any road, or observing any rule ; but here is the best matter and rule, both for regulating our thoughts in meditation and self-examination. As for meditation, the best way is to think of Christ : why, you may think upon a promise, but out of Christ, you'll find no comfort in it, for all the promises are *yea* and *amen* in him ; and so you will not find it your own, but by looking to Christ. Yea, you may think upon God, but out of Christ you'll find no comfort in him, *Psal. lxxvii. 3. I remembred God, and was troubled* : But the antidote against that trouble is believing thoughts of Christ ; therefore says Christ to his disciples, *John xiv. 1. Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me*. If you think upon the law, you'll find there you're drown'd in debt both to the command and curse, till once you look to Christ the end of the law for righteousness. If you look upon your duties that God calls you to, you'll find them a heavy task, till once you look to Christ, and then you'll find his yoke is easy, and his commands are not grievous. Again, as to self-examination, the best rule here is to say to your soul, *What think ye of Christ ?* They are but proud self-conceited persons that do not think highly of Christ, and God approves them not. 2. *Cor. x. last. He that glories,*
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says the apostle, *let him glory in the Lord: for not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends*; intimating, that they that glory only in the Lord, they discommend themselves, and are commended and approved of God; but they that do not glory in the Lord, nor think highly of him, they commend themselves, but are discommended and disapproved of God; yea, they deceive themselves, *Gal. vi. 3. If any man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* Self-conceit is self-deceit; and as they are all self-deceivers who are self-exalters, so they are all self-exalters who are Christ-despisers; they think not much of Christ, who think much of themselves: and so to enquire what you think of Christ, is the best way to find yourself out, what you are in state or frame. You may by this rule know how to judge of your own thoughts: you may think of a thousand good things, you may think of sermons, you may think of death, judgment and eternity; but tho' you may think seriously on these subjects, yet the rule whereby to judge of the rectitude of your thoughts about them is here, do they lead you to high thoughts of Christ, in whom alone we can think of death without horror, judgment without terror, and eternity without fear or dread?

3dly, Hence we may see that Christ himself is the best judge of mens state; for he can look into the hearts and thoughts of men, and say, *What think ye of Christ?* All judgment is committed to the son of God, and he will cast many whom the world approves; because, whatever men think of them, yet he knows that they think little of him and his Father. Also, he will approve of some whom the world casts; because, however the world thinks little of them, yet he knows that they think much of him and his Father; for they know him, and
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whose Son he is. Christ's question shews that he knows our thoughts ; for, to whom shall we give an account of our answer to this question ? None in all the world knows what we think, but God himself, and Christ is God. Christ discovers the ignorance of the *Pharisees* here also, and shews that he knew their thoughts were amiss : *if he be David's Son*, says he, *how does David in spirit call him Lord ?* Here they were confounded, and might have been convicted that their thoughts were naught. Indeed, this was one of these things that old *Simeon* declared concerning Christ, that *He should be a sign that should be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed*, Luke ii. 35. Thus, when Christ met with the woman of *Samaria*, he revealed many thoughts of her heart to her, and gave her a view of all her lewd tricks ; *Come, see a man*, says she, *that told me all things that ever I did ; Is not this the Christ ?* As Satan presented to our Lord Jesus the whole body of the world at a glance, so Christ can let us see a black sight of all our sins at once, so as to force us to acknowledge that he is the Christ, that knows our hearts and thoughts. But,

4thly, Hence we may see, what is the great end and design of a gospel-ministry, namely, to discover Christ, and remove the prejudices of people's minds against him, to rectify their mistakes about him, and to fill them with a high opinion of him. The sum of a gospel-minister's business, is, to commend his master, saying, *What think ye of Christ ?* and that both in his preaching, and praying, and catechising, and visiting. The whole of their doctrine and practice is, as it were, a voice preaching Christ. If they preach the law and it's curses and threatnings against Christless and impenitent sinners, it is to lead them to Christ, and to drive them to the city of refuge. If they preach faith, they make Christ the

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author and finisher, as well as the object of it. If they preach repentance, they make Christ, as exalted at the right-hand of God, *to be a prince and saviour, to give repentance*, the fountain of it; and Christ crucified, viewed by faith, to be the immediate root of it. If they preach duties and new obedience, they make Christ the *alpha* and the *omega* of it. Ministers may indeed speak much of Christ in their sermons, and yet not preach Christ: as for example, if one should preach of Christ mainly as a law-giver to be obeyed, and little or nothing of Christ as a law-fulfiller, to be believed in, and served from love, because of his having saved us from the yoke of the law: for a covenant of life and death, upon doing or not doing, may be preached, and called the gospel of Christ, in a mistake, while it is only the law that is preached, and not *Christ the end of the law for righteousness*. And you may know it by this, among other things, the tendency of such old-covenant doctrine, is to lead men to this question, not, *What think ye of Christ?* but, *What think ye of yourselves?* and, *What are you doing, that you may have eternal life?* Why, the man begins to think, God is standing upon some doing-terms yet with him; and therefore, in order to life, he must do so and so: thus he is led to himself, and not to Christ. But gospel-doctrine tends to lead a man wholly out of himself, and wholly into Christ; for, whatever be the text, the strain of gospel-doctrine is, *What think ye of Christ?* It is not the design of gospel-ministers to commend themselves, but Christ. There is a set of ministers, say some, that set up themselves above others, and study only to commend themselves, to the disparagement of all others, as if none but they were gospel-ministers; but, my friends, if any man's concern for Christ's cause and interest, or for his master's glory, shall commend

him, he needs not think strange tho' the world of *Pharisees* envy him, as they did Christ himself when his doctrine and life commended him. I'll tell you what commendation a gospel-minister hunts most after ; it is that of *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* iii. 1, 2, 3. it is to have an epistle-commendatory in the hearts of hearers, by the power of the spirit of God savingly accompanying the word, and leaving an impression there, that it is indeed the word of God, and not of men, and that God is in it of a truth. He would desire, with the same apostle, 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. *to commend himself by the manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Let truth be nick-nam'd and reproached as it will, the evidence of truth will commend itself to the consciences of all the lovers thereof. Mean time, it is possible that a man may commend Christ in order to commend himself as an evangelical preacher ; for such a good work he is indeed commendable, but for such a bad end, it is to God only that he is accountable. But it is possible also to know if a man intend not himself by preaching Christ ; for sometimes there is such a power and virtue attending the word, and such a smell and favour of heaven with the preacher, as carries a secret demonstration of his spirituality and purity of intention into the heart even of the carnal by-standers, much more those whom he hath enlightned with the spirit of discerning, to know the voice of *Christ* from a *stranger*. However, sirs, think of ministers what ye will, the great question is, *What think ye of Christ ?* Woe to us, if our only design be to bring people to say, *What think ye of such a minister ?* and *What think ye of such a sermon ?* If we make Christ a covert for raising our own applause, he can instantly command an angel to smite us, as he did *Herod*, and order us to be eaten up of worms for not giving God

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the glory. O what should ye think of us? Tho' we magnify our office as ambassadors of Christ, yet in ourselves, some of us are frail, feeble, sinful pieces of dust as any of you; we are among the chief of sinners as well as you; we need the blood and spirit of Christ to justify and sanctify us, as well as you; let us decrease, but let Christ increase: if any of us be made instruments of good to your souls, let it engage you to think the more of Christ, that could work such a work by such simple and unlikely instruments: he puts the treasure in earthen vessels, that the *excellency of the power may be of God*, and not of us. Whatever honour God calls you to put upon them for their work's sake, yet, if your esteem centre upon the minister or his work, saying, *O I think much of the minister*, and *I think much of the sermon*, you need to begin to think better; for the grand question is, *What think ye of Christ?* It is indeed the best sermon that works the highest thoughts of Christ.

The *2d use* is for conviction and reproof to all those that are filled with unworthy and unbecoming thoughts of Christ, with ignorant and erroneous thoughts of him. Some have no thoughts of Christ at all; some think little of him, some think hardly and harshly of him; some think meanly and basely of him: to speak of all the base and mean thoughts of Christ that the world is filled with, would be impossible. O how basely do the *Arians* think of Christ and his supreme Godhead! If I had not found it necessary to confine myself to the first branch of Christ's question here, *What think ye of Christ?* the other branch, namely, *Whose son is he?* might have led me particularly to have treated the doctrine of Christ's sonship, and eternal Godhead, and co-equality with the Father, in opposition to that damnably heresy, which some tell us is creep-

ing to *Scotland*, as well as it is raging in *England* and *Ireland*. I shall only say, that the question concerns them, as well as the *Pharisees* of old, *What think ye of Christ; and whose son is he?* O can they say no more than with the *Pharisees*, that he is the son of *David*? Then, how does *David* in spirit call him Lord? And if he be *David's* Lord and God, how can he be so, and yet not co-equal with the Father? For we have not two Lords, or two Gods; the Lord our God is one Lord, we have but one supreme God and Lord; therefore, Christ being Lord, must be one with the Father essentially: Christ is the true God and eternal life. But I cannot now enlarge on this subject. O may *Arian* doctors begin to read over the christian catechism again, and learn to answer this question, *What think ye of Christ?* Again, as *Arians* think nothing of his Godhead, but as if it were an inferior diety; so some that pretend a greater respect to him, yet think but basely of him. *Papists* think nothing of the imputation of his righteousness; *Socinians* think nothing of the sacrifice of his death; *Arminians* think nothing of the power of his grace; *Quakers* think nothing of his word; *Atheists* think nothing of his spirit; *Deists* think nothing of his revelations. If we look out to the world, the *Pagans* have no thought of him at all; the *Mahometans* think him nothing but a great prophet at best, and inferior to *Mahomet*; the *Jews* think him nothing but an impostor, and that he is not the Christ, but only the carpenter's son, or it may be a blasphemer, that had a devil. And again, if we look into the church, even the purest churches in the world, among which, I would willingly hope, the poor church of *Scotland* hath not yet lost the vogue; yet O how many dark and confused notions, yea, unwarrantable and unworthy thoughts of Christ, may be there

there discovered, even among these churches that are supposed to be pure, christian, protestant and reformed churches: it were endless, to speak of doctrinal and practical errors that swarm in the churches, whereby contempt is poured upon Christ and his doctrine, his truth, his gospel, and his yoke; his loving yoke of gospel-obedience. What low thoughts of Christ appear in that strain of doctrine that tends to confound the old and new covenant, law and gospel, faith and works, without duly keeping up the old land-marks betwixt Christ and all his rivals and competitors, that seek to share with him in the glory of salvation-work! What low thoughts of Christ appear in that sort of practice, that consists either in a life of legal righteousness, or a life of open wickedness? What low thoughts of Christ, as our righteousness, appear from every thing that tends to lead sinners back to the law, as a covenant of works? And what low thoughts of Christ, as our sanctification, appear from every thing that tends to lead sinners off from the law, as a rule of holiness? How is Christ, and his merit and righteousness disesteemed, to the encouragement of self, and self-righteousness? And how is Christ and his spirit and grace disesteemed, to the encouragement of sin and licentiousness? It is not my business, to expose the nakedness of any: they are singular persons, that are helped to guard against all right and left-hand extremes, so as to think no less of Christ as a Lord, than Christ as a saviour; and to esteem a whole Christ, without setting up one part of Christ against another; but my work especially is, to strike at the root of all that disesteem of Christ, that takes place in the world, especially in the visible church. Whence is it, that the world thinks so little of Christ, and so naughtily of him? Why, *1st, Ignorance is a cause of it, ignoti nulla cupido.* As

it is impossible for them to undervalue Christ, who have the saving knowledge of him ; so it is not possible that any can prize him, whom they do not know. Many are like *Festus*, *Acts* xxv. 19. who told *Agrippa*, that *Paul's* enemies had questions against him, concerning one Jesus ; Christ is to them, a certain man, one *Jesus*, but for their part they know little of him, and are indifferent about him. As a blind man, what he does not see, he cares not for, tho' he be told of it as never so fair and beautiful ; so natural men are blind, *2 Cor.* iv. 4. they can see no beauty or comeliness in Christ, for which they should desire him. Therefore, tho' they may hear of his glory and comeliness, and be a little moved therewith, yet they care not so much for him, as to give him the highest room in their thoughts and esteem. 2dly, *Unbelief* is another cause why people think little of Christ. If they could believe, they would see the glory of God in him, and see him a glorious and lovely object : but through unbelief, Christ is lothsome instead of lovely ; hence his doctrine is lothsome, his righteousness, his holiness, his cross. Unbelief makes people think Christ is a cheat, and God is a liar, and that he says what he hath no mind to do ; it makes them think that he is not able to save, or that he is not willing to save. O how basely does unbelief think of Christ ? Unbelief also will make a man think God like unto himself, and an approver of his sin, *Psal.* l. at the close, *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self* ; and so it makes them think of Christ but very basely. 3dly, *Pride and self-righteousness* is another cause why people think little of Christ, *Rom.* x. 3. While people think much of themselves, and their doing, they cannot think much of Christ, and his righteousness. This is that legal principle that makes men to do with the garment of

Christ's righteousness, as the *Ammonites* did with the garments of *David's* messengers, they clip them so short, that they were not able to hide their shame : but if it was a terror and smiting to *David's* heart, to cut off but a little of the lap of *Saul's* garment, ought it not to be a terror to us, to cut off a lap of Christ's garment, or clip it so short, as to think that it cannot cover us completely, without some rags of our own rotten righteousness sewed to it ? Again, it is this legal principle, that makes believers themselves think it cannot be that they are accepted as righteous, perfectly righteous in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Christ imputed ; why, because they want a feeling of that righteousness in themselves, which the legal heart is ready to make the foundation of pardon and acceptance : but, as *Luther* said, we must not feel, but believe, that we are thus righteous ; yea, it is this hidden principle of self-righteousness, that will make a minister preach Christ alone for righteousness, as if he were as much for exalting Christ, as any that ever preached ; and yet, before ever you know well where you are, you'll find him bringing in some legal duty of qualification, in order to your being justified, that will spoil all your former beauty ; just like an untoward milk-cow, that will let down a good deal of milk very well, but then, with an unhappy kick of her foot, she will tumble it all down to the ground, when she hath done : even so the sincere milk of the word of life, and justification through Christ's righteousness alone, may be let down abundantly, that you would think the man as evangelical as *Paul* himself, or any body that ever preached the gospel ; but, behold of a sudden the legal foot gives it a kick, and spills all when he hath done, or else the law sets her foot among the midst of the milk ; I mean, mixes some
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dirty righteousness, and qualification of our own, with the fair and clean milk of Christ's righteousness, so as the poor exercised soul's heart rises to take a drink of it. Why, I thought yonder milk was for me, and yonder righteousness of Christ was for me ; but there came in a qualification, that before ever I could be justified, I behoved to do so and so, and to be so and so humbled, and penitent, and sure I am I want such a qualification, and therefore all is lost to me. But poor soul, whatever comes in this way, tending to make you look into yourself, and stand off from Christ, you may know it is but a switch of the law of works ; slight it, and set it off if it hinder you from thinking of Christ as your ALL, and from buying and drinking his wine and milk without money, and without price. *4thly*, *Carnal Reason* is another cause why people think little of Christ ; *for the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, they are foolishness to him*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. There is natural reason, which is so much cried up, at this day, when a man goes about to measure God's truth and spiritual mysteries, with this short line of human reason ; and finding that reason agrees with these mysteries, no more than the sound of rams horns in the view of carnal sense, was like to bring down the walls of *Jericho* ; behold, no fault must be found with lady *reason*, but Christ's gospel, and the mysteries thereof, must bear the blame, namely, that they are foolish and absurd, and therefore not to be received or esteemed by such wise heads as they are, who little remember the apostle's admonition, 1. Cor. iii. 18. *If any man will be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise*. Hence *Luther* gave it as an infallible mark that the gospel was not truly preached, and was not the gospel indeed, namely, if it was so brewed, fitted and adapted unto reason, that all approved of it,
and

and yielded to it peaceably; for how then should Christ be a sign that should be spoken against, Luke ii. 34. and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of defence? This leads me to a 5th cause why people think so little of Christ, namely, the *calumny* cast upon the gospel of Christ, and the dispensers of it. Is it possible for the wisdom of the world to hold her peace from speaking against that which she judges to be foolishness? How then shall Christ be not only for the rising, but the falling of many in Israel? Mark, says Luther, where this fall is, even in Israel, in that people that seemed to be Christ's only people, and upon Christ's side. It is even in Israel that many fall, and in Israel that Christ is spoken against. Thus, when he came to be a minister of the old and antient truths of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, Rom. xv. 8. when he began to preach the same, the greatest part of the multitude cried out, *What new doctrine is this?* Mark i. 27. Whence we may see, that when a church hath gone off from any antient truth, or old way of expressing it, no sooner are these old truths received, or set in their antient frame, than presently it is called a new scheme of doctrine: however, by this means Satan gets much of his will; for it tends to make people think little of Christ and his gospel. 6thly, *Division* is another cause why people think so little of Christ. There is a twofold *division* that I mean; there is not only an outward church-division, but an inward heart-division. No doubt the former hath a great hand in making many to slight Christ; for when a church is divided, the generality of people are apt to be stumbled: why, say they, we know not whom to believe, and what side to turn to; every party says they are for Christ, and therefore the indifferent sort of people think we will even let Christ and them both alone. But it is especially

cially inward *heart-division* that I mean: when the heart is divided betwixt Christ and the world, betwixt Christ and idols or lusts; the world and lusts thereof, will be sure to carry away the heart, that it cannot think highly of Christ, while it thinks so much of other things. A man may as soon with one eye observe the stars, and with the other measure the earth at the same time, as he can think highly of Christ and of his idols too; therefore, when Satan, like the pretended mother, says, let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it; God, who is the Lord of the heart, says, let the devil rather have all, for God will either have all or none. Now, when men have any approved idol in the heart, Christ is despised, his rival gets all; the divided heart then is a heart separated and joined to idols; and this division causes disesteem of Christ, so as the man cannot think of Christ, he must, of necessity, think of some other thing, *Luke xiv. 18.* See how they that were invited to the great supper, the gospel-banquet, put it off with excuses, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it*, says one: mark the phrase, *I must needs go*; he pleads necessity, and necessity hath no law. When the heart is not wholly for Christ, of necessity it will be for the world, and the lusts thereof: and he that is not for Christ, Satan will find him always enough of business to take up his thoughts, and which the man will reckon so necessary, that he will have no leisure to think of Christ. Now, when this question is proposed, *What think ye of Christ?* or when Christ is offered, there are two sorts of persons that shew very little esteem of him; yea, that shew they do nothing but despise him in their heart: the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, *2 Pet. ii. 22.* 1. There are some like swine, namely, the profane worldly people: for as swine think more
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of the mire, than any thing else ; so, if one go to drive him away from the mire, he only gives a grunt, and away he goes to the mire again, or else rooting his snout in the earth : so prophane and worldly people love to wallow in the mire of sin, and to be rooting in the earth ; and if any go about to drive them from sin, and to pull their noses out of the earth, they go away grunting and grumbling in their heart, that they cannot be allowed their necessary pleasure and profit, and they return to the wallowing in the mire, and rooting in the earth, as eagerly as ever. All the answer they give to the question, *What think ye of Christ?* is a grunt : they are disturbed a little about it, and moved a little to mutter some words, according as they are affected ; but away they go grunting, with their mouth towards the dust ; it is not Christ they are thinking of. 2. There are others like dogs, namely legalists, and self-justiciaries, that are worse enemies to the gospel of Christ, than the worldling, or openly profane ; for as a dog thinks more of a stinking carcase than any thing else, so, if you go about to drive the dog from his vomit, or stinking carrion, he will be ready either to bark or bite, or fly in your face : even so legalists and self-justiciaries think more of the stinking carcase of their own righteousness, and legal duties, than any thing else ; and when any goes about to draw them away from the high esteem of the filthy rags of their own righteousness, shewing the loathsomeness and vileness thereof, the absolute necessity of being wholly denied thereto, and adorned with nothing but Christ's perfect righteousness for justification before God ; if we shew them how God justifies the ungodly, and how the righteousness of God, without the works of the law, is manifested in the gospel ; why, then they go away from the ordinances, barking and biting, and slan-

flandering, calumniating the gospel, which they do not understand or esteem, as if it were a doctrine of licentiousness, and an encouragement of sin ; and they return to their vomit, their stinking carrion, neglecting the heavenly carcase to which the believing eagles gather together, that they may live by faith upon the Son of God. Now, both these sorts of persons, however differently affected, yet agree in their slighting of Christ, upon different grounds. What do they think of Christ ? Nothing at all : the Lord convince and awaken such.

The *third use* may be for *examination* and *trial*. Let this great question of the christian catechism be a touchstone to try what metal you are of, and to understand what is your state now, and what will be your lot forever. It is according as you answer this question, *What think ye of Christ ?* For helping you into this enquiry, I would direct you to try it, 1. By the qualities of your thoughts. 2. By the object thereof.

First, Try yourselves upon this question, by the qualities of your thoughts ; for it is not a simple thought like a flying vapour, that is here intended ; but a qualified thought that you are to try yourselves by. For example, (1.) Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are preferring and superlative thoughts, Christ is beyond comparison to the man : the language of such a thought of Christ is this, O what can he be compared unto ! If you compare him to a rose, *he is the rose of Sharon* : if you compare to a lillie, *he is the lillie of the valley* : if you compare him to a sun, *he is the sun of righteousness* : if you compare him to a star, *he is the bright and morning star* : if you compare him to a chief and honourable worthy, *he is the chief among ten thousand* : if you compare him to a head, *he is the head of principalities and powers* : if you compare him to a flower,

er, *he is the flower of the stem of Jesse* : if you compare him to a branch, *he is the branch of righteousness* : if you compare him to an advocate, *he is an advocate with the Father* : if you compare him to a counsellor, *he is the wonderful counsellor* : if you compare him to a king, *he is the king of kings, and Lord of Lords* : if you compare him to a prince, *he is the prince of peace, the prince of the kings of the earth* : if you compare him with men, *he is fairer than the sons of men* : if you compare him with angels, *he is the Lord of angels ; let all the angels of God worship him*. The man does in his thought, prefer Christ to all things in heaven and earth. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee. In all things he gives him the pre-eminence, Col. i. 18.* Then again, (2.) Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are admiring and adoring thoughts, exalting and extolling thoughts ; if you have due thoughts of him in your heart, you'll find in your heart to bless him, saying, as *Psal. cxviii. 26.*

*Blessed is he, in God's great name
that cometh us to save ;*

*We from the bouse which to the Lord
pertains, you blessed have.*

And, O magnify the Lord with me ; you would wish that all the world would fall a blessing and praising and extolling him. They are glorying and glorifying thoughts ; the man's heart glories in the Lord, and glorifies the Lord, and would desire his glory may be advanced above the heaven : why, because (3.) Right and becoming thoughts of Christ, are spiritual and sublimated thoughts. Natural thoughts can rise no higher than nature, *1 Cor. ii. 14.* but spiritual thoughts being managed by the conduct and influence

influence of the Spirit of God ; *the spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.* Indeed the Spirit of God is the *all in all* of these thoughts ; for he comes, according to the promise, and *glorifies Christ by receiving the things of Christ, and shewing them unto the soul,* John xvi. 14. *They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit,* Rom. viii. 5. Indeed, the things of Christ and the things of the Spirit are the same, no human natural wisdom can reach to them. Wise naturalists may indeed dream of them, and speak of them, like a man speaking in his dream of the light of the sun, while yet it is dark night with him, and he was never awakened, &c. (4.) Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are applying and appropriating thoughts, insomuch that the man takes Christ into his soul, as he takes meat and drink into his body, *John vi. 54.* This is that believing thought, without which a man receives no benefit, any more than a man that wants meat can have benefit by thinking upon meat without eating thereof. The man takes in Christ to himself for his own good. To think of Christ without applying him, is like a man thinking of meat and drink, without taking it, which does no good. *Quest.* But can there be no right thinking of Christ, without applying ? Indeed, man, the thought is but a vain thought, an unbelieving thought, an unprofitable thought, if it be not either an applying thought of Christ, or a thought of Christ in order to application ; like a sick man receiving a cordial out of his physician's hand, he takes it from him, not to hold it in his hand and no more, but in order to make it his own, by drinking it down for his refreshment, healing and strengthening. The man's taking the cordial in his hand, is not properly the taking that the physician means, but his taking it into his stomach, is the proper taking of it ; yet the

the former taking of it in his hand is right, in so far as it is in order to the other: so here, a bare thinking of Christ is of no avail, unless it be an applying thought, or a thought in order to application. And tho' the thoughts of Christ, in order to application, be not application itself properly, yet it is good, in so far as it is like a taking Christ into your hand, in order to take him into your heart, and that for your own soul's refreshment, life, health, and everlasting salvation. (5.) Right thoughts of Christ are sinking and serious thoughts, in opposition to the swimming, roving, and indifferent thoughts. Some have a wild thought about Christ, that if he be good for any thing, they shall have a share of him as well as others: but what he is, and how they shall come by him, they never deeply pondered; for they were never touched with a sense of their sin, misery and undone state without him. A swimming thought of Christ is like that of some ignorant creatures crying out in a surprise, *Christ, have mercy on us*; but the thought that sinks deep, is like that of the *Publican*, smiting on his breast, and crying, *Lord, have mercy on me a sinner*. But there are learned fools in the world, as well as ignorant ones, that have nothing but swimming thoughts, roving speculations; and yet, it may be, they can speak of Christ to better purpose (you would think) than one that is exercised to godliness: but yet these two sorts differ as far as the pleading of an orator differs from the pleading of a malefactor; the one vents his great wit, but the other his heart-concern. Again, (6.) Right thoughts of Christ are trading thoughts. The man hath it for his constant trade, to think highly of Christ, and give him the chief room in his heart and esteem. In this respect, *his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*. *The desire of our soul is to thy name*, says the church, *Isa. xxvi. 8. 9. and to the remembrance of thee.*

thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.

There was a trading with heaven late at night, and early in the morning. Yea, *David* makes it morning and evening, and mid-time of the day ; yea more, seven times a day ; and yet most of all, when he says, *My soul breaks for the longing that it hath to thy righteous judgments at all times.* It is a constant trading. True, indeed, there are innumerable intermissions in the believer's christian thoughts and desires. But as we say, it is such a man's trade to buy and sell, while he follows that employment, tho' it is not every moment he is thus occupied ; but tho' there be several intermissions in the exercise of his employment, yet the bent of his mind goes that way : so here, we may call this the believer's constant trade, because, whatever intermissions there are in this his mental trading with heaven, yet the bent of his soul is towards Christ : yea, it is not only his business, but his pleasure, and that makes him go on. If a man thrive at his trade, he takes pleasure in it ; and if not, he is in danger of giving it over. We go sometimes upon business to those whom we never saw, nor care for seeing again, and whom we take little pleasure to converse with ; they that never go to Christ but merely upon business, and never find any pleasure in conversing with him, surely they are too great strangers to him. Certainly, believer, there is too much strangeness betwixt Christ and you, if your business you have to do with Christ be seldom your pleasure, or if it be merely business that takes you to him, saying, I want a pardon, I want a promise, I want this and that. But, is there never a love-visit you make to him, saying, Lord, I have got a pardon, and I am come to bless thee for it ; I have got a promise, and I am come to praise thee for it ; thy company is
sweet,

sweet, and I am come to get thee in my arms, that I may have more of thy embraces ? O sweet trading ! *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* Indeed, these thoughts of Christ that are right, are glad, joyful, satisfying thoughts.

(7.) Right thoughts of Christ are humbling thoughts, and yet emboldning thoughts. O but these that think highly of Christ, cannot but think meanly of themselves, saying with *Job*, *Now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* The believer, that thinks duly of Christ, hath both the highest and lowest thoughts in the world ; the highest thoughts of Christ, and the lowest thoughts of himself ; and yet this humility doth not hinder his boldness, for he hath *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. x. 19. The more he thinks of Christ, the more humble thoughts he has of himself ; and yet the more he thinks of Christ, the more bold he is towards God. It is a bold humility, and a humble boldness ; hence, when he is *worshiping God in the spirit*, two other things concur, *Phil. iii. 3.* namely, *a rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, and *a having no confidence in the flesh.* O, says the soul, I have no ground of confidence in myself, but I have all ground of confidence in Christ ! Unworthy wretch am I, as ever was out of hell ; but behold there is a worthy blood, a worthy righteousness of Christ, *the Lord our righteousness* ; therefore, unworthy as I am, I am warranted to be bold in claiming all thro' Christ : I see the holy of holies is open to me thro' this blood of Christ.

(8.) Right thoughts of Christ are *assimilating* thoughts, sanctifying and transforming thoughts, 2 *Cor. iii. last.* They that see Christ, cannot but love him, and desire to be like him ; for there is a charming favour in his face. They that are in heaven

are like him, because they see him as he is ; the beatifical vision brings in full conformity to him : now a spiritual thought and a believing thought is a mental sight, a fiducial vision of him ; and the more of this, the more conformity to him in holiness. The thought that indears Christ, embitters sin ; a man cannot think duly of the loveliness of Christ, without thinking of the loathsomeness of sin. O, when the sun of righteousness ariseth, there is a heat that accompanies the light, and warms the heart. And indeed high thoughts of Christ do warm the heart, and make it burn within him ; and such heart-warming thoughts are these, burning thoughts, tending to burn up and destroy corruption ; for, according as Christ comes into the heart, sin must go out, according to the measure and degree of his coming : as a talent of gold, or some weighty metal, falling into a vessel of water, dashes out all that is in the vessel to make room for itself ; so Christ's coming into the heart, dashes out sin, to make room for himself. And indeed they that have honourable thoughts of Christ in their hearts, cannot have favourable thoughts of sin ; because, whenever Christ comes into the thoughts, if he do not dash out the life, yet he dashes out the love of sin. What, man ! will you say that Christ is in you, and that you have faith, and yet the love of sin as great as ever, and you can indulge yourself in whoredom, and drunkenness, and lying and swearing, &c. You'll never make a good man believe that Christ is in you, or that you have faith, even tho' you should swear by your faith, as some do, who even thereby testify to the world that they have no faith at all, being so prodigal of it, as to swear away the faith which they say or think they have. So far as Christ comes in, sin goes out. It is possible, indeed, that a believer, that hath Christ in him, may

may think that he hath more sin than ever, and that sin is on the growing hand, instead of decaying ; but he is mistaken. It is in this case as it is with a cup of water, put silver and gold into the cup, and the water swells up ; and the more you put in, the more will the water swell and run over, that you would think there is still more water than before, the more gold is put in. Christ is the tried gold ; and the more the vessel of the believer's heart is filled with it, the more may sin appear to rise and swell, and run over all it's banks. This frights and terrifies the poor soul, because now he sees that which, it may be, was hid in the vessel of his heart before, and out of his sight. But it is not that there is more sin, more water than before, but more gold cast in ; only every dash perhaps makes the water fly about, that he thinks that he was never so full of sin and corruption as now : yet still it holds good, Christ's coming in makes sin fly out ; and the more it seems to rise and swell, the more does the soul's indignation rise and swell against it. All right thoughts of Christ are sanctifying thoughts. In a word, high thoughts of Christ are new thoughts : they that suppose they have thought well enough of Christ all their days, and continue to have no better thoughts, no higher thoughts, no weightier thoughts, no clearer thoughts of him than ever they had, surely they are strangers to this esteem of Christ that we are inquiring into. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are done away, and all things are become new,* and new thoughts among the rest. Where grace comes, there the wicked man does forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, his carnal thoughts, his legal thoughts ; they are changed into spiritual thoughts, evangelical thoughts, such as he never had before : and new thoughts of Christ will bring

in new words and new actions ; the words follow the thoughts. You may then turn the question, *What think ye of Christ ?* to another, *What speak ye of him ?* for, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* If you think it ill breeding, or ungenteel manners, as many do, to speak of Christ and spiritual things, and cannot drop a word for him from sabbath to sabbath, who can believe that you think highly of Christ ? Nay, that which is most in your heart and thoughts, will be most in your lips. The actions also follow the thoughts : can you think highly of Christ, and yet do nothing for him ? Nay, new and precious thoughts of Christ will bring in new gospel-obedience from a principle of love to him. Thus you may try yourselves now on this question, *What think ye of Christ ?* by the qualities of your thoughts. Examination is the very design of the question, namely, to discover what our thoughts of Christ are ; and therefore I insist mainly upon this.

But, having tried yourselves by the qualities of your thoughts: *2dly*, Try yourselves by the object thereof, namely, Christ ; *What think ye of Christ ?* And here such a large field presents itself, that it is impossible I can go through it all. Besides what was said in the doctrinal part, I would ask some further questions concerning Christ, not only for examination, but for raising your esteem of him.

(1.) What think ye of his eminent station he is in as mediator betwixt God and you, and his relation to God and you, his relation to God by nature as his eternal Son, and by office as his righteous servant ? God calls you to wonder at him in this station, *Isa. xlii. 1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold, &c.* His Father called him forth to serve him and you, and to serve him for your sake ; to serve him as a redeemer to ransom you ; to serve him as a

surety to pay your debt ; to serve him as a physician to heal your souls : to serve him in all the offices that your need requires : and what think ye of him ?

(2.) What think ye of his travels, in order to accomplish the works that belong to that station and relation wherein he stands to God and you ? The travel of his eternal mind before time, when his delights were with the sons of men ; the travel of his soul, and the travel of his body in time ; his travel from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven again ; in all his mediatory actions, his incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession ! O but the Lord can give a glance of his glory in the very naming of these things ! How did he travel as in birth, when he *went about his Father's business* ! Luke ii. 49.

(3.) What think ye of his treasures, his unsearchable riches that are stored up in him for the benefit of poor sinners, having received these gifts for men ? *All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him* ; all, and infinitely more than we lost in the first *Adam*, is treasured up in the second *Adam*. O, what may a poor, ignorant, witless sinner think of a treasure of wisdom for his illumination ! What may a guilty sinner think of a treasure of righteousness for his justification ! What may a filthy sinner think of a treasure of grace for his sanctification ! And what may a miserable sinner think of a treasure of mercy for his complete redemption ! Yet all these treasures, and infinitely more than we can name, are in Christ, 1. Cor. i. 30. *Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. O the fulness of grace that is in him, *that out of his fulness, we may receive, and grace for grace* ! He is the store-house of all God's treasures ; for all is treasured up in him, that we may be complete

plete in him, who will by faith make use of him : and what think ye of him ?

(4.) What think ye of his thoughts ? *Psal. cxxxix. 17. How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them ! If I count them, says he, they are more in number than the sand ; when I awake, I am still with thee. O his thoughts ! Dwell with wonder and admiration upon God's thoughts. Is it nothing to you, that ever he had thoughts of love towards the like of you, thoughts of pardon, thoughts of peace, thoughts of good and not of evil, to give you an expected end ? O believer, his thoughts are not precious to the rest of the world ; but what are they to you ? Think you nothing that his thoughts and care should have been about you from all eternity, and now manifested in time ? Having loved you with an everlasting love, how is he drawing you with loving-kindness ? besides all his providential care in bringing things about for your good, and that in a way beyond your contrivance and foresight, yea, in such a manner as never entred into your thoughts. You little thought what was his design in ordering your lot in such a part of the world and such a spot of his vineyard, and bringing you to such a sermon, or under such a ministry. O how innumerable are his precious thoughts ! and what think ye of him ?*

(5.) What think ye of his words, as well as his thoughts ? Surely if you think duly, you'll think them sweet words, *Psal. cxix. 103. How sweet are thy words to my taste ? sweeter than honey to my mouth. Does the spirit never take some of his words, and put a spiritual majesty thereupon ? Tho' many times, like Samuel, you mistake the Lord's voice, believer, and think it is Eli that speaks, and cannot discern the voice of Christ from the voice of Moses, the voice of grace from the voice of the law ;*

law ; yet when the spirit comes, and rounds-in a word from Christ sometimes, what think ye of it ? It is the voice of my beloved, behold he cometh skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills ! What think ye of his inviting words, saying, *Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden ?* What think ye of his expostulating words, saying, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel ?* What think ye of his intreating words, and his promising words, his *I wills*, and *ye shalls*, *I will* be your God, and *ye shall* be my people ? Do ye think so much of them, that your hearts say *amen* to them ? What think ye of his *may-be's* ? Believers will think much of a *may-be* from him sometimes. *It may be he will be gracious ; it may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* What think ye of his *shall-be's* ? There are *shall-be's* for the church in general ; upon all the glory he *shall be* a defence ; in the mount of the Lord it *shall be seen* : what think ye of these ? There are *shall-be's* for yourself in particular. There is a *shall-be* for your protection, *a man shall be* a hiding-place from the storm. *This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land.* There is a *shall-be* for your provision, *bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.* There is a *shall-be* for your instruction, *they shall be all taught of God.* There is *shall-be* for your justification ; *his name shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.* There is a *shall be* for your salvation from sin and wrath, *his name shall be called JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins, even Jesus, which delivers from the wrath to come.* There is a *shall-be* for your happy death, *death shall be swallowed up in victory.* There is a *shall-be* for a happy welcome at the day of judgment, *they shall be mine, in the day that I make up my jewels.* There is a *shall-be* for a happy eternity, and so we shall be ever with the Lord. What think

of all these words and *shall-be's*? Is there any faith here, saying, *amen*, so let it be, so shall it be? What think ye of his *verily's*? We cannot go through these, to tell you how oft he hath confirmed his words with a *verily, verily, I say unto you*: many a wrathful *verily* against his enemies, that think nothing of him; many a loving *verily* towards his people that think much of him. O, do you esteem them all to be the truth, and that *verily* it is and shall be as he hath said? What think ye of his dying words, and when he said upon the cross, *It is finished*? What think ye of his living words, *I am he that was dead, and am alive, and behold I live for evermore*? O what think ye of his words? Cannot your heart say, *Lord, to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life*: O what think ye of him?

(6.) What think ye of his *works*? even his works of creation, what think ye of these? *For by him all things were made that were made, and without him was nothing made*, John i. 3. O when you behold the heavens, the work of his hands, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained, may you not say, *what is man that thou art mindful of him, &c.* What think ye of his works of providence? *For he upholds all things by the word of his power*: Heb. i. 3. If you wonder how can raise your dead bodies at the great day, and sever your dust from other dust; may you not as well wonder, how he every day raises up in your view innumerable stalks of corn out of the dust, and gives to every grain of seed his own body? as the Apostle argues, 1. Cor. xv. 35. and downward. How will he raise the believer's vile body out of the filthy dust, where it rots, and make it like his own glorious body? O fools that we are, and slow of heart to believe, how does he raise the beautiful lillies out of the dung? Solomon, in all his glory, is not comparable to one of these; and all the world cannot

not make one of them to rise, without his powerful providence. These miracles of providence are common every day in our view, and so we think nothing of them ; but we might see the power of Christ in them. If you wonder how it was possible for Christ to turn the water into wine, or multiply a few loaves, and a few fishes, as to feed so many thousands ; we needed not wonder so much, if we but thought how his providence is doing that every year ; the water falls from the clouds, and the vine, by his order, turns it into wine ; and, by the spawn of such fishes, and the grain of such loaves, he is feeding millions every day. Woe's us, that we cannot think of him, and his works, as we ought ! Above all, what think ye of his works of grace, and redeeming love ? All his other works are as the drop of a bucket, in comparison of this ocean ; for herein we may see him appear, in his own, and his Father's pomp and splendor, manifesting all the glorious perfections of God, even his infinite power, and wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, truth, faithfulness, and all God's attributes. I might here mention his works of grace for us, and his works of grace in us ; but it were endless to speak of the thousandth part. His work of grace for us lies in his bringing in everlasting righteousness, especially if we speak of his good works ; surely it is a good work, that can fulfil the holy precepts of that good law which we have broken, and can answer the righteous threatening of the just law which we have incurred. Well, here is the doing and dying of the son of God, for both these ends, that divine holiness may be vindicated, and justice satisfied, in the way and manner of our salvation through him. The law of God is a perfect law, and exceeding broad ; but here is a righteousness as broad as it can be, so as to magnify the law, and make it honourable : O what think
ye

ye of that good work ? His work of grace in us is also much to be thought of ; and that lies mainly, I think, in his imputing that perfect righteousness to us for our justification, and implanting another righteousness beside it for our sanctification, which he carries on to perfection. This internal work of grace may be begun with sighs and groans, advanced in battles and conflicts ; but it will be completed in victory and glory. But in this short glance of his works, what think ye of them ? May ye not say, as *Psal. cxi. 3.* *His work is honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endures for ever :* and when you notice his works, what think you of himself ?

(7.) What think ye of his gospel, and the terms of it ? That gospel, which we preach in his name, wherein *his righteousness is revealed from faith to faith :* if you think highly of him, you'll think highly of it, as the best news and gladdest tidings that ever you heard ; *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them, &c ?* Some are ready to think the gospel of grace, and salvation through Christ, is too good news to be true with respect to them, as if it were not to be supposed that God will bestow so great salvation so freely upon so great sinners ; not considering, that God in the gospel aims not at our glory chiefly, but at the declaration of his own glory, and the magnifying of his own free grace ; and that therefore we ought to take freely what he gives freely. It is a manifestation of free grace, sovereign grace, which is neither hindered by our evil, nor furthered by our good, *Rom. iii. 24.* and regards neither our worthiness to deserve it, nor our unworthiness to impede it, *Rom. ix. 15.* Hence, *Luther* alleged, that mens minds were so occupied with fantastical imaginations of their own works, that the glad tidings of the gospel will seem strange matters to them : men will be astonished at the
greatness

greatness of his grace, as it is, *Jer.* xxxiii. 8. 9. Many think of the gospel, as if it were a *new law*, wherein God stands upon some easier terms with us, than in the covenant of works; thus confounding law and gospel, and making a hotch-potch of both. Indeed if we speak of law-terms, upon which our salvation stands, they are no easier than ever they were: A perfect righteousness is the only condition of salvation; and we not having that in ourselves, the gospel offers it in Christ, and there is the ground of our eternal salvation: but if we speak of gospel-terms, we need not say, you must come up to them; but rather come down *Zaccheus*, *for this day is salvation come to thy house*: salvation is come to you and offered freely to you. *without money, and without price*; come down and take it. And indeed faith, which belongs to the order and method of God's applying the gospel, is a coming down from all our legal hopes of salvation for something to be done by us, in order to our being obliged to another, even to Christ for all, *Isa.* lv. 1, 2. *Rev.* xxii. 17. Come down from the sycomore-tree of your vain hopes, and get all freely; that is the gospel: What think ye of it? This is indeed a hard saying to proud flesh and blood, which thinks rather they should go up, and do more for their justification and salvation, than come down, and be obliged to another to pay all their law-debt completely. He will do all for you, or nothing: and, O man, what think ye of him, and his gospel? But then,

(8.) What think ye of his service, and his wages? When a man is once brought into the gospel-terms, and understands them, then, and not till then, does he come up to the gospel-rule; *for faith works by love, and love is the fulfilling of the law* as a rule, from thankfulness to him who hath delivered from the law as a covenant. If you think his service
hard

hard and uneasy, it seems you are not thinking much of Christ, but rather of the law, which is a heavy yoke, that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear : but *Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light*, Matth. xi. 29, 30. because in this service the man hath no law-debt to pay, for Christ hath done that to his hand, but only a love-debt. *If ye love me, keep my commandments ; and thus, His commandments are not grievous.* Here grace is all and all, both of the service and wages. Grace says, *Up and be doing, man, in thy strength ; for the greatest work is done to thy hand, and now my grace shall be sufficient for thee.* Grace says also, *Behold a crown of glory, a reward of grace awaiting you, after you have fought the good fight of faith ; therefore have an eye to this recompence of reward.* Death is the proper wages of sin, and it is a just debt ; but grace's wages is free : *The gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord ;* that is, there is here no promise of life upon our doing, but a promise of grace to do, and of glory to crown our doing, and of both grace and glory as the reward of Christ's doing all ; and therefore, What think ye of him and his service ?

(9.) What think ye of his livery ? If you would answer this question, *What think ye of Christ ?* I would ask, What wear ye of Christ ? The raiment of his righteousness and the garment of his grace, so as to be all glorious within and without, like the king's daughter, will be precious to you. If you be clothed with the scarlet robe of his blood and righteousness, by which you are perfectly righteous before God, then to be sure you'll think it very indecent for you to be clothed with nasty apparel before men. If a poor maid be married to a rich king, and yet go abroad like a beggar in filthy rags, would not every body cry, shame on her, that having such a husband, should discredit him and herself ?

self? If you be married to Christ, and think much of your husband and his righteousness, surely you'll think it becoming to wear his livery, and not go abroad with foul mouths and filthy hands, like the rest of the world, to the dishonour of your Lord.

(10.) What think ye of his love, and the reason of it? Who can understand the height, and depth, and length of his love? It is without all dimension. And why does he love any of the lost posterity of *Adam*? He tells us the reason, *Deut. vii. 7, 8. He loved you, because he loved you.* Do you think he loves you for your beauty, O black and ugly sinner? Nay, he urges his love and kindness upon you in the gospel freely, not for your own beauty's sake, but for his own name's sake: and his grace, love and good-will, as revealed in the gospel, is to be believed with application to yourself, for no other reason but because it is his will and pleasure. His love must make you beautiful, but cannot find you so. And if you cannot believe his grace and good-will to you, because you have no beauty, you're but rejecting the reason of his love, despising the freedom of his grace, and standing upon the terms of the old covenant of works, slighting the grace of the new covenant: this is such a natural disease to mankind, that even believers in Christ, when they are helped to perform duty with any lively frame, are ready to say with *Leah, Jacob's wife*, when she brought forth several children to him, *Now my husband will love me because of my fruitfulness*; so says the believer, when he is helped to bring forth fruit unto God, and finds his spirit revived in duty, his soul strengthened, his heart enlarged, and a great deal of comfort there, O now, says he, *my husband will love me, because of my fruitfulness*: but what comes of it? The person having such a legal set, the Lord, to correct it, takes away all his fruitfulness out of his

his view, in a manner, and leaves him barren? O, says the believer then, *where is my former sweet hearing, and sweet praying and praising, and sweet meditation?* Why, the Lord hath cut off these, that he may cut off your legal pride of being loved for your beauty and fruitfulness, and that you may *return to your first husband, for then was it better with you than now.* You must begin, believer, where you began at first, and think of his loving you meerly because he loves you. They that build their conjugal comfort only, or mainly, upon their righteousness of sanctification, and so secretly hanker after the law, will find their souls very unsettled, even up and down with their changeable frame. But again, I might ask, What think ye of his loveliness? O, is he *white and ruddy* in your view! O see how the spouse describes him, *Song v. 10.* and downward, in the beauty of his head, his locks, his eyes, and all and every part of him; his belly or bowels of mercy: his mouth is most sweet, says she. O the words, the smiles, the kisses of his mouth, his kind embraces! I have read of one *Agatho*, that was a man so holy, that with a kiss he cured one of the leprosy; whether that be true or false, yet what I intend by telling it, is true, That such is the virtue of Christ, that a kiss of his mouth, a smile of his countenance, will cure the soul of spiritual leprosy; yea, a word of his mouth will do it. *Now are you clean through the word that I have spoken,* John xv. 3. Again, What think you of his favour and his blessing? Surely if you esteem him duly, you will think *his favour is life, and his loving-kindness better than life, and that it is his blessing only that makes rich.* Especially, what think ye of these blessings and benefits that cannot be enjoyed by feeling, but by faith, nor by sight of sense, but by the sight of faith? *We walk by faith, and not by sight,* says the apostle. But

it is the fault even of believers, that they can hardly believe they have any more than they feel; and hence, when they are in the darkness of desertion, they think they have nothing, they have lost his favour because they do not feel it; they have lost his righteousness, because they do not feel it: but remember, that when *Asaph* said, *Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?* He added, *This was my infirmity.* You know, in a house, where it is dark, all things are there that were before, though you see them not; so it is with you, believer, though you be in darkness, yet all abides: do you think all is gone, because you cannot see it? Well, you never walk by faith, but by feeling; nay, *He that walks in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.* The name of the Lord still abides, his God remains, the object of faith continues as much as ever, and the *just shall live by faith.* Will you not believe the sun is in the firmament where it was, because a cloud hath come and intercepted the light of it's beams? *Why, says one, but my misery is, when I'm in the dark night, I fear it was all but delusion that I ever met with, and that there was nothing real or saving in it.* This I find is a common thought among serious souls; but all that I shall say to it, is by enlarging the former similitude: ask a man when it is dark night, How do you know that ever you saw the natural sun? It may be you was but dreaming, and deluding yourself; it was nothing but a strong imagination. Why, says the man, I am sure I saw it, because my eyes were dazzled with the light of it, and I was warmed with the heat of it, and I saw to work by it, and by the light of it I saw every thing about me. So may you say, believer; when a dark night of desertion or temptation comes on, the tempter suggests,

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It may be all was but a delusion. Why, man, were not your eyes enlightned, was not your heart warmed, did you not see to work, and went on in your work joyfully, *the joy of the Lord being your strength* ; and did you not you see every thing about you ? You saw God in his glory, you saw sin in it's vileness, you saw holiness in it's beauty, you saw the world in it's vanity, you saw the creature in it's emptiness, Christ in his fulness, you saw yourself in your loathsomeness ; but now, when the light is withdrawn, *What think ye of Christ ?* Is there no sun, because it is set, to your view ? Do you think it never shone upon you because it is not now shining ? What think ye of an absent Christ ? Do you think nothing of him, because he is absent ? Surely, believer, that is not thought like a believer. Sense is many times denied you, that you may learn to believe more than you do. *But, say you, when he is not present with me, I cannot believe :* I shall tell you my mind here, there is a *powerful* presence necessary to believing ; but there is a *sensible* presence, that is not necessary to it, but rather usually comes in immediately after faith. Now that powerful presence of God that is necessary to believing, does open up the object of faith, and draw out the soul to the embraces thereof. Hence, when a man begins to think upon the proper object of faith, namely, Christ's righteousness, God's promise, the truth of God, the blood of Christ ; power is sometimes insensibly exerted, not by any outward open violence upon the man, but by an inward, secret and sweet enchantment, as it were : ere ever he is aware, and before ever he knows that it is divine power that is doing the work, he finds the object of faith, that he is thinking upon, making room for itself in his heart, and drawing out his soul

soul, as it were, insensibly to it ; and thereupon comes in sensible presence after that, *Eph. i. 13. After ye believe, ye were sealed.*

Now, if you say you cannot believe without this powerful presence, that is true ; divine power must be exerted to every act of faith : but then this power does ordinarily put forth itself insensibly and unawares, while we are thinking on, or viewing the object of faith, *Psal. xxxix. 3. While I was musing, the fire burned.* The spirit of God clears the object of faith, that being viewed and applied, the heart is set on fire with it ; there is his powerful presence ushering in the sensible presence. But if you say, you cannot believe till you have his sensible presence ; that is to make sense the foundation of your faith, and not the word of God, or the Christ of God : therefore, in order to believe, let not your question be first, What find you in yourself ? but rather, *What think ye of Christ ?* You will find none of the sweet effects of faith, till you think on Christ the object of it. Again, What think ye of his invisible glories ? *Faith is the evidence of things not seen.* Faith sees not the things that are seen and felt ; sensible enjoyments, for example, are not the object of faith, but sense : but faith sees the things that can neither be seen nor felt ; it believes contrary to sense, yea, things incredible to human reason, considering only the power of God that speaks in the word, as you see in the faith of *Abraham*. The greatest glory of Christ is invisible and incredible to nature ; therefore we do not think much of him, if our faith does not terminate on things not seen. Again, What think ye of his tabernacles and ordinances ? Surely, if you think much of Christ, his tabernacles will be amiable to you. The slighter of his ordinances is a slighter of Christ, a slighter of prayer is a slighter of Christ, a slighter of the word is a slighter of Christ : *He that despises you,*
I de-

despises me, &c. Again, What think ye of his cause and interest, such as the much-forgotten reformation-work in *Scotland*, which our forefathers established by solemn national covenants? If, the more it is forgotten among ministers and people, the more nearly it lies to your heart, and the more you long for it's reviving, it were an evidence that you think something of Christ, when others think little of him. But, O, if the generation thought more of Christ, there would be more zeal for his interest, honour, and publick reformation-work! And perhaps the confusions of our day, the heavy bondage we are complaining of through the land, will never cease to grow to a height of terrible wrath, till we be brought to a sense of our defection, and a humble confession and reformation. Further, What think you of his cross, and of his crown? Is his cross your crown? Surely they think much of Christ, that can say with *Paul*, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.* *Moses* thought his cross better than a crown, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.* They that think much of Christ, must resolve upon it, that the world will not think much of them, but that they will be crossed, reproached, and nicknamed: but, if Christ was nicknamed for us, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, we may well bear a reproach for him, especially when he hath said, *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified;* and considering that his cross makes way for his crown, and in the mean time his sweetness swallows up all the bitterness thereof. What think ye of his friends and his foes? If you think highly of him, surely his friends and followers will be esteemed as the *excellent*

lent ones of the earth, and his foes will be disesteemed by you. What think ye of his enemies ? Though they were appearing in never so much worldly pomp, you'll think very little of them, if you know them to be his enemies. *O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; to their assembly, mine honour, be thou not united.* What think ye of his enemies within you ? When you find these like thorns in the flesh, like splinters run into the flesh, does it not make you, with *Paul, to beseech the Lord thrice*, yea, to pray thrice and thrice, and a hundred times thrice, with sighs and groans, to be freed from them ? What think ye of his enemies about you ? I mean, the world and the lusts thereof, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. I have read a pretty story, which I reckon useful no other way than for the *moral* of it, how an angel and an *hermit* should have been travelling together : when first they went by a dead carcase, the *hermit* stopt his nose, and the angel smiled ; and, after that they went by a wanton strumpet proudly dressed, at which the *hermit* smiled, and the angel stopt his nose. The moral shews us, that, in the sight of God and angels, *Man* no carrion is so noisome as pride is. But the more highly that any think of Christ, surely the more humble they are, and pride will accordingly be hid from their eyes. Again, What think ye of the world's thoughts of Christ ? If you think highly of him, you'll wonder why the world think so little of him. O strange, that all the world are not taken up with him ! What think ye of your own thoughts of him ? Surely, if you think duly of him, you'll think you have but very poor thoughts of him, you'll think you cannot think enough of him. These are some probatory questions, by which you may take your own heart to task before the Lord.

But I cannot stand to enlarge on these things ;

and I must own the thousandth part is not said that might be spoken from this text: for as the whole scripture does testify of Christ, either directly or indirectly, so I might go through all the scripture, and ask, what ye think of Christ, in a suitableness to what is said of him, in this or that place of scripture?

This doctrine might again be applied by way of lamentation over all Christ-despisers, who either stand upon a legal bottom, trusting in themselves, and their own righteousness, or who slight Christ and his ordinances, not loving the place where his honour dwells; who delay and postpone their closing with him, giving away the prime and virginity of their affections to the world, prostituting their precious souls to their lusts, and the ignoble things of time; who sit down satisfied and content without Christ, never miss him, nor feel a want of him, nor seek after union and communion with him. O whence is it, that you despise Christ at this rate! Alas, it is through ignorance and unbelief, that you see no form or comeliness in Christ, wherefore he should be desired; and the God of this world hath blinded your minds who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Do you consider what a miserable case you are in, while you despise and think so little of Christ? You are in imminent danger of temporal judgments; for God, in his holy providence, may resent the injuries done to his Son, he may leave your house desolate. You are exposed to spiritual judgments, such as that, *Isaiah vi. 10.* and to eternal wrath, even everlasting destruction from his presence; *He that believes not, shall be damned.*

Now, let me offer a word of exhortation. O seek the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge

knowledge of Christ may be sent; that beholding his glory, your thoughts concerning Christ may be changed; and you may be brought to esteem him, and to go home with the rose of *Sharon* in your bosom, Christ in your heart. O, will you tell me, do you think it worth your while to take Christ, and embrace him before you go? If you say, you cannot believe, you cannot repent, you cannot mourn for sin, you cannot pray, you cannot obey; and so because you have no grace, no strength to do any thing, you are discouraged: I must tell you, sinner, when you conceive religion to be some great difficulty above your power, and thereupon are discouraged and damped, you do not think of Christ as you ought, but of yourself, forsooth, as if you were the fountain from whence these good things should flow. The law may, and does discourage sinners; yea, curses every Christless sinner unto hell; but the gospel offers no discouragement to sinners, but all encouragement. Perhaps you'll find us that are ministers sometimes going off from our most gospel-texts that we can choose; and when we explain faith, we will tell you how many things it includes, such as the forsaking of all sin, and the performing of all duty, and studying universal holiness: but, whatever be the fruits of faith, which the Lord makes to grow out of his grace, yet faith itself is a great mystery; and whatever you hear us say, that leads you off from this question, *What think ye of Christ?* suspect it. I'll tell you in the Lord's name, that to believe, imports no more than to take Christ for all; it is to think you have nothing, and can do nothing, but that he hath all, and can do all, and therefore you'll take him for all. You think you cannot believe: well said, but what think ye of Christ? If you think to bring faith out of your own bowels, you think unworthily of Christ, who

is the author of faith, and of his Father, who is the giver of it. You think you cannot repent : true, but what think ye of Christ ? If you think to bring repentance out of yourselves, you think unworthily of him *who is exalted, by the right hand of God, to give repentance.* You think you cannot do this, or that duty you are called to ; but what think ye of Christ ? If you sit poring on yourself, and your own abilities, never a good turn will you do : nay, you think unworthily of Christ who hath said, *Without me ye can do nothing,* but by me strengthening you, ye can do all things. You are discouraged, because you think you have not this thing in yourself, or that thing in yourself ; but that is unbelief, man ; for faith lies in thinking, what am I in Christ, *Isaiah xlv.24. Surely shall one say* (and they shall not only say it with their mouth verbally, but think it in their heart believingly) *in the Lord have I righteousness and strength :* and because, by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is confirmed, there are three *In the Lords,* in that one chapter, *ver. 17. Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation ;* *ver. last. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory ;* and in this 24th *ver. In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* And if you be once brought to this believing thought ; *in the Lord have I righteousness, in the Lord have I strength,* in the Lord I have salvation, in the Lord I have all, then you'll find your work easy, and all going right. Now, you that cannot be brought to think much of Christ, *O pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you ;* and whereas you think nothing of him now, *O* consider what you will think of him in a day of challenges, when conscience awakens ; in a day of desolation, *Isaiah x.* in the day of death, in the day of judgment. What will you think of him, when you see him mounting the tribunal, and when pro-

pronouncing the fearful sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed?* Surely you must have dreadful thoughts of him then, if you cannot be brought to think highly of him now; now, when he is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save. But you, believer, that now think highly of him, whatever great thoughts you have of Christ now, yet what will ye think of him in that day, when he who is your life shall appear, and ye shall appear with him in glory? O, what will ye think of him, when he pronounces the sentence of absolution, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you?* O, what will ye think of his palace, his attendants, his throne, crown and glory?

I would offer an advice to you that think much of Christ, and have a high esteem of him. *First*, That you would evidence your esteem of him; and that, *First*, By the *degrees* of it, so as to esteem him above all things else, above all your relations, *Mat. x. 37. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.* Our love to them must be hated, when it comes to compete with Christ. *If any man come after me, and hate not father and mother, he is not worthy of me.* Above all worldly advantages, yea, above life, *Rev. xxi. 11. They loved not their lives to the death*: their pangs of love were stronger than the pangs of death. *Secondly*, By the *effects* of it, such as, (1.) Desire of converse: if you think much of Christ, you'll desire his company in all ordinances; you'll seek him in the temple, &c. (2.) Entertaining no rival, but saying, *What have I to do any more with idols?* Giving up all other lovers. (3.) Sympathy, grieving at those things that are grievous to him. (4.) Preserving his memory, living upon him: like the woman that drank the powder of her dead husband's body, mingled with her daily drink; so should ye by faith, daily eat the flesh,

flesh, and drink the blood of the son of God. A *Second* advice is, That you would do all that you can, to make others think as much of him as you do ; and that, (1.) By commending him, and telling others of his beauty, that they may admire him. See the practice of the spouse for this, *Song* v. and what influence it had upon the daughters of *Jerusalem*, their beginning to think much of him, and seek after him also, *Song* vi. 1. O then commend him to your families, your children, and your neighbours. (2.) By adorning his gospel, and walking worthy of him, and wearing his livery. It is a master's honour and credit to have a good servant, and well arrayed ; they think much of the master that hath such a servant : and how does it proclaim the praises of Christ, when they that profess him are eminent for piety ? 1. *Pet.* ii. 9. In a word, *Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify God*, and think much of Christ. O let your hearts be still thinking of him, your life praising, and your tongue speaking of him. Here is a fountain for spiritual discourse : if you have opportunity of conversing with any concerning the great solemnity you have been witnesses to here ; or if any ask you, Where was such and such a minister's text ? here is a fair occasion for spiritual converse ; for you cannot in a manner tell them this text, without asking them a question, *What think ye of Christ ?*

Christ in the Believer's Arms :

I N

A SERMON preached at *Strathmiglo*, May 10. 1724.

By the Revd. Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

LUKE ii. 28.

Then took he him up in his Arms, and blessed God.

I N the preceeding context, from verse 25. and downward, we have the following particulars recorded concerning *Simeon*, of whom my text speaks. *First*, We have an account of his character, ver. 25. *He was a just and devout man*, that is, one that made conscience of the duties of the *first* and *second* table of the law, just towards man, and devout towards God. *Note*, That there are no barren branches in Christ the true vine: *they that have believed in him, will be careful to maintain good works, and will have a respect to all his commandments.* Another part of *Simeon's* character is, That he waited for the consolation of Israel; that is, for Christ the promised Messiah, who is, has been, and will be the matter and ground of consolation to all believers, in all ages and periods of time; *And blessed are all they that wait for him, for they shall not be confounded.* Another part of his character is, *That the Holy Ghost was upon him*; and that both as a spirit of prophecy, and a spirit

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spirit of holiness. It is the privilege of all true believers, *That they have the spirit of glory and of God resting upon them,* 1 Pet. iv. 14. Secondly, We have here a promise made to *Simeon*, ver. 26. *And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* In this promise, *Simeon* saw him by the eye of faith, before he saw him by the eye of his body. Note, That faith's views of Christ in the promise, makes way for the sensible manifestations of him here, and the immediate enjoyment of him hereafter, *Eph. i. 13. After that ye believed, ye were sealed.* Thirdly, We have the time *when*, and the place where *Simeon* had this promise actually accomplished unto him, ver. 27. it was in the temple, when the parents brought the child *Jesus*, to do unto him after the custom of the law. Note, *They who would have a meeting with Christ, must wait upon him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment ; for it is there that every one doth speak of his glory.* Fourthly, In the words of my text, we have *Simeon's* welcome and kindly reception he gave to the *Messiah*, when he met him in the temple, *Then he took him up in his arms, and blessed God.*

Where notice, *First*, *Simeon's* privilege, *He took him up in his arms*, viz. in the arms of his body ; but at the same time, he embraced him also in the arms of faith, and took him up as the salvation of God ; otherwise he could never have blessed God for him as the promised *Messiah*, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. I am ready to believe, that there were many who got Christ in their arms, when he was an infant, who never had him formed in their hearts ; but *Simeon* got him, both in the arms of his body and soul at once. Some may be ready to think, O what a happy man was *Simeon*, and what a sweet arms-full had he, when he had the Great *Messiah*, *Immanuel*, God-Man, in his

dily arms ! 'Tis true indeed, this was a privilege ; but yet his greatest privilege was, That he had him clasped in his arms of faith ; and though now his body be out of our reach, yet still there is access to embrace him in a way of believing : and this is what every true believer hath the experience of, either in less or more. *Secondly*, In the words, we have *Simeon's* gratitude for this privilege : *he blessed God*. He is in a praising frame, being *filled with joy and peace in believing* ; and his heart is so big with praise, that he wishes immediately to be gone to the land of praise, where he might get a well-tun'd harp put into his hand, and join with the *hallelujahs* of the redeemed above ; *Now*, says he, *lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*. So much for explication of the words.

Before I proceed to the doctrine I intend to insist upon, We may observe, from the *text* and *context*, *First*, That God's word of promise to his people is *sure*, and never fails of accomplishment. *Simeon* here had got a promise from the Lord, *That he should not die, until he had seen the Lord's Christ* ; and accordingly my text gives an account of it's accomplishment. O sirs, venture on God's *word of promise*, and look on it as the best security, *for faithful is he that has promised* ; his naked word is as good as payment ; he never broke his word to man ; yea, it is impossible for him to lie. *Secondly*, That believers will find God not only as good, but better than his word, when he comes in his own time, to make out his promise to them. *Simeon* had a promise, that he should only see the *Messiah* before he died ; but we find that he gets more than a bare sight of him, for he gets him in his arms and heart at once. *Thirdly*, That a true believer loves Christ so well, that he would put him in his very heart. *Simeon* here takes Christ in his arms, and lays him
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in his bosom, as near his heart as he could bring him ; so the spouse, *Song i. 13. My beloved is to me as a bundle of myrrhe, he shall lie all night between my breasts.* O ! the mutual endearments betwixt Christ and believers ; he carries them as lambs in his bosom, and they carry the lamb of God in their bosom, *Isaiah xl. 11.* Fourthly, That faith's embraces of Christ are so sweet, that they render the prospect of death not only easy, but desireable to the believer. *Simeon* here, when he gets Christ in his arms, is content that the union betwixt the soul and body should be dissolved. But passing all these, the doctrine I design to speak to at this time, is this :

DOCTRINE. That *faith's embraces of Christ fills the mouth with praise.* *Simeon* took him in his arms, and blessed God, whereas I told you, it was the arm of faith clasped about Christ, that did fill him with praise and gratitude, taking him up as the Lord's *Messiah*.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, I. Speak a little concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ. II. Notice some of these songs of praise, which readily fills the believer's heart and mouth, when he gets Christ in his arms. III. Whence is it, that faith's embraces of Christ do thus fill the heart and mouth with praise. IV. Apply the whole.

As to the *First*, viz. Concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ, I would shew, (1.) what it is. (2.) What sort of an arm it is. (3.) How it embraces Christ.

For the *first*, I have not time, at present, to open up the nature of faith at any length ; all I shall do, is only in a few particulars to shew what it supposes and implies. 1st, Then it plainly supposes, that there is a gift or grant of Christ made to sinners, in the free offer and call of the gospel. Receiving necessarily supposes

poses a giving ; and to take what is not given, is but theft, robbery, or vitious intromission, *John vi. 32.* Saith Christ there to a promiscuous multitude, the greatest part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from the sequel of the chapter, *My Father giveth you the true bread which is from heaven ;* where 'tis plain, that giving and offering are much the same thing, with this difference only, that the gift or grant of Christ in the word to sinners, is the ground upon which the offer is made. We read, that God *hath given the earth to the sons of men ;* that is, he made a grant of it unto them, to be used and possessed by them ; and, by virtue of this grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, when a man came to a piece of land, and set his foot upon it, he might warrantably use it as his own property and possession ; and the foundation of this was, that God had given or granted the earth to the sons of men. In like manner, God hath gifted or granted his only-begotten son, *John iii. 16.* For what end ? *That whosoever believeth in him, or takes possession of him by faith, may not perish, but have everlasting life.* 'Tis true indeed, the eternal destination, the purchase and application of redemption, is *peculiar* only to the *elect* ; but the *revelation, gift and offer* is common to all the hearers of the gospel, insomuch, as the great Mr. *Rutherford* expresses it, the *reprobate* have as fair a *revealed warrant* to believe, as the *elect* have. Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door who lives within the compass of the joyful sound ; and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name : so that none have reason to say, the call and offer is not to me, I am not warranted to embrace Christ ; *for it is to you, O men, that we call, and our voice is to the sons of men, Prov. viii. 4.* We have God's commission to preach this gospel, and to make offer of this
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Christ to every creature sprung of Adam, Mark xvi. 15. and the event of the publication of *this gospel* among sinners follows in the next words, *He that believeth this gospel, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned.* No man ever died, or shall die under the drop of the gospel, for want of a full warrant to embrace a saviour. No, no, sirs, your death and blood will be upon your own heads; your unbelief will be the great ground of your condemnation: God will upbraid you at the great day with this, that you had Christ in your offer, and would not embrace him; *I called, but ye refused; I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded; therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh,* Prov. i. 24, 26. 2dly, This embracing of Christ supposes *the knowledge of Christ*; for a man, when he believes, doth not embrace a blind bargain. Now, there is a *twofold knowledge* that faith necessarily supposes, viz. a knowledge of ourselves, and a knowledge of Christ. (1.) I say, it supposes the knowledge of ourselves, or a conviction and discovery of that sin and misery, thralldom and bondage, we are reduced unto, by the breach of the first covenant. *The law must be our school-master to bring us to Christ*; without a discovery of sin and misery by the law, in less or more, the sinner will never flee to him, *who is the end of the law for righteousness.* The man, in this case, is just like a mariner at sea, sailing upon a broken and shattered bottom, not far from a great rock; so long as he apprehends his vessel to be good enough, or sufficient to carry him to land, he will still cleave to it, refusing to throw himself upon the rock for safety; but when the wind and waves beat upon the ship, and break her in pieces, then, and never till then, will he cast himself upon the rock: so is it here; while the sinner apprehends he can do well enough upon the broken

ken bottom of a covenant of works, his own doings, and good meanings, he will never betake himself to Christ the rock of ages ; but when a *hail-storm sweeps down the refuge of lies*, and lets him see, that if he stay on this bottom of the law, he must inevitably sink into the bottom of hell ; then, and never till then, doth the man cry with the jailor, *Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved ?* The same we see in Paul, Rom. vii. 9. *I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* And Gal. ii. 19. *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* Thus I say, embracing of Christ necessarily supposeth the knowledge and conviction of our lost condition by the law or covenant of works. (2.) It supposeth or implieth a knowledge of Christ, as the blessed remedy of God's providing ; and there is so much of this goes into the very nature of faith, that we find it frequently called by the name of knowledge, *Isaiah liii. 10.* *John xvii. 3.* and this knowledge of Christ is not a bare *speculative knowledge* of him, attained by external revelation, or common illumination, for there are many learned unbelievers ; but it is an internal saving knowledge of him, which comes by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, accompanying the external discoveries of him in the gospel, which goes into the nature of true faith ; *God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, must shine into the heart, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,* 2 Cor. iv. 6. He, as it were, strikes out a window in the man's breast, which before was like a dungeon of hellish darkness, and makes a beam of saving, humbling, and captivating light to shine into it ; and thus the man is *changed from darkness into a marvellous light* : and this light is called, *The light of life*, because with it, and by it, a new principle of life is implanted

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in the soul, *Eph. ii. 1. You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* (3.) This embracing of Christ bears in it the soul's firm and steady assent unto the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ ; so that the man cannot but join issue with *Paul, 1. Tim. i. 15. It is a faithful saying, that Christ came to save sinners.* Now, this assent of the soul to the gospel-revelation, is not a bare historical assent, which leans only to the testimony of man, for thus reprobates may and do believe ; but it is such an assent, as is bottomed upon the testimony of God, or his record, concerning Christ in the gospel ; hence it is called, *A believing the record of God, a setting to the seal that God is true.* Faith that is of a saving nature, will not venture upon any thing less than the credit and authority of God himself ; THUS SAITH THE LORD, is the ground and reason of the soul's assent : and this is a firmer bottom than heaven and earth, *For the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever ; faithfulness being the girdle of his loins, and truth the girdle of his reins ;* so that he will as soon cease to be God, as cease to make good *his word*, which is ratified by *his oath ; these being the two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie.* (4.) Hereupon follows the *receiving, embracing, or applying* act of faith. Christ being known in the light of the word and spirit, and the truth of the revelation concerning him assented to ; the soul goes a degree further ; and, as it were, takes him home into it's arms and bosom, as a remedy every way suited unto the soul's malady and misery. This embracing and appropriating act of faith is just as it were the soul's eccho unto the call and offer of the gospel. I offer him for thy *saviour*, faith God ; and I embrace him as *my saviour*, faith faith : I offer him for *wisdom*, to thee who art a fool, says God ; and I embrace him

him for *my wisdom*, says *faith* : I offer him for thy *righteousness and justification*, who art a condemned sinner, says *God* ; and I embrace him as the *Lord my righteousness*, says *faith* : I offer him for thy *sanctification*, who art a polluted filthy sinner, says *God* ; and I embrace him for *my sanctification*, says *faith* : I offer him for thy *redemption*, who art a lawful captive, says *God* ; and I embrace him for *my redemption*, and my *all*, says *faith*. Thus, I say, the soul echoes to the voice of God in the gospel, when it believes, much like that, *Zech. xiii.* and last, *I will say, it is my people ; and they shall say, the Lord he is our God :* and this is what we call the *assurance of faith*, or an *appropriating persuasion*, whereby the soul, as it were, takes *seizin and insoefment* upon Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase as it's own, upon the *ground of the gospel offer and promise*. What lay before in common to all in the offer, the soul brings home to itself in particular ; and, just like *Simeon*, takes Christ in its arms and bosom, saying with *Thomas*, *my Lord, and my God*. I do not say, that the first language of faith is, *That Christ died for me, or I was elected from eternity*, no, but the language of faith is, God offers a slain and crucified saviour to me, and I take the slain Christ for my saviour ; and in my taking or embracing of him, as offered, I have ground to conclude, that I was elected, and that he died for me in particular, and not before. I shall only add, that this appropriating act doth inseparably attend the *knowledge and assent* before-mentioned ; and that they are all jointly comprized in the general nature of saving faith ; which I take up as an act of the whole soul, without restricting it to any one faculty, or distinction, as to priority or posterity of time.

Now this saving faith which I have been describing in it's essential acts, is variously expressed in the

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sacred oracles of the Scripture of truth ; from which fountain alone, our notions of it are to be drawn : To the law and testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no truth in them, Isa. viii. 20. 1st, Then it is called a receiving of Christ, John i. 12. To as many as received him, &c. Col. ii. 6. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. This expression of faith leads us to conceive of Christ, under the notion of a gift freely offered and presented to us in the gospel, and bears an appropriation in the very nature of it ; for, where a man receives a gift, he takes it as his own, and it becomes his in possession. 2dly, It is sometimes expressed by a resting or rolling ourselves on the Lord, Psalm xxxvii. 5. Commit thy way, or as it reads in the margin, Roll thy way on the Lord ; and ver. 7. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Which expression may either allude unto a poor weary man, who is like to sink under a load, his legs not able to bear him ; he leans or rests himself upon a strong rock, which he is confident will not sink underneath. Faith, in it's justifying act, it is not a working, but a resting grace ; O ! says the poor soul, I am like to sink into the depths of hell, under the weight of mine iniquities, which have gone over my head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear :- but I lay my help where God has laid it ; O ! this is my rest. Hence he that believes is said to enter into his rest. Or this resting of the soul on Christ, may allude to one's resting upon a bond, or good security granted to him by a sponsable person : he takes it as security to himself, and rests on the fidelity of him that grants it : so, in believing, we rest upon the veracity of a promising God in Christ, as a sufficient security for the blessing promised. 3dly, 'Tis called a flying for refuge to the hope set before us, Heb. vi. 18. In which, there is an allusion to the man-slayer under

der the law, who fled from the avenger of blood : the poor pursued man, he was not to turn aside to any of the cities of *Israel* ; he was not to fly to the temple, and to offer sacrifice ; but he was to fly streight to the city of refuge. So in believing, the soul is never to rest in any thing on this side of Christ, *who is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest* ; the hail shall sweep away every other refuge : but as the man-slayer, when once within the gates of the city of refuge, was in such safety, that he could freely speak with the avenger of blood, without any manner of danger ; so the soul that is by faith got under the covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ, is in such absolute safety, that it dare speak to the law, and all it's pursuers, saying with the apostle, *Rom. viii. 35. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? it is Christ that died, &c.* 4thly, It is called, *A submitting to the righteousness of God*, *Rom. x. 3.* A very strange expression ! Shall it be thought submission for a condemned criminal to accept of pardon from his prince ? or for a person that is stark-naked, to accept of a garment ? The expression plainly points out the arrogant pride of the heart of man ; we are, as it were, mounted upon an imaginary throne of our own righteousness by the law, thinking with *Laodicea*, that we are rich, and stand in need of nothing, disdaining to be obliged to another for righteousness : but now, when a man believes, all these towering imaginations are levelled, he is emptied of himself, and made to count all things but loss and dung, that he may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness that is of God by faith, *Phil. iii. 8, 9.* The language of the soul submitting to the righteousness of God, is that of the church, *Isaiah xlv. 2. 4. Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I*

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righteousness and strength. 5thly, 'Tis called, *a taking hold of God's covenant*, Isaiah lvi. 4. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is like a rope cast into a company of drowning men ; God comes by his ministers, crying to sinking sinners, who are going down to the bottomless gulf of his wrath, *Take hold of my covenant*, and of him whom I have given for a covenant to the people, and I will deliver you from going down to the pit. Now, when a man believes, he, as it were, takes hold of this rope of salvation, this covenant of grace and promise ; and like *Jeremiah*, when the cords were let down to the pit by *Ebedmelech*, puts them under his arm-holes, and lays his weight upon them. The poor soul, in this case, says with *David*, speaking of the covenant of grace, *This is all my salvation* ; here will I lay the weight of my sinking and perishing soul. 6thly, 'Tis called, *A yielding ourselves to the Lord*, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. *Hezekiah*, writing to the degenerate tribes, exhorts them to *yield themselves to the Lord* ; or, as it is in the *Hebrew*, *give the hand to the Lord* ; alluding to men who have been at a variance, when they come to an agreement, they strike hands one with another, in token of *friendship*. The great God, the offended majesty of heaven, comes in a gospel-dispensation, stretching out his hand all the day long to rebellious sinners, crying, *Behold me, behold me* ; cast away your rebellious arms, and be at peace with me. Now, when a sinner believes, he, as it were, strikes hands with the Lord, according to that, *Isa.* xxvii. 5. *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.* 7thly, 'Tis called, *An opening of the heart to Christ*, Cant. v. 2. Rev. iii. 20. Acts xvi. 14. This expression imports, that as the sinner's heart is by nature shut and bolted against the Lord ; so when he believes

lieves, *the everlasting doors of the understanding, will, and affections, are lifted up to the Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle*, Psal. xxiv. 8thly, 'Tis sometimes called, *A buying*, Isa. lv. 1. *Buy wine and milk without money and without price.* Rev. iii. 18. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, &c.* This buying does not import such a commutation, as if we were to give to God an equivalent for his grace ; for 'tis a buying without money, and without price ; 'tis a giving of poverty for riches, emptiness for fulness, deformity for beauty, guilt for righteousness, pollution for holiness, bondage for liberty ; in a word, buying in Christ's market is nothing else but taking, Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely.*

Many other expressions the spirit of God makes use of in the word, to hold out the nature of faith ; sometimes 'tis called, *The substance of things hoped for*, Heb. xi. 1. because faith, as it were, doth realize and substantiate the promise : just like a man looking to bonds, charters, or any other securities ; he will say, *There is my substance, and all my stock, tho' they be but bits of paper : so the believer, when looking on Christ's righteousness and fulness, as held forth in the free promise of the gospel, will be ready to say, There is my substance, and everlasting all ; with David, he rejoiceth in God's word of promise, as one that findeth great spoil ; yea, it is better to him than gold, yea, than much fine gold.* Again, 'tis called in the same verse, *The evidence of things not seen* : the word in the original rendered *evidence*, signifies to convince to a demonstration. Faith, acting upon the promise, convinceth the soul of the reality of things invisible, as if they were before him, and he saw them with his bodily eyes : and this sight of faith is not such a sight as Balaam got of Christ, when he said, *I shall see him, but not*

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now ; *I shall behold him, but not nigh* ; he saw him by the spirit of prophecy, as the redeemer of *Israel*, but not by the spirit of faith, as *his redeemer*, as *Job* xix. 20. *Balaam* saw him without any personal interest ; but *Job* saw him as his own redeemer, with appropriation ; *I know*, saith he, *that MY REDEEMER liveth*. Again, in the 13th verse of the same chapter, faith is called, *An embracing of the promises*, Heb. xi. 13. The word in the original signifies a kindly salutation or kissing ; being an allusion to two dear friends, who, when they meet, clasp one another in their arms, in a most loving and affectionate manner. The grace of the promise embraces the soul, and then the soul embraces the promise, and hugs it, and Christ in it, in his arms. The reverse of this is the case of the presumptuous hypocrite, who, in some sort, embraces the promise indeed ; but the special grace of the promise not having embraced him, he is like a man taking a tree in his arms, he embraces the tree, but not the tree him.

Again, Faith is sometimes called, *An eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the son of man*, John vi. 53. because faith makes use of, and applies Christ for the life, nourishment and sustentation of the soul ; just as a man makes use of the meat and drink that is set before him for his bodily nourishment. Let a man have never such a rich feast before him, yet he will inevitably starve, unless he apply it, and make use of it : so without faith's application of Christ, and his fulness, we inevitably die and perish ; and O ! how sad to perish in the midst of plenty ? *Lustly*, Faith is called, *A trusting in the name of the Lord*, *Isaiah* l. 10. *Isaiah* xxvi. 3. We all know what it is to trust in a man of honesty and integrity ; when he passes his word, we make no doubt, and have no hesitation concerning his performing what he hath promised : so faith takes the promise, and trusts the

the veracity of the promiser; as 'tis said of *Abraham*, Rom. iv. 20. *He staggered not at the promise of God, thro' unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God.* The perfections of God, such as his *power, holiness, goodness*, but especially *his veracity*, are pawned in the promise, as *grounds of trust*. Hence we are to trust in his NAME, and when we trust in him, and stay ourselves upon him, we are still to take him up as *our God in Christ*, for we can never trust him, while we take him as *an enemy*.

The *second* thing proposed for opening up the first general head in the method, was to give you some of the qualities of this arm of faith. *First*, 'Tis *leaning, and a staying arm*, Cant. viii. 5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* Isaiah xxvi. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee.* It is the office of faith to underprop the soul, when 'tis ready to be overwhelmed with the burden of sin and sorrow, darkness and desertion, Psal. xxvii. 13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* It leans and stays itself on him who is *the strength of Israel*, even the *man of God's right-hand*, whom he hath made strong for himself; and thus it bears up the soul under the heaviest pressures. *Secondly*, 'Tis *a winning and a gaining arm*. The apostle, Phil. iii. 8. speaks of *winning Christ, and being found in him*; and 'tis said of the wise merchant, *That he went and sold all, that he might buy or win the pearl of great price*; and this pearl can be won no otherwise, but by receiving it, John i. 12. Yea, faith is such a *winning grace*, that it is ever taking, ever receiving out of Christ's fulness, *grace for grace*; it digs into the rock of ages, and makes up the poor soul with unsearchable riches; it maintains a traffick with heaven, travels to *the land afar off*, and returns richly freighted, and loaded

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loaded with the commodities of that *better country*. *Thirdly*, It is a very *wide* and *capacious* arm. It is not little that will fill the arm of faith ; the whole world, and all the fulness thereof, cannot fill the arm of faith : no, no, it flings them away like dung, that it may get its arm filled with a God in Christ ; *I count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord*, Phil. iii. 8. Yea, I may add, that heaven, and all the glories of *Immanuel's land*, bear no bulk in the arm of faith, without *Christ*, in whom the *fulness of the Godhead dwells*. Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee*. *Fourthly*, 'Tis a *most tenacious* arm ; its motto may be, GRIP FAST : as the arm of faith is wide, and *takes in much*, so it keeps, and *grips fast* what it gets, *Cant. iii. 4. I held him*, says the spouse, *and would not let him go*. Faith is such a tenacious grace, that it will wrestle with an omnipotent God, and refuse to yield to him, when he seems to shake himself loose of it's grips, as we see in the case of *Jacob*, Gen. xxxii. 24. and downward ; there *Jacob* gets a grip by faith of *the angel of the covenant* : the *angel* says unto him, *Let me go*, *Jacob* ; a very strange word for the *Creator* to become a suppliant to *his own creature* : well, what says *Jacob's* faith to this proposal ? *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me* : as if he had said, let the day break, and let it pass on ; let the night come, and let the day break again ; 'tis all one : lean *Jacob* and the living God shall not part without the blessing. To this purpose is that of the *Prophet*, Hosea xii. 3. 4. *By his strength*, viz. by the strength of faith in prayer, *he had power with God* ; yea, *he had power over the angel, and prevailed* ; *he wept and made supplication unto him*. O, sirs ! try to follow the example of *Jacob*, and you shall be fed with the heritage of *Jacob your father*, Isaiah lviii. 14.

Thus,

Thus, I say, faith is a most *gripping* and *tenacious* arm ; the first grip that faith takes of Christ is so fast, that it never quits grip of him again through eternity ; it unites the soul to Christ, and the union is so close and intimate through faith, that the man becomes *one body and one spirit with him*, and so indissoluble, as that *neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to make a separation*. *Fifthly*, Hence it follows, that faith is a very bold and confident arm, it hath a great deal of ASSURANCE in it, for it will maintain its claim to Christ upon the ground of *the new covenant*, even when hell and earth, sense and reason, and all seem to be against it ; it will *trust in the name of the Lord, and stay itself upon its God and covenant*, even when the poor soul *walks in the darkness* of desertion, in the darkness of temptation, in the darkness of affliction, yea, in the dark valley of the shadow of death. *Abraham's* faith had much opposition to grapple with, when he got the promise of *Isaac*, and in him of the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed ; yet, such was the *confidence and assurance* of his faith, that *he staggered not at the promise*. The language of faith is, *When I fall, I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me ; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness*, Mic. vii. 8. 9. Yet I would not be here mistaken, as if the poor believer did not apprehend Christ and the promise, with a tottering and trembling hand ; nay, the believer, through the prevalency of unbelief, is many times brought so low, as to cry with the Psalmist, *Is his mercy clean gone ? Hath he forgotten to be gracious ? Fails his promise for evermore ?* Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. But let it be remembred, that this was not his faith, but his infirmity, through prevailing unbelief, which made him thus to stagger ; for let faith but get rid of unbelief,

belief, let it get up its head, and allow it to speak its proper language, its dialect will be, ABBA FATHER, *Rom. viii. 15. and, doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not ; Thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer, thy name is from everlasting. Sixthly, 'Tis a very patient and waiting arm ; for he that believeth, doth not make haste, Isa. xxviii. 16. Faith, although it firmly believes the accomplishment of the promise, yet it will not limit the holy one of Israel, as to the time of its accomplishment ; I will wait for the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, I will look for him, Isa. viii. 17. The vision is for an appointed time ; and therefore, says faith, tho' it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry, Hab. ii. 3. Faith will not draw rash or desperate conclusions, because the Lord hides or defers his visits ; no, but it looks to God's word of promise, and grounds its confidence there, saying with the church, I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me, Hos. vii. 7. Seventhly, Faith is a feeding arm, it feeds upon the carcase of the lion of the tribe of Judah ; and thus, like Sampson, gets its meat out of the eater, and sweet out of the strong. Hence, as you have heard, 'tis called, *An eating of the flesh, and a drinking of the blood of Christ ;* and, in this view, Christ is presented to us in the sacrament of his supper, *Take, eat, this is my body.* There was a part of the sacrifices under the law reserved for food to the priests, when the rest was burnt upon the altar ; believers are spiritual priests unto God, and they live upon the altar, and that blessed passover that was sacrificed for us. Eighthly, It is not an idle, but a working arm. Indeed, in its justifying act, it is not a working, but only a taking, or a resting arm ; 'tis like the beggar's hand, that takes the alms, without working a stroke for it. In justification, faith is*

a *passive*, or recipient kind of an *instrument* ; but in *sanctification* it is an *active* or *efficient* kind of an *instrument* ; 'tis such an active arm in sanctification, that it purifies the heart, and actuates and animates all the other graces of the spirit ; it works by love, it works by repentance, it works by hope, it works by patience, it works by obedience ; and faith without works is dead, as the body is dead without the spirit : in a word, the whole of gospel-obedience is the obedience of faith ; and the obedience that flows not from faith, is but dead works, which cannot be acceptable to a living God. *Ninthly*, Faith is a *fighting and warlike arm*, Heb. xi. 35. 'Tis said of the worthies there, That they, by faith, *waxed valiant in fight* : Yea, 'tis not only a fighting, but a victorious arm ; for it puts *to flight the armies of the aliens*. 'Tis by faith leaning on the arm of omnipotency, that the believer's *bow abides in its strength*, and the arms of his hands become strong, to break bows of steel in pieces. By faith we quench the fiery darts of hell, and trample upon the powers of darkness ; by faith we overcome the world, and set the moon under our feet : yea, this gallant grace of faith, it will take up the spoils of Christ's victory over sin and satan, hell and death, and triumph in his triumphs, even while it is in the field of battle, and seemingly overcome by the enemy. *Thanks be to God, that causeth us always to triumph in Christ*. My head, and general, faith faith, has overcome, and I have already overcome in him ; for we are more than conquerors through him that loved us, Rom. viii. 37. *Lastly*, Faith is a *saving arm*, *He that believeth, shall be saved* ; there is an inseparable connexion established, by the ordination of heaven, between faith and salvation, John iii. 16. *Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life*. Although indeed there is no connexion of *causality*, yet there is an

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undoubted connexion of *order*. Faith cannot but carry salvation along with it, seeing it takes up Christ the salvation of God in its arms, as you see *Simeon* did.

The *third* thing proposed here, was, To enquire how this arm of faith doth embrace Christ. In general, I answer, it embraces him just as God offers him in the gospel. There is a manifest proportion betwixt God's offer, and faith's reception of Christ; which I shall illustrate in the *four* particulars following. 1st, Christ is *freely* offered in the gospel, *Isa.* lv. 1. *Rev.* xxii. 17. So faith embraces him as the *free gift* of God. There is a natural propensity — in the heart of man, to give something or other of our own, by way of exchange or equivalent for Christ, and the blessings of his purchase. Proud nature cannot think of being so much beholden to God, as to take Christ and salvation from him for nothing at all; and therefore it would always be bringing in this or the other qualification, as a price in its hand to fit it for Christ: I must be so penitent, so humble, so clean and holy, before I come to Christ; and then I will be welcome, he will pardon me and save. But, sirs, whatever you may think of it, this is but a tang of the old covenant of works, and all one as if a man should say, I must first heal myself before I go to the physician; I will first wash myself clean before I go to the fountain opened up for sin, and for uncleanness. Beware of this, for 'tis a secret subverting of the order and method God hath established in the covenant of grace, this being the very money and price, which he forbids us to bring to the market of free-grace. Faith argues at another rate, in its embracing of Christ; — O! says the poor soul, I am a diseased sinner, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head; and this qualifies me for the physician of souls: I am a pol-

luted sinner, black like the *Ethiopian*, spotted like the leopard ; and therefore I will go to the fountain : I am naked, and therefore I will take the white raiment offered me, to cover the shame of my nakedness : I am blind, and therefore I will take the eye-salve, which recovers sight to the blind. Thus I say, faith embraces Christ, as he is freely offered. 2^{dly}, Christ is *fully and wholly* offered in the gospel ; and accordingly faith embraces him *wholly*, without dividing him. I own indeed, that the first sight of faith is to Christ as a *saviour*, Christ as a *Priest*, fulfilling the law, satisfying justice, and thereby bringing in everlasting righteousness ; this being the only thing that can answer the present strait and necessity of the soul, under the awful apprehensions of vindictive justice and wrath ; and therefore, thither it flees for refuge, in the first act of believing. But now, although faith, *at first*, fixes upon Christ as a *Priest*, yet at the same time, it embraces him as a *Prophet*, submitting unto his instruction, and subjects it self unto him as a *King*, receiving the law from his mouth : O ! says the soul, *I am more brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of a man*, but this Saviour *has pity on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way* : he opens the book and looses the seven seals thereof, and therefore I will sit down at his feet, and receive the whole revelation of the mind and will of God from him : I am a poor captive and vassal of hell ; *Other Lords have had dominion over me, but now I will make mention of his name* : he is my judge, my king and my law-giver, even he that saves me. Thus, I say the arm of faith embraces a whole Christ. There is nothing of Christ, says the soul that I can want ; I must have him all, and have him all as mine own, as my prophet, my priest, and my king. And herein the faith of the hypocrite or temporary believer comes short of the faith

faith of God's elect : The hypocrite, he halves Christ, or else inverts the order of his office, in his way of receiving him ; either he receives him as a saviour only to keep him out of hell, but waves the acceptance of him as a king to rule him ; or else he professedly subjects himself unto Christ's authority as a king and a law-giver, hoping upon that score, that Christ will save him by his blood and righteousness, as a priest ; and so thereby makes up the defects of his lame obedience : which is, upon the matter, to put a piece of *new cloth into an old garment, whereby the rent is made worse.* 3d'y, God gives Christ *cordially* and *affectionately* in the gospel : his very heart, as it were, goes out after sinners, in the call and offer thereof. It is not possible to conceive any thing more affectionate, than the word in which he bespeaks sinners, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Hos. x. 8. Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3.* Now, I say, as God offers Christ most affectionately and cordially, in like manner does faith embrace him ; he embraces a whole Christ, with the whole heart and soul ; the love, joy, delight and complacency of the soul, runs out upon him, as their very centre of rest : and these affections, like so many springs of gospel-obedience, set all the members of the body a-work in his service ; so that the head will study for him, the hand work for him, the feet run on his errands, and the tongue ready to plead his cause. 4thly, Christ is offered particularly to every man ; there is not a soul hearing me, but, in God's name, I offer Christ unto him, as if called by name and surname. Now, as the offer is particular to every individual person, so faith embraces Christ with particular application to the soul itself. When I embrace a Saviour, I do not embrace for salvation to another man ; no, but I embrace him as my saviour, for salvation to my own soul in particular. Beware, my friends, of a
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general faith, abjured in our NATIONAL-COVENANT, AS A BRANCH OF POPERY. A general persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save all that come to him, will not do the business; no, devils and reprobates may, and do actually believe it: there must therefore, of necessity, be a persuasion and belief of this, with particular application thereof unto a man's own soul; for, if the mercy of God in Christ be offered to every man in particular, then surely faith, which, as I was saying, is but the echo of the soul to the gospel-call, must embrace Christ, and the mercy of God in him, with particular application to itself, otherwise it doth not answer God's offer, consequently cannot be of a saving nature. So much for the *first* general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

The *second* thing proposed was, to take notice of some of these songs, which readily the soul has in its mouth, when, like *Simeon*, it gets Christ embraced in the arms of faith. We are said to be *filled with joy and peace in believing*; yea, by *faith in an unseen Christ*, the soul is replenished *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*; and when this is the soul's case, it cannot but bless God, as *Simeon* did, and vent its heart in these or the like songs of praise. (1.) It cannot but bless him for electing and everlasting love. Faith's embraces of Christ helps the soul to trace the streams of divine love to their fountain-head, and to read its own name in the book of life, among the living in *Jerusalem*. O, blessed be God, will the soul say, that ever I, wretched I, miserable I, should have been upon God's heart, before the foundations of the world were laid: glory to God in the highest, who hath drawn me with loving-kindness; whereby I know, that he hath loved me with an everlasting love. (2.) The soul, in such

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such a case, cannot but bless God for Christ, and redeeming love through him, saying with the apostle, *Thanks be unto him, for his unspeakable gift ; glory to him in the highest, that to us a son is given, to us a child is born, whose name is the wonderful counsellor, the everlasting father, the mighty God, the prince of peace.* And then, when the soul views the glorious retinue of blessings that come along with Christ, it cannot shun to join issue with the apostle in his triumphant doxology, *Eph. i. 2. saying, Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ.* And there are these few, among innumerable blessings that come along with Christ, which the soul will readily bless God for, in the case mentioned. *First*, O blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ he is become my God, even my own God. I was once without God in the world ; but O ! what a happy turn is this ? Now, I can view him in Christ, and say, *He is my God, my father, and the rock of my salvation, the portion of my cup ;* and therefore, *the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage.* *Secondly*, O ! blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ the fiery tribunal is turned into a mercy-seat, by his obedience and death ; the law and justice having got a complete satisfaction, a way is made for the empire of sovereign grace : so that now *grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. v. last.* And as it is the will of God, that grace should reign, so 'tis the desire of my soul, to make this name of his to be remembered to all generations. O ! let grace wear the crown, and sway the scepter for ever ; and let all the *Hallelujahs* of the higher house be to the *praise of the glory of his grace.* *Thirdly*, O ! blessed be God, will the soul say, that

in Christ he has blotted out all mine iniquities, *as a cloud, and as a thick cloud.* There was a cloud of sin pregnant with wrath hovering above my head, but in Christ I see it scattered ; *We have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins ;* and therefore, *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, who pardoneth all thine iniquities.* Fourthly, O ! blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ I am blessed with an everlasting and law-binding righteousness ; Christ my ever-blessed surety, he *was made under the law, and has magnified it, and made it honourable ; and the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness-sake ; and in him, and through him, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in me ;* and therefore, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, who hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robes of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels, Isaiah lxi. 10.* Fifthly, O ! blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ he is become *a father to the fatherless, and blessed me with the blessing of adoption and sonship.* I may seal it from my experience, that *in him the fatherless find mercy.* I was like an outcast infant, and helpless orphan, but *the everlasting father took me up, and gave me a name and a place in his house, and within his walls, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.* Behold, *what manner of love is this, that the father hath bestowed upon me, that I should be called a son of God ?* 1 John iii. 1. Sixthly, O ! glory to God, will the soul say, for the open door of access into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. The door was once barred against me, and all *Adam's* posterity by the breach of the first covenant ; but in Christ it is again opened, so that we may *come with boldness to a throne of grace, for grace and mercy to help in time of need :* an incarnate Deity is now become the way

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to God and glory. I might tell you of many other blessings that the soul is ready to bless God for, when it gets Christ in the arms of faith, but I do not insist. I conclude this head, by referring you to two or three scriptural songs, which will readily occur in such a case, 1. *Pet. i. 3. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, &c.* Another you have, *Rom. viii. 33. to the end of the chapter, who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect, &c.* A third you have, *1. Cor. xv. 55. 56. O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? &c.* Another, with which I conclude this head, is that which concludes the bible, *Rev. xxii. 20. Even so come Lord Jesus.*

The *third* thing proposed, was, to enquire whence it is, that faith's embraces of Christ doth thus fill the mouth with praise ? *Answer* (1.) This flows from the certainty that is in faith. Faith is not a doubting grace ; no, doubts and jealousies vanish before it, as the clouds and darkness of the night do vanish at the appearance of the sun ; and the certainty of faith flows from the stability of these foundations upon which it builds, which are more firm than the pillars of heaven, and foundations of the earth ; it builds upon the word of God, the oath of God, the blood of God, the righteousness of God, the power of God, the veracity of God ; and seeing it builds upon such immoveable foundations, how can it miss, to have a certainty in it proportioned, in some measure, unto the grounds upon which it stands ? And hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise. Let news be never so good, yet, if we have no certainty in our belief of them, it exceedingly mars our joy and comfort : but now the glad tidings

tidings of the gospel, they are no flying uncertain reports ; no, 'tis God that cannot lie, who speaks, and thence comes the certainty of faith. (2.) This flows from the applying and appropriating nature of faith, which I hinted at already. Let news be never so true, though never so great and good, yet, if we have no interest or concern in them, it mars the sweetness and comfort of them. Tell a poor man of mountains of gold and silver, what relief will that afford him, if he hath no access thereto, or interest therein ? But tell him that all these treasures are his, and that he has the owner's warrant and command to take and use them as his own, this will make him rejoice indeed. Tell a hungry and starving man of a rich feast or banquet, what is that to him, if he be not allowed to taste it ? Tell a naked man, exposed to the injuries of the wind and weather, of fine robes, and excellent garments, what will it avail him, if they be not for him, or for his use ? but tell the hungry man, that the feast is for him, and naked man, that the clothing is for him, this will create joy and triumph. So here the gospel-report doth not tell us of a saviour and salvation that we have no interest in ; no, but it tells us, that *to us is the word of this salvation sent ; that to us is this child born, and this son given ; that he is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption ;* and that as the great trustee of heaven, *he received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.* Now, faith accordingly, applies all these good news, this saviour, and his whole salvation, to itself in particular ; and hence it comes, that it fills the heart with joy, and the tongue with praise. (3.) This flows from that sensible assurance of God's love, and of grace and salvation, which commonly follows upon believing ; according to what you have *Eph. 1. 13. After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise.* There is a certainty of sense,

which very frequently accompanies or follows upon the certainty of faith, as a natural fruit of it, and yet is not of the nature and essence of it, because there may be true faith where there is not this sensible or reflex assurance of grace and salvation. The certainty of faith is built upon the word of God, the record of God, and promise of God, which is a believing, because God hath spoken, *Psal. lx. 6. 7.* compared ; God hath made a promise of the kingdom to *David* ; *God hath spoken in his holiness*, faith he, *I will rejoice* ; and in the faith of this word of promise, he speaks with such certainty, as if he were already in possession ; *Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine*, &c. But now the certainty of sense is a knowing that we have believed, or the soul's reflecting upon its own act of believing. The certainty of faith is like the certainty that a man hath of his money in a good and sufficient bond, or the certainty that a man hath of his estate, by a good and sufficient charter. He rests upon his bonds and charters as good security to him. But the certainty of sense is like the certainty that a man hath of his money, when he is handling it with his fingers, or taking in his rents. By the certainty of faith, *Abraham* believed, without staggering, because he had God's word of promise for it ; but, by the certainty of sense he knew it, when he saw *Sarah* delivered of his son *Isaac*, and got him in his arms. Now, I say, faith commonly produces this sensible assurance, sweet and reviving experiences of the Lord's love to our souls ; and, hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise.

The *fourth* thing was, The application of the doctrine. And the first use shall be of information. This doctrine informs us, (1.) Of the excellency of the grace of faith ; it cannot but be an excellent grace, because it embraces precious Christ. Hence

it is, that God puts such an estimate upon it, that he cares for nothing we do, if that be wanting ; *Without faith it is impossible to please God ; whatever is not of faith, is sin.* Suppose it were possible for a man to attain such a pitch of morality, as to be, touching the law, blameless ; yet all his obedience, moral and religious, stands for a cypher in God's reckoning ; yea, is *like the cutting off a dog's neck, and the offering of swines blood upon God's altar*, if faith be wanting. Thus then, I say, faith is an excellent grace of absolute necessity, in order to our acceptance before God ; only let it be here carefully remembered, that 'tis not the act of faith, but it's glorious and ever-blessed object, Jesus Christ, whom it embraces, that renders us acceptable unto God. In point of acceptance, faith renounces its own actings, and looks *for acceptance only in the beloved ; it rejoiceth in Christ Jesus only, and hath no confidence in the flesh.* (2.) See, from this doctrine, what a happy and privileged person the believer is ; he gets Christ the lamb of God in the embraces of his soul : And, O ! what can the most enlarged heart or soul of man wish for more ? This was the one thing that *David* desired, *Psal.* xxvii. 4. We read of one in the gospel, that said to Christ, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck ; to which Christ answered, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word, and keep it,* *Luke* xi. 27. 28. And who are they that hear the word of God, and keep it, but believers, who have him formed in their hearts, and clasped in the arms of faith ! for he that thus *hath the son, hath life.* And concerning such, I may say, as *Moses* said concerning *Israel*, *Deut.* xxxiii. 24. *Happy art thou, O Israel ! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ?* Notice the expression, they are a people already saved, *they have everlasting life ;* that day that Christ comes into the heart,

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the salvation of God comes, as 'tis said to *Zaccheus*, *This day is salvation come to thy house.* (3.) See, from this doctrine, the true way of joy and comfort; perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning *without the sun*, saying, *O that it were with me as in months past*; once in a day, I thought I could say, *The candle of the Lord shined upon my head*; but, alas! now the scene is altered, the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me, how shall I recover my wonted joy in the Lord? Well, here is the way to it, go forth out of yourselves, by a direct act of faith; take Christ a-new, in the embraces of your souls, upon the free call and offer of the gospel, and with *Simeon*, ye shall be made to *blefs God*. It is the wreck of the comfort of the generality of God's people, in our day, that they continue poring within themselves, upon their graces, their frames, their experiences, their attainments, without going forth, by faith, unto the fulness of a redeemer for relief: and while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea, while they sail among shallow waters near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon the rocks, or running upon sands, because they want depth of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean, they are delivered of their fears, being carried far above rocks and sands: so, while the believer continues among the shallow water of his graces, duties, experiences and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but at ebb, while we stay there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts and perplexities vanish: the soul is carried up above all these, being strong, not in the created grace that is in itself, but in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the God-head. So then, I say, if you would

would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Lord, study to live by faith upon the son of God ; for we *are filled with joy and peace in believing.* (4.) From this doctrine we may gather, what a delightful place heaven will be, where the soul shall live in Christ's embraces for ever. If the believer's heart be so refreshed when he gets Christ embraced by faith, what overpowering floods of joy must flow upon his soul, when he comes to immediate fruition, where no clouds shall ever intercept the rays of the sun of righteousness from him, through an endless eternity. No wonder, though sometimes the believer break forth into such longing expressions, when he thinks of immediate enjoyment, as that of *Paul, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all.*

Use II. may be of trial. Sirs, you have been in the temple this day ; I would ask, have you seen the Lord's *Messiah* there ? Have you got him, like *Simeon*, in the arms and embraces of faith ? O ! say you, how shall I know if I ever had him in my arms ? For answer ; take these following things as marks. 1st, If ever ye have embraced Christ, Christ has embraced you first ; for there is a mutual embracing betwixt Christ and the believer, and it begins on Christ's side ; he first takes hold of the soul by his spirit, before the soul takes hold of him by faith, *Phil. iii. 12. I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* O ! will the soul say, I was wandering like a lost sheep, among the mountains of vanity, I had gone into a far country, with the prodigal, and never had a thought of Christ, till he by his sovereign grace held and drew me, with the cords of victorious love and grace, and then my heart laid hold, and apprehended him : never a soul yet came really to believe in Christ, but will be ready to own that

that it was not free-will, but free-grace that began the work: *No man can come to me, except the father which hath sent me, draw him.* 2dly, If ever ye had Christ really in the embraces of faith, you have been made to quit the embraces of other lovers; *Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols?* Particularly, ye have been made to part with the law, as a husband, *Rom. vii. 4. Ye are dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye may be married to a better husband, even to him that is raised from the dead.* O, Sirs! 'tis a harder business than many are aware of, to make a divorce between a sinner and the law, so as to make him renounce all hopes of salvation and righteousness from that corner. It is much easier, to pull his lusts out of his arms, than to pull the law, as a husband, out of his embraces; and the reason of this is plain, because the law gives a promise of life to them that obey it; *He that doth these things, shall live in them*; which sin and lust cannot do, in regard they carry the stamp of hell and wrath visibly upon them, to the eye of a natural conscience: so that 'tis much easier to convince a man that his sin is an evil thing, than to convince him that his righteousness is so; hence Christ tells the *Pharisees*, these self-righteous wretches, that publicans and harlots should enter into the kingdom of God before them: publicans and harlots and such sort of persons, lie more open unto the sharp arrows of conviction, than self-righteous persons, who make, as it were, a barricado of the law itself, and their obedience to it, behind which they lie intrenched, and fortified against all the curses and threatnings of the law that are denounced against them: they still take the law for a friend, while they obey it as well as they can; never dreaming that nothing will satisfy the law, but an obedience that is every way complete. But now, I say, if ever

ye have embraced Christ, ye have been made to part with the law as a covenant, and with your own righteousness by the law, as filthy rags, saying with *Paul, I through the law, am dead to the law.* At the same time, that the soul quits the embraces of the law, as a husband, it parts with other lovers also. The first view of Christ by faith, makes all the twinkling stars of created enjoyments to vanish and disappear ; so that the soul joins issue with *David, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c.* 3dly, If ever Christ was in the embraces of thy soul, thou mayest know it by the desirable concomitants and effects thereof ; I shall not stand upon them, only, in so many words, your estimate of Christ will be raised, *For to you that believe, he is precious :* your love to him will be inflamed, *for faith worketh by love :* your joy and peace will be increased, *for, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory :* heart-holiness will be promoted, *for faith purifieth the heart :* and, in a word, your souls will make their boast in him, *for in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

Use III. shall be of exhortation to all in general. Sirs, before we part this evening, I would fain have every soul hearing me, going home with the great *Messiah*, the son of God, in the arms and embraces of their souls ; and then I am sure ye should go away blessing God that ye ever came here. We must deal with you as reasonable creatures, and persuade you in a moral way ; and when we are so doing, look up to God for the concurring efficacy of his holy spirit, whose prerogative it is, to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel ; and therefore, by way of motive, consider, (1.) The absolute need you have of this Christ, whom we offer unto you. Without him, *ye are condemned already ;* without him,

ye

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ye are *without God in the world*, *God is angry with you every day* ; the law and justice of God, like the avenger of blood, is pursuing you ; and therefore, O sinners, flee to a saviour : *Turn to your strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope.* (2.) Consider the matchless excellency of that saviour whom we call you to embrace. Angels and men are at an everlasting stand, to speak of his worth and glory ; he is best known by his own and his father's testimony concerning him ; and if you would know the record of God concerning him, search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of him ; 'tis in this glass that we behold *his glory, as of the only-begotten of the father, full of grace and truth.* I despair that ever a sinner will embrace Christ, till there be a true knowledge of his personal excellency, as *Immanuel*, God-man. There is a seeing of the son, which, in order of nature, although not in order of time, goes before the soul's believing in him, *John vi. 40.* (3.) Consider the ability and sufficiency of this saviour whom we call you to embrace ; take the father's testimony of his ability, *Psalms lxxxix. 20. I have laid help upon one that is mighty* : take his own testimony, *Isa. lxiii. 1.* take the spirit's testimony, in the mouth of the apostle *Paul*, *Heb. vii. 25.* declaring him *able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him.* Thus ye have the three that bear record in heaven attesting the sufficiency of this saviour. O then, *set to your seal, that God is true, by believing the record that God gives of his son* ; for if you do not, your unbelief gives the lie unto a whole Trinity, *1. John v. 10, 11.* (4.) Consider that this sufficient saviour is the SENT of God. This is a designation given to Christ thirty or forty times in the gospel, according to *John*, and the ordinary argument with which Christ persuades sinners to embrace and receive him ; and nothing could have greater influence than this designation,

signation, if the weight of it were but duly weighed. O! consider in what quality or capacity his father has sent him. Shall not God's AMBASSADOR-EXTRAORDINARY get a hearing, among a company of condemned rebels? He is sent as a redeemer, to set at liberty the captives; and shall not captives embrace him? He is sent as a surety, and will not insolvents and bankrupts embrace a surety? He is sent as a physician, and will not the wounded and diseased sinner embrace him, and his healing balm? &c. (5.) Consider that his heart and his arms are open, and ready to embrace all that are willing to be embraced by him. O! may the soul say, fain would I embrace him, but I doubt of his willingness to embrace me. I tell you good news, he is more willing to embrace you, by far, than you are to be embraced by him. He says he is willing, and you may believe his word, for he is the AMEN, FAITHFUL and TRUE WITNESS; and he says, that he will cast out none that come unto him. He swears he is willing, and will ye not believe his oath? *Ezek. xxxiii. 11. As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners, saith the Lord.* Pray tell me, why did he engage from eternity, and voluntarily give his hand to the father, in the counsel of peace, saying, *Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God?* Why did he assume the nature of man, and the sinless infirmities thereof? Why did he, that is the great law-giver, subject himself unto his own law? Why did he, that is the Lord of life and glory, submit to the stroke of death ignominiously upon a cross? Why doth he send out his ministers to you, with call upon call? Why doth he wait all the day long, saying, behold me, behold me? Why doth he expostulate the matter with you? Why is he grieved at the obstinacy of your hearts, if he be not willing that ye should embrace him? For the
Lord's

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Lord's sake, therefore, consider these things, and do not reject the counsel of God against yourselves. (6.) Consider what a glorious train and retinue of blessings come along with him, when he is embraced in the arms of faith ; such as pardon of sin, *Heb. viii.* and last ; Peace with God, *Rom. v. 1.* A complete justifying righteousness, *Rom. viii. 3, 4.* Adoption and sonship, *John i. 12.* Sanctification, both in the root and fruit of it, *1. Cor. i. 30.* Saving knowledge of God, and the mysteries of his covenant, *2 Cor. iv. 6.* The crown of eternal glory at last, *John iii. 16.* All these might be particularly enlarged on ; but I don't insist, but proceed to obviate some objections that some may make against complying with this exhortation.

Object. 1. Some poor soul may be ready to say, gladly would I embrace Christ, with my very soul ; but still I entertain a jealousy of my right and warrant to meddle with the unspeakable gift of God ; he is such a great good, that I am afraid it be but presumption in me to attempt the embracing of him. Now, for removing any jealousies of this nature, I shall lay before you a few of these warrants, upon which a lost sinner may receive and embrace this favour. 1st, Let desperate and absolute necessity be your warrant : you must either do or die ; there is no middle : *He that believeth, shall be saved ; he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Do not stand to dispute the matter ; there is no time, no, not one moment of time, wherein a man is allowed to toss this question in his breast, after the revelation of Christ to him in the gospel ; shall I believe, or shall I not ? Or if ye will dispute the matter, will ye argue, as the Samaritan lepers did ? *If we sit still here, we perish ; but if we go into the camp of the Assyrians, peradventure we shall live :* so ye, if ye sit still in this sinful and miserable condition, without God, and without

without Christ in the world, we unavoidably perish ; but if we throw ourselves into the arms of a redeemer, and upon the mercy of God in him, beyond peradventure we shall be saved : and therefore, I say, let absolute necessity be your warrant. *2dly*, Venture to embrace this saviour in the arms of faith, upon the warrant of the very design of his incarnation ; why is there a saviour provided ? Why was he manifested in the flesh ? Upon what errand was he sent *into* the world, but *to seek and save that which was lost* ? Well, since this is the very design of God in giving a saviour, that sinners might be saved by him ; what can be more agreeable unto him, or his father that sent him, than that a lost sinner should embrace and receive him ? *3dly*, Let the revelation of this incarnate Deity, in the glorious gospel, be your warrant to embrace and receive him ; a bare revelation of a saviour, without any more, is enough to induce a sinner to believe in him. Why was the brazen serpent in the wilderness lifted up on the pole, but that every one in the camp of *Israel*, who were stung with the fiery serpents, might look unto it, and be healed ? The very lifting up of the brazen serpent, was a sufficient warrant to any man to look unto it : so the son of man his being lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, warrants every man to believe in him, *John* iii. 14, 15. *4thly*, Besides the revelation of Christ, ye have a full, free, and un-hampered offer of him, in the external call of the gospel ; and this directed to every one, without exception, *Isa.* lv. 1, 2, 3. *Rev.* xxii. 17. *Mark* xvi. 15. *Prov.* viii. 4. Sirs, we offer a Christ to you, and the whole fulness of grace and glory, merit and spirit that is in him, as the free gift of God, without the money and price of your own works and qualifications ; if ye bring any such price, to make a purchase of

of the pearl of price, ye shall lose him for ever : God loves to give his Christ freely, but he scorns to receive any thing for him. Let this then be your warrant, that Christ is gifted and offered of God in this gospel ; and let it be remembred, that in the matter of a gift, there is no difference between man and man : the poorest, as well as the richest, may receive a gift presented unto him ; a condemned malefactor has as good a right to receive a gift presented unto him by the king, as the greatest favourite in the court ; his being a guilty criminal is no prejudice at all to his receiving a gift ; yea, his being so, qualifies him for receiving the pardon. So here, Christ's being the gift of God, freely offered and presented, warrants the sinner to receive him without respect to any qualifications, but that of his being a sinner : hunger is the best disposing qualification for meat, nakedness fits a man for clothing, &c. And that Christ seeks no other qualifications, is evident from his counsel to *Laodicea*, Rev. iii. 17. 18. *Thou art wretched, and miserable, and naked, and poor, and blind ; I counsel thee to buy of me gold, white raiment, and eye-salve.* 5thly, Ye have not only an offer of Christ, but an expresse command, requiring you to embrace him, for your warrant, 1 *John* iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ.* Sirs, 'tis not a thing left optional to you, to embrace Christ or not, as ye please ; no, ye are concluded under a law, fenced with the severest penalty, *He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.* The unbelieving sinner counter-acts the authority of heaven ; and thus rushes upon *God's neck, and the thick bosses of his buckler.* Ye have no reason to doubt, but that the command of believing is to you ; for if ye were not commanded to believe, your unbelief could not be your sin : *where there*
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is no law, there is no transgression. Ye do not doubt but ye are commanded, by the word of God, to read, hear, pray, sanctify the sabbath, and to perform the other duties of the moral law ; and because they are commanded, ye mint at obedience : now, believing is as peremptorily enjoined, yea, rather more than any other duty ; inasmuch as the successful and acceptable performance of all other duties depends upon it ; and therefore do not stand disputing your warrant, against the express authority of heaven. 6thly, Besides the command of God, ye have a promise of welcome, to encourage you in believing, *John vi. 37. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. John iii. 16. Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life :* but say ye, these promises may be to others, and not to me : I answer, the promise is indorsed to you, directed to you in the external call and dispensation of the gospel, *Acts ii. 39.* There the apostle is preaching to a company of men, whose hands had lately been dipt in the blood of the son of God ; he calls them to faith and repentance : by what argument does he enforce the exhortation ? Why, he tells them, *The promise is to you, and your children, and to all that are afar off, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call ;* where 'tis plain, the promise is extended, first to the *Jews*, and then to the *Gentiles*, who, at that time were afar off ; and then indefinitely both to *Jew* and *Gentile*, to whom the call of the gospel should reach : the external call, which is only here intended, howsoever the spirit of the Lord did internally concur, being the alone foundation upon which the promise is to be received, and not the internal call of one person ; which can never be a warrant of believing to another ; and therefore, as the apostle said to them, so say I to you, in the name of God, the promise is to you, I mean the
promise

promise of welcome; *Whosoever of you believeth, shall not perish.* This promise is not made to believers exclusively of others, but to every one that hears the gospel; for if so, we could call none to believe, but such as have believed, which is most absurd. Well then, let God's promise warrant you to believe in Christ; and if ye do not think this sufficient, take his promise of welcome, ratified with his oath, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11. These being the two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie.* 7thly, Let the indefinite and absolute nature of the covenant of grace, be your warrant for embracing the Lord Jesus. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is conceived in the form of a blank bond, or testamentary deed, where there is room left to every man to fill up his name by the hand of faith; the strain and tenor of it is, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people; I will take away the stony heart, and I will give them a heart of flesh; I will sprinkle them with clean water; I will put my spirit within them; I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; I will subdue their iniquities:* where you see the grant runs in an indefinite way; no man's name mentioned, neither any by name, excluded: why, what is the design of this, but that every man may be encouraged to subscribe his name, or to make application thereof to his own soul, in a way of believing, by which we are said to *take hold of God's covenant?* O Sirs! the covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, (for now I abstract from his secret purposes, which are not at all the measure or rule of faith) is just like a rope cast in among a company of drowning men; he that throws it in, cries to every one of them to take hold of the rope, promising to draw them safe on shore: so God, in the gospel-dispensation, proposes his covenant to every one as a
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ground of faith ; assuring them, that whosoever *takes hold of his covenant*, and receives his Christ, whom *he hath given for a covenant to the people*, shall not *perish*, but have *everlasting life*. For the Lord's sake, do not put this rope of salvation away from you, under a pretence that ye know not if it be designed for you. Would ye not reckon it ridiculous madness, in any of these drowning men now mentioned, to fall a disputing whether the rope were cast in to them, when they are at the very point of sinking to the bottom ? Would not every one of them grip at it, with the utmost strength and vigour, without putting any question ? Now this is the very case, O sinner, thou art going down to the pit of eternal misery ; God, by his ministers, cries to you to take hold of his rope of salvation ; O then see that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven ; do not dispute yourselves away from your *own mercy*. 8thly, Let the welcome that others hath met with, in coming to Christ, be your encouragement to venture also ; never any that really came to him, but they met with a kindly reception. Ask the prodigal son ; ask *Mary Magdalen*, *Paul*, and others, what entertainment they met with from this saviour ; they will be ready to tell you, that they obtained mercy. Now the same mercy that saved them, is as ready to save you. You don't doubt but *Moses*, *David*, *Peter*, *Paul*, and other saints that are now in glory, had sufficient warrant to believe. Sirs, you have the same grounds of faith as ever they had, the same God, the same saviour, the same bible, the same covenant, the same promises, the same faithfulness of God to lean to, as ever they had ; and these grounds of faith are so firm, that they never disappointed any that leaned to them ; and therefore be encouraged to believe as they did. O ! how will it gall and torment unbelieving sinners in

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hell for ever, when they see others who believed upon the same grounds, that were common to them also, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves shut up in utter darkness, with devils and damned spirits, because of their unbelief? And how will the devil himself upbraid unbelievers in hell, when fallen under the same condemnation with himself, that they had such fair warrants to believe in Christ, which he never had?

Object. 2. You bid me embrace Christ, but, alas! he is far away out of my reach; Christ is in heaven, how shall I win at him? *Answer,* Seeing ye cannot come up to Christ, Christ is come down to you; and we bring him near to you in this word of salvation which we preach, *Isa.* xlv. 12, 13. *Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and therefore, say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down from above? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring him up again from the dead? for the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach,* *Rom.* x. 6, 7, 8. Sirs, Christ is in this gospel, this word of faith, and grace, which we, in the name of God, deliver unto you; and your faith must terminate immediately upon this word, otherwise ye can never embrace him. As I believe or trust a man, by his verbal or written promise; so I embrace Christ, by the word of faith, or promises in the gospel. Suppose a sponable man, residing in *America*, should send me his bill for any sum of money, that man and his money are brought near to me by his bill and security which he sends me: so here, though Christ be in heaven, and we upon earth, yet the word of faith which we preach, brings him, his kingdom, righteousness, salvation, and whole ful-
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ness nigh unto every one of us, *so that we need not ascend into heaven, or descend into hell, in quest of him.*

Object. 3. My arms have been so defiled with the embraces of other lovers, that I am afraid Christ will never allow me to embrace him. For answer, I only refer you to *Jeremiah iii. 1. Thou hast playea the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* But say ye, my sins are highly aggravated. *Answer, Isa. i. 18. Come, 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 as crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Object. 4. You bid me embrace him; but, alas! I want an arm; I have no power to embrace him. *Answer,* If thou hast a will to embrace him, the great difficulty is over, for there lies the principal stop; *Ye will not come to us, that ye might have life:* where God gives the will, he gives also to do of his own good pleasure. You say, you want the arm to embrace him; then do as the man with the withered hand did, *mint to stretch it forth* in obedience to the command of Christ. Believing is a thing we must be essaying, even before we can find the spirit of God working it in us effectually. We cannot pray, we cannot sanctify the sabbath, we cannot think a good thought, till the spirit of God work it in us; and yet we do not forbear these duties, because we have no power to do them: so, although we have no power to believe, yet we should be trying to believe. The way that the spirit of God works faith in the souls of the elect, is, by making them sensible of their own inability, that they may turn the work over upon his own hand, who *worketh all our works in us, and for us.*

Object. last. Let me mint at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God's elect: *for it is only they that are ordained*

to eternal life that do believe. *Answer,* This is an extraordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, whereby he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus ; and the fallacy, or weakness of it, will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary business of human life. When meat is set before you, do ye decline to take or use it, for this reason, that ye do not know whether God has ordained it for you ? Don't ye say, meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. Ye don't say, I will not plow or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth ; or I will not go home to my house, because I don't know if ever God has decreed I should come the length. Ye would reckon a man mad, or beside himself, who would argue at this rate in affairs of this nature. Why, the case is the very same ; as the secret decrees of heaven lie quite out of the road in the management of the affairs of this life, so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actions in the great concerns of eternity : *Secret things belong to the Lord, but things that are revealed, to us and our children :* and the ground of your condemnation at the great day, will not be, because ye were not elected, but, because ye would not believe. The reprobate *Jews* were cut off because of their unbelief, *Rom. xi. 7, and 20.* I shall only add, That as ye cannot know that the meat set before you, is yours in possession, till ye take it ; so neither can ye ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till ye take him into your possession by faith : and therefore ye must believe in Christ, before ye know your election ; otherwise ye shall never know it, and shall never believe either. So much by way of exhortation.

I shall conclude this discourse with a short word to
two

two sorts of persons, *First*, To you who, like *Simeon*, have got him in the embraces of your souls, and who perhaps can say to your sweet experience, with the spouse, *I have found him whom my soul loveth*. All I say to you shall be comprized in these two or three words, (1.) O bless God, as *Simeon* did, for such a privilege; let the high praises of God be in your mouths. I told you already of several songs ye have ground and reason to sing, which I shall not stand to resume: only, to engage you to bless him, consider, that this is all the tribute he expects from you. Who will ever bless him, if not the people that he has formed for himself? Consider again, that this is the way to have blessings multiplied upon you: the thankful beggar is best served at the door both of God and man. The trumpeter loves to sound where there is an eccho, which brings back the sound to his ears; so God loves to bestow his blessings, where he hears of them again in songs of praise and gratitude. Praise is the work of heaven through a long eternity: now, they who are bound to that land afar off, should be lisping out the language of the land before they come there. (2.) Have ye got Christ in the arms of your souls? O then improve your golden season; and while ye are allowed to ride with the king in the chariot of the wood of *Lebanon*, improve your interest with him, both for yourselves and others: particularly, intreat him, that he would revive his own work, which is under such a sad decay in our land, at this day; study to *bring him into your mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived you*. (3.) Have ye got him in your arms, then follow the spouse's practice, *Cant. iii. 4. I held him, and would not let him go*: O! keep him in the embraces of your souls; his presence dispells clouds, and turns the shadows of death into the morning; it is like oil to the cha-

riot-wheels of the soul : light, life, liberty, peace, pardon, and plenty are his continual attendants ; and remember that his departure is of a very dangerous consequence. 'Tis true, his real presence shall never depart ; but yet his quickening, strengthening, and upholding presence may be withdrawn to such a degree, that ye may go mourning without the sun ; and if through untenderness ye provoke him to withdraw, the quarrel may be pursued even to the gates of hell, so that ye may be made to cry out, *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirits ; and the terrors of God set themselves in array against me,* Job vi. 4.

And in order to your keeping him in the embraces of your souls, (1.) Beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw ; particularly beware of security, which made him to withdraw from the spouse, *Cant. v. 3, 6.* verses compared. Beware of pride, for *God resisteth the proud, and beholds them afar off.* Beware of worldly-mindedness, *for the iniquity of his covetousness, I was wroth, and smote him,* Isa. lvii. 17. Beware of unbelief, that root of bitterness, which *causes to depart from the living God.* Distrust and *jealousy is the rage of a man,* much more is it provoking unto God. Under the law, God appointed porters to keep watch at the door of the temple, that nothing might be suffered to enter which might defile the dwelling-place of his name : thy soul and body, believer, is the temple of God ; therefore guard against every thing that may defile the same. (2.) If ye would hold Christ in the embraces of your souls, keep grace in a lively exercise, for these are the *spikenard and spices, that send out a fragrant smell* for his entertainment. Keep the arm of faith continually about him ; let the fire of divine love burn continually upon the altar of thy heart ; let the anchor of hope be fixed within the
vail ;

vail ; let the fountain of evangelical repentance be still running ; and under your greatest attainments, be humbled, and take care to set the crown upon Christ's head, saying, *Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory.*

The second sort of persons I would speak a little to, are these, who perhaps are complaining of hidings and withdrawings, and are perhaps saying, I came to the temple, to see if I could get Christ in my arms, but I am disappointed ; yea, matters are come that length with me, that I am ready to raze foundations, and to conclude that I am an utter stranger to him. All that I have to offer to you, shall be comprised in these two or three things with which I conclude. (1.) Allow me to ask, if there be not a void and emptiness in thy heart, which the whole creation cannot fill, till Christ himself comes and fills it ? Are not ordinances, ministers, word and sacrament, empty without him, like dry breasts ? That says, thou art not altogether a stranger to him ; and therefore do not entertain harsh thoughts of thyself, thy case is not at all unprecedented. What think ye of *David*, Psal. xiii. *Asaph*, Psal. lxxvii. *Heman*, Psal. lxxxviii. yea, of Christ himself, who, through the withdrawing of his father's love, was made to utter that heart-rending cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* (2.) Know, for thy comfort, that thy hiding Lord will return again ; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning, *Psal.* xxx. 4, 5. *Isa.* liv. 7, 8. The very breathings and longings of thy soul after him, ^{is} a pledge of his return ; for *he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.* (3.) When ye cannot get Christ himself embraced, study to embrace his word of promise, as the old-testament saints did, *Heb.* xi. xiii. As a loving wife will lay the letters of her absent husband in her breast,
and

and perhaps kiss his hand-writ ; so lay the sweet promises of thy best husband in thy bosom, and between thy breasts, until he himself return. (4.) Maintain your claim unto him on the ground of the covenant, when ye cannot maintain it upon a ground of sense ; as a wife will maintain her relation to her husband, though he be both angry and absent. The Lord loves to have his people threaping kindness, and maintaining their claim upon the marriage-contract of the new covenant, *when they walk in darkness, and see no light*, Isa. l. 10. and such a carriage as this, commonly lands in a happy meeting betwixt Christ and the souls of his people, for, after believing, comes sealing.



The rent Vail of the Temple : or, Access to the HOLY of HOLIES by the Death of CHRIST ;

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A SERMON preached immediately after the Administration of the Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER, at Carnock, the 12th Day of July, 1719.

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MATTH. xxii. 51.

And behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

SOME here may think, what will the minister make of that text, and what relation hath it to the work of this day ? Indeed, I cannot promise to make any thing of it, unless the Lord himself make something of it to you. But, with his help, we may find a feast in it to our souls, and a suitable feast to follow immediately after the celebration of the Lord's supper. Christ hath been evidently set forth as crucified among you this day, and as you have been called to feast upon his passion, so now you are called to feast upon the fruits and effects of it.

it. Have you seen him dying on a cross for you? O come and see what immediately followed upon his death, *Behold the vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom.* That I may divide the words, and then explain them, you may notice here, 1. The connexion of this verse with what went before, in the particle *and*; intimating the time of this miracle, that attended the death of Christ, *verse 50. When he had cried with a loud voice, he gave up the ghost.* This loud cry signified that his death should be publick, and proclaimed to all the world, as it hath been to you this day; and his yielding up the ghost, shewed that he voluntarily resigned his soul to be an offering for sin, according to his undertaking as our surety, *Isa. liii. 10.* Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant, *Thou shalt surely die*; the mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise no remission. Now, he gave up the ghost, and immediately the vail of the temple was rent. 2. You have a note of admiration, *Behold!* intimating what a wonderful thing did immediately ensue. Several miracles, besides the rending of the vail, are here mentioned, but this seems to be the most remarkable. We are told, *that the earth did quake, the rocks rent, the graves were opened, and many dead bodies of the saints arose*; but that which is put in the first rank of these miracles, is, *that the vail of the temple was rent in twain*; and we find the evangelist *Mark* mentions this in particular, and none of the rest of the miracles here named, as if this rending of the vail was the miracle most to be noticed, as containing somewhat most mysterious and significant therein, *Mark xv. 37. 38.* Where we have the very same words, *Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost, and the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* And here

it is ushered in with a *behold*, turn aside and see this great sight, be astonished at it. But what are we to wonder at? Then, 3. See this object of admiration, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, just as our Lord Jesus expired; that vail of the temple which parted betwixt the *holy place* and the *most holy*, was rent by an invisible power. In this and the rest of the miracles Christ gave testimony to his Godhead, putting forth the power of his divine nature at the same time wherein his human nature, his soul and body was rent in twain, like the vail of the temple. It is remarkable how the evangelist describes the manner in which the vail of the temple was rent, shewing, what a full and entire rent it was; *Luke* says, *it was rent in the midst*, and here *Matthew* and *Mark* say, *it was rent in twain*; rent from the top, rent to the bottom, and rent in twain from the top to the bottom, an entire rent. But what was the meaning of all this? What did the rending of the vail signify? 1. It was in conformity to the temple of Christ's body, which was now dissolved. Christ was the true temple, *in whom dwells all the fulness of the God-head bodily*. When he cried and gave up the ghost, and so dissolved and rent the vail of his flesh; the literal temple did, as it were eccho to the cry, and answer the strokes, by rending it's vail. 2. The rending of the vail of the temple signified the revealing of the mysteries of the *Old Testament*. The vail of the temple was for concealment. It was extremely dangerous for any to see the furniture of the most holy place within the vail, except the high priest, and he but once a year with great ceremony, and through a cloud of smoke: all which pointed out the darkness of that dispensation, 2 *Cor.* iii. 13. But now at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries are unvailed, so that he that runs

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runs may read the meaning of them. (3.) The rending of the vail of the temple signified the uniting of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, by removing the partition-wall betwixt them, which was the *ceremonial law*. Christ by his death repealed it, and *cancelled that hand-writing of ordinances*, nailed it on the cross, and so *broke down the middle-wall of partition*; and by abolishing these institutions and ceremonies, by which the *Jews* were distinguished from all other people, *he abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*; for to make in himself of twain one new man, Eph. ii. 14, 15. Just as two rooms are made one, by taking down the partition-wall. (4.) The rending of the vail did especially signify the consecrating and opening of a new and living way to God. The vail kept off people from drawing near to the most holy place; but their rending of it signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God for himself, as our blessed high priest, and for us in him. 1. For himself. This was the great day of atonement, wherein the great high priest, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entred once for all into the holy place, in token of which, the vail was rent; Heb. ix. 7, and downward to *verse* 13. Tho' Christ did not personally ascend to heaven, *the holy place not made with hands*, that is, to heaven, till above forty days after; yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission. His entrance into the heavenly temple, into the holy of holies, began in his death; having offered his sacrifice in the outer-court, the blood of it was to be sprinkled on the mercy seat within the vail, according to the manner of the priests under the law. But now the legal shadows were all to vanish; the great, the true high priest, having by his own blood entered, and so procured, 2. For us

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us an open entrance into the true holy of holies, as the apostle applies it, *Heb. x. 19. 20. We have 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 vail.* We have now free access to come with boldness to a throne of grace, to a God in Christ, *Heb. iv.* at the close. The vail of the temple did so interpose betwixt the people and the most holy place, that they could neither go in, nor look into it, but only the priest in the manner that I said before ; but the rending of the vail signified, that the true holy of holies, heaven itself, is now open to us by the entrance of our great high priest, that we also may enter in by faith as a royal priesthood, following our forerunner, who for us hath entred within the vail, *Heb. vi. 19.* Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to God in his grace and glory, for the vail is rent. Now I am to touch a little at the special mystery here represented, *Behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

Observ. *That Christ by his death both rent the vail that interposed betwixt God and us, and obstructed our access to him.* He gave up the ghost, and behold the vail was rent ; *1 Pet. iii. 18. Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.* Why ? *that he might bring us to God ;* and in order thereunto, that he might rend the vail of guilt and wrath that interposed betwixt us and him, that he might take away the cherubims and flaming sword, and open a way to the tree of life.

The method wherein I shall speak to this subject, shall be to shew, I. What is the vail that interposed betwixt God and us. II. How the death of Christ hath rent that vail. III. In what manner is the vail rent. IV. For what end is the vail rent. V. Draw some inferences from the whole for application.

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There may be some here that came to this occasion, to enquire into God's temple, to see his beauty and glory there, and to get near to God ; but ah ! they are complaining, they have mis'd their mark : why ? they apprehended a vail betwixt them and the glory of God, and thought it impossible to get thro' the vail : but (may be) you will not that the vail of the temple was rent, and therefore you have not seen the beauty of the Lord in his temple. If you had known that the vail was rent from the top to the bottom, you would have gone in more boldly to the most holy place ; and if yet you will believe that the vail is rent, I can promise that you shall not miss a sight of his glory through the rent vail ; did I not say to thee, *If thou wouldst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God.* But to proceed to the method proposed.

First then, What is that vail that interposed betwixt God and us ? Not to speak of the vail of old-testament shadows and ceremonies, now rent and removed by the death of Christ, there are some vails that in a special manner obstructed our access to God, and they may be reduced to these three. The vail of a broken covenant, the vail of God's injured attributes, and the vail of man's sin. 1. The vail of a broken covenant, or law of works. The covenant of works you know, was *do and live* otherwise you shall die ; *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die.* In which covenant, you see there was a precept, a promise, and a penalty. The precept was *do*, or perfect obedience ; the promise was *life*, or eternal happiness upon his obedience ; and the penalty was *death* and eternal damnation, in case of disobedience. Now man by his sin hath broken the precept of that covenant, and so forfeited the promise of life, and incurred the penalty of death. If ever we have access to God, this broken precept

precept must be repaired, this forfeited life must be redeemed, this penalty must be executed. Here is a vail that separates betwixt God and us, a vail that neither men or angels can read, and yet a vail that must be rent, otherwise we die and perish for ever, and this vail is the harder to be rent, because of the following, namely, 2. The vail of God's injured perfections, particularly, his incensed justice, and injured holiness; justice, infinite justice was a black vail that obstructed our access to heaven; for God became an angry God, a God filled with fierce wrath against the sinner. God hath set his penalty upon the law, commanding perfect obedience upon pain of death, God's justice was engaged to make this penalty effectual upon man's falling into sin. Nothing can satisfy justice but infinite punishment; *the wages of sin is death, and God will by no means clear the guilty*; and so if this vail be not rent by a complete satisfaction, the guilty sinner must go down to the pit. The holiness of God also was injured by the breach of the law; sin is a transgression of the law, a transgression of the precept. Now, as God's justice stands up in defence of the threatening penalty, so his holiness stands up for the defence of the precept and command of the holy law. God cannot justify the sinner, nor accept of him as righteous, unless he hath a complete righteousness; not a lame, partial and imperfect righteousness, but a righteousness every way commensurate to the extensive precept of the law, will satisfy an infinitely holy God. As infinite justice cannot be satisfied without a complete satisfaction, answering to the threatening and penalty of the law, so the infinite holiness of God cannot be satisfied without a perfect obedience answerable to the precept and command of the law. Now, our natural want of ability to yield satisfaction, and our natural want of perfect

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perfect conformity to the law, make justice, and holiness, and other perfections of God stand in the way of our salvation, and of our access to heaven, like a vail that can never be rent by us ; especially considering, that there is a third vail, and that is the vail of sin on our part. This is a separating vail betwixt God and us, *Isa. lix. 2. Your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God.* Now before we can get near unto God, this vail must be rent, the guilt of sin must be expiated ; for without shedding of blood there is no remission. The filth of sin must be purged ; *for who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place, but he that hath clean hands and a pure heart ?* The power of sin must be broken. There is by nature in us all a power of ignorance, our minds are become a dungeon of darkness, and this is such a vail betwixt God and us, that unless it be removed, there is no hope of mercy. Therefore, says the prophet, *It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, &c.* There is in us a power of enmity : *the carnal mind is enmity against God, &c. We are enemies to God by wicked works :* this is another vail that must be rent by an arm of almighty power ; for it is a vail and curtain that the devil hath strongly wrought like a web with the warp and waft of pride, carnality, security, worldliness, and all other wickedness whatsoever, which are but so many threads and pieces of the web, this vail of enmity. There is a power of unbelief, that is another vail that on our part stands betwixt us and the holy place, and separates us from divine favour : *he that believeth not, is condemned already.*

The second thing, How the death of Christ hath rent the vail ; when he gave up the ghost, behold the vail was rent. 1. By the death of Christ, the vail of a broken covenant was rent in twain, so as

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we might get near to God thro' that vail of the law ; for the law was fulfilled in every part of it, by his obedience to the death. Was the precept of the law a perfect obedience ? Well, Christ by his obedience to the death did magnify the law, and make it honourable, brought in everlasting righteousness ; his death was the finishing stroke, the highest act of that obedience whereby the law was fulfilled. Was the promise of life in the law or first covenant forfeited by us ? Well, Christ rent this vail, by redeeming the forfeiture with the price of his blood ; he bought back the inheritance for us that we had lost, making a purchase of us and of eternal salvation for us. Was the penalty of death in the law standing also in the way ? Well, Christ comes in the sinner's room, endures the penalty, by coming under the curse of the law, becoming obedient to the death, enduring the wrath of God, and delivering us from the wrath to come : and so behold the vail of a broken covenant was rent. 2. By the death of Christ, the vail of God's injured attributes, that stood betwixt God and us, was rent and removed. Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, *by offering himself a sacrifice, Eph. v. 2.* This offering being through the eternal Spirit, it was of infinite worth and value ; here the altar sanctifieth the gift ; the altar was the God-head of Christ, the offering was made upon the altar of divine nature, and therefore this blood of Christ is called the *Blood of God*. This sacrifice was of infinite worth and value, for doing the business of poor man, in atoning justice, and so rending this vail. But now, as Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, by enduring the penalty and threatening of the law, so he hath vindicated the holiness of God, by fulfilling the precept and command of the law ; which he not only did thro' the whole course of his life, but perfectly finish'd

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in his death. Now if Christ hath fulfilled the law, satisfied the justice, and vindicated the holiness of God, by his obedience to the death, then we may see and say, *Behold the vail was rent.* But, 3. There is the vail of sin on our part ; how is this rent by the death of Christ ? Why, the lamb was sacrificed to rend and remove this vail ; *Behold the lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world.* By his death the guilt of sin is expiated, *for God sent him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, &c.* By his death the filth of sin is purged, *for the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sins,* and that both meritoriously, and efficaciously ; for by his death the power of sin is also broken fundamentally, seeing by his death he purchased the Spirit which in due time he pours out, and thereby actually removes the vail on our part, which he hath done fundamentally and virtually on the cross. By this purchased Spirit he rends the vail of darkness and ignorance : *The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, &c.* All the light of nature, reason, education, and human literature, cannot rend this vail, till the man receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of Christ. By this purchased Spirit he rends the vail of enmity, shedding abroad his love upon the heart ; and indeed the view and apprehension of God's mighty love in Christ, can rend that mighty vail of enmity, for we love him whenever we see that he first loved us, 1 Jo. iv. 19. When the soul sees the God whose majesty he dreaded, is now a God in Christ, reconciled to the soul thro' the sacrifice that Christ offered up, then the soul is reconciled to God, and so the vail of enmity rent in twain. By this purchas'd Spirit he rends also the vail of unbelief ; for as he is a Spirit of light to remove the vail of darkness, and a Spirit of

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of love to remove the vail of enmity, so he comes into the heart as a Spirit of faith, and removes the vail of unbelief. He begins this rent in a work of humiliation, when he rends the heart in twain with a sense of sin, and a sight of its undone state ; when he makes the soul confess its sin, and justify the Lord though he should damn him for his sin, he makes the rent of the vail wider by a gracious manifestation, like that, *John ii. 11. He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.* Thus he rends the vail of unbelief, and completes the rent of this vail, when faith is turned into vision. Thus you see how by his death the vail was rent.

The *third thing, In what manner was the vail rent?* All I shall say on this head, shall be in allusion shortly to the rending of the vail of the temple here, which we see was in a wonderful manner usher'd in with a *Behold*, 1. *Behold it was rent*, not only drawn aside, but rent. The curtain was not only drawn aside, but torn to pieces, as if God had been angry at the vail of partition between him and us ; angry at the vail of separation, and enraged that there should have been any vail to intercept betwixt him and us. God's heart was set upon a reconciliation betwixt him and us, and therefore his hand tears the curtain that was hanging betwixt him and us ; gave it such a rent, as it might never be whole again : all the devils in hell cannot sow up the rent, so as to disappoint Gods design of bringing his people into union and communion with him. Behold the vail of the temple was not only rent, but rent in twain ; the vail that was one, was made two, that God and man who were two, might be made one. It was not half rent, but wholly rent ; shewing that Christ by his death, would not be a half Saviour, but a complete Saviour, and the author of a full and complete salvari-

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on, taking intirely out of the way whatever separated betwixt God and us, not leaving so much as a stitch of the curtain to hold the two sides of the vail together ; no, the vail was rent in twain. And not only so, but, 3. *Behold the vail was rent from the top to the bottom. The vail was rent from the top ;* the highest thing that separated betwixt God and us was rent in twain ; we could never have reached up to the top of the vail, yea the hands and arms of all the men on earth and angels in heaven, were too short to reach to the top of the infinite justice and holiness of God, that interposed betwixt him and us. The top of this vail, this wall of partition, *was higher than heaven*, what could we or any other creature do for rending it from the top? But Christ put up his hand, as it were, to the top of the vail, and rent it from the top. The rent begins at the top, but it does not stop here : For, 4. *The vail is also rent to the bottom.* The bottom of this vail that did separate betwixt God and us, did reach as deep as the bottom of hell ; who could descend to hell for us, to rend the vail from the bottom? According to the lamentation of one *Joannes Seneca* upon his death-bed, *We have here*, says he, *some that will go to the quire for us, some that will play for us, and some that will say mass for us, and some that will pray for us ; but where is there one that will go to hell for us ?* But O happy believer, Christ is one that hath gone to hell for you, that he might quench all the flames of hell with his blood, and conquer all the powers of hell, that were in the way betwixt you and heaven. He descended to hell in a manner that he might rend the bottom of the vail. But there is yet more here, he not only rends the vail at the top, and at the bottom ; but, 5. From the top to the bottom all is rent, both the top and the bottom, and all that is betwixt the top and

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and the bottom, and all the impediments betwixt heaven and hell are removed. Though heaven be purchased, and hell vanquished, yet there might be something in the earth, something in the world, betwixt heaven and hell, that might obstruct the passage to the holiest ; ay, but the rent is from the top to the bottom, all that comes betwixt the top and the bottom, is rent as well as at both ends ; so that there is access from the lowest part of misery, to the highest happiness ; a long rent, in a manner from the top of heaven to the bottom of hell. We fell as low as hell by sin, but Christ by his death hath made an open way from hell to heaven ; for, *behold, the vail was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

The *fourth thing*, *For what end was the vail rent ?* I shall tell you only these two ends of it. 1. That Christ might enter into the holiest as our high-priest for us. 2. That we might enter in also after him, and through him. 1. I say, the vail of the temple was rent, that Christ our glorious high-priest, might enter into the *holy of holies* in our name. I told you, that the vail of the temple was that which parted betwixt the *holy place* and the *most holy*, and which kept off the people from drawing near to the *most holy place*. The vail was for concealment, that none might enter in within the vail but the high-priest, and he not to enter in without blood, the blood of of the sacrifice along with him, as you see, *Heb. ix. 3, 7.* Now the most holy place was a type of heaven. So our Lord Jesus Christ having shed his own blood, enter'd within the vail into heaven, the true *holy of holies*, carrying in with him the blood of his own sacrifice, *Heb. ix. 12.* *Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he enter'd in once into the holy place.* Not that Christ did carry into heaven his own substantial blood in his

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hand, we are not to understand it so carnally, but that in a spiritual sense, and virtually he did so. Under the law, the day of atonement was upon that day, when the high-priest went in to the *holy of holies*, Lev. xvi. 30. on that day the people were pardoned all their sins, and cleansed from all their transgressions ; when the high-priest had been within the vail, in the *holy of holies*, then was the atonement actually made. Tho' the blood was shed without the camp, yet the atonement was not made till it was brought into the holy place, Lev. xvi. 14, 15. What did this typify, but that our atonement was perfectly made upon Christ's going into the *holy of holies*, namely heaven ? See *Heb. xi. 24. For Christ is not enter'd into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* Perhaps you have thought hitherto that the work of our redemption was perfectly compleated on the cross, so as there was no more to be done ; but know, it was not enough for the sacrifice to be kill'd without the camp, but the blood must be carried into the *holy of holies*, all was not done till that was done. Indeed when Christ died, the sacrifice was slain, the blood was shed, there was not more sacrifice to succeed, all was finished in that respect ; but yet all was not done until the true vail being rent as well as the typical, the blood of Christ was carried into the holy place within the vail, that is, into heaven. Tho' Christ did not personally ascend, as I said in the explication, to heaven till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquir'd a right to enter, and had a virtual admission ; so that his entrance began in his death, and when he ascended into heaven, he compleated and perfected that in his own person, in the true *holy of holies*, heaven itself, which the high-priest did typically,

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cally, in the figurative *holy of holies*, which was of old under the law in the earth, and there hath Christ, in the power and virtue of his blood, made atonement ; and as the high-priest did under the law, he carried in with him all the names of all the tribes of *Israel* on his breast, and by the power of this blood of the sacrifice, made a full atonement. But then, 2. Another end of rending of the vail was, not only that he might make a way for himself, as our priest unto the most holy place, but that he might make a way for us in him, that we might enter in also, and have access to God through him, access to heaven thro' him. See therefore how the believer is said to follow in after Christ into the holiest within the vail, *Heb. vi. 19, 20.* They are said to flee for refuge to the hope set before them, *which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entring into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entred, even Jesus, made an high-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Heb x. 19. 20.* We have 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 vail, that is to say, his flesh. Where our way to heaven, or to the holiest, is said to be thro' the blood of Christ, or which is all one, thro' his flesh offered as a propitiatory sacrifice, by which, as by the rent vail, we have boldness to enter. Now this entrance into the holiest, or access to God we have in Christ, is two-fold, either inchoative here, or consummative hereafter. 1. There is an initial, inchoative, or begun entrance that we have into the holiest in time. In the most holy place was the golden altar, and symbols of God's presence and glorious majesty, and access thereto was typical of our access to God and heaven ; which access we now have with boldness even in time, through the rent vail

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by which our high-priest hath enter'd into the holy place, *Heb. iv.* last verse, *Seeing then that we have a great high-priest, that is past into the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.* And so it is inferred from this same doctrine, *Heb. x. 22.* *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* *Quest.* What is that nearness to God, and access to him, that a man hath in time when he is brought within the vail? *Ans.* In a word, it lies not only in the first application of grace, and change of the man's state, when in Christ Jesus he that was afar off is made nigh by the blood of Christ; for whenever the virtue of that blood comes upon us by the spirit of Christ, God comes near to us, and we are brought near to God; but there is still more and more nearness enjoy'd by his people. Exercised christians are able to give a distinct account of their having this nearness at some times, and of their want of it at other times. He may be suspected indeed for an hypocrite, that hath no changes, *Psal. lv. 19.* for the true christian's sky is never long clear and without clouds; change of weather and change of way, is usually found by travellers to heaven. Every believer indeed hath still the spirit of Christ dwelling in him; *for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; but there are some singular out-pourings of the Spirit promised and bestowed, and well known by all believers, and they are precious enjoyments. *This Spirit the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him, says Christ; but you know him, for he dwells with you, and shall be in you, John xiv. 17.* This access to God within the vail, is sometimes experienced in prayer, yea, most frequently in that exercise is the light of God's countenance lifted up, and the soul made to say, *I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication.*

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supplication. Do not ye believers, know this, that sometimes you have been so troubled that you could not speak? *Psal.* lxxvii. 4. that your hearts have been so bound and straitned, that you could do nothing, and say nothing before the Lord, but sit as dumb and oppressed, all dark above, all dead within, and all doors shut upon you? You durst not neglect prayer, and yet you could not perform it; but behold, you have quickly found the two leav'd gates cast open to you, your hearts enlarged, and mouths wide opened in asking, the windows of heaven open, and the banks of the river of life broken down, and the streams gushing in upon you, like that in *Isaiah* xlv. 3. *I'll pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.* Also this access to God within the vail is sometimes experienced in sweet communion and fellowship with God; *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This communion with God is a mystery, sweet indeed to them that have it, and surpassing all the delights of sense and reason; but to them that have it not, it is incredible and unintelligible, a stranger intermeddles not with this joy. Ye that know not what it is, although the word be full of suitable and savoury expressions of it, yet it is a riddle and dark parable to you, it is only tasting of it that can declare its transcendent sweetness. *O taste and see that God is good!* You that know what it is, tho' you cannot express it, yet you can relish and understand some sound words about it. It may be, you feel it sometimes at a communion-table, sometimes in a barn or cow-house, sometimes in the fields, or under a bush, as *Nathaniel* under a fig-tree: but what you felt you cannot make the world understand: only when the Lord directs the minister to speak somewhat suitable to it, then you're ready to think, O

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it is just like the thing I felt at such a time and such a place ; that which the minister is saying from God's word, hath a sweet sound of that which I got yonder, when none in all the world heard me or saw me : *But* (Nathaniel) *when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee*, says Christ. I heard your groaning to me, I saw your wrestling with me, I put your tears in my bottle, and poured in my comforts into your soul. O know you what it is to be brought near to him, and to have the clouds and vails that are on your hearts, or on your faces scattered, and the light of his countenance lifted up upon you? Have you not been sometimes on the mount, so as to think, *O how good is it to be here ?* Have you not known what the warm and healing beams of the sun of righteousness upon you are ? Have you not tasted that in his company that hath made all *the wells of worldly comforts like puddle water*, lothsome and unsavoury to you, yea, that hath made you groan in this tabernacle, and long to be at that complete and uninterrupted communion above, whereof all you tasted on earth is but a small earnest ? However, the vail was rent, that you might enter within the vail into the holiest, to a begun heaven even in time. Grace being the same specifically with glory, there is but a gradual difference ; and therefore the believer even on earth, is said to be *come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born that are written in heaven, to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*, Heb. xii. 22, 23. Why, when does the believer come to all this ? Even when he comes by faith to *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling*, then he is come to heaven itself, the true holy of holies inchoatively, or by a
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begun entrance. But, 2. There is a consummative entrance into the holiest, that the believer shall have, as a fruit of the rending of the vail, and that is, when he comes to the heaven above, to the higher house, *whither the forerunner is for us entered*, having rent the vail ; which was rent that we might have access to God in glory, as well as in grace, and then the believer will not be half in, as it were, but compleatly within the vail : for then will his communion with God be completed ; then his knowlege of God, his love to God, his delight in God, his vision of God's glory, his conformity to God's image, will all be complete, *for that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come*, 1. Cor. xiii. 10. O what a sweet exchange will that be, when faith will say to vision, I give place to you ; when hope will say to fruition, I give place to you ; when grace will say to glory, I give place to you ; when partial communication shall say to perfection, I give place to you ; when short transient views will say to uninterrupted everlasting joys, I give place to you ? Little wonder, then, if believers long to be wholly within the vail (but I insist not on it) for then indeed, he fully enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Thus you see the two great ends for which the vail was rent ; *namely*, that way might be made for Christ's entring into the holy of holies, and so for our entring in through him, and after him. But I come now to the

Fifth thing, viz. the application. Is it so, that Christ hath by his death rent the vail that interposed betwixt God and us, and obstructed our access to him ? Then, 1. For information, hence we may see, (1.) what a full feast of love we have to feed upon on a communion day, *namely*, the love of Christ, not only in dying, but in rending the vail,
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that he might enter into the holiest for us. The apostle says, that Christ loved us, and how does he prove it? *Eph. v. 2. He gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour* ; this savoury and sweet-smelling sacrifice, was the offering of incense, and where was the incense offered under the law? Why, it was offered within the vail. God tells *Moses*, that *Aaron* should take his handful of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail, *Lev. xvi. 12.* Now Christ having given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, without the camp in this world, he rends the vail, and goes to heaven, and offers himself as incense within the vail. Perhaps you have seen and thought upon the love of Christ, in his dying upon the cross, in his making himself a sacrifice ; but, O see his love also in his incense within the vail. We ordinarily feed too sparingly upon Christ, and therefore our faith is weak ; we eat for the most part, but of one dish, Christ as the Paschal Lamb slain on the cross ; but we should learn to feed upon Christ as a priest gone in within the vail ; our faith should not tarry on the cross, but we should carry it further, even after Christ within the vail, into heaven itself. Our faith should flee for refuge, to lay hold upon all the hope that is set before us ; the anchor of our soul will not be so sure and steadfast, as it might be, except it enter within the vail, *Heb. vi. 19.* As the apostle says of patience, *Let it have its perfect work*, so we say of faith, let it have its perfect work ; let us follow Christ within the vail, and view him, not only shedding his blood, but entering into the holy of holies within the vail, and sprinkling his blood upon the mercy-seat, and before it, *Lev. xvi. 15.* The priests under the law sprinkled the mercy seat which was within the vail, all over ; and when Christ went to heaven within the vail,

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he did that in substance which the priest did in ceremony, in order to make a full atonement : and when faith is acted upon all this, then the believer is said to be come to the blood of sprinkling. And we act not our faith far enough, when we act it not farther than the death of Christ ; for the atonement was not actually perfected, tho' it was made fundamentally on the cross, yet not formally, till upon the rending of the vail, our high-priest entered into the holy place, and sprinkled the mercy-seat with his blood, by which act mercy and justice are actually met and kiss each other. (2.) If the vail of the temple be rent, hence we may see the glory of the New Testament dispensation, beyond that of the Old ; the vail of the covering is rent, the darkness of that dispensation removed by the death of Christ, and Old Testament mysteries unveiled, so that now, he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see clearly, that the mercy-seat signified Christ the great propitiation, the pot of manna signified Christ the bread of life. Now we all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, as in a glass which helps the sight as the vail hindered it, and that the vail of the temple was rent, it may give us ground further to expect, that the vail shall be taken away from the hearts of the *Jews*, for *even to this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their hearts ; nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away*, 2 Cor. iii. 15. (3.) If by the death of Christ, the vail be rent, that is interposed betwixt God and us, hence we may see what is the way to heaven and what access we have this way. Why, *we have boldness to come to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way, that he hath consecrated thro' the vail. We may come boldly to the throne of grace, for the vail is rent, by the blood of Jesus the*
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way is open. How shall the unholyest of sinners venture to come into the holiest of all, or to God's presence? yea, says the Holy Ghost, *by the blood of Jesus*, by the rent vail. There are many mistakes about the way to the holy place: it is a dreadful thing to think, that many who have heard the gospel (it may be) ten, twenty, thirty years, if they be asked of the way to heaven, they will say, If we do justly, live honestly and civilly, and do as we would be done to, we shall surely be saved. But I tell you, you shall surely be damned if no more be done. O sad, that after all the light that hath shined about the way of salvation by the slain Son of God, that civility that is to be found among the heathens, is all the title that a great many have to eternal life. Others they hope to go to heaven by a better righteousness, but it is a righteousness of their own; they say they will do as well as they can, they must read, and pray, and hear, and the like, and so they find out a way to heaven for themselves. Some cannot endure to hear any thing spoken against self-righteousness, as if no body were in danger to be ruined by it; whereas this is a great part of the strong man's armour, whereby he keeps possession of souls. I tell you, sirs, your self-righteousness is so far from being the way to heaven, that true holiness itself, is but the business that people have to do who are in the way, there will never be another way to heaven but Christ; holiness is the walk, Christ is the way in which we walk, *Col. ii. 6. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. I am the way, no man comes to the Father, but by me. This is the new and living way, consecrated thro' the vail.* The vail of the temple is rent, and the way to the holiest lies thro' the rent vail. Every body thinks, that it is very hard to get to heaven, and that it will cost a great deal of

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time, and pains, and struggling ; but, says one, here is the mischief of it, people do not know, that it is hard to know the way to heaven, and that flesh and blood cannot reveal it, till God himself send in a beam of light upon the heart, and give the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, who is the way, having by his death rent the vail. O this way is little known, and yet we let you to know, that there is free access for you all this way, and nothing to hinder your access to God and heaven this way, if it be not your own ignorant unbelieving heart ; nothing to hinder your entering into the holiest, for the vail is rent, the law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied, holiness vindicated, sin is expiated. Will you go to heaven this way, man and woman ? for the door is open for you, the vail is rent for you, *to you is the word of this salvation sent*, to you old men and women, to you young men and women, whosoever hears me and to you is the way to the holiest made passable, and *whosoever will, let him come and enter in*, and *him that cometh, he will in no ways cast out*. What in all the world is to hinder you from coming in ? The law, however holy, needs not hinder you, here is a righteousness ; justice, however awful, needs not hinder you, here is a satisfaction ; your sins, however great, need not hinder you, here is a sacrifice ; all these vails are rent, what should hinder ? Are there any other vails to be rent ? O, say you, the vail of darkness, ignorance, enmity and unbelief that is upon my heart. Well, let me tell you, that needs not hinder you neither to come to Christ, and employ him to rend these vails on your part, that's but little for him to do, who could rend such great vails as were on God's part ; O he is good at rending vails, give him work, and the work is done. Did he not rend a greater vail, when he satisfied infinite justice,

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justice, and stopt the flood-gates of divine wrath? And if he hath done the greater, O will you not employ him to do the less? Why, say you, if I knew that he rent that great vail for me, I would not fear but he would rend the lesser; why, man, the vail was rent for sinners, and why not for you? *Nash* *Christ came to save sinners.* But, say you, all shall not be saved and brought within the vail, and perhaps not I. I answer, some shall be saved, and why not you? Wherefore are not all that hear his gospel saved, but because they will not give employment to Christ to save them? Through unbelief they think he meant no favour towards them, when he rent the vail, and so stand from him saying, It was not for me; but I declare in his name, it was for you, man, for you, woman, whoever will have the benefit of it. The gospel notifies in general, that the vail is rent for you all, so far as that God calls and commands you all to come into the holiest by this way, this new and living way, consecrated through the vail, and if you do not, you shall be damned for your neglect of it. But as for your particular personal knowledge of your actual interest in the benefit of this rent vail, it is impossible for you to have it, till you come to Christ and sue for it, therefore let nothing hinder you to enter, since the vail is rent, and the way made plain; you have nothing to do yourself, for you cannot rend any vail, all that you have to do, is to consent that Christ should rend all vails betwixt God and you, for he will be a complete Saviour, he will not leave a rag of the vail for you to rend, but with his own hand will rend all in twain from the top to the bottom. O say *amen* to it, that he may get all the work and all the praise.

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Use second for examination. Try what interest you have in this privilege, if the vail be actually rent from the top to the bottom, with respect to you ; try whether or not you have gone in within the rent vail of the temple, to the holy of holies. The vail was fundamentally rent, when Christ gave up the ghost, it was rent formally, when he entered in to the holiest ; the vail is rent objectively, in the preaching of this gospel, and now the question is, if the vail be rent subjectively, and so as you have the actual saving benefit of it in your own person ? It is not enough that the vail is rent doctrinally for you, so as you have liberty to go into the holy place ; but whether is the vail rent effectually to you, and in you, so as you have stept into the holiest by the rent vail. And,

(1.) If you be a believer indeed, to whom the vail is savingly rent, then you have got a humbling fight and sense of the vail that interposed betwixt God and you, and have seen yourself to be without the vail. Did you ever see such a vail of wrath on God's part, and such a vail of guilt on your part ? Such a vail of broken law, incensed justice and injured holiness on the one hand, and such a vail of sin, darkness, unbelief and enmity on the other hand, as hath made you to despair that ever the vail would be rent by you, or any creature in heaven or earth, and made you to see yourself lost and undone, crying out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved ?* Did you never see your sad state, as having a black vail standing up betwixt God and you ? Folk's soul exercise about religion is suspicious, if they never saw the vail. Some will say, O I have seen many ills about me, and I have an ill heart, and an ill frame of heart ; but I ask, man, did you never see yourself to be in an ill state, in a state of distance from God, in a

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state of separation from God, by reason of the vail that was betwixt him and you? The effectual rending of the vail begins here, *namely*, at a humbling fight of the separating vail, and so within the flood-mark of God's wrath.

(2.) If the vail be effectually rent in you, then you have seen the glory of him that rent the vail, and the glory of God through the rent vail, something of the glory of God in Christ. The apostle tells us, *Heb. x. 19, 20. That Christ's flesh*, that is, his human nature, is the vail for us to enter by to the holy of holies, that is heaven, or God's presence, God's face; so that in his flesh, or human nature of Christ, we may see the very face, the very brightness of the glory of God, as in a mirror. Now, if the vail be rent in you, and the face of the covering removed, then you have seen the glory of God in Christ; you have seen God's law fulfilled by him, God's justice satisfied in him, God's holiness vindicated by him, and so God's righteousness declared in the way of saving sinners through him, as the propitiation in his blood. Have you seen his glory as the *only way* to heaven, as God's *way* to you, and your *way* to God, as the render of the vail on God's part and yours, the glory of his death in the value and virtue of it; in the value of it, for rending of the vails that hindred God's access to you; and in the virtue of it, for rending of the vail within you, that hindred your access to God? Have you felt something of this virtue in rending the vail of darkness and ignorance that was upon your understanding, and shining in upon you with the light of life? The effectual rending of the vail makes a man see some glory that's within the vail; have you seen God's glory then thro' the rent vail, and that God's glorious attributes are all glorified to the highest in this way?

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3. If the vail be effectually rent, then you have *cast the anchor of your hope within the vail*, Heb. vi. 18, 19. After your soul, like a weary vessel, tows'd upon the waves of convictions, fears, terrors, could find no rest, God hath brought you at last into this haven of rest, to cast anchor within the vail ; *you have fled for refuge to the hope set before you, which hope you have as an anchor, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the vail, whither the fore-runner hath entered*. Whither have you fled for refuge, when the law and justice of God was pursuing you for your debt, when they were ready to condemn you to hell prison ? Was you then made to flee for refuge to the surety that God set before you, for paying of your debt, and to say, Lord, take bail of thy own Son for me, I despair of ever answering such a terrible charge as justice and the law hath against me ; but O look for a discharge in the blood and righteousness of Jesus, and let that answer the charge. When Christ entered into the holiest with his blood within the vail, he sprinkled the mercy-seat ; and when the soul takes hold of this blood and righteousness of Christ, as the ground of his acquittance from the charge of justice, then he *casts anchor within the vail*.

4. If the vail be effectually rent for you, then surely you cannot but have a superlative love for that glorious High-priest, who by his death rent the vail, and went into the holiest for you. O can you say with *Paul*, *He loved me, and gave himself for me* ? Or can you say with *Peter*, *Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee* ? Surely they that love him not, know nothing yet savingly about the rending of the vail. It may be some love him, and dare not so confidently say it as *Peter* did ; but if you can say *amen* to two texts of scripture, we may warrant you that you love him indeed. The one

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is a sad text, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. The true lover of Christ can say, *amen*, let them be even accursed that do not love him, and shall not love him. They that can say *amen* to that now, they shall sit at Christ's right-hand at the great day, and say *amen* to the sentence of the great Judge, *Depart from me, ye cursed*. The other is a sweet text, *Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*, Rev. v. 12. The true lover of Christ can say *amen*, worthy, worthy, worthy is the lamb to receive all the praises of all the redeemed to all eternity. They that can set the *amen* of faith to this now, they have begun to join with the triumphant company already within the vail, and they shall join with them forever hereafter, saying, *Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the lamb forever and ever* : indeed, if you love Christ at all, you love him with a superlative love, above husband, wife, children, lands, houses, goods, and worldly comforts. You do not love him at all, if you do not love him above all ? and if you love him at all, the vail is rent, and if you have got into the holiest in part, and if you'll have patience, yet a little while and you shall get in fully. It is impossible that a man that truly loves Christ, should ever go to hell.

5. If the vail be effectually rent, then all the vails on your part that continue to separate betwixt God and you, are matters of sad regret to you ; the vail of indwelling sin and corruption, the vail of darkness and ignorance, the vail of remaining enmity, the vail of unbelief, these vails are all whole and intire in the unregenerate ; and tho' in believers these vails be rent, yet they are not removed. Regenerating grace hath given them a rent that shall never be sewed up or healed again ; but yet, alas ! there

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are remaining vails within the believer, while here; tho' they be rent, yet they hang there, and many times sadly separate betwixt God and him; and hence he cries, *O wretched man, &c. ! O to be above corruption, O to be within the veil, that I may see him as he is, and be like unto him.* O, when shall all vails be removed? When *shall the day break, and the shadows flee away?* O, when shall the curtain be taken down? Christ stands behind the curtain, and does not manifest himself. Hath he been a veiled Christ at this communion, then I'm sure, believer, your heart will be saying, O that the curtain were drawn! O that the veil were rent into ten thousand pieces!

6. If the veil be effectually rent, then your heart will be effectually rent also; when the veil is rent, the heart is rent, and there is something it is rent for, and something it is rent from. (1.) Something it is rent for; it is rent for sin. Indeed the sight of the rent veil, or of God reconciled by the blood of Jesus, will rend the heart of sin more than all the thunders of Sinai, or flames of hell: *They shall look on him whom they pierced, and mourn.* When a man reads his sins, as they are written upon the cross of Christ with the red ink of his sin-pardoning blood, O then he reads them over with tears of joy, and his heart is kindly rent for sin; then he cries, *Behold, I am vile. When the veil is rent, the heart is rent, not only for his own sins, but for the sins of others; Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because of the wicked that break thy law. I beheld transgressors, and was grieved.* They that can see God dishonoured, and hear men curse, and swear, and blaspheme the holy name of God, and yet never be troubled about it, surely the veil remains upon their hearts, otherwise their hearts would rend for the sins of others, and of the generation: *Set a mark upon the foreheads of*

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them that sigh, &c. Again, when the vail is rent, the heart is rent for the Lord's anger and absence ; nothing fears them more than the Lord's anger. *O rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chastise me in thy hot displeasure.* Nothing affects them more than the Lord's absence ; for these things they weep, *mine eye, mine eye runs down with waters, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me.* O the little lamentation after an absent God, an angry God, at this day ! Again, when the vail is rent, the heart is rent for the calamities of the church, *Jer. ix. 1. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.* The miseries of the church, and the sins that bring them on, are heart-rending things to the people of God ; and particularly, their hearts are rent for the rents of the church, *For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.* For my own part, I am but a person of little experience in the world, and therefore I desire to be modest at this juncture, about the *present rent* among us. It is plain enough that *the anger of the Lord hath divided us*, and rent us in twain, like *the vail of the temple, from top to bottom.* God is angry because we have sinned. Surely, if we had been more valiant for the truth, and zealous for a covenanted work of reformation when we had fair opportunities for it, our rent had not come to such a height. But yet, tho' I cannot justify the ignorant zeal of many professors, whose hearts are rent from ministers, and they know not for what, they can give no reasonable account of their separating courses ; yet I hope there is a serious remnant, whose hearts are daily rent for the rents of the church, and the sinful causes thereof ; and I hope the Lord will help such to be regular in the way of their dissenting from whatever they reckon, upon

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upon solid grounds, to be the defection of the day they live in. But that I may not degress too far, I am telling you, that if the *vail* be effectually rent with you, then there are some things your heart is rent for, namely, for your own sins, the sins of others, the sins of the land, the sins of the church, the calamities of the church, the rents of the church. The Lord's anger with her, and absence from her, may indeed make you weep when you remember *Zion*, and hang your harps upon the willow-trees, while we are gone so far into captivity, and the glory is so far departed. In a word, *if the vail be rent with you*, your hearts will be rent habitually for all these things, as also for all your heart-plagues. Your heart will be so rent for your atheism, ignorance, enmity, carnality, hypocrisy, roving, wanderings, worldliness, and such like, that you'll be ready to say, as *Rebecca* said to *Isaac*, in another case, *I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth.* (2.) *If the vail be effectually rent*, then, as there are some things your heart will be rent for, so there are some things your heart will be rent from. Why, your heart will be rent from sin, as well as rent for sin; your heart will say with *Ephraim*, *what have I to do any more with idols?* What have I to do any more with lusts? All that expect to get into the *holy of holies* in the heavenly temple, are students of holiness and purity. *He that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* Christ having rent the vail, entered into the holiest with blood; and believers are daily sprinkling themselves with that blood, that so they may enter in, all sprinkled over with that blood also. Believers want not sin, and it cleaves to them here; but they are so far from cleaving to it, that it is the desire of their soul to be rent from it, and therefore their daily sins oblige them to make daily application to the blood of sprinkling. Again, *if the vail be*

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effectually rent, then your heart will be rent from the world. O but this globe of earth, and all the glory of it, looks but like a filthy mote, a piece of dung, *to the man who hath got his heart within the vail*. The glory of God in Christ darkens all created glory. What cares he for worldly pleasures, who hath Christ for his delight? What cares he for worldly profits, who hath Christ for his gain? What cares he for worldly honour, who hath Christ for his crown of glory? What cares he for the *world's all*, who hath Christ for his *all in all*? His heart is rent from the world. Again, when *the vail is rent*, the man's heart is rent from the law. *He that is married to Christ, is divorced from the law*, Rom. vii. 4. The law, as a covenant of *works*, the believer hath nothing to do with it. *He does not owe it a cup of cold water*, as one says, for Christ hath perfectly fulfilled the condition of the covenant of *works*; and therefore, if the law challenges him, he sends it to Christ for a perfect obedience; if the penalty challenges him, he sends it to Christ for a complete satisfaction. He desires with *Paul, to be found in Christ*, and would not be found in his own righteousness for ten thousand worlds; he sees so much unholiness in all his own holiness, so much unrighteousness in all his own righteousness, so much carnality in all his spirituality, so much earthliness in all his heavenliness, so much sin in all his duties, that he is sure God may damn him for all his best duties, as well as his worst sins; and therefore he hath no expectation from the law, but is rent from it, and join'd with the Lord Jesus, saying, *In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength*. In a word, when *the vail is effectually rent*, the man is rent from himself. 'Tis very hard indeed to rend a man from himself; self insinuates itself into all our praying, preaching and communicating. How-

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ver, the power of self is broken in all true believers ; instead of self-estimation, he is brought to that, *Behold, I am vile !* He hath never a good word to speak of himself, not a good thought to think of himself, but every time he prays, every time he communicates, he cries out, *Behold, I am vile !* Instead of self-justification, he is brought to that, *I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I will not answer, I cannot justify myself, but must condemn myself, and justify the Lord.* Instead of self-love he is brought to that, *I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.* Self-loathing and abhorrence takes place instead of self-will ; he is brought to that, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?* Instead of self-ease and carnal security, he is brought to that, *O what shall I do to be saved ?* And after the first soul-exercise about salvation hath landed in conversion, he is always exercising himself to godliness, giving employment to Christ to carry on and complete his salvation, and restless, till salvation be completed. Instead of self-fulness and sufficiency, he is brought to that, *In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing ?* he sees himself empty of all good, and filled with all evil. Instead of self-confidence and false hope, he is brought to that, *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.* They are brought to despair in themselves, and instead of self-righteousness, of which before, they are brought to that, *All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* Thus, in so far as they share of the saving benefit of the *rent vail*, so far are they rent from self ; and thus by these things you may examine yourselves, what interest you have in this priviledge of *Christ's rending of the vail betwixt God and you.*

Use third, For terror to unbelievers, who, tho' they hear the *vail is rent*, and so a free access to the *holy of holies* proclaimed, yet they are not at all concerned

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cerned about entering in by this *rent vail*. The door of heaven is open to you, but you will not come in ; the vail of the temple is rent, but you will not enter. O wretched creature, how can you answer that challenge, *John v. 40. You will not come to me that you might have life ?* You have no grace, no holiness, no repentance, no good thing ; but # says Christ, *you will not come to me, that you might have grace ;* you will not come to me that you might have holiness ; you will not come to me that you might have repentance ; you will not come to me that you might have all good things that you need. The *vail is rent*, the door is open, but you will not come in ; O *what will you do in the day of visitation, &c.* What will you do when he that rent the vail shall rend your soul and body in twain, and say, O flighter of the Son of God, come and give account — of what use you have made of the sabbaths, sermons, and communion seasons that you have enjoyed ? Perhaps you're little thinking on death ; but what know you but God will say to you, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee !* I defy all the ministers on earth to assure you that you shall live to get another offer of Christ to-morrow. Many here will not come again to-morrow, and many here may never have another venture for heaven. O what will you do, when he *that rent the vail*, that you might have access to God, will rend these heavens, and come down to judgment ; *Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him !* With what countenance will you look him in the face in judgment, when you did not care for a sight of his face in mercy thro' the *rent vail* ? O what a dreadful voice will that be to you, when he will say, *Rise, ye dead, and come to judgment !* Rise, ye undervaluers of the gospel, and give an account of yourselves ! Do you know, that while you're neglecting

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glecting the Gospel, and slighting the Son of God, you're saying with the *Jews*, *his blood be upon us and upon our children*? The guilt of the blood of Christ is upon you, and upon the generations after you, that follow your example; and O how terrible will it be, when he comes to make inquisition for blood, for the blood of God which you trampled under foot! O how will you then wish to be rent and grinded in pieces, when you shall find all the curses of the bible lighting upon you! O what will you do, when he that rent the vail, shall openly rend you from the company of God, saints and angels, and set you with the goats on his left-hand? When you shall see some of your acquaintances that are here, standing on his right-hand, how will you then think with yourself, O what ailed me, that I did not consent to the gospel as well as they? You now join with them in the same congregation, but your hearts are disjoined from them; you separate from them in your choice, your affections, your disposition and conversion; but e're long there shall be another kind of separation. You that will not come in among them thro' *the rent vail* now, there shall be a vail hung up betwixt you and them, that that shall never be rent; yea, the vail betwixt you and the glory of God: for *you shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*. He that rent the vail to pieces, will certainly tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver. Now the vail is rent betwixt God and you, so as you may come to God's presence with boldness, thro' the new and living way that is consecrated thro' the vail, and you shall have God, and Christ, and saints, and angels all welcoming you, *for the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and whosoever will, let him come*, for the vail is rent; but if once you go down by the sides of the bottom-
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less *Tophet*, the vail that then shall be placed betwixt God and you, will never, never, never be rent, so long as eternity lasts. You'll never hear again such — a sweet word ; and O what would you then give for such a word as that, behold the vail is rent, that you may come to God's favour and fellowship. But no such news shall be heard in hell ; now, only *now, is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation* : *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts* ; but think of coming into the holy of holies, when, you hear that the vail is rent, and nothing to hinder you.

Use fourth, For consolation to believers, to whom the vail is so effectually rent in twain, that from the marks given, they may conclude they have made some entrance within the vail, by coming to a God in Christ, and casting their anchor within the vail. I have a word of comfort to say to you, tho' perhaps you are still complaining of the many — vails that separate betwixt God and you ; yet a little while, and you shall have a triumphant entrance ministred unto you, into the holy of holies above, whither the forerunner hath for you entered : for *behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*, therefore you shall come *unto Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your heads ; you shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away*, and then all vails shall be rent and removed for ever. I'll tell you, for your comfort, of a few vails that then shall be rent ; for the rending of the vail of the temple promises the rending of all vails in a short while. (1.) Then, the vail of *sin* and *corruption* shall be rent in twain : all the rents, all the knocks, that sin gets by the word, the rod, the spirit, never rends a body of death from you, but still you are groaning under a sense of indwelling sin that separates betwixt God and you ; but then,

O then believer, this vail shall be rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and from the bottom to the top, both root and branch shall be rent and removed ; for when he shall appear, you shall be like him, your conformity to him shall be complete. You must go to heaven dragging a body of death after you ; but whenever you come to the port of glory, there will be a joyful parting : for you shall take an everlasting farewell of all your lusts and corruptions ; then you'll say farewell, with all your hearts, and glory to God that we shall never meet again. Blessed be God, we shall never see your face again. (2.) Then shall the vail of darkness and distance be rent in twain ; for then darkness will give way to light, glorious light : all distance will give way to presence, glorious and everlasting presence. Now you say, it cannot see him, he is far away ; but Christ says, *Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.* To be with me, where I am, there is distance removed ; to behold my glory, there is darkness removed. Darkness and distance now create doubts and fears, but doubts and fears will then take wings and fly away, never to return again ; for *the face of the covering shall be entirely removed*, Isa. xxv. 7, 8. (3.) Then shall the vail of ordinances be rent in twain. Now any view we have of God's glory is mediate, thro' the intervention of means and ordinances, and every glimpse we get of his beauty, is thro' the dim glass of duties and ordinances ; for *now we see thro' a glass darkly*, says the apostle, but the time comes, when the glass shall be broken, and *we shall see him as he is*, in an immediate manner, Rev. xxi. 22. *I saw no temple there, for the Lord God Almighty, and the lamb, are the temple of it.* And then shall the saints be able to say, the half of his glory hath not been told, when

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when they shall see him face to face, and not his back parts, or the skirts of his garments only. (4.) The vail of *scanty enjoyments*, and interrupted views will be rent in twain. The life of the saints here is mostly a life of desire, he can never get his desire fully satisfied, and when you get any desirable meeting with the Lord, why, it is but a taste and away, your desires are but increased thereby, and your melancholy wants remain unsupplied; but within the vail all desire shall be satisfied, all wants shall be supplied; for *in his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand rivers of pleasure for evermore*. No clouds, no night, no desertion there, no such complaint as this, O why hidest thou thy face? *mark* The best communion and enjoyment here admits of interruption, but that which is above, is uninterrupted; no tempting devil, no deceitful heart, no dismal cloud to darken their day, or interrupt their vision and fruition of God. Christ is here only passing by us, and as a way-faring man, that taries only for a night, yea, hardly for a night; no sooner does he enter, but he is away; no sooner does the heart begin to open to him sometime, than alas he is gone, *Song v. 6. I opened to my beloved, but he had withdrawn himself, and was gone*. But then their enjoyment shall be full and everlasting, and uninterrupted; for *so shall they ever be with the Lord*. Partial enjoyments will give way to eternally full enjoyments; for *when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away*. (5.) The vail of church disorders and confusion shall be rent in twain. Many times you have reason to sigh and complain, that matters are all out of order in the church, the vail of confusion and disorder is upon it, and the glory departed, nothing but clouds in our sky. Indeed we would gladly expect the rending of these vails that are upon the church, even

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ven in time, and even with respect to the church of *Scotland*. It is with the church as it is with particular believers ; the Lord usually brings them to an extremity, before he gives them a deliverance ; the darkeſt night may uſher in the cleareſt day ; *to them that fear his name, the ſun of righteouſneſs ſhall ariſe*. Whatever dark eclipse the ſun may be under at preſent, do not ſay the ſun is gone out of the firmament, becauſe it is a cloudy day, the clouds may grow thicker and thicker ; yea there may not only be clouds but rain, and perhaps a terrible ſhower of wrath is coming, many things look like it : but tho' there ſhould be both clouds and rain, ſay not the ſun is gone, and will never return and ſhine again ; he that rent the vail will rend the clouds in his own time. Yea, the rending of the vail of the temple did fore-tell good to the church. It, ſays he, will rear up a more glorious temple ſuch as is promiſed, *Iſa. liv. 11, 12, 13. O thou afflicted, toſſed with tempeſts, and not comforted ; behold, I will lay thy ſtones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with ſapphires, and I will make thy windows of agats, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleaſant ſtones*. Why, what is the meaning of all this ? See it *ver. 13. All thy children ſhall be taught of the Lord, and great ſhall be the peace of thy children*. You ſay, It is a time of great darkneſs in the church ; ſo it is indeed : but here is a promiſe of light that ſhall ariſe, *All thy Children ſhall be taught of the Lord*. Is it a time of great diviſion and contention ? So it is, but here is a promiſe of great peace, *great ſhall be the peace of thy children*. We hope there will be a more full accompliſhment of this in the church, even in time ; but when will all this come to paſs ? Why, we may come to be toſſed with another kind of tempeſt before that come to paſs ; for ſee how the promiſe is uſhered in, *O thou afflicted, toſſed with*

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with tempest and not comforted, then follows the promise of a pleasant issue. But withal never expect a perfect church upon earth ; we hope it will be more pure, but it will never be perfect, till *that which is in part be done away*. The time is coming, when the bride, the lamb's wife, shall be presented to him without spot or wrinkle, when the union of the saints shall be intire, and the communion of saints shall be perfect ; there will be no contention, no division, no disorder in the general assembly and church of the first born that are written in heaven. (6.) The vail of *militant graces* will be rent in twain, and nothing but triumphant graces will have the throne : *Now remains faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love*. Why, love is a triumphant grace, and faith and hope will resign to love the chair of state. There will be no need of militant graces in the church triumphant, — no need of faith, where vision is ; no need of hope, where fruition is ; no need of patience, where all tribulation is at an end ; no need of any fighting grace where there is nothing but victory, light, life, love, liberty, joy, glory. You have a fighting life of it here, but then a song of victory, victory for evermore. (7.) The vail of infirmities will be rent in twain. Here believers have infirmities in their bodies, that have no small influence on the actings of their souls ; infirmities on their souls, darkness and dulness in their intellectual powers ; infirmities of the new nature, tho' created in Christ Jesus, tho' supported by his power, and guided by his grace ; yet still it is a weak thing, like a new-born babe : but none of these infirmities are in them that are within the vail, they are become perfect ; *then shall we all come in the unity of the faith to a perfect man in Christ*, Eph. iv. 13. Then that scripture shall be fully accomplished, *Isa. xxx. 26. The light*

light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days. (8.) The vail of mortality shall be rent in twain; *For this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruption shall put on incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.* The vail of flesh, the clay-tabernacle will be rent in twain; *we know, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,* 2. Cor. v. 1, 2. O was you ever brought to that man's saying, O mortality, mortality, O time, time, that will not haste away, to let eternity come! Was you never content to shake the sand-glass of time to get into eternity? Was you never content to take death in your arms, and say, welcome, welcome, O friend, welcome news, that mortality shall be swallowed up of life. (9.) The vail of incapacity will be rent in twain. Now you are not capable of that glory which you shall be able to behold and contain in heaven; your eye is so weak, that you cannot behold the sun of righteousness shining in his strength. Tho' light be the most pleasing thing, to the eye, yet the meridian brightness of the sun cannot be looked upon without destroying the sight, because the faculty is not strong nor capable to receive the object; so it is here, we want a capacity to behold the light of glory; but within the vail, or in heaven, the faculty will be strengthened, and the capacity to hold an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, the want of which hath made some in time, when their cup hath overflowed with consolation, to cry out, Lord, hold thy hand, thy servant is a clay-vessel and can hold no more. Indeed it is little we get here below, and it is little we can hold, tho' we should get our fill; but in

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heaven the capacity will be so enlarged, that it will be able to hold a fulness of God, a fulness of glory, a fulness of the spirit, a fulness of joy at God's right hand, for ever and ever. (10.) The vail of *weariness* shall be rent in twain. Here we soon weary of praying and preaching, we soon weary of sermons and sacraments. I doubt not many here may be wearied to the heart with this day's work. Indeed little wonder that the carnal hearts say, what a weariness is all this work? for as one says, you may take a carnal man, tie him to a post, and then kill him with praying and preaching only. But even the spiritual man himself, while he hath a wearying body of death about him, he wearies of ordinances, he wearies of God's service; but in heaven within the vail, they shall serve him without wearying or fainting, *Rev. xxii. 3. There his servants shall serve him.* Their weary service here is hardly to be called a service, but there his servants shall serve him indeed. O will it not be a mystery, and a great wonder, if we who cannot pray half an hour to an end, and hardly hear an hour to an end, but we'll be toil'd, as if we had done some marvellous work, shall be brought to heaven, and never weary of the service of heaven! Here is comfort, believer; you shall thro' all the years of eternity praise him, and never weary. In a word, all the vails of troubles and trials will be rent in twain; *there remains a rest for the people of God.* The vail of sorrow and anxiety shall be rent in twain; for *all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, sorrow and sighing shall fly away.* The vail of sickness and uneasiness of body or soul shall be rent in twain; *the inhabitant of that land shall not say, I am sick, the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.* The vail of wandering thoughts and vain imaginations will be rent in twain; you shall not have a wrong thought
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or conception of God throughout all eternity ; for, all your heart-plagues, lusts and corruptions that you have been wrestling with all your days, will leave you ; and I'm sure you'll leave them with such pleasure and satisfaction, and be so glad to part with them, that you'll hardly shake hands with them, but rather say, the back of my hand to you. Many a sad hour, many a sigh and groan have you cost me, but happy am I, now I am quit of you for ever. And I cannot but say, that they who have now a glad heart to think of parting with these, and a meeting with Christ forever, they have gotten some communion with him this day. *Finally*, The veil of time will be rent in twain, and the streams of time will be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. O how will you say with wonder then, O hath such a black and ugly creature as I was, gotten glorious Christ in my arms, never, never, never to part again ! O how will his kind looks dart a sweetness and joy inexpressible into your hearts, when you shall be led with the Lamb about the rivers of living water, when time shall be no more ? Take all this comfort into your hearts, believers, for the God of consolation allows you to rejoice forever, and to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which you shall see, and be forever possess of within the veil.

Use fifth for exhortation. All I shall now say, is this, if the veil be rent in twain by the death of Christ, O then come and see, come and take, come and wonder, come and enter, come and sing. (1.) *Come and see.* When the seal was opened, *Rev. vi.* then the voice cried, *Come and see* ; so when the veil is rent, O come and see, come and see. Turn aside and see this great sight, the veil of separation betwixt God and us, rent in twain from the top to the bottom. What was to be seen within the veil of the temple, you are told, *Heb. ix. 4, 5.* *There*

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was to be seen the golden censer, the golden pot, the ark of the covenant, and over it, the cherubims of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat. What all these did signify, I cannot stand to shew ; but in short, they all pointed out the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Now is the vail rent, then look into the holiest, and see the glorious mystery of redeeming love ; see the wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and grace of God manifested brightly in the face of Jesus, who by his death rent the vail, that we might see heaven and the glory of it. (2.) *Come and take.* The pot of manna was within the vail, as you see in that fore-cited text, which signified Christ the bread of life. Now that the vail is rent, you may come to the holiest, and take manna ; if you go away fasting this night, it will be your own fault, for you have liberty to come and take, since the vail is rent. Christ himself is the manna, and if you take him, you take all things with him that you need. Do you need a pardon ? why, the opening of the vail is a proclamation of pardon upon a jubilee-day. In the year of jubilee, the priests entered within the vail into the holiest, and there was a discharge of debt, and liberty proclaimed ; so here is our jubilee, Christ our high-priest having rent the vail, and entered the holiest, he issues out his proclamation of indemnity, he proclaims pardon of debt. Many a bankrupt, drowned in debt, is in this green ; but behold, the cry is, *go forth ye prisoners of hope.* There is a pardon in this pot of manna, if you'll but take it ; yea, there is life to your souls, and death to your sins, in this pot of manna, if you'll take it. *Object.* But you'll say, I cannot take what is offered me. *Ans.* I wish you indeed knew your own weakness, and were sensible of it. *No man can come to me,* says Christ, *except the Father draw him ;* but O, hath God drawn you so far, as that you're willing to take Christ, tho' you

you can do nothing, and willing that Christ should take you? Do you know what it is to believe? It is not to do some great thing by your own power; no. It is a grace that hath two eyes; with the one it looks to a man's self, and sees his own utter weakness, saying, *Not that I am sufficient of my self to think any thing as of my self*; and with the other it looks to God, and sees his infinite power, saying, *My sufficiency is of God*. So that to believe, is to see that you can do nothing, and to employ the power of God to do all things for you, and in you, that you need. Now, when you're called to take Christ, you're called to take and employ the power of God to do all things that you're called to do, but cannot do of yourself; this power of God is in your offer, and you may give employment to it, *Isaiah xxviii. 5. Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me*. Did you ever know before that the power of God was at your service? Take hold of his power, and give employment to his power, saying, Lord, let this power of thine be put forth upon a weakling, that I may take Christ. Behold the Father offers him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; there is manna, indeed, which you have for the taking in this manner, saying, Lord take me, and I'll take thee. Let thy power and grace be glorified upon me. If you be in earnest, it is a bargain; for he never called a sinner to take his Son upon any other terms, but that they only consent that Christ take all the work, and take all the glory. 3. *Come, and wonder. Behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom*. Come and wonder, that all hindrances are taken out of the way of your access to God. Wonder at the love of God in sending his Son to rend the vail, wonder at the love of

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Christ in rending the vail, that you might have access to God, wonder that it was rent at all, wonder that it was rent in twain, wonder that it was rent from top to bottom, wonder at the thing, and wonder at the occasion of it. *Christ gave up the ghost, and the vail of the temple was rent.* The rending of the vail cost him his life, it cost him his soul, his soul was made an offering for sin, and then the vail was rent ; O, is there no wondering at this ? It would be an evidence of a good communion to you, if you were filled with wonder. A short wonder is better than a long prayer. (4.) *Come and enter.* Not only see, and take, and wonder, but also boldly enter into the holiest, not standing in the outer court, as it were, or behind the vail, gazing, or only putting in your hand by the rent vail, but come in wholly, and enter boldly. The vail is rent in twain, O then come and enter by the rent. You may all come boldly to the holiest, by this new and living way that is consecrated thro' the vail. O may such a dog, such a filthy dog as I come ? Yes, we use to say, *Open doors, dogs come ben,* the door is open, the vail is rent, let the dogs come in and get a crumb. The *Gentiles* are called dogs in scripture, and it is said, *without are dogs, murderers, forcerers, whoremongers ;* but to all the dogs that are without the vail, we in God's name, proclaim liberty to come in, and get what will save you and sanctify you. You'll say, you have nothing to bring with you, no grace, no good : I tell you, there is none here, but they have something to bring to Christ with them. What is that ? Have you not much sin and misery to bring with you ; have you not much want, weakness and wickedness to bring with you ? Come with all your ills in order to get all good ; come with your sins, and get grace ; come with your guilt, and get pardon ; come
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with your filthiness and get cleansing ; come with your wants and get fulness. Let dogs come in, and get a crumb, yea, a feast ; there is nothing to hinder you, since the vail is rent. The law is not in your way, for that is fulfilled ; the flaming cherubim is not in your way, for Christ hath rent the vail of God's wrath, and divided the *Red-sea* of divine vengeance that you might pass through. Have you a mind for heaven, men and women ? Here is the way, it lies thro' the rent vail ; and if you take not *this way*, you shall never enter there : for there are two porters that will keep all unbelievers out, namely, *justice and holiness*. *Justice* will say, I must be satisfied : *Holiness* will say, I must be vindicated, or else you shall never enter here. But if you come by this *rent vail*, you shall have open entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Christ will say to justice, let such a man in, for I have paid you all his debt ; holiness, let such a man in, for I gave you a perfect obedience for him, look upon him in me. This will satisfy both these porters to let believers pass. O then come and enter through *the vail that is rent*. Christless soul, who will satisfy justice and holiness for you ? These porters will never be bribed by you : Therefore O come and *enter by the rent vail*, for there is no other way to heaven. (5.) *Come and sing*. If you have made entrance, O sing glory to God in the highest that ever rent the vail. You might go home singing, if you took up the true meaning of the text, and turn it to a song, and sing it with understanding. *Behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom*. Behold the vail is rent, and shall never be whole again. Behold the work is completed by the Son of God, the work is done, and shall never be undone. To the author and finisher of this great work, be glory for ever. *Amen.*

CHRIST *the People's* COVENANT.

A

SERMON preached immediately before the Celebration of the LORD'S SUPPER, at *Dunfermling*, August 19. 1722.

To which is annexed,

The Substance of some DISCOURSES after the Sacrament, upon the same Subject.

By the Revd. Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

ISAIAH xlii. 6.

—*I will give thee for a covenant of the people.*

MY dear friends, if your ears be open, there are three things that you may hear this day. 1st, You may hear what ministers will say ; but that is a matter of small moment, and it is but a poor errand, if you be only come to hear what a poor, mortal, sinful fellow-creature will say to you : little matter what we say, if God himself do not speak to your hearts. Therefore 2^{dly}, You may hear what God says to you : this is a matter of greater moment

ment ; for God's speaking can make us both hear and live, though we were as deaf as stocks, and as dead as stones. He spake the *old* creation out of nothing ; and he can speak a new creation out of us, who are worse than nothing. Indeed it will be a wonder, if he do not speak terrible things in righteousness unto us, because of our sins ; and really, if he speak to us out of Christ, it will be dreadful. Therefore, *3dly*, You may come to hear what God says to Christ, and this is of the greatest moment of all. To hear what ministers say to the congregation, is a little thing ; to hear what God says to you, is a great thing ; but to hear what God says to Christ, is one of the greatest things that can be heard. God in his word speaks to the sons of men, and perhaps you have noticed that : but he speaks also to the Son of God, to his eternal Son ; and perhaps that is what you have little noticed to this day. Why, what says he to Christ ? Is it any thing that we the people are concerned with ? Yea, what he says to Christ is of the greatest concern to us, and it is this, *I will give thee for a covenant of the people.* O, might the great and eternal Father say to his great and eternal Son, who is one God with him and the eternal Spirit. ; yonder is a company of people meeting in *Dunfermling* about a communion-table, with a view to the sealing of the covenant ; but their work will be to little purpose, if they view not *THEE*, my beloved Son, to be the spring, the spirit, the life, the all of the covenant : their covenant will be but a poor bargain without *THEE* ; and therefore, *Behold, I will give THEE for a covenant of the people !* O a sweet saying as ever was said in the world ! And no wonder, for 'tis a part of a sermon whereof God himself is the preacher, and Christ is the text, and the Spirit is the voice that conveys it. If we had much of this Spirit with us, we might see how sweetly

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ly this glorious preacher handles this wonderful text, from the beginning of the chapter : O how sweetly does he speak of him in the first four verses, and how sweetly does he speak to him from the fifth verse and downward ! *First*, how sweetly does he speak of him, *Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth, &c.* That Christ is the subject here treated of, you need not question, if you compare this first verse with *Mat. xii. 18.* where Christ expressly applies it to himself. And now, when the Father here speaks of Christ, every word is a word of commendation ; he commends him for a good servant in his mediatory work, *Behold my servant, &c.* He commends him for a well-qualified Saviour, *I have put my Spirit upon him ; and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles :* he commends him for a meek Saviour ; *He shall not cry, &c. ver. 2.* He commends him for a tender-hearted Saviour ; *A bruised reed shall he not break, &c. ver. 3.* He commends him for an able Saviour, that will go thro' his work, maugre all impediments ; *He shall not fail, &c. ver. 4.* and *the isles shall wait for his law ;* the isle of *Britain* not excepted, and not forgetting *Scotland* in the north-end of it. *Secondly*, How sweetly does he speak to him from *ver. 5, 6.* And here notice both the divine preface to this part of the sermon, and then the divine discourse. (1.) The preface, shewing the glorious dignity of the preacher, *ver. 5. Thus saith the Lord.* Here the glorious *Jehovah* is commending himself, as it well becomes him, and none but him to do. Who is it that is speaking ? It is the Lord, the great Lord of heaven, earth, and mankind ; it is the Lord of all the heavens that is speaking ; he that created the heavens, and stretched them out ; it is the Lord of all the earth, that is speaking ; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it ; it is the Lord

Lord of all mankind that is speaking ; he that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that dwell therein. Why then, he is the God that hath authority to make the following covenant with the Messiah, and give a commission to him. Therefore (2.) Notice the divine discourse itself, and what he says to Christ, *ver. 6. I the Lord have called thee, &c.* He had spoken sweetly of him, and here he speaks as sweetly to him ; and in this speech is opened up to us the great mystery of the covenant of redemption betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity, and the opening thereof in time makes it a covenant of grace to us. And here we may see several parts of the indenture he binds and obliges himself unto.

The first piece of the indenture is, *I have called thee in righteousness.* Here is his vocation ; he takes not this office, of being mediator, upon him, without being called thereto ; and God called him thereto in righteousness. He was rightly called, for the right of redemption fell into his hand ; he was rightly called, for he was able for the work, and fit for it ; he was rightly called, for he was willing to the work, and voluntarily offered himself ; *Lo I come, &c.* He was rightly called, for as God did him no wrong, so he did himself right, and provided for the glory of all his perfections in this way.

The second part of the indenture is, *I will hold thine hand ;* that is another thing he says to him. Go, says he, and I'll hold thee by the hand all the way, I'll bear the expences of that hard service : Christ goes this warfare on God's charges, he bears equal burden in the work of our redemption. We are fools in our love, if we love not the Father as well as the Son. The three glorious persons of the adorable Trinity had all one will to it, and they

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go hand in hand about it ; *I will hold thine hand.*

The third part of the indenture, or the other thing he says to Christ is, *I will keep thee* ; I, says the great *Jehovah* to the God-man mediator, I will keep thee, when the sins of an elect world shall all meet upon thee ; when the curses of the law, the terror of justice, the vengeance of heaven, and the fury of earth and hell shall invade and encompass thee ; I will keep and preserve thee, and make all these red-seas to divide, and make way for thee to pass through triumphantly.

The fourth part of the indenture is in the words of our text, and it is one of the great and glorious things he says to Christ ; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles, &c.* Whatever be their malady, I'll give thee to be a suitable remedy. Have they broken covenant, I'll give thee to be a better covenant. But what of that, while they are ignorant ? Why then, *I'll give thee for a light of the Gentiles.* But what though they have light, if they have no sight too ? for a blind man hath no benefit of the sun ; why then, *I'll give thee to open the blind eyes.* But what though they have both light and sight, if they be still in a dark prison, bound and fettered there ? why, I'll give thee for this end ; *To bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness, out of the prison-house.* O but these are sweet promises made to Christ, and in him to us ; and the leading one that comprehends the rest, is in these words ; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people.* Where, without critical division, you may notice these two things, 1. The gracious designation and title that Christ bears, *a covenant of the people.* 2. His glorious ordination and appointment thereto, *I will give thee for that end.* 1. The gracious designation and title of honour that he bears, he is called a *covenant of the*

the people. And here he is described by his relation to the covenant, and by his relation to us by this means. His relation to the covenant is such, that he is designed the covenant itself; he is the head and the heart of the covenant, he is the foundation and top-stone of the covenant, the bottom and top of the covenant, *the Alpha* and *Omega* of the covenant, the first and the last letter of the covenant, the all in all of the covenant. The first covenant-head brake and fell; and he falling, all his seed fell: the second covenant-head stands; and he standing, all his seed stand in him; *My covenant shall stand fast in him.* Again, his relation to us by this means; to whom is he a covenant? Even a *covenant of the people*, of the *Gentiles*. O good news to us poor *Gentiles*! (2.) His glorious ordination and appointment unto this business, *I will give thee*; and here also every word hath some glory in it. Here is the glorious person ordaining him, 'in the pronoun *I*, *I Jehovah* do it; here is the glorious person ordained in the pronoun *Thee*, *I will give Thee*; here is the glorious manner of the ordination, it is by way of free and gratuitous gift, *I will give thee*; and here is the glorious reason and moving cause of the whole, even the sovereign will of God, *I will give thee.* But the further explication of these particulars, I refer to the prosecution of the doctrine.

OBSERV. *That, by divine ordination, Christ is the covenant of the people.* The only scripture I name for the confirmation is, *Isa.* xlix. 8. where you see the vision is doubled, because it is true.

The method I would endeavour, through grace, to follow, is. I. To offer some remarks concerning the covenant in general. II. Shew how Christ is the covenant, and in what respects he bears that name. III. Inquire for whose behoof he is so; and thus

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thus shew that he is the covenant of the people. IV. By whose authority he is so ; and here speak of his divine ordination, and being given of God for that end. V. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, why he is given to be a covenant, and why a covenant of the people. VI. Draw some inferences for application.

The *first* thing is, To offer some remarks concerning the covenant in general ; and I confine them to these four, which are imported in the text and doctrine.

The *first* remarkable thing imported in the text is, that the covenant of works is broken, and cannot save us ; and we are broken and cannot save ourselves. There was a covenant of works made with the first *Adam*, and his seed before the fall ; and therein God was upon these terms with man, *do and live* ; and if you do not, you shall die. In this law of works, there was a precept and a sanction. The precept is, *Do this* ; that is, perform perfect and personal obedience ; the sanction is, *If thou do not, thou shalt die* ; importing that the reward of obedience was eternal life. The man that doth these things shall live in them ; and that the punishment of disobedience was eternal death. The soul that sinneth shall die, *Gen. ii. 17*. Now, as by the fall of mankind, the precept of doing is broken, and the penalty of *dying* is incurred, and eternal life forfeited ; so our salvation is impossible without a perfect righteousness ; a righteousness of obedience, performing the precept of the law, and so entitling to life ; a righteousness to satisfaction undergoing the penalty of the law, and so delivering from death : the former is impossible to us, for we are dead in sins and trespasses, and so can never perform any duty acceptable to God, far less every way perfect obedience : the latter is impossible ;
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for being both finite and sinful creatures, we can never give infinite and sinless satisfaction, and so we are broken and lost by the breach of this covenant. There are four things upon this particular, that I presume, you all profess to know, namely,

1. The tenor of this covenant of works : *That when God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life, or works with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.* 2. The breach of this covenant ; *That our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God, and particularly by eating the forbidden fruit.* 3. Our concern in this original apostacy and fall in *Adam* ; *That the covenant being made with him, not only for himself, but for his posterity ; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression : for by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, or in whom all have sinned.* 4. The fatal, woful effects of this fall, and breach of the covenant of works ; namely, *That, by this means we have fallen into a state of sin and misery ; that our state is a sinful state, we being guilty of Adam's first sin, wanting original righteousness, and our whole nature being corrupted, whence proceeds all our actual sin ; and that our state is a miserable state, having lost communion with God, being under his wrath and curse, liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.* Why, *The wages of sin is death, and we are children of wrath ; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.* It may be, it is long since ye knew these things in your *catechisms* ; but, O how long is it since you believed them ? or do you believe them yet ? Have you

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you seen your fall in *Adam*, and your woful, sinful miserable state by nature, through the breach of the covenant of works? If you were convinced of this, surely, the news of another covenant would be welcome to you. But then,

The *second* remarkable thing imported in the text is, That there is a covenant of grace provided for the recovery of some, by Jesus Christ, from a state of sin and death, to a state of righteousness and eternal life; or ye may take it thus; God having out of his meer good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them, &c. Hence such scriptural expressions as these, *By grace ye are saved, not by works of righteousness that we have done; for if there had been a law (namely of works) which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law*, Gal. iii. 21. Now this covenant of grace may be considered, either in its original transaction from eternity, or in its actual manifestation in time. 1st, Consider it in its original transaction from eternity betwixt the Father and the Son; God's having, in his eternal decree of permitting the fall, foreseen the ruin of mankind, by the breach and violation of the covenant of works, graciously purposed, not to proceed against all mankind, according to the demerit of their transgression, in the execution of that death upon them, which that covenant threatened; and therefore a council of peace is called from eternity, and the proposal made concerning the shewing mercy to an elect number, in a way that should be to the honour and glory of God's holiness, which says, they must do perfectly; and of God's justice, which says, they must die eternally. Well, none in all the creation of men and angels were able to satisfy this proposal; then says Christ, *Lo, I come*, Psal. xl. 8. I offer myself to
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be their surety, to give a perfect obedience to the law, which was the condition of the covenant of works, and to give infinite satisfaction to offended justice, in answer to the penalty incurred through the breach and violation of that covenant. *Lo, I come* : since the law cannot be fulfilled without doing, nor justice satisfied without dying, lo, I come to do both ; and seeing this undertaking must be accomplished by one who is both finite, that he may die, and infinite, that he may conquer death and wrath ; I offer to do it in their nature, and by an unspeakable mystery to become flesh, *Lo, I come* ; let the impannelled criminal go free. The Father, being infinitely well pleased with this consent, encourages his eternal Son, enters into a covenant with him, calls him, qualifies him, promises to uphold him in the whole work, and to give him for a covenant of the people ; and that for making his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and see the travel of his soul, and be satisfied, *Isa.* liii. 11. This is called by many, *The covenant of redemption* ; not that it is another covenant of grace, but I take it as another consideration of the same covenant. It was made with Christ as the second *Adam*, and in him with all the elect as his seed. As it is made with Christ, it is properly *conditional* to him, the condition being perfect obedience, and complete satisfaction ; but as made with the elect in him, it is *absolute*, consisting of free and absolute promises to them. But, 2^{dly}, Consider it in its actual manifestation in time ; and here, omitting what might be said of the legal administration of it under the Old Testament, and the evangelical administration under the New, I shall only say, That as the transaction betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity is the fountain, so this manifestation of it in time, is the opening of the fountain ; and the grace of God

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is manifested in this covenant of grace, several ways, (1.) In that he freely provides a Saviour for lost sinners, shewing by the gospel that he hath made this provision. (2.) In that he freely offers to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation in him. (3.) In that he not only calls and commands them to come to him by faith, as the mean to interest them in him, and to believe in him for salvation ; but, (4.) Promises his Holy Spirit to work in them that faith, and all other saving graces. And tho' this, and all the other absolute promises of the covenant, shall certainly be accomplished, and actually applied to the elect only ; yet in the external dispensation of the gospel, and administration of the covenant, they are revealed and exhibited in a general indefinite way and manner, with an universal offer and command to all and every one that hear this gospel, to plead them, and lay hold upon them ; that in this way the hearers of the gospel may be left inexcusable that embrace it not ; and that the elect may be gathered in, made to believe, and come under the bond of the covenant.

The *third* remarkable thing imported in the text is, that there is an oneness and identity betwixt the covenant of grace, as made with Christ, and as made with us in him : both are one and the same covenant ; for here the Father is contracting with the Son, I will give thee for a covenant of the people ; and therefore that with the Son and with the people belong to one and the same covenant. And hence I find our standards make the covenant of redemption and grace to be one and the same covenant ; Christ and the people are but two subjects of one and the same covenant. With respect to Christ, it had it's constitution from eternity, with respect to us, it hath its application in time, therefore it is called, *The grace given us in Christ before*
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the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9. And eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began. Tit. i. 2. As the first Adam was our public federal head, and he and we included in one and the same covenant of works ; so Christ our second Adam, is our public head, and the covenant of grace with him and us is the same covenant, tho' he alone is the head, surety and mediator, to whom some promises and precepts are peculiar : however, he being the covenant of the people, all things promised unto, or to be performed by the people, are secured in the contract with Christ ; all the conditions of life to be performed, are found in him ; yea he undertakes, in that covenant, the removal of all obstructions and impediments from within, that would hinder their attainment of covenant-mercy, being given for a light to the Gentiles, to take away the inward blindness that is found in them ; so that not only all necessities for redemption, but also all necessities for the powerful and effectual application of that redemption, are first promised in the covenant to him, and then to us in him, upon his fulfilling the condition of perfect obedience. Is justification promised ? it is first to him, and then to us in him, Isa. liii. 11. By his knowledge, or by the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many. Is sanctification and the Spirit promised ? It is first to him, and then to us in him, ver. 1st of this chapter, I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Is glorification promised ? It is first to him, and then to us in him, Rom. viii. 17. If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. He and the people are all in one and the same covenant ; he, as the glorious head, surety and representative, having all fulness in him, both of grace and glory, for our use and behoof ; and we, as members of that

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body whereof he is the head, and in a way of union to him by faith ; for all the promises, not only some, but all the promises of God are in him, *yea* and in him *amen* ; twice in him, importing that as the covenant of grace, which is the covenant of promises, is made jointly with him and us. So is the constitution of the covenant, the promises are all made to him, and in the application of it, they are made to us in him ; primarily and mediately they are made to him, secondarily and immediately to us in him. Hence the fourth thing remarkable imported in the text is, that Christ is the center, in whom all the lines of the covenant do meet ; and so, by an usual figure, of the part for the whole, he bears the name of the whole covenant ; I will give him for a covenant of the people : the covenant of grace is said to be not only made with him, but he himself is the covenant. And this leads me to the

Second thing, to shew how Christ is the covenant, and in what respect he bears that name. And, (1.) Christ is the covenant of the people, *radically* and *fundamentally*, being the root, basis and foundation upon which the covenant of grace stands, the alone foundation. Other foundations can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ, *Cor.* iii. 11. He is the sure foundation that God hath laid in *Zion*, *Isa.* xxviii. 16. The covenant of works being built upon something in man, it was not sure work ; and so the fabric tumbled down ; but the covenant of grace and mercy is built upon a never-failing foundation, it is sure work to eternity ; and therefore says God, *Mercy shall be built up for ever* ; Why, ——— *I have made a covenant with my chosen.* Christ is the antient and eternal foundation of the covenant ; no other foundation is laid in *Zion* in time, but that which was laid in the council of peace
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from eternity. God hath promised nothing to us in time, but what he purposed and promised in Christ from eternity ; he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, *Eph.* i. 4. and promised eternal life in him before the world began. He is the foundation of all the blessings and privileges of the covenant, being made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He is the foundation of all the promises, graces and comforts of the covenant. This is a large field, but I go on. (2.) Christ is the covenant *relatively*, in respect of the relations he comes under to it. We find in scripture, that he is called the *Mediator* of the covenant, *Heb.* ix. 15. Why ! he brings God and man that were at variance, to meet amicably ; by the price of his blood he brings God to us, and by the power of his Spirit he brings us to God, and makes up the difference. He is called the *testator* of the covenant, *Heb.* ix. 16. *Where a testament is, there is the death of the testator* : he hath signed all the articles of it with his blood, and so confirmed it, and made it a testament. He is called the *messenger* of the covenant, *Mal.* iii. 1. When God would communicate his mind to us, it is in Christ ; when we would communicate our mind to God, it is in Christ. Whatever message God hath to us, or we to him, Christ bears it, and makes the travel, be the journey never so dangerous ; for this is he that came by water and blood, *1 John* v. 6. He came by sea, by a sea of water for our sanctification, for if he wash us not, we have no part in him ; and by a sea of blood for our justification, for without shedding of blood there is no remission : a dangerous voyage for bearing the message. He is called the *witness* of the covenant, *Isa.* lv. 4. *I'll give him for a witness of the people* ; he is the true and faithful witness. As he was an eye

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and ear-witness to the whole transaction of the covenant from eternity ; so he sets his seal to the articles of it in time, and bears witness by his word, by his blood, by his spirit. This he does effectually, sometimes in the hearts of his people, when he conquers all their unbelieving doubts and jealousies of his word, and suspicions of his love, or of his Father's kindness. He is called the *surety* of the covenant, *Heb. vii. 22.* He is the surety both for debt and duty : surety for debt ; the law demanded of us a debt of infinite suffering, the just demerit of our sins, which, if laid upon us, would sink us for ever ; for the wages of sin is death : and also it demanded a debt of perfect obedience, and universal holiness and righteousness. Now we are insolvent debtors, drowned in debt, and unable to pay a farthing ; and unless there be a surety for us, we cannot escape the prison of hell, and the everlasting wrath of the omnipotent God. Behold, the surety steps in, in this hopeless state we were fallen into, pays the debt to the least farthing, and put his name into our bond, was made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law. And then he is surety for duty, promising to put his spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes. He is surety for both sides of the covenant, surety that all that God hath said and promised shall be accomplished, and surety than all that we are obliged to do, shall be done for us, and in us. O sweet and gracious covenant ! In a word, he is the *servant* of the covenant, *Behold my servant, &c.* Wist ye not, says he to his parents that were seeking him, that I must be about my Father's business ? What business ? what service ? The hardest service that ever was, even to satisfy justice, to fulfil the law, to conquer *Satan*, to purchase heaven, to save an elect world, to endure the contradiction of sinners against

gainst himself, in accomplishing this service. He is the performer of the covenant, yea, the performance itself. Christ standing in all these relations to the covenant, may well be called the covenant of the people. (3.) Christ is the covenant *substantially*, in respect of his being the very matter of the covenant, the principal part of it, the principal promise of it. He is the substance of all the promises, the first thing promised; and what ever is promised else, is for his sake. He is the promised seed, spoken of to *Adam* and *Eve*, to *Abraham*, to *David*, Gen. iii. 15. Gen. xxii. 18. Luke i. 32, 33. He is the substance of the prophecies, to him gave all the prophets witness, *Acts* x. 43. He is the substance of all the shadows, and Old-testament types: he is the true brazen serpent that heals diseased souls, the true manna and bread of life, the true sacrifice and paschal lamb, whose blood being sprinkled on the door posts of the soul, saves from the destroying angel: of all the types he is the antitype, the substance; in a word, he is the substance of the whole bible, and of all the scriptures, *These are they that testify of me*. It is an odd text that a gospel-minister cannot find Christ in, since the whole scriptures testify of him, as if it said nothing else but Christ, Christ. Thus he is the covenant *substantially*. Again, (4.) Christ is the covenant *eminently*, in point of eminency, ornament and excellency: He is the ornament of the covenant, the excellency and sweetness of it; he is the blessing of all the blessings of the covenant, the mercy of all the mercies, the soul of all the privileges of the covenant: no blessing of the covenant is a blessing without him, for all blessings come with him; *How shall he not with him freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. The covenant is nothing without Christ, the blessings of it are nothing without Christ; he is the

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sweetness of all the blessings of the covenant, the marrow of all the mercies of the covenant, and the fulness of all the promises of the covenant ; they are all empty without Christ, for he is all in all : and therefore, O empty ordinances, without Christ ; O empty sacraments, if Christ be not there ; O empty ministers, if Christ be not with them ; yea, O empty heavens, if Christ be not there ; empty enjoyments, empty comforts without Christ. (5.) Christ is the covenant *meritoriously*, and in point of acquisition and procurement ; he does all that is necessary for the procuring the blessings of the covenant : his righteousness is the great condition of the covenant, the alone condition of it, properly so called ; it is the cause, the procuring cause of all covenant blessings. All that is promised to Christ, or to us, is upon the account of his obedience, *Isa.* liii. 10, 11, 12. *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*, not by the obedience of any man for himself, *Rom.* v. 18. He is the procurer of justification, *Rom.* v. 18. The procurer of remission of sin, *Rom.* iii. 24. The procurer of peace, *Isa.* liii. 5. Yea, the sum of it, for *he is our peace* ; the procurer of access to God, and communion with him ; all that are afar off, are made nigh, only by the blood of Christ ; the procurer of sanctifying grace, *Isa.* liii. 10. *1 Cor.* i. 30. and of eternal salvation. His death is the purchase of the heavenly inheritance ; and so he is the covenant *meritoriously*, in procuring all the blessings thereof. (6.) Christ is the covenant *efficaciously* or *efficiently* ; as he procures all by the price of his blood, so he applies all by the power of his Spirit. By this powerful Spirit of his in the efficiency of his application, by means of the law, he discovers to men their sad condition, while under a covenant of works : by the means of the gospel, he discovers the excellency of the covenant of grace, and also
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their claim to it, in, and by the indefinite general dispensation of the gospel, and the promise of the covenant ; so that, whoever will, may come, and put in for a share. But this is not all ; Christ, in his efficiency, does persuade and enable the poor soul to take hold of this covenant of Christ, himself, as the all of the covenant, and that with particular application to itself, for its own relief ; and not only to accept, but to trust to it for all grace and life ; and that upon the warrant of God's word of grace, renouncing all other ways of salvation, and resting only upon this, 1 *Tim.* i. 15. *Acts* xv. 6. Yea, after the person is brought within the covenant, Christ is the great performer of all covenant duties, he performs all our works in us, *Isa.* xxvi. 12. We are to present no duty of our own to God for acceptance, or in order to obtain life and salvation by it ; but to present him with Christ, he being the covenant to perform all for us, and in us, which we are obliged to. In a word, he is engaged, as the covenant of the people, to be all, and to do all, to procure all, and to see all made effectual that concerns grace and glory : I will give him for a covenant of the people, says the Lord ; I will not enter into covenant, or deal with them in an immediate way, as with the first *Adam*, but I will take a surer course, I will give thee for that end ; thou shalt undertake all the matter therein ; I will look to thee for the performance thereof. Man hath broken covenant, I will not trust him again ; but thou shalt be the covenant, the promise of life shall be made only in thee, and the condition of life shall be found only in thee, thus he is the covenant.

The *third* thing was to shew for whose behoof he is a covenant ; and so to shew that he is the covenant of the people. Men and women have a way of excluding themselves by unbelief ; but I am
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sure my text will exclude none this day, that are here, from a right to accept of this covenant, unless it be the devil himself. He indeed, and all the fallen angels are excluded: and no doubt, he has come here among us this day, to tempt people to exclude themselves, because he himself is excluded. But here is a foundation of faith for all the people that hear this gospel; Christ is the covenant of the people, insomuch, that whosoever of all the people shall subscribe to this covenant, and go into it by faith, shall have the everlasting benefit of it. *Quest.* Why, say you, I'm (it may be) none of the people here meant, none of the elect, whose names are in that covenant and contract, and therefore my subscribing it may be vain? *Ans.* For the clearing of this, that Christ is the covenant of the people, you would know and remember, that there are two copies of this covenant, or rather (if we may so express it) two writs of this charter, the one is an original written in heaven, and the other is an extract written in this bible. (1.) I say, as to the original, it is written in heaven, and hath all the names of the church invisible inrolled in it, *Heb. xii. 23.* They are called *the church of the first-born that are written in heaven*; or as it may be read, *inrolled in heaven*. In this writing are the names of all the elect, of all that ever were, are, or shall be actually taken in within the bond of the covenant; and these are they of whom it is said, *They are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4.* And again, *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, Rom. viii. 30.* And again, *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me; all that were ordained to eternal life, believed*: and of them Christ says, *I lay down my life for my sheep.* This original draught of the covenant, is a writ locked up in the cabinet of God secret purpose; and

and secret things belong not to us, but the things that are revealed. Therefore, (2.) There is an extract of this original writ, and this extract is written in the bible, which is the book of the covenant. This you have among your hands, and this copy of the covenant is sent open to you all to sign and subscribe, by giving faith's assent and consent to the covenant, or closing with Christ, the covenant of the people, as he is offered in the gospel. Now, tho' this extract be a true copy, answering exactly to the original ; yet, for rendring all inexcusable, to whom these presents are sent, if they do not subscribe, and for gathering in all the elect, this fair extract is directed to all and every one of you, giving you full and sufficient warrant, to sign and subscribe for yourselves ; for you cannot possibly see your names in the original, till once you have signified your consent, by subscription to the copy which is here let down to the earth, to see how you are pleased with it this day. And if you sign the extract as it is sent to you, then you may lay claim to the original and see your name there, which alone is the privilege of those that make the extract their own by signing it ; for *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant* ; he shews them sometimes their names in the original writ of the covenant. It is the settled order of heaven, that altho some, who by faith subscribe the extracted copy are kept in the dark, about their names being in the original ; yet none shall see their names there, but those who subscribe their names here. *Quest.* But what serves my putting my name to the foot of a bond, if my name be not in the bond itself ? Why, then, read the direction of this gospel-covenant, and see if your name be there, and answer to your names ; for I shall endeavour to be as practical, as I go along, as possible, that I
may

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may have the less to do in the application. For whose behoof then is he thus the covenant? Why, it is even for the behoof of those whose names are here set down; and tho' they may not find their particular names, *John, James, Mary, Martha*; yet their general names, yea, both their more general and their more special names are here. (1.) Their more general name is, *the people*, he is the covenant of the people. And here all sinners of mankind, who hear of Christ, have a claim to put in for a share in him, seeing the covenant is directed to them; whosoever they be that hear this gospel, all saving benefits are preached to them by Christ Jesus, according to the ministerial commission, *Preach the gospel to every creature*, Mark xvi. 15. and according as the Apostle hath taught us to execute this commission, saying, *To you is the word of this salvation sent*, Acts xiii. 26. And in this sense the Apostle says, *Tit. ii. 11. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men*; or, as it may be rendred, as you see it in the margin of some of your bibles, the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared. Let them straiten the gospel-offer who will, they do at their peril; our commission is wide and full, insomuch, that this covenant is directed to all to whom these presents may come. If this be your general name, that you are one of the people, be what you will otherwise, then you are concerned to answer to your name, and put in for a share of the grace of this covenant, by subscribing and saying, *amen* to it. Why, say you, that is a general name indeed; I dare not deny but that is my general name; then men and women, do not put this covenant away from you. But, say you, is there no more special names of the people, whose covenant he is? Yea, (2.) Their more special name is here set down in
black

black and white ; for who the people are, and what people in a special manner is here meant, is cleared in the following words, *A light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, &c.* And here you will find both the name and surname of the people intended ; and I believe, your names and surnames, that hear me, will be found in it. 1st, The name is *Gentile*. 2^{dly}, The surname is *Gentile, dark and blind ; Gentile bound and imprisoned.* 1st, I say, the name of the people, whose covenant he is, is *Gentiles* ; and I know well that this is the name of all that hear me, if there be not *Jews* here ; if I thought there were any, I would drop some promise of Christ to, and concerning them, that might draw them to him also, if the Lord would put forth power with it. However, it is to you *Gentiles* that I am speaking ; and O may I venture to say with *Paul* this day, *To me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, to preach among you Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ !* This is a part of the mystery of godliness, Christ preached to the *Gentiles*, 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. It was a mystery to the *Jews* and primitive christians, when Christ was first given by a preached gospel, to the *Gentiles*, *Acts* xi. 17, 18. Why ? the *Gentiles* were called the uncircumcision, *Eph.* ii. 11. being abominable outcasts whose entering into the temple was enough to pollute it ; but now the gospel declares, God will justify the uncircumcision by faith. The *Gentiles* were called, *aliens without God, without Christ, without hope, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise*, *Eph.* ii. 12. But now the covenant of promise is given and exhibited to the people that were aliens. *Gentiles* were called *dogs* ; *It is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it to dogs*, says Christ to the woman of *Canaan*, one of the posterity it seems of these accursed nations

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nations that were devoted by that word, *Gen. ix. 25. Cursed be Canaan.* And indeed the *Gentiles* and *Canaanites*, as they were contemned by the *Jews*, and looked upon as *dogs* ; so, in comparison of the house of *Israel*, who were so much blessed, dignified and privileged of old, Christ seems here to allow it, and assert that they were cursed, that they were dogs : but now the tables are turned, the *Gentiles* are called ; and in this woman, the Lord gives an instance of what mercy was in reserve for these dogs ; and we *Gentiles* may plead the same privilege at least, with that woman of *Canaan*, *Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.* The door of *Bethlehem*, the house of bread is open, *Acts xiv. 27.* God hath opened the door of faith to the *Gentiles*, even to dogs ; the door of the covenant is open, and we dare not shut the door upon any dog in all this house ; and therefore, as we use to say, *At open doors dogs come in*, allow me in this homely comparison ; for, as all the *Gentiles*, so all the wicked are called dogs, *Rev. xxii. 15. Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, &c.* But the door being open, to all sinners by this gospel, you may come to Christ for salvation, as freely as a dog will come in at an open door ; yea, more freely and boldly ; for dogs many times come in uncalled, and therefore we beat them out again : but here is both a call to come, and a promise of welcome, *Whosoever will, let him come ; and him that cometh, I will in no ways cast out.* Well, I say the *Gentiles* are called dogs, and if that be a part of your name, man, woman, answer to your name, and take with your name and take the blessing that is offered to you by name. If you have no better name than that of a dog, come with that same, and set it down at the foot of the contract, by subscribing your consent to have Christ to be your covenant ; and tho' it be

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a base name, he will not refuse to take in your subscription. In a word, the *Gentiles* are called *heathens*, Gal. iii. 8. *The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.* Good news to heathens and pagans, such as we in our forefathers were ; and this is the gospel indeed, that was preached to *Abraham* long ago. *In thee shall all nations be blessed ; in thee, what thee ?* the same *thee* that is in our text, which preacheth the same gospel also ; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people*, even the people that are called *Gentiles* and *heathens*, *uncircumcision*, *aliens*, and *dogs*. Well, there is the name of the people whose covenant he is, they are *Gentiles*. 2dly, The surname of the people is *Gentiles*, dark and blind *Gentiles*, bound and imprisoned ; and see if the surname be not yours, sirs, as well as the name. There are especially two surnames here that the people have. First surname is *dark* and *blind* ; this is imported in these words, *a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes*. Well is this your surname ? Are you darkness itself in the abstract ? are you in the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of error, in the darkness of corruption, in the darkness of confusion, in the darkness of desertion, in the darkness of delusion ? O here is a brave covenant for you to sign : it is a covenant of light ; for he that is the *covenant of the people*, is the *light of the Gentiles*. But all the light in the world, without sight, will be uncomfortable ; and therefore is another piece of your surname *blindness*, as well as darkness ? Are you not only bleared, and see ill, but blind, and see none at all ? Are you blind with respect to sin, and cannot see it in it's power and guilt ? Blind with respect to duty, and cannot see what to do ? Blind with respect to God, and cannot see him in his beauty and excellency

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lency? Blind with respect to Christ, and cannot see him in his glory, fulness and righteousness?

— Blind with respect to ordinances, and cannot see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary?

Blind with respect, to providences and cannot discern the signs of the time? Blind with respect to

your interest in Christ, and cannot see whether that be secured or not? Blind with respect to your

warrant to intermeddle with Christ and his institutions? Blind with respect to all spiritual and eternal

things? Why, this covenant of the people is designed to open the blind eyes. And if darkness

and blindness be the surname of the people for whose behoof Christ is the covenant, and if that be

your surname also, why then there is room at the foot of this covenant to set down your name and

surname both; this covenant of the people is a covenant of light to the people that are dark, and a

covenant of sight to the people that are blind. Let all them that find this to be their surname, sub-

scribe to this covenant, and say, I am one of the dark people, and I come for light; I am one of the

blind people, and I come for sight; there is my name, Lord, let it be recorded among the dark

blind people of which Christ is the covenant. Again, the second surname of the people is *bound*

and *imprisoned*; this is imported in these words, *To bring out the prisoners from the prison, and*

them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. Now whatever prison you are in, sirs, if your

surname be a *bound prisoner*, our text speaks to you. Are you in the prison of sin, a bond-slave and a

servant unto lusts? Are you in the prison of satan, in the devil's prison, led captive by him at his plea-

sure? Are you in the prison of the law, a debtor to do the whole law, and a debtor to bear the whole

curse of it? Are you in the prison of carnality,
clogged

clogged with the things of this world? Are you in the prison of a black league with death, and covenant with hell? Are you in the prison of a natural state, as a child of disobedience, and a child of wrath? Are you in the prison of temptations, either from without, or within, filled with dreadful suggestions and blasphemous injections? Are you in the prison of affliction, either upon soul or body, state or family? Are you in the prison of doubts, and fears and despondency, with your soul cast down within you? Are you in the prison of unbelief, concluded under it, so as you cannot for your life get an act of faith elicite? Are you in the prison of wretched carelessness, unconcernedness and indifferency, not caring whether you be loosed and delivered out of prison, or not? Are you in the prison of atheism, and cannot believe a God, a Christ, a heaven, or hell? Are you in the prison of death, and bondage through fear of death? Or are you in the prison of security, fearing nothing, but sleeping in the arms of the devil? What prison-house are you in, man? Answer to your name, prisoner, in such a prison-house that I have named. Is the door of the prison-house bolted and barred, that you cannot get out, and the heavy chains and fetters of hell about you, so as you cannot loose them any more than you can unhinge the axletree of the universe? Behold, this covenant of the people is a covenant of liberty for the people that are in prison. If I have not named the prison, or the chamber of the prison-house you're in, name it yourself, and say, I prisoner in such a prison-house, I have been so long, and so long in such a dark prison, and lo I set down my name, to wit, *a bound prisoner*, consenting to be liberate by the Son of God, and consenting that he would work the consent himself, and do all that concerns my liber-

ty: Why, man, down with your name the same way; and if you be not set at liberty in God's own time and way, you'll be the first that ever gave in a subscription and was not received: nay, marked and recorded it shall be; for the covenant speaks to you by name and surname, saying, *Go forth ye prisoners of hope; the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach and proclaim liberty to the captives.* This covenant of the people then is drawn up already and signed. See who hath signed it, ver. 8. *I am the Lord, that is my name.* He hath signed it by a name, by which he is known in heaven and earth, even *Jehovah, I am Jehovah, I am the Lord, that is my name.* O glorious name subscribing this bond! That is his name; what is yours? Why, can you not say, *I am one of the people they call Gentiles?* I am a *dark, blind, bound prisoner*; that's my name and surname both. Yea, be your name as vile and black as hell, yet down with it in capital letters; for the infinitely fair name of the first subscriber will set it off, his name will answer for all the defects and deformities of yours: And if you wait till you be in a better condition, and have a better name to sign with, you'll wait till doom's day, and perish by the way; and all the money of your terms, conditions, and good qualifications, which you would bring as a price in your hands, will perish with you. Nay, you have nothing to do in this covenant, but bless God that brought it to your hand, and sign it with your heart. Christ hath a commission from his Father, and we in his name, to take in the subscriptions of all the people, whose name and surname I have mentioned; and I hope, I have not missed any one that is here. Thus you see who the people are, for whose behoof he is the *covenant*; and that he is well designed the *covenant of the people*, seeing all the people

people here named have a right of access to the covenant, a warrant to sign and subscribe it ; and all the people that are subscribers, have a right of possession to the whole good of the covenant, and to the seal thereof, the sacrament of the supper.

The *fourth* thing proposed, was to shew, by whose authority, or by what authority, Christ is the covenant of the people ; and so to hint at his divine ordination to this business, in these words, *I will give thee, &c.* Where you have, 1. The glorious person ordaining, *I.* 2. The glorious person ordained, *Thee.* 3. The gracious manner of the ordination, *Give.* 4. The gracious motive and ground, *I will give thee.* A short word to each of these.

1st. The glorious person ordaining Christ to this work, *I will give thee* ; What I ? I the Lord, I Jehovah, I the first person of the glorious Trinity. God the Father, here is the first grand party of the covenant ; yea, here is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, essentially considered, contracting with the Son, and ordaining him, personally considered, to this work. Now, this glorious person ordaining Christ to this work, imports, 1. The will of God and of the Father, that Christ the second person, should come and bear the whole weight of the covenant. Hence Christ tells us, he had commandment from the Father, and that he came to do his will, *John* vi. 37, 38, 39. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by unanimous counsel, ordained and appointed the Son to come in his own person upon the errand of man's redemption ; and God the Father being the first in the order of subsistency, and so the first in operation *ad extra*, therefore the giving is primarily ascribed unto him. 2. His being the person ordaining, imports the divine authority of Christ's commission, in that he is given of the Father, and came from the Father,

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John xvi. 28. and xvii. 8. Where Christ commends that faith which believes his divine mission, his divine ordination to this mediatory work. 3. His being ordained of God, imports God's confidence in him, as being both able for, and faithful to perform the whole work that he gave him to do. He was confident that he would be a faithful and righteous servant; *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* 4. His being the person ordaining, imports, the Father's zealous concern for the redemption and salvation of men: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son*; I will give thee: his hand is first at the blessed bargain, subscribing this covenant; shewing that he will do the whole work of the covenant by himself, and by his Son Jesus Christ, and will get the whole glory of it: and hence the strain in which he subscribes, *ver. 8. is, I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another.* He will let none share of any of the glory of it but himself, either in the contrivement, commencement, advancement, or completement thereof.

2dly, The glorious person ordained, in the pronoun *Thee*, namely, Christ, the second Person of the glorious Trinity, and the other party of the covenant, *I will give Thee.* And Christ being the person here ordained, imports, 1. His having cordially assented and agreed to the bargain; God could not have given him, if he had not consented: but as he and his Father are one, so there is but one will betwixt them; and his consent is recorded among the decrees of heaven. In the volume of thy book it is written of me, *Lo I come.* 2. His being the person ordained, imports the insufficiency of all others for the work of man's redemption; *Him hath God the Father sealed; sacrifice and offering*

ing thou wouldst not, a body thou hast given me. Tho' men and angels had put their shoulders to this work, it would never have been done ; for *the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever*, as to the creature : he alone is the Messiah, chosen, constitute, promised, typified, to whom all the prophets gave witness, and we are not to look for another ; insufficiency is engraven and stamped upon all others. 3. His being the person ordained, imports the alone sufficiency of this glorious person for this glorious work. O the glorious excellency of this person here given ! and O the glorious sufficiency of this person ! I will give thee. *I have laid help upon one that is Mighty : this is he that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save : this is he that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, who trod the wine-press of the Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him.* 4. His being the person ordained of the Father, imports the unparalleled love both of him that gave, and of him that is given, both of the ordainer, and the ordained : *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,* 1. John iv. 10. And herein is love, that Christ so cheerfully undertook this work ; *He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men,* Prov. viii. 31. Here are both the parties of the covenant, God and Christ, that glorious *I*, and that glorious *Thee* ; *I will give Thee* : two wonderful covenants. God foreseeing from eternity that mankind would be ruined, by violating the covenant betwixt God and man, set on foot a better project, even an inviolable covenant betwixt God and Christ, two unchangeable parties, mutually engaging for the relief and recovery of the lost sinner ; and Christ bearing such a part of the work,

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as to get the name of the whole ; *I'll give Thee for a covenant of the people.*

3dly, The gracious manner of this ordination, is imported in the word *give*, I will give thee. *A man's gift makes room for him*, says Solomon, and gives him a place among great men, Prov. xviii. 16. Men are esteemed and respected for the valuableness of the gifts and benefits they give ; how much more should God's gift make room for him ? Christ is God's gift, *I'll give thee for a covenant of the people.* And this giving of Christ implies several things which concern the manner of his ordination, to be a covenant of the people. 1. In general, and negatively, God's giving of Christ does not imply, that he was about to alienate his own right to Christ from himself to us ; no, he is still his only begotten Son. When we give a thing to another, we alienate our own right to it, but it is not so here ; what God gives, we may have the benefit and use of it, but God still keeps a right over us and it. Hence says the apostle, *All things are your's, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* But, 2. More particularly and positively, God's giving of Christ for a covenant of the people, implies (1.) His eternal destination by the Father for this end, to be a covenant of the people, before ever the people had a being. They were not so much as consulted in the matter, when the contract was signed in the council of peace betwixt the Father and the Son ; and we have no reason to complain of injury done us here, for we have nothing to contract on our part. The breach of the first covenant left us worse than nothing, for the first Adam left us with a burden of debt, a burden of poverty and wants, yea, a burden of curses from the fiery law ; and all that we can do, is to increase the debt, instead of being able to pay it off. Now

If say, God's giving him, includes his eternal destination by the Father for this mediatorial work, without our having any hand in it, or knowlege of it, or any obligation lying upon God so to do as he did in the eternal transaction with his Son concerning the people whom he designed to save. There was no obligation lying upon Christ to come in our stead, to be our surety, to take our guilt, and pay our debt, previous to his own consent ; nor any obligation upon God to accept of a surety instead of the principal debtor ; therefore God's giving of Christ must imply a transaction, wherein the Son consented to be the covenant, and the Father consented to send him, and accept of his suretyship for lost sinners. (2.) God's giving of Christ implies his actual qualifying, and sending him to accomplish that which was contrived from eternity. How he called and qualified him, you see in the preceeding *verse* ; he called him in righteousness, and qualified him with a supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost, *I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles* : accordingly he received the Spirit above measure. How he sent him, you see in many places of scripture ; he gave him a body, a true body, and a reasonable soul, and then he gave him to death in the fulness of time ; for it pleased the Lord to bruise him : justice awakened against him, *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, &c.* He was put in the wine-press [of divine vengeance, and bruised there ; he was not only bruised in his name, being called a mad-man and a devil ; not only bruised in his estate, *while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air, nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.* Neither was he bruised in his body only, while they pierced his hands and feet, but bruised in his soul, till it was exceeding sorrowful, even unto

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death, and till the agonies of his soul pressed the blood out of his body, even great drops of blood : no wonder, for he was plunged in the ocean of God's wrath, and suffered all the hell that was due to sin ; sin being imputed to him as the covenant of the people, justice did not spare him, Rom. viii. 32. *He spared not his own Son, but gave him to the death for us all.* (3.) God's giving of Christ, implies, that the manner of his ordination for this work, was every way free and gratuitous ; what freer than a gift ? God gives Christ for a covenant of the people, without regard to any motive, merit or solicitation of the people, yea, and in opposition thereto. This gift is free, in opposition to merit, either of condignity or congruity.* If we be for merit of our own, we must be for hell, for that is all that we merit ; if wretchedness, misery, and a mass of confusion and enmity, be accounted merit, then we may lay claim to it, but no otherwise. This gift is free, in opposition to constraint, force, or necessity : God had nothing from without to constrain him to contrive the redemption of men, or to give Christ for that end ; tho' all mankind should have for ever been drowned in the flood of his wrath, God had remained as he was, as happy as ever ; no force was upon him to contrive a remedy for man. This gift is free, in opposition to debt : God owed us nothing but wrath ; but we owe many millions of talents to his infinite justice. In a word, it is free in opposition to all motives from without God himself. There was nothing about us, to move him to pity us, ten thousand things to move him to destroy us. Upon what condition in us could God be moved to give his Christ to us, seeing our best condition, before he gave him in possession to us, is a condition of sin and misery, death and thralldom ? But then again,

(4.) God's

(4.) God's giving of Christ for a covenant of the people, his giving him thus, I say, implies a right and title that the people have to receive him : God's giving Christ, is the foundation of our title to receive him ; faith which is the actual acceptance of the gift, is the mean of putting us in possession ; but it would be the height of presumption, thus to take and receive, if there were no giving, *John iii. 27. No man receiveth any thing, except it be given him from heaven.* As this receiving then, supposes a giving of Christ prior to the receiving, so this giving of Christ for a covenant of the people, implies the people's right, and title, and warrant to receive him. There is a twofold giving of Christ. *1st*, A giving of Christ in point of actual possession ; and thus he is given to the elect soul in the day of believing ; and this giving is the foundation of his title to all things in and through him ; for, *how will he not with him freely give us all things ? Rom. vii. 32.* And till a man have an interest in Christ thus, he hath no saving right to any thing, no right to a communion-table ; nay, no covenant right to the food of his communion-table. *2dly*, There is a giving of Christ in point of exhibition, and gospel-offer ; and thus he is given to the whole visible church, in the dispensation of the word ; and this giving is the foundation of our title to receive Christ, and of our claim of right to take this gift out of the hand of the giver. A right of possession none have, till they believe, and take the gift that is offered ; but a right of access and warrant to believe, all have, whether they believe or not, and whether they take this gift out of God's hand or not. That Christ is God's gift to a whole visible church in this sense, is a great privilege, whatever the world think or say about it ; and it is a part of my errand this day, to tell you of it : if
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it be choaking doctrine to any, and will not go down, we cannot help it ; it is bible-doctrine, and gospel-doctrine, and therefore we must preach it in his name, who commands us to preach the gospel to every creature. But I think, it should be welcome doctrine to all that hear me, that Christ is given to all the people in this house, in the same manner that the *Manna* was given to all the people of old, *John vi. 32.* Where Christ, speaking to all the promiscuous multitude, and making a comparison betwixt himself, and the *Manna* that fell about the tents of *Israel* in the wilderness, says, *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven ; where the revelation and offer of Christ is declared to be a giving of him, before ever he be received, or believed on. It is such a gift and grant, as warrants a man to believe and receive the gift ; for this end he is given to a perishing world, God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. As the brazen serpent was given for a common good to the whole camp of Israel, that whosoever in all the camp, being stung by the fiery serpents, looked thereto, might not die, but live ; even so is Christ given as a common good to poor stung sinners, that looking to him they may be saved. Christ is given to all, in the dispensation of this gospel. And O, it should be glad tidings of great joy to all people, that to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, whose name is called Wonderful.* This giving, in a general and definite manner, to all, in the gospel-offer, may be, and is, for the most part, where there is no receiving ; but there can be no receiving of Christ for salvation, where there is not this giving : for a man can receive nothing, except it be given. This giving then implies a right, and title, and warrant to receive ; he is so given to you, that
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all that are pleased with the bargain, have warrant to take possession. He is your own already, man, woman, in the former sense, whether you take him or not ; as he said to the *Jews*, *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* But faith's improvement of this gift and grant, among your hands would make him your own, in a peculiar sense, by actual possession. Thus we have the manner of his ordination, to be the covenant of the people ; it is even by a free and gracious donation. The next thing here was,

Fourthly, the gracious motive, ground and reason of this divine ordination, which is just the divine will, I *will* give. This verb must necessarily be borrowed from the former clause, I *will* hold thine hand, and give thee for a covenant of the people ; I will give, O sovereign reason ! No gift in the world so free as Christ ; when men bestow gifts upon one another, there is some impulsive cause that excites them to it, drawn from the relation to, or interest in one another ; drawn from services and favours received, or expected from each other : but no such impulsive cause here ; we have no relation to God, but as his enemies ; we can do him no service, but sin against him, therefore can merit nothing from him, but his curse. His reason of doing, then, must be his own sovereign will. Men may rack their wit, and dispute about the reason of God's actings, but there would be more calm reasoning in the world about gospel truths, if all our reasoning did strike sail to the sovereignty of free-grace, and stoop to that ; he will, because he will ; I will give thee. I think this will imports, 1. A consent and agreement : the counsel of peace is concluded, parties are both agreed ; I will. 2. A complacency and satisfaction : God is well pleased with this device of his own infinite wisdom, well pleased

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pleased with the ransom and ransomer, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* ; I take pleasure in giving him to be a covenant of the people ; I will. 3. I think it imports authority : the supreme authority of the eternal Godhead, Three in One, is interposed in this matter, for ordaining Christ to this work ; I will. And 4. I think it imports an express command, *I will give thee* ; and of this command Christ speaks, when he says, *This commandment have I received of my Father, to lay down my life for my sheep* : and when he says, *Lo, I come to do thy will* ; by the which will *we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all*, Heb. x. 10. In a word, it imports, that the sovereign will of *Jehovah* is the reason of all. And this may lead us to, and shall make me the more brief upon the

Fifth thing proposed, namely, the reasons of the doctrine, why is Christ given for a covenant of the people ? And here I might shew, 1. Why he is given. 2. Why given for a covenant. 3. Why given for a covenant of the people of the *Gentiles*.

1. Why is he given, or exhibited by way of gift ? Why, the grand reason is told already, even his sovereign will. Christ the great ordinance of God for man's recovery, is dispensed freely by a gratuitous gift, that salvation may be by grace, and that free grace may get the whole glory of it, from the foundation to the top-stone, with shoutings of *grace, grace* to it. The giving of Christ to all, in the gospel-offer, is from sovereign grace, and must be absolutely free and unconditional ; for what in all the world is the condition of the offer ? If men be in a sinful condition, in a miserable condition, in a lost condition, that is all the condition and qualification that I know, necessary for making an offer of Christ as a saviour to them. If any clog the gospel-offer
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with legal terms and conditions, they inroach upon the warrant ministers have to offer Christ to all, and the warrant that all have to receive him ; yea they inroach upon sovereign grace, which hath made this grant and offer of Christ, not to devils, but to men in the most extensive terms : *To you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* Again, the giving of Christ to some, in actual possession, is from sovereign grace also : for tho' none can be possessed of Christ and his benefits, till by faith they receive him ; yet this faith to receive, is given, as well as the gift received by it, *Eph. ii. 8. By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* It is given by virtue of an absolute promise of the covenant, such as that, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power* ; and so, the hand to take the gift, being itself given out of the covenant, the covenant takes hold of the man, before the man can take hold of the covenant. But,

2. Why is Christ given for a covenant ? I offer you only one great reason for it ; he is given for a covenant, that God might have more glory out of the covenant of works, by the second *Adam's* fulfilling of it, than he lost by the first *Adam's* breach and violation of it. The law of eternal life and death was irreversibly stated only by the covenant of works ; and tho' we be changed, yet the covenant of works is unchangeable : and as by virtue of the stability of it, all the Christless world are condemned, cursed, and die eternally ; so by virtue of its being perfectly fulfilled by Christ, in whom only it is established, all that are in him, are freed from condemnation, and live eternally. What is the covenant of grace ? I may say, it is Christ's fulfilling, for us, the covenant of works. We were debtors to the mandatory and minatory part of the law

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law, arraigned, at the instance of divine justice, to pay the debt : Christ substitutes himself in our room, came under the law, to pay the whole debt due thereunto ; and now God gets more glory, by his doing so, than he lost by our sins. Herein he glorified his sovereign Majesty, whose authority was so heinously violated by such a base creature as man is, in that he received him not into his favour, without a becoming reparation, made to his honour, by the intervention of a perfect obedience and full satisfaction. Herein he glorified his infinite wisdom, in finding out a mean to reconcile justice and mercy ; to punish the sin, and yet to pardon the sinner ; to take vengeance on sin, to the very uttermost, and yet to magnify his mercy, while the sinner is justified, accepted, and saved, without his own suffering. This is that *πολυποικιλῶς σοφίας* *Dei* *the manifold wisdom of God.* Herein he glorified his free love, goodness, and pity, in subjecting his life to such a death, and his glory to such a shame, and all to purchase such vile and worthless creatures as we are, and to redeem us from eternal woe and misery : as also his almighty power is here glorified, in supporting the human nature of Christ under the vast load of divine wrath, and law curses. Herein he glorified his holiness and faithfulness, in fulfilling not only the promise of the law, as a covenant of works, even the promise of eternal life, made to perfect obedience ; which tho' we forfeited in our own persons, yet we recover in Christ ; the condition of life in the covenant of works, being perfect obedience *personal*, and the condition of life here being perfect obedience *imputed*, and so the promise of life, upon the ground of a perfect obedience, fulfilled to us in him : but also divine faithfulness is glorified, in fulfilling all the threatnings of the law, while we, who come under
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the sentence of death in the first *Adam*, undergo that death in the second *Adam*. In a word, herein he glorifies his justice and righteousness, in the remission of sins, thro' the propitiation of Christ, *Rom. iii. 25. Whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation, thro' faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, thro' the forbearance of God.* Herein is vindictive justice displayed, in its greatest severity, in Christ's being the sacrifice and propitiation : and here is *retributive* justice illustriously declared, in the sinner's being rewarded, justified, saved, upon the blood and sacrifice, the obedience and righteousness of Christ ; yea, all the perfections of the great God shine gloriously in the faith of Christ, as in a beautiful and bright constellation, *2 Cor. iv. 6.* And for this reason, he gave him for a covenant.

(3.) Why is he given for a covenant of the people of the *Gentiles* ? Why ! not only to show his just displeasure at the unbelief of the *Jews*, as we see, *Acts xiii. 46, 47. Rom. xi. 11, 19, 20.* but also to shew his sovereignty ; that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy ; and to shew his truth, in fulfilling the ancient prophecy concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*. It is long since God promised by *Noah*, saying, *God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem,* *Gen. ix. 27.* Now of *Japhet* came the *Gentiles*, *Gen. x. 5.* and of *Shem* came the *Jews*. By the posterity of *Japhet* were the isles of the *Gentiles* divided. The isles were solemnly by lot divided among them, (and probably this isle of *Britain* among the rest) so that as *Japhet's* dwelling in the tents of *Shem* is a clear prediction of the conversion of the *Gentiles*, and their succeeding to the *Jews*, in their church-privileges ; so this directs us to understand the promise in the context, *The isles shall wait for his law :*
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he is given for a covenant of the people, a light of *Gentiles*. In a word, he is given for a covenant of the people, to show the extent and all-sufficiency of his grace, and the intrinsic value of his blood. Suppose a prince were setting up a sanctuary or city of refuge, the privileges whereof are not restricted to any sort of men, but extended to all, *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*; would not this declare, that the privileges of the place are full and ample, so as, whosoever comes to this sanctuary might be safe? Here also, in like manner, the sufficiency of the merit of Christ, and the fulness of his righteousness is declared, insomuch, that none can, with any shadow of reason, exclude themselves, be they what they will, *people, Gentiles, dark, blind, imprisoned*; seeing all *Gentiles* are called *dogs, aliens, heathens, uncircumcised*, are included; and seeing the motto written upon the outside of the door of the sanctuary is, *whosoever will, let him come*: all comers are welcome, and refusers left inexcusable.

The *sixth* thing proposed, was the application of the whole. This doctrine would admit of a vast improvement, which we must confine to as narrow bounds as possible; and we may improve it.

1st, For *Information*. If it be so, that Christ, by divine ordination, is thus the covenant of the people; in the glass of this doctrine, we clearly see many precious gospel-truths. And,

(1) Hence we may see, in what way it is, that the ruin we brought upon ourselves, by the breach and violation of the covenant of works, is reparable. We have brought ourselves into a most lamentable state by sin; and we are irrecoverably lost indeed, as to all that we can do for own help; *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self*. Who can repair that ruin? There is a glorious *Me* that says, *In Me is thy*

thy help, Hof. xiii. 9. Who that *Me* is, is explained in our text, even a God in Christ, the glorious *I and Thee* ; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people*. There is no help, no justification for them now by the covenant of works ; but I'll give *Thee* for a covenant to them, which, tho' it be all works to thee, yet it shall all be grace to them. The world is busy casting the law of works into this and the other handsome shape, and pleasing themselves with a fancy, that in this way of works, they may have righteousness and life, to the disparagement of the way of grace, to the destruction of their own souls, and to the dishonour of Christ, who alone is the covenant of the people.

(2.) Hence we see the greatness of the love of God towards poor sinners, in giving such a great and glorious person as Christ, and that for such a great and glorious end, as to be a covenant of the people ; *God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son*, &c. Christ came not to be a covenant of the people, without commission, call, and ordination from his Father. He had authority from the Father to do all that he did about the covenant ; *I will give thee for a covenant*. Let not our notions of God be so gross, as to think, that God the Father is of an implacable nature, full of severity ; and that the Son only is of a pleasant meek nature, full of lenity towards sinners. Nay, God the Father was the first, in order of nature, that made the motion about man's redemption ; Christ was appointed, authorized and given of him. Behold the love of God hath gone to its utmost height, in giving Christ, for he cannot give a greater gift ; and the love of Christ also hath gone to its utmost, in consenting hereto, and giving himself, and all this to be no less than a complete covenant of the people. Because the people can do nothing, therefore

he leaves them nothing to do of themselves ; *I'll give thee for a covenant.*

(3.) Hence we may see a test of the true religion. All schemes that center not in Christ, are to be rejected ; and all schemes of the covenant, that make not Christ to be the all of it, are to be renounced. If I can find nothing in the covenant but Christ, surely I find enough, and I find all that my text makes of it ; and if the world make it a new scheme, at their peril be it. But this I say, that every scheme, that leads to *self*, and takes off from Christ, is a false and ruinous scheme ; yea every doctrine, that advances any thing to be a rival with him, and mingles our filthy rags with his excellent robes. The second *Adam* came not to piece up and amend old *Adam's* coat, as some express it, but to give us a wholly new garment of his own making, and dyed with his own blood : *I'll give thee for a covenant.* Our chief business, as ministers of the gospel, is to trumpet forth the transcendent excellency of Christ, and to desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, as the all of the covenant, for making people both happy and holy.

(4.) Hence we may see the believer's freedom from the law, as a covenant of works. He is not under the law, but under grace ; having closed with Christ, Christ is now all the covenant that he is under : he is freed both from the *do* and the *die*, the command and the threatning of the covenant of works. They are made void to him through Christ : for he is not under it, either to be justified or condemned ; he is not under its command to be justified for his obedience, nor under its threatning and sanction, to be condemned for his disobedience, as it is a covenant ; *for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.* It is true, as the law
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is a rule of obedience, he remains under it, as much and more than ever, and stands obliged thereby to study perfection ; and his disobedience may bring upon him rods and stripes, and all the terrible effects of God's fatherly displeasure, upon soul and body ; but as it is a rule of acceptance, a condition of life, or a covenant of works, he hath nothing to do with it, nothing to expect from it, nothing to fear by it : he hath nothing to do with it, any more than a wife hath to do with a dead husband, *Rom. vii. 4. Ye are dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye might be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God.* He is not to bring forth fruit any more to the dead husband, the law, but to Christ the living husband. He hath nothing to expect from it, no life, no righteousness, no happiness, no holiness, by his own legal obedience, but only by Christ, a better covenant ; and he hath nothing to fear by it, no hell, no death, no damnation, no condemnation, no liableness thereto.

And hence, (5.) We see what place the believer's obedience hath in the covenant of grace. His obedience hath no place here, in point of causality, or proper federal conditionality ; for this were to turn it in the same place it had in the covenant of works : where, tho' there was no merit of condignity (I know, few will dare to say so) yet there was a merit by paction ; that is to say, there was a promise of life made to works and obedience, *do and live.* But in the covenant of grace we assert against all popish doctrine whatsoever, that there is no such reward of work, obedience, or personal holiness, upon compact and promise ; because the tenor of this covenant runs upon the condition of Christ's obedience and righteousness apprehended by faith. Gospel-holiness is of manifold necessity

in the new covenant ; but the promise of life is not here made to the work, but to the worker ; and to the worker, not for his work, but for the merit of Christ : as for instance, *Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee the crown of life ;* the promise is not made to fidelity, but to the faithful person, whose fidelity is a sign that he is in Christ, in whom all the promises are *yea* and *amen*. If the law had now the promise of life to our obedience, we should not have life and salvation any other way but by the law, and by the works thereof, *Gal. iii. 21. If there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law :* therefore our obedience now is not a cause or condition, but a necessary effect of the covenant, and qualification of all that are within the covenant ; yea, all whom this covenant take hold of, it makes them holy : and therefore, without holiness, no man shall see God ; because without holiness, no man hath this effective evidence of his being within this holy covenant.

(6.) Hence we may see what are the motives that now should influence the believer in his obedience. If Christ be the all of the covenant, and that he is loosed from all his former relation to the covenant of works, he is not to obey either from a legal hope of heaven, or slavish fear of hell : not from a legal hope of heaven, for the covenant secures the purchase of that by Christ's perfect obedience ; not from a slavish fear of hell, for the covenant hath secured freedom from that by Christ's complete satisfaction. The principal motive is the love of Christ constraining, the love of a God in Christ who is given *for a covenant of the people*. God deals not with believers now according to the covenant of works, neither ought they to deal with him as if they were under it : they ought to mourn for sin,

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to repent, to confess, to beg pardon, but not in a legal way, as if they had to do with a wrathful judge, but, as having to do with a merciful father in Christ: they are to yield obedience to the law, not out of a servile fear of hell and wrath, but out of a child-like love and willing mind; so far as the believer acts otherwise, so far he is under a spirit of bondage. Neither ought the believer to act from a dread and fear of his being disinherited; so far as he does so, it is not an act of faith, but of unbelief; for he cannot view this covenant, and yet see himself left in an uncertainty. There is no liableness to a forfeiture of its privileges, Christ is the *covenant of the people*.

(7.) Hence see, if Christ be the covenant of the people by God's ordination, why the believer is to take the law only out of the hand of a mediator, and yet is not without law to God; when he is under the law to Christ. He is not to view it in the first covenant-form in the hand of an absolute God, but only in Christ, and as it cast into a new covenant-form. And the original authority of the law is not hereby dissolved, nor obligation to obedience diminished, but rather strengthened and sweetened; in regard that this authority does now run only in this sweet and blessed channel, by the father's ordination; yea, the creator's authority and sovereignty is in Christ, and the whole fulness of the Godhead; and by the voice of God the Father from the excellent glory, saying, *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* We are so much obliged, by the Father's appointment, to obey him, and take the law only out of his hand, that, if we do it not, we condemn the authority of the father, and run cross to this divine ordination.

(8.) Hence see, if Christ be the all of the covenant, then believers have all things in Christ. Christ
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being the covenant of the people, this covenant is *all his salvation, and all his desire.* All his salvation is here ; and well may the believer say, in the exercise of faith, in Christ I have all things at once, neither need I any thing more that is necessary to salvation ; this covenant is all my salvation. He may say in the point of justification, Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, my work, my covenant, my all ; yea, my all in all, for in him dwelleth all the *fulness of the God-head bodily* ; and believers are complete in him, *who of God is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.*

(9.) Hence we may see, if Christ be given for a covenant to the people, that the gospel, strictly and properly taken, is a bundle of good news, glad tidings, and gracious promises. Our text is a sum of the gospel, and it is a free promise ; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people.* There is no precept or command here ; the law is properly a word of precept, but not the gospel. The law commands all, and the gospel promises all. It were a disparagement to the divine law, if it were not perfect and exceeding broad, if there were any duty we are called unto, not enjoined therein. Why ? are there no commands in the gospel, say some ? we are ready, Sir, to confound the dispensation of the gospel, with the gospel itself ; and this makes much wranglings on this head. The gospel, largely taken for the dispensation thereof, hath the whole law in it, subservient thereunto ; but strictly taken, it is a quite other thing than the law of commandments. *Faith and repentance* may be called gospel commands, if you speak of the dispensation of the gospel ; but if you speak of the gospel itself, they come in under another consideration. We are to distinguish betwixt *duties* and *graces* : faith and repentance, as they are *duties*, are commanded in the law,

law ; but as they are *graces*, they are promised in the gospel. We are to distinguish betwixt a new commanded duty, and a new presented object ; the gospel presents a new object of faith, a God in Christ ; but the same law that was from the beginning, obliges us to believe whatever new revelation God makes ; if we understand it safely, then we may say, the law obliges us to believe the gospel ; and therefore he that believeth not the gospel, is condemned already by the law, *John* iii. 18. And his condemnation shall be more aggravated, than if this new object of faith had never been presented, or if this new light had never come into the world, *verse* 19.

(10.) Hence, if Christ be given as the covenant of the people, then we may see the nature of faith, and its appropriating quality. When God says, I will give thee as a covenant of the people, faith says something by way of answer corresponding with the revelation and testimony of God ; God says, I give, faith says, I take ; God says, I give him for a covenant ; faith says, I take him for a covenant ; God says, I give him for a covenant of the people ; faith says, I am one of the people, I take him for my covenant, my own covenant, my own all. It is the people's covenant in the general offer, but my covenant in the particular application of faith ; faith breaks the shell, and eats the kernel. The general dispensation of the gospel says, he is given for a covenant of the people ; the particular application of faith says, he is given for a covenant to me ; God says, I *give* him, faith says, I take him as a *gift*, a free gift ; God says, I give him, it is I that give him ; faith says, Lord, I take him as thy gift, as God's *gift* ; God says, I *will* give him, it is my will to do it ; faith says, thy will be done, even so I take him according to thy will ; a-

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men, so be it ; and all the people should say *amen*, and every one for himself should say *amen* to God's offer, and receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered ; and in so doing believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ they shall be saved, *Acts* xv. 11.

(11.) If Christ be thus given for a covenant of the people, see the ground of faith that all the hearers of the gospel have : why ? the offer is universal to all that hear the gospel, I give him for a covenant of the people. Let *Arminians* maintain at their peril, their *universal redemption* ; but we must maintain, at our peril, the universal offer : necessity is laid upon us, and woe to us, if we preach not this gospel to every creature. Christ is so far given to all the people that hear the gospel, that it is warrantable for them to receive the gift ; it is no presumption for them to take what God gives, they shall not be guilty of vitious intromission in so doing ; nay they shall be guilty, they shall be damned, if they believe not, and take not God's gift. It is true, reprobates will exclude themselves, but this gospel-offer does not exclude them ; they have as fair a revealed warrant to believe, as the elect have. We cannot say, you are an elect man, you are an elect woman, therefore believe, we have no such commission : nay, God, by this gospel, cast the covenant in among all the people, saying, whosoever will, let him take ; whosoever pleases, let him take, and in taking, he shall have a proof of his being an elect. As it said of the *Jews*, To them belong the covenant of the promises ; so say I to you *Gentiles*, the covenant belongs to you, the promise is to you and your children ; you have a right and warrant to take all, and this right was sealed to you in baptism, and is proclaimed to you in this gospel, and you shall be inexcusable, if you improve

prove it not ; you will have none to blame for your damnation but yourselves, and your own enmity and ill-will, You will not come to me that you might have life. I would have gathered you, and you would not.

(12.) Hence we may see the certainty of the conversion of the elect ; whose conversion in particular is God's great end and design in exhibiting Christ as the covenant to the people in general. It is with a design to give Christ to them in possession, that he gives him to a visible church in the gospel-offer. It is for the elect's sake that the reprobate have an offer of Christ ; and if once all the elect were gathered, the sound of this silver trumpet of the gospel shall be heard no more. The dispensation of the gospel is the mean which he sanctifies and blesses to that end, for working and begetting of faith in all the elect, whose names, as I said before, are recorded in the original draught of the covenant, which is indeed a sealed writ, that we have nothing to do with, till once we have subscribed the open copy that is here before us all. However, this work is not left arbitrary to the will of men, otherwise none would ever be willing ; for all are enemies, and the power of enmity is insuperable by men : therefore our text promises, not only the means, the general donation of Christ in the indefinite offer, but also the power, the effectual application of covenant grace, to the conversion of all whom Christ did undertake for. Why ? The covenant here exhibited, is proposed as a covenant of light, light to the *Gentiles*, to remove spiritual darkness ; a covenant of sight, to open blind eyes, and so to remove spiritual blindness ; and a covenant of liberty, to remove spiritual bondage to sin and Satan ; all which, denote effectual vocation, which is a being brought from darkness to light and

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and from the power of Satan unto God. And hence we see, how effectual vocation and saving faith followed upon this very gospel-dispensation, *Acts* xiii. 47, 48. So that an effectual application of covenant-grace is here promised to Christ, in behalf of all that were given to him: it is absolutely promised that *he shall see his seed, and see the travel of his soul.* The election shall obtain, and all that the Father hath given him, shall come to him; and yet we see, that the accomplishment hereof, is by ways and means of his appointment, in the general invitation and call of the gospel. God by his will of precept revealed, commands all, wherever the gospel comes, to believe; and he mocks none, for all that do believe, shall certainly be saved. And tho' none have power to make the means effectual, yet the utmost attendance to the general call of the gospel, is of the utmost concernment to your souls for eternity; for who knows that he is not of that number, whom Christ covenanted for, and will make it effectual unto? But so vast and comprehensive is this doctrine, that I might begin anew to give a bundle of more inferences therefrom.

(1.) Hence we may see the miserable circumstances of all unbelievers, that hear this gospel, and yet refuse God's gift of Christ as a covenant. They continue under a covenant of works, both in its commanding and condemning power. That they are under its condemning power, is evident; for, says Christ, *He that believeth not, is condemned already*: and that they are under its commanding power, is evident also; for, says the apostle, *they are debtors to do the whole law*, Gal. v. 3. In *Adam's* covenant, they remain under obligation to duties and punishment, as long as they are not interested in the new covenant. Tho' by the gospel they are obliged

obliged to seek a title to life thro' Christ's obedience, and freedom from wrath, thro' his satisfaction ; yet, while this covenant is slighted, they remain obliged, in their own persons, to yield perfect obedience, upon pain of damnation. If they be not under the command with the promise, *Do, and live* ; they are under the command with the threatening, *Do, or be damned*. They are in a miserable state ; for the least failure, in obedience to the command, brings them under the whole curse of the threatening, and wrath of the eternal God, while they will not have a better covenant.

(2.) Hence we may see the folly of all that prefer any ruining covenant to this covenant, which God gives for our relief. The covenant of works is now a ruining covenant, yet many prefer this covenant to Christ, the covenant of the people. They prefer their doing to Christ's doing, while they cannot believe they shall have acceptance with God upon Christ's doing and obedience ; and yet they will hope, that if they do their best, then God will accept of them. O proud devil, that thus makes the dung of thy duties of more account than the perfect obedience of the Son of God ! The covenant with hell is also a ruining covenant, and yet the world prefers this also to this glorious covenant while they are in league with their lusts, and prefer their base idols to the Son of God, &c.

(3.) Hence we may see the difference betwixt the law and the gospel, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. The law promises nothing but upon our doing ; the gospel promises nothing but upon Christ's doing ; he is the covenant of the people. The covenant of works promises life, if we obey in our own persons, the covenant of grace promises life if we obey in our surety. The condition of the covenant of works and the covenant
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of grace both, is perfect obedience, but here lies the difference, the condition of the covenant of works is perfect obedience *personal*; the condition of the covenant of grace is perfect obedience *imputed*, and conveyed to us by a faith of God's operation. Yet both law and gospel are sweetly subservient, the one to the other, and work to one another's hand, while the law declares what obedience God requires, and the gospel provides that obedience, and points out Christ as the all of it; so that faith does not make void the law, but establishes it, and makes it honourable, &c. Christ hath fulfilled the condition of the covenant, to the father's contentment; *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, for he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable.*

(4.) Hence we may see the difference betwixt God's covenant of grace, and our covenant of duties. Our covenant of duties is either private or personal, or publick and national. If by personal covenanting be either meant believing at first, and laying hold on God's covenant, or the believer's engaging, through grace, to serve the Lord in all the duties of religion; it is indeed the duty and honour of every person to be thus engaged. Publick and national covenanting is also the duty and honour of a land; it was the glory of *Scotland*, that we were solemnly in covenant, wherein our forefathers, for themselves and their posterity, engaged, and swore against popery, prelacy, superstition, and every thing contrary to the word of God, and to the doctrine, discipline, worship and government of the reformed church of *Scotland*; and that as we should answer to Jesus Christ in the great day, and under the pain of God's everlasting wrath, and of infamy, and loss of all honour and respect in this world. And, O
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may not our hearts bleed to think on our own defection from old covenanted principles, and violation of engagements ; yea, of the burning and burial of our covenants, and many grave-stones laid upon the sepulchre ; also the prevalency of abjured popery in this land, without being duly lamented, and the open introduction of abjured prelacy, and *English popish ceremonies and services*, in many places of the land, without being duly testified against ; but the zeal of many running in another contrary channel ! Is it any wonder then, that the infamy and loss of honour and respect in this world, mentioned in that covenant, hath come upon us, while our honour as a nation, and glory as a church, is sunk into the horrible pit and filthy mire of infamy, bondage, slavery and contempt ? However, covenant obligation to duty is what we still stand under ; tho' many be ashamed of, and refuse to own these obligations, yet it is the glory of our land, however it be now defaced. And therefore let us even in our approaches to a communion-table, go foreward, lamenting our sinful defection from the covenanted reformation, acknowledging our solemn covenant obligation, and hoping that the Lord will, in due time, revive a covenanted work, and pour out a spirit of reformation. But let us with all remember, there is a vast difference betwixt God's covenant and our covenant, betwixt his promise and our promise. We may break and change a thousand times, but the covenant of grace is unchangeable, and stands fast in Christ. Many poor Christians mistake matters sadly, by confounding their covenant and engagement to duty, with God's covenant of grace. They covenant to serve the Lord, and the next day they break it ! O says the man, the covenant of grace is broken : gross ignorance ! the covenant of grace is a quite other thing. Therefore,

(5.) Hence

(5. Hence we may infer, if Christ be given for a covenant of the people, the transcendent excellency of this, above all other covenants, whether of legal works or gospel duties. For here, the Father is promising to the Son, that he should be a covenant of the people; and so it imports all the excellent qualities and properties, that can be in a covenant. 1. If Christ be given of God for a covenant of the people, then it is a divine covenant, a covenant of God's making, and not of ours. It was made when we knew nothing about it; it was made when we were nothing; yea, when we were foreseen to be a company of lost and undone sinners: God made it with his Son, and established all the articles, promises, and blessings of it, before the foundation of the world was laid; yea, it is God that makes the elect soul, in a day of power, to take up the extracts of it, to read it, to love it, to sign it. Again, 2. If Christ be given for a covenant of the people, then it is a free covenant, altogether free, absolute, and unconditional to us. It is a covenant given of God, I will give thee for a covenant. Our legal hearts are still for giving something to God, and for giving him this and the other service, in hope of pleasing and pacifying him, and doing so and so, in order to acceptance with him. Nay, but says God, your giving me is vain, unless I give you; your giving is not the way of it, but I'll give, and you shall take. The legalist is always for giving, but the believer is always for taking; you must know that here you have nothing to give, but to take. There is an order indeed observed in the covenant, and in God's giving: there is a condition of connexion betwixt one blessing and another. First the spirit of faith is given, and then by faith the man takes other blessings, and receives of Christ's fulness, grace for grace. Here

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Here God gives all, and faith takes all. All that is required is given ; and all that is given, is freely given. Faith itself does but receive a right ; it does not give one : it acts in a way of taking what God gives ; it takes the covenant that God gives ; it takes the righteousness of Christ, which is the meritorious condition of the covenant, and so is the means of our being accounted righteous. Not a promise of life, or of the eternal reward, can the believer lay claim to, but in Christ ; for all the promises are in him *yea*, and in him *amen* ; in him, in him, twice over, as I said already. Why ? we cannot claim any promise in our own name, upon performing any gospel-condition, though by the helps of grace ; for then, though it were never so small, it were of debt to us : but our only claim is in him, that is, in the right of our elder brother Jesus Christ ; and thus it is a debt to him, but only of grace to us. And thus God is not a debtor to us but to himself, to his own goodness and faithfulness, and to his Son Jesus Christ. If either faith or obedience were a proper condition, then there were a suspending the acts of God upon some actions of the creature ; which, says an eminent divine, (*Dr. Owen*) cannot be without subjecting eternity to time, the first cause to the second, the creator to the creature. 3. Again, if Christ be the covenant of the people, then it is a full covenant, having all things in it. It hath grace and glory in it, happiness and holiness in it, peace and pardon, *yea*, Christ, who is all in all, is in it ; for he is the all of it. Who can tell me of a grace, or gracious quality, that does not spring out of this covenant, and the promises of it ? It takes in all the promises made to Christ, and to us. Some promises are constitutive of the covenant, as these betwixt the Father and the Son, concerning a seed ; and here

Christ

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Christ hath some peculiar promises appropriate to him, which are not afforded to us in the same manner and degree. Others are executive, or referring to the execution, and application of it, as *Heb. x. 11, 12.* Some are principal, and concern the end, eternal life ; others less principal, and concern the means, whether internal, as the spirit and faith, or external as ordinances, all is comprised in the covenant. 4. Again, if Christ be the covenant, then it is a sure covenant, *the sure mercies of David.* This foundation of God's stands sure : this covenant is secured by the oath of God to his eternal Son, *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.* He hath sworn, that the bargain shall stand, insomuch that if all the devils in hell should attack the weakest believer in Christ, or that ever looked towards a covenanted Christ, they cannot ruin him, it is impossible ; for the covenant, in which he is wrapt up, is established, drawn up, and concluded betwixt two unchangeable persons, in presence of that consenting, unchangeable witness, the Holy Ghost, one God, and of one and the same will essentially with the Father and the Son ; *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever.* The parties of the covenant of grace are not God and man, but God and Christ ; and the believer is no otherways a party, but in Christ. And here is a bottom of everlasting consolation, that Christ and he, are within one and the same covenant ; and it stands as sure to them, as it stands fast in him. In a word, if Christ be the covenant, then it is a glorious covenant, a holy covenant, an everlasting covenant ; but I omit a great deal of particulars, that I might here mention.

(6.) Hence we may infer, what is the marrow of the gospel-feast in the sacrament of the supper ;
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it is even Christ, given of God to be the covenant of the people : for in the sacrament, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers. To take the sacrament, is nothing but a mock, if people do not in it sacramentally, really, and believably take Christ, as the covenant of the people. Yea, the sacrament of the supper is the seal of the covenant, confirming to the believer all the promises thereof ; *this is the new testament in my blood.* The covenant is sure enough in itself ; but the believer is never too sure of it, while he hath unbelief in him : and therefore God hath condescended to give us all that we could require of the most faithless and dishonest man upon the face of the earth, that we may believe him ; not only his word, and writ, and oath, but his seal too ; and all hath enough to do, to confirm the believers faith ; yea, nothing will confirm and strengthen his faith, but the same almighty power of God which wrought it at first, even the power whereby he raised Christ from the dead. Yet in these means, he uses to convey his power for that end, and therefore the believer is to use them : I say, the believer, because none, who by unbelief refuse the covenant, are to meddle with the seal thereof, to profane it ; yea, they that use the seal, and refuse the covenant, they seal their own condemnation : for being under the covenant of works, they seal no other covenant, than that which they are under ; and so they seal themselves up under the bondage and curse of the covenant of works, which is the heavy curse of the great God. But now passing all other uses, I come to close with a word,

II. For *exhortation.* If God hath given Christ to be the covenant of the people, then the native exhortation is, 1. That all *the people* take the covenant that God is here giving them. And 2. That

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all who take this covenant, take the seal thereof in the sacrament of the supper. But at this time I confine myself to the first of these. The first exhortation is to all the people that hear me, that seeing God makes offer of his Christ to you, and gives him as a covenant of the people, you would take his gift off his hand. I am come to make an offer of Christ as the ail of the covenant, to you in his name, who is the covenant, and in his Father's name, who gives him for a covenant of the people. If you go to a communion-table, and take the seal of the covenant, before you take the covenant itself, you'll but mock God, and set a seal to a *blank* ; yea, you'll seal your covenant with hell, and trample under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant. And therefore I call you all before-hand, to come and take the covenant. I know not how the call will be entertained ; many will slight it, yet we must make the offer in God's name, who bids us preach the gospel to every creature. I know that you cannot, and will not embrace the offer, without divine almighty power be extended ; but he uses to make the gospel-offer the channel of his power to win souls to himself. I know, moreover, that as you are unworthy of such an offer, and I most unworthy to make such an offer ; so you would mind, it is not me you have to do with, but the great and eternal God that is offering his Son to you for a covenant this day : and as it becomes such a glorious God to make such a glorious offer ; so it becomes no vile sinner here to refuse the offer : and choose or refuse you must, there is no middle ; either you must receive or reject Christ this day, for he is offered universally, to all the people here for a covenant. I know further, that it is one of the hardest things in the world, for men to persuade themselves, that God is in earnest in offering Christ to them,

them, and giving Christ to them in particular ; and yet, because this is the very porch and avenue of faith, O plead that God would deliver you from such blasphemous thoughts, as tend to give the lie to the God of truth, who swears by his life, that he hath no pleasure in your death. Men shall find to their cost, that he called them in earnest to believe, when he damns them in earnest for their unbelief ; *for he that believes not, shall be damned.* I know further, that many deceive themselves with a temporary faith, thinking they take Christ, when there is no faith of divine operation, but a counterfeit faith of their own forging. However, the covenant must be opened, and Christ offered, tho' he should be a stumbling block to many, over which they fall, and break their necks ; for the covenant will draw some to it powerfully and sweetly, to raise a divine building on a divine testimony. I offer then, a whole covenant, a whole Christ to you, in his Father's name, who gives him for a covenant ; will not you take, when God gives ? It is true, God is not speaking immediately to you in this text, but to Christ, saying, I will give thee for a covenant of the people ; but still so much the better for you, seeing it is on your behalf, that God who cannot lie, the eternal God, is speaking to his eternal Son in your favours. There is the surer ground and stronger argument for your faith, that you may say, Lord, I take thee at thy word, and it is not thy word to me only ; if it were directed immediately to me at the first hand, I am such a black filthy monster of hell, that I durst not credit it ; but it is thy word to the fair, fair *Immanuel*, who is thy heart's darling and delight, in whom thou art well pleased ; and I think thy word to him must be a sure word, and it is thy word to him concerning me. Whatever I be, I am sure thou wilt not go back of thy word to him ;

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and lo, I take thee at thy word, and upon thy faithful word to him, who is the true and faithful witness ; I agree to that contract, and put in my name, consenting to have him for a covenant to me. O sure work, if that be the way of it ! as sure as God is faithful and true to his eternally beloved Son. Well, men and women, do you find in your heart, thus to take the covenant in the bulk ? Need I say any more for motives ? Consider,

1. What for a state you're in, while you're out of this covenant. You're under a covenant of works, and so under the wrath and vengeance of God, under the bondage and curse of the law ; yea, you're in covenant with hell and death by that contract ; you have nothing to expect, but a terrible death shortly, and a horrible hell eternally.

2. Consider, that this covenant is the last bargain that ever God will make with you or for you. The covenant of works is broken, and you're damned for ever if you be not under another, for that bargain is blown up. This new covenant is a plank after shipwreck ; tho' it was contrived and transacted before the first was broken, yea, from eternity, yet it is a new bargain proposed to us after the old is gone ; and if you refuse this, there is not another covenant to save you : *There remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery wrath, that shall consume the adversaries.*

3. Consider, that this covenant is a bargain made ready to your hand. It is not a covenant of your making, it was made before the world was made, and drawn up in the council of peace, and the all of it presented to you in Christ, who is the great ordinance, institution, and appointment of the Father, for your relief and recovery from sin and misery ; for *him hath God the Father sealed*, sealed and authorized

authorized him to be the bread of life to perishing souls, sealed and given him for a covenant of the people. God hath sealed and made ready a covenant to you, and all that is required of you, is only that you will not discredit God, and make him a liar, but through grace set to your seal that God is true, receiving his testimony concerning his son.

4. Consider, that you have a good claim and right to this covenant, or a warrant to accept of it. You have a warrant by the call and command of God, to believe ; *This is his commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son :* You have a warrant sealed to you already by your baptismal sacrament ; it was a sealed right to believe in Christ, and to take him for a covenant ; and you're obliged thereby to *take hold of this covenant*, and if you will not set your hand to it this day, you practically renounce your baptism, and the devil hath a strong hold of you. You have a warrant from the general and indefinite promise and publication of this covenant to you : *The promise is to you, and to your children, and to you is the word of this salvation sent : I'll give him for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles.* So that it is published and directed to you, man ; to you, woman ; you have a good claim to take it for your own. It is a covenant for you, for every soul of you within the four corners of this house ; even you that are thinking, O it is not me that is meant : yes, it is you. Away with unbelief, and let your heart say, this is a covenant for me : that is a believing with application ; and wherefore am I sent here, but to tell you that this covenant is for you ? You're welcome to it, whosoever will.

5. Consider upon what terms you may have this covenant. On what terms ? The condition of the covenant is already fulfilled ; Christ hath brought in everlasting righteousness, and God hath

accepted it, and is well pleased with it, and on this account promises all other things freely ; not a far-thing have you to pay for this covenant, it is God's gift, *I'll give thee for a covenant.* There are but two words necessary to make up this whole business ; the one is a word from God, saying, I give him for a covenant ; the other word is from you, saying, *I take him* for a covenant to me. The first word is said already, *I give* ; and if you want faith to say, *I take*, this the covenant hath in the bosom of it. The spirit to work faith is promised in it ; for he that says, *I give him for a covenant*, says also, *I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles* : Yea, with the same breath that he is given for a *covenant*, he is given for a *light to open blind eyes*, and for *liberty to open prison-doors*. Now, faith to take is covenanted, and this whole covenant, and all salvation in it, is laid to your hand ; all is given, when the covenant is given. Why, Sir, I think you leave me nothing to do at all. Yea, as much as you can do, and that is just nothing. If you can believe by your own power, then I'll take back my word ; but that I know you cannot do : and I give you as much to do as my text allows, which offers all, when it offers Christ for a covenant to you. But will you tell me, what the worse are you, that you who can do nothing, get nothing to do ; and that he who can do all things, gets all the work, and all the praise ? Are you not pleased with these terms, to have all freely without money, and without price ?

6. Consider, that the most part of the world rejects this covenant, and despises this free gift of God. The legal unbelieving heart will not have Christ at that easy rate ; the devilish proud spirit of man is not set for taking a covenant from God, but for making a covenant with him : for as ill as they
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are at keeping covenants, they cannot believe that God will give all for nothing ; and therefore they will not take without making some bargain of their own ; yea, they think, that this way of taking Christ for all, is an enemy to holiness. And, because they thus contemn and reproach this holy covenant of free grace, which only can furnish them with holiness, therefore God hath blasted all their holiness, insomuch that there was never less holiness, or more wickedness in a christian world. I say, the most part of the world reject Christ the gifted covenant, few in the world will have him, few in *Scotland* will have him : And, *is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ?* Do you think it a small matter, to see the world crucifying the Lord of glory, and interpretatively, renewing the bloody tragedy again, that was acted at *Jerusalem* really ? And will ye have a hand in the murder also ? the more they be that reject him, the more should ye receive him. He hath long been set before you in a preached gospel, and you have long refused him, and you know not but this may be the last communion offer that ever you'll get of him : *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

7. Consider, that you cannot please God, nor glorify him so much any way, as by taking this gifted covenant out of his hand. As *Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God ;* so taking this covenant of promise, is the way to give glory to God. You'll please him better than ever your sins displeased him, yea, it is impossible to please him any other way ; for *without faith it is impossible to please God ;* but in this way you'll please him, and content his heart ; yea, you'll give more satisfaction to his justice for all your sins, than your everlasting damnation would do : for this is a covenant with

him by sacrifice, a sacrifice of sweet-smelling favour, giving infinite satisfaction ; for he that is given for a covenant, is given for a sacrifice, by which God is pleased and glorified to the highest.

8. To name no more, consider, that this covenant can answer all objections ; and the very proposal of it in the text is such, as may obviate all, on whatever ground you state them. *I'll give thee for a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, and to bring out prisoners out of their prison-house.* There is no room, no place for any objection here ; for the tenor of the covenant answers all difficulties. Whatever be the prison-house you're in, this covenant not only knocks at the prison-door, but breaks open the door, and comes in, saying, there is my hand of power to help you out, will you take my help ? *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self, but in me is thy help :* Will you have it ? Let your heart say, Lord, it is welcome. Are you in the prison of the lowest hell, that ever any was in upon earth ? This covenant comes so low as to lift you up, if you do not reject the counsel of God against yourselves. Would you wish to be free of all that deadness, hardness, blindness, stupidity and enmity, which you reckon make you unfit, and unprepared for coming to Christ, and taking this covenant ? Why this covenant is adapted for curing these plagues ; and when you take this covenant, you take it as a cure for all these diseases, which never can be cured till you take this remedy ; for to cure your selves, and then come to this covenant, is impossible ; but to come to this covenant, and get the cure of all maladies that affect you, is God's instituted means of salvation. Would you wish to be free of that temptation, that you are none of the elect ? Accept of this blessed bargain, and your election is sure. Who dare say that you're

a reprobate poor worm of yesterday's date, will you speak as if you had been upon the privy-council of heaven from all eternity? Will you rather beguile the devil, by saying, whatever I be, this covenant constitutes my duty, and therefore I'll venture upon the covenant at the call of God? But, if I be not one of the elect, I will not get grace to venture, or grace to believe. What mean you, man, by grace to believe? Is not grace to believe conveyed by such a call as this? And therefore, if you slight this call, you slight the grace that would make you believe; and therefore, O let not the devil make a fool of you. Would you wish to be free of that temptation, that you have *sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that there is no mercy for you?* Why, if you embrace this offer this day, you may be sure you was never guilty, nor ever shall. Tell me the clause of the text, that secludes you from meddling with this covenant; and why will you debar yourselves? What is the case that this covenant cannot answer? Are there any here, that have false and fickle hearts, that break all bonds? O here is a suitable covenant for you. If you cannot keep the covenant, the covenant will keep you. The bastard covenants of your own making, will not keep you, but this covenant will, *Jer. xxxii. 40.* Are there any here that want through-bearing in the world, and are fear'd for straits, and even temporal difficulties? Here is a covenant that says, *Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure: yea, thou verily shalt be fed, and in the day of famine shall be satisfied.* Are there any here that cannot get rest among all the creatures? Here is a covenant that says, *Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Are there any here, that think themselves poor abject creatures, saying, O I am but a burden to myself, and a burden to all that are about

bout me ; no body cares for me, and I fear God
 cares not for me either ; I am cast out at all hands ?
 O here is a covenant that says, *He will gather toge-*
ther the outcasts of Israel. Is there any here fear'd
 for death, and knows not how to get through that
 — dark trance ? O here is a covenant fit for you,
 that says, *O death, I will be thy plague, and death shall*
be swallowed up in victory. Are there any here la-
 bouring under desertion ? Here is a covenant that
 says, *I'll lead the blind in a way they know not, I'll ne-*
ver leave you, nor forsake you. Are ye for this cove-
 nant ? Is there any here labouring under temptati-
 ons ? Here is a covenant that says, *The God of peace*
will bruise satan under your feet shortly ; and my grace
shall be sufficient for thee. Is there any here labou-
 ring under the power of sin and corruption ? Here
 is a covenant that says, *I will put my Spirit within*
you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ; I will subdue
your iniquity : Yea, he who is the covenant, says,
For your sake I sanctify myself, that you also might be
sanctified. And again, *The water that I shall give*
him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to e-
ternal life. Is there any here saying, I am a lost
 creature ! The covenant is saying, *I come to seek and*
save that which was lost. Is there any here saying,
 O I have sinned to the uttermost ? This covenant
 says, *He is able to save to the uttermost.* If you say,
 you cannot believe, the covenant says, *Christ, who*
is the all of the covenant, is the author of faith ; and
 the spirit of faith is given when the covenant is gi-
 ven, all grace is given when it is given. Are you
 content to have this covenant, and all the grace of
 it ? If you say, you cannot repent, the covenant
 says, *Him hath God exalted with his right-hand, to*
give repentance. What is the case that the cove-
 nant cannot answer ? Why, say you, you're calling
 us all, both wicked and godly, to accept of this co-
 venant

venant ; but does not God say to the wicked, *what hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my law behind thy back.* Very true, he says so, *Psa. l. 16.* Yea, the voice of God in the law, says, *Vengeance upon you ;* and there is no escaping that vengeance, but by *hearing and believing* what the voice of God in the gospel-covenant says, and by taking it, not in your mouth to abuse it, but in your heart to love and improve it for your sanctification, as well as for your justification, for making you holy as well as happy. God's covenant is a holy covenant, and it works out sin, and advances holiness in all that are under it. What, would you have me believing in Christ before my life be reformed ? may some say. Yea, I would have you believe in Christ, in order to reformation, and taking him for a covenant, in order to your sanctification. Why then, say you, I'll take Christ and my lusts both. I defy you, man ; if you take him, you must let these go away ; yea, it is impossible to take him, and keep your lusts too : for whenever the covenant of grace is embraced, the covenant with sin and hell is abandoned. And therefore, if any come to this covenant, to seek a shelter to any any one lust under it, it is no coming at all, it is no faith, but fancy ; yea it is a mocking of God, and his holy covenant, and will bring a curse upon you, instead of a blessing. To come to this covenant, is to come to the lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world ; it is a coming to Jesus, to be saved from sin. But O, say you, I cannot think that the covenant of grace says a good word to me ; I have been making God to serve with my sins, and wearying him with mine iniquities. Indeed the law and covenant of works says, you are a dead man, the soul that sinneth shall die ;
but

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but see what the covenant of grace says, *Isa. xliii. 24, 25. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake.* Take this [covenant then, and pardon with it, as well as purification. O, but what says the covenant to one who hath been neglecting prayer, and forgetting God all my days? Why, there is no word in the law for you but fury, *Pour out thy fury on the heathen, and on the families that call not on thy name. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.* But there is a word even for such in the new covenant, *I am found of them that sought me not.* O come and take the treasure you was never seeking after to this day, and it will sweetly determine you to seek his face all the days of your life. O but what will the covenant say to such, whose case you have not touched, and who think their case nameless, and that ministers cannot find out a name for them, because they are just hidden amongst the mist of the bottomless pit, among the reek of hell, so as they cannot be found out? Why, the covenant hath a word to you, *Isa. lxii. last, Thou shalt be called, sought out, a city not forsaken;* there is a name for you, thou shalt be called, *sought out.* This covenant is sent this day to seek you out from the bottom of the dark prison that you are in, whatever it be; will you take the benefit of this covenant? are you for it, men, and women? will you have a Christ to be a covenant to you? Young people, will you have him, that you may not live in the devil's service? Old people, will you have him, that you may not die with the devil in your arms? Drunkard, will you have him, that you may get a drink of the new wine of consolation? Unclean person, will you have him to wash you, that you may be fitted, to walk with him in white? Swearer, will you have him, that your tongue may
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be fitted for a *Hallelujah*? Men and women who hath seven devils in you, will you have him, who hath the seven Spirits that are before the throne (that is, the eternal spirit with his various operations) that he may put the devil out of you, and put his Spirit within you? Whosoever will, may have a covenant this day, that will make you up for ever. Is there any here that despises all this love, saying, I will keep my lusts and sins, say you what you will; it is but a new scheme, perhaps, out of your own head; I have no fancy for that covenant? Say you so, man! then as the Lord lives, you have spoken this against your own life. I protest against you, in the name of God, and I shake the dust off my feet in witness against you, that on the 19th day of *August* 1722, at a communion of *Dunfermling*, Christ, and in him all the covenant of grace, was offered to you, and you refused him; and if you live and die in that mind, I summon you to answer for this refusal, before his awful tribunal at the great day. But, because I am courting a bride for my glorious Master, I would fain speak her fair on a marriage day; therefore, O refuser and despiser of Christ, will you bethink yourself yet, and return again; many a slight have you put upon this glorious Christ, and yet he is content to take you for all that, he is loth to take a denial; and therefore I would ask, in his name, before you give him a total refusal, will you tell me, where will you do better? Will a broken covenant of works be a better bargain for you? Or, will the black covenant with hell, and with your lusts and idols, be a better bargain for you? Or, is the vain perishing world a better bargain? No, no, the devil himself does not think so, whatever he suggest to you. But again, before you give him a total denial and refusal, will you tell me how will you do without him? Or, if you make a shew

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while you live, how will you die without him ? and how will you stand in judgment without him ? and death and judgment may be at hand. There are many dead, and gone to eternity, since the last communion here ; and this may be the last communion-invitation that you ever will get ; if you refuse Christ now, it may be the last offer that ever you will get of him ; he hath taken many refusals of your hand already. And finally, before you refuse him wholly, think again what you are refusing ; is Christ a despicable person of no more worth but to be slighted by you, and trampled under your feet ? Is he a hateful object, whom yet the tongues of all the glorious seraphims are not worthy to adore ? Is the everlasting covenant a matter of moon-shine ? Is the love of God, the blood of Christ, the eternal interests of your immortal souls, and the divine glory, all matters of indifferency to you ? Is the great *Jehovah's* giving Christ to be a covenant of the people, a contemptible thing ? And is this a gift no worth the taking ? O, no, no, say ye, surely it is a worthy offer. Why then, by the awful authority of the eternal God, and by the blood and bowels of his eternal Son, I adjure you to take him and his Father's blessing, and all the blessings of the everlasting covenant with him. O say you, I think I am gained and overcome by this offer and proposal ; but I know not if it be a passing thought that will vanish, or a real faith that will abide the trial ; I fear it be but loose work, and a temporary flash. Why man, the covenant can resolve you in that difficulty ; and it says, *Fear not, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, I am thy salvation.* Are you content to take the covenant for this end, to discover the defects of your faith, and to work in you the faith of God's elect ? Can you say, that it is not in your faith, but in Christ himself, that you are seeking salvation ;

salvation ; that you are not building your faith upon your faith, nor your hope upon your hope, but both your faith and hope upon the covenant. Can you say, that whatever be wrong about you, and about your faith ; yet you see there is nothing wrong about Christ and the covenant, but that it is well ordered in all things and sure, and such as can right all that is wrong about you ? Can you say, however I am in the dark about my faith, yet I have sometimes found out my unbelief, and that I could no more believe, than I could move the earth from it's center ; but yet the joyful sound of the gospel-grace hath touched my heart, and made me take up so much glory and excellency in Christ, that I think all the world nothing in comparison of him ; and I think my heart's desire is, O to have him for my prophet, to take away the darkness of my mind ; as a priest, to take away the guilt of my sins ; and as a king, to take away the power of my lusts. Fain would I have him, that thus my soul may be blest in him, and his name may be glorified in me. Why then, whatever you think of your faith, and of yourself, as the blackest monster of sin and guilt that ever was out of hell ; yet it seems you have the faith of God's elect. I would fain hope, that some souls in this assembly are taken hold of by grace, and content to sign this covenant with their heart : and woe's me, that there should be any here that will let all this love and grace, and this good prize go by them, and they never have a heart to it. But yet, some that through grace have a heart to sign, may be saying, O I cannot write, I cannot believe, I cannot subscribe, tho' I think I would do it, with a thousand good-wills. Say you so, man ? I'll tell you good news, Christ hath the book of the covenant in the one hand, and the pen is in his other hand, ready to set down your

your name, and to subscribe for you ; only declare before witnesses that you cannot write, and do you touch the pen, saying, Lord, set down my name, consenting to every article of the covenant, and pleased with the whole frame of it : if you say so, well, it is done, for he hath the pen of a ready writer ; your name is within the bond already. But if grace will help you to a new act of faith, a stronger act, read over the covenant again, and hear how the great *Jehovah* is speaking, and not I ; and speaking to his only-begotten Son that lies in his bosom, saying, I will give thee for a covenant of the people. Now, let faith say, Lord, I take thee at thy word ; I hear thee speaking to thy beloved Son, concerning me, a poor, dark, blind, and bound *Gentile* ; wilt thou ever go back of thy word to thy Son ? No, in despite of the devil, I think that is the surest word that ever was spoken ; it is to him thou speakest, and to me in him ; and therefore, behold, I take thee at thy word : black and ugly as I am, the covenant can make me fair and clean : thy grace hath conquered me, thy love hath drawn me, and I am pleased with the bargain ; and I see it is the best bargain that ever was, for advancing thy eternal glory, and my eternal good ; I see it is all my salvation, and all my desire ; I see it is well ordered in all things and sure : why then, the Lord be thanked, that it is a done bargain, and that God's gift is received. And therefore, having taken the covenant, never stand to take the seal in the sacrament of the supper.

*The Substance of some Discourses, after the Sacrament,
upon the same Subject.*

NOW, my friends, it were not fit I should detain you, by speaking to the several sorts of people here ; I shall only drop a few words in the general. I think, if my heart deceive me not, the great thing I was helped to seek, some time before this solemnity, was not only assistance to ministers, and to my self, so as to be carried through the work, for I thought that would soon come to little account ; but I would have had a day of power among you that are the people, that the glory of the Lord might shine among you. And now, what shall I say ? O, to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? hath the right hand of the Lord done valiantly, even the man of his right-hand, whom he hath made strong for himself ? hath the Lord appeared as yet, for as much of the work as is over ? or shall we expect that he will appear in the work that is yet to follow ? or shall our prayer just only return to our bosom again ? I would ask you, what welcome entertainment hath Christ, the Father's gifted covenant, got among you this day ? He hath given him for a covenant of the people ; and who of all the people have welcomed the Father's gift ? I fear there are many fools here, that have a price put in their hand, but no heart to the bargain. But to all the despisers of Christ, and all the refusers of Christ in *Dunfermline* this day, in case the Lord may catch you with a word yet before you go, I have a word to say to you, whether you have been at the Lord's table or not. Altho' the sacrament-table is drawn, yet the covenant-table is not drawn, it is covered yet, and Christ is the feast that is set upon it, and you are

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all welcome ; for all that have eaten, there is bread enough, and to spare, in his Father's house. Christ as the covenant is offered to you, man, to you, woman, to you that are before me, and behind me, and round about me in every corner of this place ; tho' I do not see you, yet God's eye is upon you, and his word is directed to you : yea, this covenant is directed and offered to you, he is the people's covenant ; let the people come, be who they will, even the vilest monster of sin out of hell ; God's giving him in this gospel, is your warrant for taking him : and if you will not hearken to this gospel-offer of Christ for a covenant to you, I charge you, in God's name, and as you will answer at his tribunal, to declare before him and your own consciences, what ye have to say against him : is it, that you are not holy ? Nay, you shall not have that to say ; for to the unholy soul, here, this covenant is offered, for this end, to make you holy ; and never shall you be holy, till you come and accept of it.

+ Is it that you have not grace to come ? Why, man, when this covenant is offered, Christ and all the graces in him, are offered ; and among the rest, grace to draw you : and if you will not put away this grace from you, it will take hold of you. Is your objection this, I fear my unbelief, enmity and ill-will, put away all that grace : why, that is the thing most to be feared ; and yet, if that be indeed your fear, there is the less ground of fear ; for this covenant is offered to you, to take away your ill-will and enmity. Are you content to have God's gifted covenant, for that end ? Really I know not what good thing it is in all the world that you want or need, but what is offered to you in this covenant, for Christ is the All of the covenant ; and he who is the All of it, is all in all : and therefore, I charge you again, before you bid him farewell,

wel, to declare what you have to say against him, whom God is giving for a covenant. Shall I take your silence for a confession, that you have nothing to say against him? Then by the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by the eternal salvation of your immortal souls, by all the joys of the redeemed, and torments of the damned, I charge you all, and every one of you, to welcome the covenant of the people, that God is giving, and that by your hearty saying, even so I take him, as the Father offers him in the gospel, to be a whole covenant to me, to do all my work in me, and for me.

What say you, drunkard, swearer, whoremonger, scarlet-coloured sinner in *Dunfermline*? what say you, communicant, and spectator? It may be, the thing that keeps you back, is, O I am unworthy to have him. True; but unworthy monster of hell, as you are, if you think him worthy to be received, I charge you again, by all the blood that he shed at *Jerusalem*, and by all the bowels of compassion that move within him, that you do not refuse him, but welcome God's gift, welcome God's sent; saying, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. If, after all, you are saying, stay a little, sir, let me take it to advisement, for some days; no, no, men and women, I have no commission to allow you a day, or an hour's delay; *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart*: If you refuse to day, I know not but you may be in hell to-morrow. What if the next hour, the breath should go out of your body? and if your soul be removed out of your body, before it flee into Christ, you are gone, you are undone for ever and ever. If God's omnipotent grace, and almighty power, which only can make you willing to accept of his offer, be not accompanying this call, he needs not our apology. He is the sovereign, that is obliged,

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as a debtor to none but himself, as his own pleasure, and his Son's rightcousness, yet still you are obliged to obey his call, and your wilful rejecting is inexcusable. And therefore, if after all, this gift of God for a covenant of the people, be slighted by you, you not being content that God should rend and tare the old contract that was betwixt you and your lusts, but esteeming it above this covenant, betwixt God the giver, and you the refuser, be it ; let him and you reckon together, I hope I am free of your blood, this day ; for there will be blood in the case. If you will not have the blood of the everlasting covenant, to wash you, to justify you, to sanctify and save you, nor believe that God gives it to you, to be received for that end, then there will be blood for blood ; *He that believeth not shall be damned.* Remember what a free offer of Christ you have got this day ; you have nothing to pay for this covenant, I'll give thee for a covenant ; you have nothing to pay for a pardon, the condition of the covenant is fulfilled by Christ, and in it is a full payment of all debt ; and therefore, so freely is the pardon and life offered to you, that you cannot have it, till you have nothing to pay for it. See how the creditor deals with the debtor in the parable, *Luke vii. 42. When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.* Now, the legal old covenant-heart of many says, with the wicked servant, *Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all ;* I will grow a better man, I will fall a repenting and reforming, and then I hope God will pardon me : that man hath something to pay, at least he fancies so, and therefore he hath no forgiveness. But when a poor soul is brought to this, O, I have nothing to pay ; if I be the payer of my own debt, it will never be paid for me ; the debt of satisfaction will never be paid for me ; the debt of obedience, the

the debt of duty ; I have nothing to pay my debt ; nay, not the least farthing of the debt, were it but a good thought, it can never be paid by me. Why then, that man stands fair for a full remission, according to this free covenant ; *When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.* Are you for this new covenant way of it, to come and bring nothing, and get all freely out of the covenant that belongs to grace and glory, debt and duty, happiness and holiness ? Now, what shall I say to God, when I go back to my closet, where I was pleading the last week, that he would shew his glory, and draw some of you to himself ? Shall I go with a complaint upon you, and say, Lord, they will not come ; they prefer their base lusts to the glorious Lord Jesus ; the drunkard prefers his cups to thee ; the whoremonger prefers his whoredom to thee ; the covetous man prefers the world to thee ; the legalist prefers his own righteousness to thee ? Shall we complain to this purpose ? or will you give occasion to Christ to complain upon you to his Father ; saying, Father, thou didst give me to be a covenant of the people, but yonder is a people in *Dunfermline*, that care not for me, and despise thy gift ; *They will not come to me, that they might have life.* O will not the Father frown upon you, when the Son complains upon you ? And, O, if you continue of that mind, he will frown you to hell. But O may we hope, that some at least have subscribed their names to the covenant this day ? We would go back to God with a song of praise in our mouths, and glorify his name for the wonder of his grace ; yea, if I may so express it, Christ would with a glad heart, shew his Father the copy of the covenant that you have signed, and that was offered and directed to you, as to the *Gentiles*, to these that were under darkness, blindness and bondage, and in the prison

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of sin, and wrath. Will not the Father be pleased, when the covenant roll is read over, with the names of all the subscribers and assenters to the covenant, and your name among the rest ? There is one that subscribed his name thus, I, one of the people, one of the *Gentiles* ; I, one of the blind and bound prisoners, assenting and consenting. Well, may God say, Was not the covenant directed and offered to the people of that name ? Yes, Father, it was. Why then let the name stand there registrate to eternity, it shall never be blotted out for me ; him that cometh, I will in no-wise cast out. Since they had no better name to sign withal, than the name of sinner, apostate, backslider, criminal, leper, blackamore, slave, and hell's drudges ; yet assenting and consenting to this covenant, this covenant that they have subscribed, shall make their names better than that of sons and daughters. They shall have a name among the living in *Jerusalem*, even a new name, and the white stone, that no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it. Now, as we have a commission from the Lord to tell you, that you're welcome to him ; so, O shall we have a commission from you, to tell him that he is welcome to you ? Since God the Father declares that you are welcome to his Son, saying, *I will give him for a covenant of the people* ; shall we go and tell him, O God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, yonder people have taken thee at thy word, and are saying in their hearts, Thy Son is welcome to them ? O, if Christ and you welcome one another this day, whether it be the first welcome to some of you, or a confirmed welcoming to others, if he and you, I say, be welcoming one another this day, glory, glory to God, that ever this day dawn'd. Eternity will be duration little enough to praise him for this day. Glory, glory to God for the three happy meetings ;

meetings ; glory to him for the happy meeting betwixt the divine and human nature in one person, that is the glorious person given to be a covenant to you ; glory to him for the happy meeting betwixt justice and mercy, who have kiss'd one another, and said, we are both pleased and honoured by him, who is given for the covenant of the people ; and glory to him for the happy meeting betwixt the Saviour and the sinner ; betwixt the covenant and the people ; is it a meeting indeed ? Hath the Lord God of the *Hebrews* met with you in *Dunfermling* ? Hath the covenant taken hold of your hearts ? O glory to him then, for it is a meeting never to part, the covenant will never quit the hold again, and therefore, as you have received Christ, so walk ye in him ; as you have received God's gifted covenant, so make use of it and improve it. When ye find you have no righteousness, look to the covenant to furnish you, for his name shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. When you find you have no strength, look to the covenant to furnish you ; for it says, *My strength shall be perfect in thy weakness*. When you find you have no life nor liveliness, look to the covenant to furnish you ; for it says, *I am the resurrection and the life*. When you find little of the Spirit's influences, look to the covenant to furnish you ; for it says, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*. When you find you have much sin and guilt in and about you, look to the covenant for pardon ; for it says, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my name's sake*. When you find your lusts and corruptions to be powerful and prevalent, look to the covenant for mortification ; for it says, *sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace*. When you find little or no holiness taking place in your hearts and ways, look

to this holy covenant, and it will make you more holy than ever the covenant of works could ; for this covenant of grace does present the law with a perfect holiness, whether you take it as the law of works, or a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator. As the law is a covenant of works, the believer hath, by this covenant, a perfect holiness in his hand, a divine righteousness answering to that : and as the law is a rule of life in the hand of Christ, the believer hath, by this new covenant, a perfect holiness also, not only by virtue of his union to Christ the fountain of holiness, but in his own person he hath a perfection of parts here, and a perfection of degrees hereafter. But as to this perfection of parts in time, it is indeed many times so low, that the believer can hardly discern it. Why, may one say, the thing that frightens me, is, lest I be a practical *antinomian*, and a gospel *hypocrite* ; because though I think my heart goes in to the offer of Christ as a covenant, yet I can never find the powerful and sanctifying virtue of this covenant, to destroy my lusts and corruptions, but still iniquity prevails against me : and can I take comfort in the covenant, in that case, without abusing free grace to licentiousness ? For clearing this, I shall only say to you, that if you can nourish and cherish sin, and yet take comfort in the covenant, that comfort is suspicious, and flows from a fancy, and not from the faith of God's operation ; for, *he that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as God is pure.* Faith purifies the heart, wherever it is in exercise ; and to take comfort in, or from the covenant, and yet take pleasure in sin, at the same time, is a dream, and a delusion that the believer cannot be under, unless he be in a fit of temptation. But as to sin prevailing, sin may prevail against a believer, and yet he may have comfort in the covenant ; as *David* had,

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when he says, *iniquities prevail against me* ; they are against my will, against my heart, against my prayers, and against my inclinations ; and he immediately adds, *As for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away*, Psal. lxxv. 3. But thou, poor soul, that says you never found the sanctifying virtue of the covenant ; why, did you never get grace to wrestle against sin ? that is some virtue. Doth prevalency of sin never humble you to the dust ? that is some virtue. Do you see and lament your own unholiness ? that is some virtue. Doth the sense and feeling of the power of sin, never make you long for complete victory and freedom from sin ? that is some virtue. Did the power of a body of death never make you look upon yourself as wretched, saying, *O wretched person that I am, who will deliver me from it* ? that is some virtue. Did the prevalency of sin never drive you to the blood of Christ, the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness ? that is some virtue. Are you never glad of any victory you got over your corruption ? yea, that is some virtue. How do you find it with you, when the light of the covenant is shining on your soul ? Do you not find your heart rising against sin ? then that is some virtue. How do you find it with you, at times, when iniquity is prevailing ? Do you not find yourself uneasy, and out of your element, till the Lord return ? that is some virtue. Do not you deny the sanctifying virtue of the covenant ; and what can be the reason of it, that even tho' you sign the covenant, and go into it, yet you find so little of its powerful sanctifying virtue ? I'll tell you one reason of your fickleness and inconstancy this way : it may be, when you signed the covenant, you put not your name at the foot of the bond, but set your name too far up, as if you were a party covenanting ; you are to sign as a party consenting,

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but not a party contracting. The covenant was drawn up, and signed by two unchangeable parties from eternity, the Father and the Son ; and you, forsooth, would have your name in the midst of the contract, as if you were promising, and contracting something for your part conjunctly with him, who is the first and the last, and the All of the covenant. Remember you are but a poor assenter at the best, and therefore put your name lower down ; for your work is just to do nothing, but to consent to take him, to do all your work in you, and for you, for, says the Lord, in my context here, *My glory will I not give to another*. He accounts it the standing of his glory, to perform all that is within the covenant ; and he will not let any footy scullion of hell, like you, or me, count our doits among his gold. The higher place that you take for your name in the covenant, the more fickle are you ; but the lower place, the more stable : therefore, when you sign the covenant a-new, put your name farther down, below his who is the covenant of the people ; let him be the All of the covenant to you, the worker of all your work, and you but an on-waiter ; for his glory he will not give to another. Perhaps some may be saying, O Sir, the thing that fears me at this occasion, is this, I am put all in confusion, with the differences that are among you that are ministers. What do I know, but the reproach of a *new scheme* does justly belong to some of you, and that I may be in a delusion ? What do I know, but your way of opening the covenant of grace, may be such as others will call an enemy to the law, and to holiness ? Why, what shall I say to you, poor thing ? Let God be true, and every man a liar. The Lord forbid that we should speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him. If there be any person here, that never found this doctrine
of

of grace have any other tendency, than to lead them to licentiousness, I'll pawn my life, that he is not a believer, but a person ignorant of the mystery of the gospel. But what say you, believer, cannot your experience bear witness for God, and his gracious covenant, that however vile and unholy you find yourself to be, yet, when the new covenant-cord of free grace is wrapt about your heart, does it draw you to the love of sin, or to the love of holiness? The more lively faith you have of Christ's being your treasure, your righteousness, your covenant, your all, for debt and duty both, do you not find holiness the more lovely to you, and his love constraining you the more to delight in his service? Let the word of God, and the experience of all the saints, in an agreeableness thereto, decide matters of this sort. But, O poor believer, do not cast out with Christ, tho' even many of his friends should cast out with one another; be not stumbled in a day of reproaches and offences; blessed are they that shall not be offended at Christ; let your hearts go in to the offer of Christ as a covenant, to make you both holy and happy. Now if you have got little this day, leave the complaint upon yourselves, for God and his ordinances are not to blame; your iniquities do separate betwixt you and your God: and yet, say not you have got nothing, if you have got but a crumb, for that portends that there is more coming in the Lord's time and way. Why, what is a crumb? if you be made more humble than you was, that is a crumb. Have you got more light in the covenant? that is a crumb. Have you got more desire after Christ? that is a crumb. Are you longing more to be free of sin, and like unto Christ? that is a crumb. Have you got so much as gives you a stomach for another marriage-supper? that is a crumb. If you have got not so much as a crumb, believer, it may be waiting for

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you in a closet, or a secret corner ; and, in the mean time, the Lord may be calling you to reflect upon some old long since experience, when you get a more sensible grip of the covenant than now ; and to live by faith, and wait at wisdom's door. And you that have been fed, and feasted this day, O resolve, through grace, henceforth, a stated war against all Christ's enemies within you, and without you ; and do all you can, to keep the ground you have gained upon enemies ; and sit not down secure, otherwise Satan will soon trip up your heels. Lie not down to sleep after meat, for God hath fed you, to run the race that is set before you, and to strive who shall run fastest in the way to heaven, following Christ the fore-runner ; you are to follow none, but as they follow Christ : the most godly ministers are but limited examples ; you are to follow them so far as they follow Christ, but no farther. *Be ye followers of me* (said Paul) *as I am of Christ* : take the word of God for your rule, and gospel-truth for your standard, and the rather that there are many in this generation, who would be content that some gospel-truths were scraped out of the bible ; but let your prayer be, *Lord, send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may guide me.* In a word, your life must be a living by faith upon the covenant, the unchangeable covenant, that is established betwixt two unchangeable parties, the Father and the Son. Here is a sure ground of faith ; whereas the reason of your staggering is, because you put in your self as the one party, who are but a changeling that changes every touch ; but it is concluded betwixt two unchangeable parties, whereof none of them ever rues the bargain. O, says, the poor soul, tho' I have been helped to consent to this covenant, and subscribe it with all my heart, yet I fear I play the devil, and my heart
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break loose again. yea, it may be so ; but this covenant says, I'll have you to heaven, if you were even a devil ; I'll draw you back again, tho' you were even in the very mouth of hell : and I think, you will find he hath done so heretofore, believer, when you thought you so far down in the pit, that the Lord would never return again to lift you up ; he hath returned, and surprised you, and, it may be, has done so at this occasion. O bless him, and serve him, and improve his covenant ; yea, let me tell you, believer, you having embraced the covenant, it lies upon God's honour to keep you, because he stands engaged to his Son ; this word of honour is past.

Some, it may be, are still questioning their right to believe, their right to take Christ, their right to subscribe to this covenant ; they stand, as it were, at the back of the door, saying, what right have I ? Indeed if you were a party and actor in this covenant, you might speak at that rate ; but that you are not, you are only to be assenter and consenter. Your legal heart dreams always that God will not accept of you, unless you do so and so : but know that God and Christ do all here ; and they have bound themselves, by this covenant, to do all : and if you will do any thing, stay till you be able to do more than God hath done, than Christ hath done ; and that will never be. God engaged in this covenant, to hold Christ's hand, and to uphold him in the work of redemption ; the Father bears equal burden in the work, and all the three persons of the glorious Trinity have one equal will to it ; and therefore, seeing a Trinity hath done it, the work is completely done. O what fools are they then, that refuse to join in with this covenant, because of their own short-coming, and because they cannot do so and so ? Why, you can do all that you are bound

bound to do in this covenant, and that is just nothing at all ; for Christ is the covenant, and the all in all of it. If ever you do any thing acceptable in God's sight, it is the covenant of grace that does it in you. But now, as to your right to come to this covenant, what right would you have, but much mischief and misery, to be a right on your part ; and the offer, call and command of heaven, to be a right, on God's part ? there is all the right to believe, that I know. You would have a right founded on some righteousness of your own ; you would have in your clouted cloke with his fair robe ; but God will have none of your blackned righteousness. The right is now, welcome, hard heart, to get softening grace out of this covenant ; welcome, guilty soul, to get pardoning grace out of this covenant ; welcome, filthy sinner, to get sanctifying grace out of this covenant ; welcome, chief of sinners, sinner above all sinners, welcome, to come and get salvation out of this covenant. Will you then object, and say, O I cannot turn from sin, and I must do that before I come ? Why man, will you tell me, who but the devil taught you to take Christ's room, and to take his work and employment out of his hand ? His name is Jesus, because he saves from sin. O let him in, and he will speak for himself ; he will say to the devil, stand by, for I have broken your head ; he will say to sin, stand by, for I have condemn'd you by the sacrifice of my self ; he condemned sin in the flesh. Yea, he will say to justice, let me through to heaven, with all my ransomed at my back ; for I have given you full satisfaction. O let him speak for himself. Christ hath got the management of all about the covenant ; and when we take him, we take holiness with him, we take perfect holiness in him for justification, and we get an
imparted

imparted holiness from him for sanctification. What is the reason of your want of holiness? Because you do not take Christ? What is the reason that some who take Christ, have little holiness about them? Even, because they take him very awkwardly, if I may so call it, very backwardly. If we were better at taking what God gives, we would find more holiness springing up; whole taking of him would make whole holiness to you, but your broken taking of him, makes broken holiness. O he is the performer of the covenant, and the performance itself, the doer of all our work in us and for us: and if our taking him and believing on him were more perfect, our holiness would be more perfect too; for faith purifies the heart. A poor lean faith, makes poor, lean obedience and sanctification. O, if you could get Christ once in your arms, you get all that the Father hath promised: but, poor soul, the best way for you, when you find your own weakness and wickedness, and fear the Father's wrath, is to take Christ, as it were, and shut him into the Father's arms, and that will please him. When you get Christ in your arms, you want no more, you have all you need; and when God the Father gets Christ in his arms, he wants no more; he hath all that he seeks; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Know this covenant, as it is enlarged upon, in the text and context. 1st, It is a covenant for *light*, a light to the *Gentiles*. Christ is the wisdom and light of poor souls, and teaches them all the good lessons that they learn; What lessons? Why, he tells them that is the way to heaven, saying, *I am the way*; he preaches himself, and it becomes him well so to do: he shews them how a man is made full, by emptying himself; *When I am weak, then I am strong*. If any say, I'll do my part of the covenant, he

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he his part, why that is all wrong ; if you make him not the all of the covenant, you make him nothing. He teaches a man how to discern his voice, *My sheep hear my voice.* He causes them to discern a spiritual preaching, a gospel-preaching, a spiritual prayer, a spiritual exercise. Some will tell us it is the great and the learned folk of the world that know preaching best ; yea, some learning may make them know how words clink together ; but he who is the light of the Gentiles makes all whom he savingly enlightens, to know his voice in a preaching. *The spiritual man judges all things* ; he teaches them to read God's will out of a providence, and to see more of God in some providences, than others see in all his ordinances : he teaches them to make use of the enemies weapons against themselves. Why, says Satan, will such a vile thing as thou art, come to Christ ? Yea, says the soul, because I am vile, I am the more fit. He teaches them how to dwell beside the fountain, and how to live near God, and the man that doth this, cannot live upon two prayers in the day. You that never knew any more about prayer, than your morning and evening set times of prayer, it seems you was never taught by him that is the light of the *Gentiles*. O take him, and he will teach you how to cry *Abba Father*, and to rejoice and work righteousness. O when Christ comes, and discovers himself to the soul, with his royal robe on him, that soul is filled with joy and peace in believing.

(2.) It is a covenant for *sight*, to open blind eyes ; a man that is called *Jesus*, opened mine eyes, says the blind man. O there are many sorts of blind people, that need to go to Christ for opening their eyes. Some are blind *Atheists*, who say in their hearts, *there is no God* ; they see not the majesty of God, they see not the justice of God, they see

see not the grace of God, &c. O that they were flocking to him, who is the opener of blind eyes. Some are blind civilians, they are very civil in their walk, but as far from grace as the former ; they do not discern the things of God, know nothing about cases of conscience ; there are some mens prayers and preaching they understand not, if they be spiritual and evangelical : the man knows not himself, but is pure in his own eyes ; his neighbours, it may be, will call him a good man, an honest man, and he judges himself to be what people call him, and and yet he is a rebel and traitor to God ; he hath not much ill that men can challenge, but O there are many things that God can challenge him for. God can see his vice in the thing that he thinks to be virtue and innocence ; he may pray, and is content and conceited to hear himself pray, and he sees no fault in his prayers. O, have not such, need of Christ to open their eyes ? Some are blind in the matters of religion, they think all their sins are sins of infirmity. No doubt we are sinners, say they, and great sinners ; who want their faults more than we ? O blind souls, know that Christ is the opener of blind eyes. There are blind folk that know their bodily case, but not that of their souls ; they observe bodily providences, but not soul providences ; they know not down-castings and up-risings of soul : O go to Christ, and he will let you see. Some are blind with respect to any distinct knowledge of the gospel, they see not the ground of faith ; they would build their faith on their little bit of holiness, rather than on God's holy covenant, that only can make them holy ; and hence their holiness is alway to seek : they see not how a man is justified in a moment by an imputed righteousness, a righteousness complete and full ; they see not how justification can be complete, without somewhat of

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their own, to make it look fair in God's sight : O seek into Christ, that he may open your eyes. Again, many are blind with respect to true faith, they cannot give a reason of their faith ; they have lost their text, and cannot give a ground upon which they believe : it may be, they will say, they have believed all their days. O stranger to faith ! the Son of God is given to be the opener of blind eyes ; he is a covenanted eye-salve for all blind folk. But then,

(3.) It is a covenant for *liberty*, to bring the prisoners out of the prison-house. The Son of God is the looser of prisoners, by his covenanted indenture with the Father, the spirit of the Lord God is upon him, for he hath anointed him : why, Christ knows all the prison-houses and all the bands ; he was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted ; *such a high priest became us, &c.* Yea, Christ carries all the keys of the prison-house ; the keys of hell and death are in his hand ; he opens and none shuts ; and shuts, and none opens. The devil, it may be, hath the poor soul bound hand and foot in the prison : but in comes the king of nations, the gingle of whose keys makes all the devils tremble, and he orders the goaler to remove his chains ; then, *Dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you to come out of him*, said Christ to the possessed man in the gospel : so says he, when he comes to loose a prisoner, Thou wicked unclean spirit, I charge thee to come out ; thou covetous and worldly spirit, I charge thee to come out ; thou atheistical unbelieving spirit ; thou lying and swearing, thou drunken and debauched spirit, &c. I charge thee to come out, let that soul go free ; *and if the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.* It may be the law hath the man in chains ; for by the law is the knowledge and conviction of sin. The law comes
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and seeks his master's rent, saying, Pay what thou owest; and the spirit of God comes along with the law, and convicts the man; and he, every day, hears himself proclaimed a broken bankrupt; he is carried to prison, and there he lies, fearing the wrath of God, and the execution of the curse, and threatning of the holy law: but behold, the Son of God comes, saying, Open to me the gates of righteousness, his name is, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The law is exceeding broad, but there is a righteousness as broad as it can be. Many are long in this prison, because they take a threatning, and dwell upon that; but if you believe the gospel-promise, and hold to the gospel-righteousness, you shall be loosed. Others dwell long in this prison, because, if they take a promise, they take a conditional promise, and make no right use of it, such as that, *To you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise.* There is a sweet promise, the sun of righteousness his arising; but then the condition of *fearing his name*, that knocks off their fingers, and hinders them from applying it, because they think they want the condition: therefore, man, either take an absolute promise that hath no condition in it at all, promising the condition too; or else, if you apply the conditional promise, take Christ for the condition to make up all to you, and then you will find a loosing of prison-bands. If you will not be content every day, and every hour of the day, to be indebted to God and to free grace, you will lie and rot in your prison. Many abide long in this prison, because they would fain live to two husbands, both Christ and the law. We cannot live to Christ, unless we be dead to the law, *Gal. ii. 19, 20.* but the man would embrace Christ for a husband, and yet stand seeking to answer the demands of the law: but whenever the law demands

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any thing of you, you must send the law to Christ; that he may answer it, and then you will be loosed. Some abide long in prison, because they build the faith of God's love on the work of God, and not on the truth of God; and hence it is, that when God's work within them divines, then their faith divines also; but faith will never be firm and stable, till it build more upon the truth of the covenant. The stable christian lives by bills of exchange; but the weak unstable soul counts all by what he hath in his pocket, by what he hath in hand, and not by what he hath upon bond. But how does Christ, the covenant of the people, open the-prison door? Why, he even teaches the poor soul to say, let Satan, sin, justice, and the law, come along with me to Christ; and what I cannot answer, he can; what I want, he hath enough to supply. Come, and lay all my sins on my back, that I may away to Christ with them, and get more mercy and grace, for Christ is the All in All of this new covenant; and in this way the prisoner is loosed, to the devil's shame, and to Christ's honour. Stand to your liberty, poor soul, and let your sins and wants hasten, and bring you forward to venture upon Christ, that he may loose you. O that the day of the Son of man were come, when Zion will get a thousand atheists at a draught, when Christ will get a multitude of prisoners set at liberty.

(4.) It is a *glorious* covenant, contrived wholly for glorifying God, and debasing self; therefore it follows, *I am the Lord, that is my name, my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images.* God accounts it the standing of his glory, to perform all that is in this covenant, and not to give any creature a share of it; he will not break his credit, having once engaged himself in covenant; and he will not suffer any to gather up the rent
and

and revenue of it, but himself, *My glory will I not give to another.* It stands on his glory, his word of honour, his word royal ; he himself will do all, and no instrument shall have the glory of it. If you give instruments any of the glory, it is the way to blast the instruments ; and blasted may they be, rather than that Christ should want any of the glory due unto his name. Therefore, for the Lord's sake, if you get any thing this day, do not give the glory to any instrument ; for says God, *I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another :* and for his glory's sake, do not think of doing any part of the work yourselves ; there shall none get any of his glory but himself. Means belong to you, and, in God's name, I charge you to make use of them, and the obligation to duty lies upon you : but if you have any regard for the glory of God, let God have the glory of the whole performance ; not I, but grace : either the Lord will bring you to this, or he will bring you to nothing. Let it be your maxim in religion, to make always much room for the free grace of God in Christ.

What shall I make of all this you have been telling me ? Why, have your hearts gone into the covenant of free grace ? Then I call you to a duty, such as you have, *verse 10. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praises from the ends of the earth.* Whence you may notice, that when God is giving a full and free covenant, then it is a fit time to enjoin a duty ; for then the man is at this, O what shall I render to the Lord ? Nothing advances holiness so much as as the getting a full and free covenant : why, because Christ walks in the midst of the covenant, and he is the covenant, and the whole of the covenant ; and when the covenant comes, he comes ; and his very presence warms the heart, and that

warmness enlarges it, and then the man is at that with it, *I'll run the ways of thy commandments, because thou enlargest my heart.* Yea, when the free covenant comes to a man, and gets the throne, then holiness will run, of course. The narrowness of your thoughts of free grace hinders all your holiness, for Christ will not sit down where the covenant gets not the throne. When the free covenant comes, it makes *self* go to the door, and bids pride begone; for holiness hath a charge never to lodge in the same room with pride. When the covenant comes in, pride goes out; and when pride goes out, holiness comes in, for he gives grace to the humble; and the most sweetly humbling thing in all the world, is a view of the free covenant, where God gets all the glory, and self, nothing of it: nay, when the covenant comes, it makes self think shame of it self, and hide its face with blushes. In a word, when the covenant comes, it contains in its bosom all the furniture that is necessary for making a man holy; and also this covenant shews to a man, that much is forgiven him; and when much is forgiven him, he loves much; and where there is much love, there is much holiness, for the love of Christ constrains him: therefore, where this covenant never comes, holiness never grows; but when the covenant of grace in its freedom and fulness takes place with a soul, there holiness flourishes. Would you know wherefore there is so much wickedness, and so little holiness in *Scotland*, for all the talking of holiness, as if the free dispensation of gospel-grace would mar it? The very reason is, little of this covenant is known: men keep fast hold of their sins, because they will not take hold of this covenant. Where there is nothing of this covenant, there is no holiness; where little of this covenant,

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there is little holiness ; and where much of this covenant takes place, there is much holiness.

The new covenant brings in the new song, *verse 10. Sing unto the Lord a new song*, and the new song is the new obedience, and the new obedience is the obedience of faith and love, and the obedience of faith and love, is gospel-holiness. O then, let the gospel-covenant have room, or holiness will never thrive : take in the covenant, and it will make you sing, *Sing to the Lord a new song, and his praises to the end of the earth ; for he that offereth praise, glorifieth God.* And the more you glorify God, the more will your holiness be like that of the redeemed above, who are singing the new song in the new *Jerusalem.*



*The COMER'S CONFLICT : or, The
Beginner's Battle with the Devil,
when essaying to come to CHRIST
by Faith.*

IN SOME
DISCOURSES before and after the
Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, at
Kinglassie, July 20, 21. 1735.

By the Reverend Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

LUKE ix. 42.

*And as he was yet a coming, the Devil
threw him down, and tare him.*

HERE is the history of Christ's healing a lunatic child, whose father came to his disciples, and they could not cure him; and now he cometh to Christ. As we ought to come to Christ ourselves for healing, so we ought to bring our children to him; and when servants and other means can do us no good, we ought to go to the master, and look beyond all ministers and servants. After Christ had reproached the disciples for their unbelief, he gives the poor man an encouraging word concerning his son. *Bring thy son hither, verse preceeding. Bring him to me.* We ought to bring our sons, our daughters, to Christ; to bring our diseases

seases and all our various cases, to Christ. But after this encouragement, follows a trial, in the text, *As he was yet coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.* Here is, 1. An excellent duty, that is, *coming* to Christ. 2. An eminent trial and heavy dispensation that befel the comer ; *The devil threw him down and tare him.* 3. The time and juncture when this heavy trial and great affliction befel him, namely, *As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.* Hence observe, 1. The best course that any can take for relief from whatever ails them, is to come to Jesus Christ the Saviour. 2. They that come to Christ for help, will be an eye-fore to hell and the devil ; he will be sure to fly upon them. 3. They that come to Christ for help and healing, tho' they may be sure he will help and save them, yet they may find their case worse before the relief come ; they may be thrown down, and torn as it were to pieces by the way. Or thus, Christ may undertake to deliver people, and yet their distress may grow upon their hand before their deliverance come. Here is Christ undertaking, *Bring him hither to me.* Here is the person coming with hope of deliverance, *he is on his way coming to Jesus* ; and yet behold, here is a dreadful dash, a mighty trial to faith and hope, both in the father and the son ; yea, after he was come to the physician, and the healing word spoken, as you see, *Mark ix. 25, 26.* where the same history is recorded with other circumstances, *The spirit cried, and rent him sore before he came out of him,* and so he was as one dead, *insomuch that many said, he is dead.* Why, then,

People that come to Christ, and whom he undertakes to heal and help, may have their distress growing on their hand, before their deliverance come, which yet will certainly come.

It is in this case, as it was with *Israel* in *Egypt*, God saw their affliction, and undertook to come and save them, and yet behold, before their salvation comes, their bondage becomes heavier than before. The darkest time of the night may be before day break. Thus it was with *Israel* in returning from *Babylon*, to rebuild the temple in the days of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. The king gives commandment to go and build, God stirs up the civil authority to give encouragement to them; but quickly the haters of *Zion* misrepresenting the work, procure an order to cause them to desist from it. This doctrine, then, is verified both with relation to God's public work towards a church, and his particular work on the souls of his people, as you see it was with the rulers of the synagogue, *Mark* v. 23. that applied to Christ in behalf of his daughter at the point of death, that he might come and heal her. Christ went with him; but see what sad news he gets from his house, *Trouble not the master, for your daughter is dead*; and now they looked upon the matter as hopeless, though yet Christ was on his way to save her. Method, I. I'll speak a little of coming to Christ. II. Inquire in what respects matters may grow worse with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ. III. Inquire into the reasons, whence it is, that people who come to Christ for help, and whom he undertakes to help, may find their distress grow before their deliverance come. IV. Make some application.

I. To speak a little of coming to Christ. There are only two things I notice here. 1st, Coming to Christ for help imports, (1.) A view that vain is the help of man, vain is the help of creatures, vain is the help of ministers, means and ordinances, of themselves. Thus it was here with the father of the child, *I besought the disciples, but they could not help.*

So they that come to Christ find *all other refuges fail them*, Psal. cxlii. 4. other physicians were of no value : none come to Christ till they can do no better, yet he is content with such comers that see there is no other shift for them.

(2.) This coming to Christ imports a putting the work in his hand, *Master, I beseech thee to look upon my son* : he prays, and he brings him to Christ at the Lord's call. They that truly come to Christ for help, they put the work in his hand, and give him employment in his saving offices, looking on him as able, and willing, and ready to save; the disease is half cured when it is laid at Christ's feet. Happy they that come thus to him, and trust him with their souls, and trust him with their cases ; see Psal. xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass.* The second head proposed, was to inquire in what respects may matters grow worse with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ. Here are two things recorded, *The devil threw him down, and he tare him.*

(1.) They that come to Christ, before they get the deliverance that is insured to them, they may meet with down-casting providences ; they may be cast down with discouragement and despondency for a while, cast down with fears and doubts, cast down with jealous apprehensions, and unbelieving thoughts. Believing souls after their coming to Christ, much more as they are coming at first, may be greatly cast down, Psal. xlii. 6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* They may be cast down with a multitude of perplexing thoughts, despairing thoughts, and manifold objections and scruples, their mind raises, or rather unbelief frames within them. (2.) They may not only be thrown down, but *torn* by the way : the devil threw him down, and *tare* him. Whenever a man begins to come to Christ,

Christ, and the devil fears he shall lose his possession, then he rages against that man, and would tear him to pieces. Therefore think not strange that beginners in religion, and such as are coming, or but lately come to Christ, or even those who have come formerly, and are coming again to him, may be mightily assaulted and attacked by all the powers of hell. So long as people remain at a distance from Christ, the devil does not meddle with them, *He keeps the house, and the goods are at peace*: but in coming to Christ, they may lay their account to be torn by torments, torn by terrors, and blasphemous suggestions; they may lay their account with fiery darts: when we expect the Lord is about to remove one burden, he may lay on another, that he may have the more mercy on us.

The *third* head proposed, was to inquire into the reasons whence it is that people, who come to Christ for help, and whom he undertakes to help, may find their distress grow before their deliverance comes: whatever malicious hand the devil hath in this matter, God hath a holy hand in permitting it. (1.) It is to shew his wisdom and power. 1. His wisdom, how he can advance his work by the stops in the way of it, and enrich his people by impoverishing them, enlarge them by imprisoning them, and *give them meat out of the cater, and sweet out of the strong*. 2. His power, and how he can support them under, and deliver them from their distress; which would not appear so much, if their distress came not to a height. He suffers them to be dejected and torn, that his wisdom and power may appear the more evidently in lifting them up, and healing them.

(2.) It is to check the unbelief that attends our faith in coming to Christ. Sometimes when we commit our case to him by faith, we do not exercise

cise this faith to a patient waiting for the Lord. Christ's first word to his people, is, *Come to me*, Mat. xi. his last word is, *Abide in me*, John xv. It is well done to come, but, alas! we do not abide; and therefore to check our unbelief in coming, as it were but a step, and going back the next step, he shews the need of going forward, by letting loose the enemy, and suffering matters to grow worse with us.

(3.) 'Tis to raise the worth and esteem of his mercies in the hearts of those that come to him. We usually do not know the worth of a mercy, till we be deprived of it, nor the worth of deliverance, till the distress be extremely great. Help is then highly esteemed, when we can say, *I was brought low, and he helped me.* *Mark*

(4.) It is to try our faith, whether or not it be such as will not only come to Christ, but also stay with him till he works the deliverance; and if we can keep our eye upon the deliverer, when the deliverance is delayed; our eye upon the promise, when cross providences appear, and can hope against hope. He designs the trial of faith for the present, and a more glorious issue thereafter.

The *fourth* head proposed, was to make some application. Is it so, that people that come to Christ, and whom he undertakes to heal and help, may have their distress growing on their hand before their deliverance come, which yet will certainly come? *Ist*, Hence see what a cruel enemy the devil is to immortal souls and their eternal salvation. For when ever a soul begins to mind religion in earnest, and to come to Christ for help and deliverance, then that soul becomes the object of the devil's spite and malice. As long as people remain graceless, and Christless, and formal, the devil will let them enjoy themselves, and hugs them asleep in their

their security ; but whenever they begin to come to Christ, then he will attempt to cast them down and tear them, and stirs up all his wicked instruments either to discourage and ridicule them, or to tear their name and reputation to pieces, and to persecute them with tongue or hand, and to raise a hue and cry against them, as if they were turn'd distracted, and out of their wits. As they are coming, the devil throws them down and tears them.

2. Hence see the reason of all the melancholy moods, heavy damps and great discouragements of many beginners, that are setting on in the Lord's way ; tho' *wisdom's ways be ways of pleasantness*, yet satan, who is a liar from the beginning, would make the world believe that it is a bitter and unpleasant way, and that the beginning of religion is but the *beginning of sorrow*.

3. Hence see the difference between the conviction of the Spirit and the temptation of satan ; and the difference between the distress of soul that arises from a law-work before conversion, and that which arises from the assault of the enemy of our salvation. Whenever conviction begins, and the soul comes to be troubled for sin, and under fear of hell and wrath, satan indeed fishes in the muddy water, and mixes his temptations with the Spirit's convictions, and he can bring all conviction to nothing, either by force or fraud, he will do it, that the convinced soul may never come to Christ for cure ; satan will stand at his right hand to resist him. But the difference between them is,

(1.) The convictions of the Spirit are before a man comes to Christ, and tends, as a severe *school-master*, to lead him to Christ, Gal. iii. 24. But the temptations of the devil are especially when a man is coming to Christ in order to keep him from coming. If the Spirit of God, by a law-work, seem,

as it were, to cast down the man and tear him to pieces, the design is to drive him to Christ for help and healing, and to provoke him to come to the Saviour, and fly to the city of refuge. But the design of the devil's temptations, when he throws down and tears the soul, is when he is coming, or as he is coming to Christ, in order to detain him from coming, or discourage him in coming.

(2.) The convictions of the Spirit are humbling, tending to make the soul despair of help in himself, or in God out of Christ. The temptations of the enemy are terrifying, tending to make the soul despair of help in Christ, or in God thro' him. The former shuts the door of hope by the law, but the devil would shut the door of hope by the gospel.

4. Hence see, there is no ground to blame religion and religious duties, notwithstanding discouragements, and down-casting trials in the way of duty. Tho' matters grow worse with you in the way of duty, and in the way of coming to Christ, blame not yourself for coming to Christ, because the devil attacks you by the way. You have enough to charge yourself with, tho' you charge not yourself foolishly. It would be far worse with you, if the devil and your own wicked heart prevail to take you off from the use of promising means. When, like *Peter*, you cast your self upon the water to come to Christ, be not frightened, tho' the devil raise a storm, the Lord Jesus *sits upon the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters*, Psal. xciii. 4. Never think the worse of Christ, tho' matters seem to grow worse with you, when you come to him for rest, and yet find trouble, for it is the devil and the ill heart that breeds all the trouble. Keep up honourable thoughts of the Lord Jesus, believe he can do for you, and wait till you find that he do.

Fetch

Fetch wind from all cross providences to hasten you nearer to your resting place ; for all that come to him shall find rest, in spite of the devil. Some begin rest here in time, however disturbed by the devil from time to time, and by unbelief, until rest be perfected in heaven.

Again, Hence see the mark of a true believer and comer to Christ. If the devil be no enemy to your faith, you may know it is a false faith. Many have a faith that the devil is pleased well enough with, and therefore he never troubles them, nor it ; but if you have saving faith, it will be the eye-sore of hell, or if you be truly coming to Christ, you may expect the devil will be upon your top. No sooner doth true faith begin, but the fight of faith begins. Some may bless themselves they were never assaulted by the devil, and yet they are but sleeping in his cradle, he is rocking them. Try your faith ; if it be from heaven, it will meet with opposition from hell : *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, &c. Eph. vi. 12.* Therefore we are called, as part of the christian armour, to take *the shield of faith, whereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,* verse 16. The devil may let you peaceably go about duty, read, and pray, and communicate, because you may do these things carnally and formally, and go to hell when all is done : but if once you begin to come to Christ, or to go about any duty believingly, then you are on the way to heaven, and if the devil can, he will draw you back, and throw you down with discouragements, and tear you with temptations, either as you are coming, or after you are come. But it is always the best faith that is most opposed by the devil.

Again, A word, (1.) To you that never yet came to Christ for help and salvation. O stay not away from
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from him for fear of the devil, lest he throw you down and tear you. Better be thrown down by the way in coming to Christ, than thrown down to hell with the devil at last, by the hand of God, who will throw you and the devil down to hell, if you do not come to Christ. Better that the devil tear you to pieces, when there is a Jesus at hand to deliver you from him, than that God himself tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver, *Ps. l. 22. Consider this, ye that forget God, &c.* Come, otherwise you remain slaves to the devil and your lusts. O, be sensible of your slavery and malady ; know, none can save you but our Lord Jesus Christ; he is a mighty Saviour, and a merciful one. *No name is given under heaven whereby a sinner can be saved, but the name of Jesus.* Put the work in his hand, put your soul in his hand. *Bring him here to me,* says Christ to the man here. O come and bring *mark* your children with you ; hear him saying, Bring your son to me, bring your daughter to me, bring your soul and your case to me, O bring you disease to me ; bring your hard heart to me, and I'll soften it ; bring your filthy heart to me, and I'll cleanse it ; bring your heart possessed of the devil to me, and I'll cast out the devil ; bring your seven devils to me, and I'll cast them out.

(2.) To you that are coming in answer to his call, O be not dismayed, tho' the devil throw you down, and tear you as you are coming. Here is a Jesus ready to lift up whom the devil throws down, ready to heal whom the devil tears, ready to help all that are hurt by the old serpent ; it is his trade to *destroy the works of the devil.* You may be always sure that it is an evil spirit that is dealing with you, that would mar and hinder you in your coming to Christ, for the voice of the Spirit of God is, *Come, the Spirit and the bride say, Come.* The
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Spirit

Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, may cast down the soul before it come to Christ, and in order to its coming ; but it is not the Spirit of God that casts down the coming believer ; no, *We have not received the Spirit of bondage again unto fear*, Rom. viii. 15. After coming to Christ, and believing in him, it is only the devil that casts down and tears you. Fear not the lion of hell, here is the lion of the tribe of *Judah* to defend you. It is unbelief, and departing from Christ, that may bring you to the greatest danger ; therefore *fear not, only believe*.

Note, This application was enlarged in some other inferences upon the *Sabbath-day*, but the notes of that sermon were not written ; what follows, was delivered upon the *Monday*.



S E R M O N II.

Preached on *Monday, July 21, 1735.*

L U K E ix. 42.

*And as he was yet a coming, the Devil
threw him down and tare him.*

THIS doctrine may be applied at this time in an *exhortation* or *advice*, particularly to those that are tempted and torn of the devil when they essay to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to your being fortified through grace against his assaults and fiery darts. There are only six sorts of temptation, at present, I would endeavour to fortify you against. 1. With reference to heart-blasphemy. 2. With reference to heart-wandering. 3. With reference to the commission of sin. 4. With reference to the omission of duty. 5. With reference to unworthy apprehensions of God. 6 With reference to self-murder. There are temptations with reference to all these, that you need to be fortified against. While you are coming to Christ, satan may attempt to throw you down, and tear you in all these, and many other respects ; but I shall touch a little at each of these.

First, There are temptations of satan with reference to blasphemy, whereby he would throw down and tear in pieces, as it were, the souls of those that would come to the Lord Jesus Christ. They may be tempted to dreadful blasphemous thoughts,

which are not to be named, they are so detestable and abominable. They are fearful injections upon the mind, and very terrifying to the weak believer that is coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to your being fortified against these, I would offer you the following advices.

(1). Be not terrified with them, since they harm you more by their horror, than by their guilt. It is true, the guilt of them is so great, that it is unpardonable to him to whom it belongs. These are satan's sins and not thine, and he shall answer for them and not thou. Tho' he lay these brats at thy door, he is the father of them. Such thoughts are like lightnings cast into a room, they have a great deal of horror; but as the lightning springs not from any cause in the room, so these thoughts proceed not from any thing in thee; not properly from thy corruptions, for unregenerate men themselves abhor them; and tho' the seed of all sin be in our nature, yet scarce, if ever, doth this sin spring up, even in reprobates: nay the devil himself doth not think of God that which these thoughts signify. Since thou dost not actually, nor did originally in *Adam*, give consent to these thoughts, they are not thy sins. Suppose some villain should meet a chaste virgin in a field, and ravish her, if she struggles and cries, she is innocent by the law of God: this is her affliction, not her sin. She may mourn for her suffering, not her guilt; especially, she doing nothing to provoke him. It may be the villain finds her at prayer, as the devil doth find thee, when he casts in these thoughts. Therefore be of good comfort, thou art more afraid than hurt: for a careless wandering thought in prayer, hath more guilt in it than these have. When Christ was in the wilderness, the devil appeared to him in a visible shape; he knew it to be satan, yet he was not in the least terrified.

We should endeavour to imitate him. If one attempt suddenly to strike our eye, tho' we know he doth not intend to strike it, yet it cannot but wink; so we can scarce choose but be terrified with these thoughts, but we must resist and conquer such fears. I say not we should not abhor such thoughts, for then we should be worse than heathens; but we should not be terrified out of our faith, or duties, or comforts thereby.

(2.) Do not give over your duties for these blasphemous thoughts and injections; for tho' these thoughts are not thy sin, yet they may be the cause of thy sinning, if they cause thee to abstain from prayer, &c. You, may be, think it better not to pray, than to have these thoughts; but thy prayers may do thee more good, than these can do thee harm, and how wilt thou conquer, if thou cast away thy weapons? Neither hasten from thy duty, for thus you do the devil too much homage; his temptations should make you pray the more, not the seldomer or shorter.

(3.) Think not over these thoughts again, even when thou goest to God, to complain of satan and his dreadful assaults; for if thou yield not to the tempter, these blasphemies are not the matter of confession, but rather of complaint; as a woman that is ravished, doth not confess, but lament her affliction. Neither speak them over, when you go to a minister or christian friend for advice or comfort; but only mention in the general, that horrid thoughts and blasphemies trouble you; they will understand what you mean, but perhaps they had as good, satan should inject such thoughts, as to hear you name them.

(4.) Pray much against these blasphemies, and thus study to be gainers by them, and to be avenged upon satan, which you may, if you do as they did,

Acts xix. when they heard that some would speak against their goddess *Diana*, they cried out for the space of two hours, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*; so that whosoever shall go about to speak against *Diana*, could not be heard. Do thou likewise, when satan casts in blasphemous thoughts, break thou forth into blessing and praising of God, and if thou canst not do so, try to read or sing some psalm full of praises, as *Psal.* ciii. cv. cxvi. cxlv. &c. and if thou art private enough, read or sing them with a loud voice; and when satan shall see that thou art the gainer by his temptations, he will be weary of tempting thee. These blasphemies are Satan's railings and revilings against the God of heaven; therefore you are to do with them as *Hezekiah* did with *Rabshakeh's* railing letter, *Isa.* xxxvi. 21. he went and spread the blasphemy before the Lord. He did not so much as read over the letter, but spread it before the Lord. So, without naming over that blasphemy, you should pray against it, that God would suppress this smoke that ascends out of the bottomless pit.

You may lawfully dispute and argue with satan against some of his blasphemies; as when he tempts you to question the being of God, and the truth of divine revelation, as the arch-angel disputed with the devil about the body of *Moses*; so when you are tempted, for example, to doubt if the scripture be the word of God, you may consider the plain arguments that prove it, and ask satan, Why dost thou fly before it? If the ark were not the ark of God, why doth *Dagon* fall before it? If it were not the word of God, why doth satan tempt me not to believe it? But do not depend upon thy arguing, satan is too strong for thy reasoning, betake thy self to the Lord Jesus by prayer. Tho' satan may stand out against thy arguments, he will not be

be able to stand out against the prayer of faith. The archangel said, *The Lord rebuke thee.* Tho' he will not fly at thy rebuke, yet he will and must, at the rebuke of God. And by the way, see the excellency of Christ above the archangel. Christ rebukes satan by his own power and authority ; for he said not, *The Lord rebuke thee,* but, *Get thee behind me, satan.*

2dly, There are temptations of satan with reference to heart-wanderings in duty. Satan knows, that if he can get these flies to come and rest in this precious ointment, they will putrify it. He knows if the thoughts wander, God regards not what the tongue says ; and if he can spoil your prayers, he fears not what good any ordinance can do thee. If your thoughts be earthly, he cares not how heavenly your words are. Herein satan gets assistance from the evil heart, *Matth. xv. 19. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.* They arise out of the heart, as sparks out of a furnace ; they stay not in the heart, but are active, and ascend up to the head, and they come out of the heart, not as sparks out of a flint, by concussion and violence, forced out ; but they *proceed out* of it, says Christ ; they come out of themselves, and proceed always in a continued act.

Satan's temptations to heart-wandering in duty, are also furthered by a multitude of business, and that two ways.

1st. If we come from a multitude of business, for our hearts are like the troubled sea, it must have some considerable time before it be composed, tho' the winds that raise the storm, cease ; so when we come from business, there must be some time after our business is ended before our hearts can be sedate and quiet, and fit for prayer ; nay, in this our hearts are worse than the sea, because,

2dly. Future business will distract us before it come. The sea is not tumultuous before the wind blow ; but the business we have to do, will trouble us before it comes to be done. It is a hard thing — to keep business out of our thoughts when we pray, and make it stay till our prayer is ended.

Now to fortify against these, I offer the following four advices, shortly. (1.) O study to mortify the love of the world : where our love is, there will our thoughts be. To set your love on the world, and your thoughts on God, you'll find altogether impossible ; *He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* O seek to mortify this.

(2.) Lay up your treasure in heaven ; *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,* Matth. vi. 21. The heart of the Jews went after their covetousness, *Ezek. xxxii. 31.* When they were hearing the word, they could not keep their thoughts where their bodies were, but they would be where their love was, and where their treasure was.

(3.) Let not the world be your familiar friend, for familiar friends come in, without knocking or asking leave ; therefore be thou a *stranger in this present world*, *Heb. xi. 13.* They were not strangers in this or that part of the earth, but in the whole earth : be a stranger to the world, and the world will not visit you in prayer.

— (4.) Make prayer your delight, not your task. Children are subject to look off their books, because they delight not in them ; but when they are playing, they are eager and earnest. The bird flutters in the cage, but sits quietly on the tree, and sings there. *I will go to God,* says David, *to God, my exceeding joy,* Psal. xliii. When our thoughts find satisfaction, they set up their nest, and wander not.

3dly, There are temptations of satan, with reference to omission of duty ; as for example, he represents to them the difficulty that there is therein. O, I cannot pray, nor hear aright, I cannot meditate nor mortify aright, therefore I may let it alone. Now in order to fortify against this temptation, consider,

(1.) That this is necessary ; you must be *exercised unto godliness, exercised in keeping a conscience void of offence towards God and man, and be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. last.* As for the wicked who are otherwise disposed, having no heart nor will to the Lord's service at all, what can they expect at his hand, but this, *Take these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me ; yea, he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel ; it is therefore absolutely necessary,*

(2.) To consider, that it is possible to serve the Lord acceptably by his own grace. Tho' duty be difficult to nature, yet if you get the Spirit of God to help you, you'll do well enough, and God hath promised his help, *Isa. xl. close. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength, &c. They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength.* Hence all the saints of old, and of late, have tried the Lord's way, and found that the way of the Lord was *strength to them ; yea, that wisdom's ways are pleasantness : their delight was in the law of the Lord ; in keeping of his commands there is a great reward.* One smile of God's countenance is worth all your pains, tho' you were at a hundred times more. There is always some sweets in religion that accompany the sedulous exercise thereof. Tho' the soul hath nothing to claim on
the

account of its own works or duties ; yet the Lord is graciously pleased to own and countenance his own way, when the soul is found in it, besides the glorious and gracious reward that abides it in heaven.

Therefore let faith batter down this temptation of satan, saying, What though satan present difficulties in the way, Christ underwent greater difficulties ; he hath born the burden and the heat of the day : I'm not called to go and satisfy justice, Christ hath done that to my hand ; I'm not called to go and fulfil the law as a covenant of works, Christ hath done that to my hand ; I am not called to work for life, but to work for love to him that worketh all my works in me, and for me, and who, as he calleth me to this work of love, so promiseth to work in me both to will and do ; and therefore, in his name and strength, I will go forward, *making mention of his righteousness, and his only* ; and in his name, I'll grapple with the devil himself, for Christ hath conquered him to my hands.

4thly. There are temptations of satan with reference to the commission of sin. He will suggest to them that it is but a little sin, and God will not be angry for a little sin ; such as, a lie in jest, an idle word, &c. Can such a little sin endanger the soul ? Now to guard you against this temptation, consider,

(1.) That the first sin which brought all mankind into a miserable state, was, in appearance, but a small and little sin : it was but eating a little forbidden fruit, the tasting of an apple ; yet had it not been for Christ's satisfaction, it would have destroyed irrecoverably all the posterity of *Adam*. There was a man, Sirs, that gathered a few sticks upon the sabbath-day, you would have thought that was but a little sin ; yet God's thoughts are not your thoughts,

thoughts, for God thought that sin worthy of death, *Num.* xv. 32, and 35 verses. *Uzzah's* putting his hand to the ark, and touching it when it tottered, seemed to be a small sin ; and yet, you know, he was smitten instantly with death for it, *2 Sam.* vi. 7. It is dangerous to give, even a little wrong touch to a tottering ark.

(2.) Consider the nature of every sin. Though some are comparatively small, and others greater, that is by reason of several aggravations more heinous in the sight of God than others ; yet in themselves, none are small. The least sin is against an infinite God, and infinite authority, and cannot be expiated without infinite satisfaction ; and it is not little promises or little threatnings that your little sins do flight ; yea, there is no little ingratitude towards God, in little sins : there is great unkindness to God in little sins. To displease God, your best friend, for a little sin ; O ungrateful thing ! *Is this your kindness to your friend ? The wages of every sin, is death eternal.* It is not little misery that every sin doth expose you to. Will you make light of the wrath of the infinite God ? Then do not make light of little sins. In a word, remember that boldness in little sins will be an encouragement to greater. Sin is of an incroaching and bewitching nature : a little thief may open the way to a greater. The devil tempts people to go from one degree to another ; he tempts them to the reverse of the *blest man*, mentioned *Psal.* i. 1. He tempts them to *to walk in the counsel of the ungodly* ; having taken a walk with them, he tempts them next to *stand in the way of sinners*, which is more ; and then having stood a while with them, he tempts them ; last of all, *to sit in the seat of the scornful*, even to the height of wickedness. The devil first makes you sit down with the *drunkard*, then to drink with him, and at last

last to be drunk. Thus he leads people from unclean thoughts, to unclean looks, words and actions : therefore let faith resist this temptation, and set you upon your watch against that which you call a little sin. No man that ever saw sin truly, can call any sin little or small, or can it ever be, till there be a little law to break, a little God to offend, a little guilt to contract, a little wrath to incur ; all which are impossible to be, blasphemy to wish, and madness to expect.

5thly, There are temptations of satan, with reference to unworthy apprehensions of God. Satan may suggest very strange thoughts of God, very base thoughts of God, most unsuitable apprehensions of him, such as are not to be spoken of ; and the prince of this world hath much in us who are so ignorant of God, to further these mishapen thoughts of God. And to fortify you against these assaults, there are these two directions I would offer concerning the way how we are to conceive of God.

(1.) We are to conceive of him as inconceivable : for the thoughts we are to have of him, are overwhelming thoughts. As long as we are merely active, and are able to master our thoughts of God, they are utterly unworthy of him. Whatsoever we know, comprehensively I mean, except we see it to be infinitely beyond us, that is not God, nor to be adored. I have read a dialogue between a christian and a gentile : the gentile seeing the christian very fervent in prayer, and seeing no image before him, asked him, whom he worshipped ; he answered, I know not. Why then do you worship him ? I therefore worship him, says he, because I cannot know him. It seems strange, said the gentile, to see one so seriously worship that he knoweth not. More strange it is for one, said the

the christian, to worship that we can comprehend. If we are not lost in our thoughts of God, our thoughts of God are lost. When we throw a stone into a pond, it makes circles larger and larger, and quickly they come to the shore: but if one should throw a millstone into the midst of the calm ocean, tho' it would make larger and larger circles, yet it would not reach the shore, because the strength would be spent long before it came the length; so when we think on the creature, we easily enlarge our thoughts so as to see an end of their perfection, and to be more than comprehensive of their excellency; but when we think of God, we can never know him to perfection, *Psal. cxix. 96.* Here our knowledge must end in admiration, and our love in extasy. Nay we must conceive of God, as above all words, above all knowledge, and above all admiration, above all love, and above all extasy. But let us go to scripture; God knows best how to speak of himself, and we may safely acquiesce in scripture expressions, *Neh. ix. 5. Thy name is exalted above all praise, above the praise of men and angels*; this is a very high expression, but doth this reach him? Nay, if it did, God should not be exalted above all praise, since this would reach him.

(2.) We are to conceive of God in Christ: Christ must be eyed in our addresses and acts of worship. All the former considerations set us but at a greater distance from God, and make us afraid of God, and fly from him, if we go no further; and indeed human reason can go no further. The utmost it can do, is but to think of mercy, without a promise, which is a very arbitrary thing; and we see that God hath not shewed mercy to the fallen angels; for never was any devil converted, therefore we must necessarily have thoughts of Christ. *We are to honour the Son as we honour the Father*; and to honour him,

1st, As a king. God hath exalted Christ *far above all heavens*, and hath commanded us to do all in his name, Col. iii. 17. And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, John v. 23. He orders that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. I shall relate a history to this purpose ; it is this, *Theodosius* the emperor, having made an edict, for the giving liberty for the *Arians* to preach, *Amphilochius* took this course for prevailing with the emperor to recall that edict. *Theodosius* having made *Arcadius* co-emperor and *Cæsar* with him, several bishops came to salute the emperor, to congratulate *Arcadius*, and to signify their consent to *Theodosius's* act, and by their respect and honour done to *Arcadius*, to shew that they took him for the successor of *Theodosius* in the empire ; among others, came this *Amphilochius* bishop of *Iconium*, who after he had done obeisance very submissively to *Theodosius*, was going away without shewing any respect to *Arcadius*, tho' he sat by *Theodosius* in all his royal robes. *Theodosius* therefore called to *Amphilochius*, saying, Know you not that I have made *Arcadius* my son emperor with me ; upon which *Amphilochius* went to *Arcadius*, and striking him on the head, said, he was a hopeful boy. *Theodosius* being very angry at this indignity done his son, commanded him to prison. *Amphilochius*, after he had gone a little way, turned back, saying, O *Theodosius*, you are angry that I give not your son the same honour I give you, since you have made him equal in majesty to yourself ; and think you, God will be well pleased that you suffer the *Arians* to abuse Christ, whom he hath set at his right-hand in glory, and will have all men honour the Son, as they honour the Father. Upon which the edict was reversed. I may say, can you think that God will accept your worship to him, be it never so great ;

if you take no notice of Christ, be sure God will reject you and your services. But then again,

2dly, As God will have Christ to have the glory of his kingly office, so also of his priestly. Thus, suppose some great monarch, his son consenting, should lay upon his son, the punishment due to some rebellious subjects, intending his son's honour as well as their pardon ; the king sends forth a proclamation to them, to let them know, that his son had satisfied justice, and procured a pardon : but but many of them not trusting to this, would not come in, but would send the king gifts and presents to gain his favour ; the emperor scorns their gifts upon that account ; especially, they thus robbing his son of the honour of making their peace, and thereby also plainly shewing, that they thought their crime was not so great, but a small matter would make it up, such as their gifts. Surely, if gifts would have done the business, his son had greater gifts than theirs ; so that he needed not have died or suffered. The reddition of this simile may be easily made : God abhors our prayers, alms, and all our services, if we bring them, as satisfactory to his justice, and sprinkle our puddly waters, our tears upon the mercy seat, and fill the holy place with the stinking savour, the stinking vapours of our prayers, which are unperfumed with the incense of Christ's righteousness, or that are no better than the reeking steams of a dunghill : I say, to go to the holy place with these, instead of the incense of Christ's merit and intercession, is not to make an atonement, but a provocation. This makes popish austerities to be acts of pride, instead of being acts of mortification.

3dly, God will have him get the honour also of his prophetic office ; for it is by his Spirit that he instructs and teaches us how to pray as well as perform

form. By his merit we have acceptance, and by his Spirit, assistance. If a child should write some excellent tracts in the mathematics in *Greek*, we would infallibly conclude some did learn him, or dictate to him ; so when you pray in the Spirit, and spiritually, for such or such spiritual blessings, who do you think dictates to you ? This is not your mother tongue ; doubtless it is the Spirit of Christ that helps your infirmities. In a word, Christ by his active and passive obedience, whereby he hath satisfied justice, &c. hath a wonderful interest with God, more than all the angels in heaven, insomuch that God delights to pardon the greatest of sinners for Christ's sake : therefore in prayer conceive of God, as a great, an infinitely great God, and as a God in Christ. Look on God as through Christ, keeping the humbling sense of your own distance and provocation ; look upon God as through Christ the most compassionate fondest Father in the world ; if he give thee not every thing thou thus askest, it proceeds not from his unwillingness to give, but thine unsuitness to receive.

Sixthly, There are temptations with reference to self-murder. Satan many times tempts people, particularly those that are coming to Christ, he throws them down and tears them, urging them to tear themselves in pieces, to make away with themselves, and cut off the thread of their own life. This is a subject I seldom or never took occasion to speak in this manner upon ; but now I think it the more necessary, that we are living in a time wherein we are compassed about with awful instances of professors being left under the power, and swallowed up with the violence of this temptation ; yea, such instances thereof, as have, perhaps made the hearts of many here present to tremble. And since what hath been, may be, and not knowing, but in such

a great company as is here, some one or other may be under such temptations, I would offer these following advices shortly, to fortify you against these assaults.

1. Consider that self-murder is a sin against the very light of nature, and the very letter of the law of God, *Thou shalt not kill* ; and you may be sure that no thought of this sort, that enters into your heart can be from God, for it hath the very image of the devil upon it ; *he was a murderer from the beginning.*

2. Yield not to the tempter ; for tho' this is a temptation incident to God's people, insomuch, that perhaps there are few of them that have not been thus tempted, as our Lord Jesus himself was, to whom the devil said, *Cast thy self down from the pinnacle of the temple* ; yet we read of no saint in scripture that yielded to the tempter. We are therein told of none but wicked wretches that destroyed themselves, such as *Saul, Achitophel* and *Judas* ; and sure you would not desire to be like them.

3. Consider the contrary practice of the saints in scripture, both in their best and worst time. Old *Simeon* got an armsful of Christ, and did he now attempt to cut off his own life, that he might get away to heaven ? No, he wishes to be away, but he puts himself in God's will ; *Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.* *Paul* is rapt up to the third heaven, and his desire of death must have been very great ; yet he is content to stay till he was *dissolved*. Again, on the other hand, if pains of body, and terrors of mind, might contribute to strengthen such a temptation, *Job* did not want his share of both ; but instead of putting a period to his own days, tho' indeed he cursed the day of his birth, and wished for the day of his death yet he

says, *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.*

4. Consider that by such horrid suggestions as these, you are tempted to assume to yourself a prerogative that belongs to God only, *Deut. xxxii. 39.* It is he that lives for ever and ever, that says, *I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal.* Your life is not your own to dispose of, and as you cannot lengthen your life, so you may not shorten it. Therefore,

5. When you are thus tempted, keep not the devil's counsels, nor be thou his secretary ; go to some faithful minister, or experienced christian, and tell them how you are tempted ; for this temptation is partly conquer'd, when it is revealed.

6. These who think they shall be damned and go to hell when they die, it is the greatest madness in the world for them to hasten their death. That the fear of hell should make them leap into hell, is so contrary to all common sense, that it is a wonder that any one should so much cease to be a man, not to say a christian, as to do a thing so contrary to nature, and much more to grace. Let me ask you, can you endure to be among blasphemers ? Can you endure to blaspheme God yourself for a year together, or an hour, and to spend it all in cursing and blaspheming ? If thy soul abhor this, why will you leap into hell, a place of everlasting blasphemy ? I read of one, who having been a long time tempted to make away herself, at last resolved to do it, for the thoughts of the torments of hell were not prevalent enough to deter her ; but as she was going to destroy herself, it was brought to her mind, that in hell she should blaspheme God for ever, which she abhorring to do, upon that very account forbore. If you were to be only in a state of horror and torment, it were sad enough ; but, for thee to put thyself into a state of blasphemy,

blasphemy, how canst thou endure to think of it ?

7. Take heed of fighting against satan with human reason, for this *Leviathan* laughs at the shaking of this *spear*, his scales are too close to be pierced by it : but take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, which divides between the joints and the marrow ; say to satan, *It is written, thou shalt not kill.*

8. Pray, pray much ; for the sword of the Spirit must be wielded by the skilful arm of the Spirit. If thou goest out in confidence of thy being able to manage scripture by thy own strength and skill, it will fare with thee as it did with these, *Acts xix. 15, 16. They thought to cast out devils by the name of Jesus, but the devil rent and wounded them, and made them to fly, saying, Paul, I know, and Jesus I know, but who are ye ?*

The great argument that the devil uses to persuade thee to self-murder, is by persuading thee that thou art a reprobate ; but thou mayest consider that satan cannot know that thou art a reprobate : was satan, think you, on God's council when he made his eternal decrees ? Satan, who is not so much as one of God's hir'd servants, but a slave and a malefactor kept in chains, he is so far from being of God's council, that he is not so much as one of his family. If thou sayest thy conscience tells thee that thou art a reprobate, know that no man living can tell who are reprobates, nor can any man know himself to be a reprobate, except he hath committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, which no man hath committed, that is sorry to think that he hath committed it ; *for it is impossible that such a man should be renewed, either by, or to repentance,* Heb. vi. 6.

You that walk in darkness, and see no light, that are haunted with these temptations, consider what a God we have to do with ; we serve such a great

Lord, that all the monarchs of the world are beggars to him ; and such a gracious Father is our God, that the tenderest parents in the world, and your dearest friends, are tyrants, yea, wolves and tygers compared to him. And if we should provoke them, as we provoke him, and they could as easily crush us as God can, we would quickly find that their tenderest mercies are cruelty ; whereas the several providences of God will be to thee, not like the *gall of asps*, bitter and deadly, but like God's rhubarb and aloes, by which thine iniquity shall be purged, *and all the fruit of it shall be to take away thy sin* ; and *tho' at present the afflicting hand of God upon thee, is not joyous but grievous, yet if thou art exercis'd thereby, it will bring forth in thee, the quiet fruit of righteousness*. Lay aside therefore your fears of hell and hard thoughts of God.

But now, to add no more particulars, let me exhort you, and all that hear me, to come to our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever opposition from hell stands in your way ; and tho' the devil should throw you down and tear you as you are coming, yet Christ will lift you up and heal you. O what ails the world at our Lord Jesus ? will you tell me, sinner, what ails you at Christ ? what ails you at his person ? is he not the *brightness of the Father's glory, and the chief among ten thousand* ? Is he not the *rose of paradise*, the heart of heaven ? what ails you at his offices ? is he not a prophet that can teach you, a priest that can atone for you, a king that can conquer for you ? what ails you at his relations ? is he not a shepherd to feed you, a physician to heal you, a father to pity you, a husband to cherish you ? what ails you at his doing to fulfil the law for you, or his dying to satisfy justice for you ? what ails you at his yoke, is not his yoke easy and his burden light, his ways pleasantness and his

his paths peace? What ails you at his grace and glory? What ails you at him, sirs? O! is he not worth your while, tho' you should run through hell to come to him? Is there not a heart in all this company that would fain be at him? Alas! would you rather go to the devil than come to Christ. That a comely Jesus cannot get two or three hearts in all this company, O pity, pity! and a thousand pities, that the beauty of the Godhead cannot get a lover! Will you all be so mad as to run by Christ to other lovers, while he begs your love, as if he were upon his knees, and sends us to pray you in his stead to be reconciled with him, and come to him? And therefore, sirs, in his blessed name I pray you, go not by him. I beg it as the best favour you can do to my master and me, that you come to him. I beseech you by the mercies of God and by the bowels of Christ, that you come to him; he will welcome the worst of you that will come to him, and if you but strive to stretch the wither'd hand, or put out the wither'd heart toward him, he will help you to it, and embrace you with hand and heart both. He is content to come to you on any terms, and will you not come to him? He stands at the door of your heart, and waits that you'll allow him to come in, and let him have access. Have you a hard heart, he would be in to soften it? are you pleased? Have you a filthy heart, he would be in to wash it? are you content? Have you a wicked heart, he would be in to renew it? are you satisfied? If you will not come to him, will you let him come to you, that he may make you willing? Consider what is a coming. O is not a day of calamity coming, and why will you not come to Christ? Is not a day of death coming, and why will you not come to him? Is not a day of judgment coming, and why will you

not come to him ? Or why come you to any thing else ? Why come you to ordinances, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the life of ordinances ?

— Why come you to sermons, if you come not to Christ, who is the substance of all sermons ? Why come you to a communion-table, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the heart of the communion ? Why do you hope for heaven, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the all of heaven, the heaven of heavens ? A thousand heavens are lighter than a feather, when laid in the balance with him. Had I the tongue of a seraphim, I could not commend him enough to you, ; but O may he commend himself to your heart, and cause you to throw your immortal soul into his saving arms, notwithstanding all the discouraging temptations of satan, and whatever objections and oppositions stand in the way of your coming to him.



The Self-humbling, and Christ-exalting
Influence of Divine Discoveries ;

Opened in

A SERMON preach'd *July* 13. 1729.
immediately after the Celebration of
the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*,
at *Dunfermling*.

By the Revd. Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

JOHN iv. 29.

*Come, see a Man which told me all
things that ever I did ; Is not this
the Christ ?*

IF our glorious Lord Jesus has been here present
this day, conversing with us as he did with the
woman of *Samaria*, discovering us to ourselves, and
discovering himself to us ; if he hath been telling us
what vile sinners we are, and what a glorious Savi-
our he is, so as *the entrance of his word hath given
light to us*, to see our blackness on the one side, and
his beauty on the other ; surely it cannot but lead
us to some such self-condemning and Christ-com-
mending exercise, as here this woman is employed
in, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I
did ; is not this the Christ ?*

In the preceeding part of this chapter, there stands recorded a very notable conversation betwixt Christ and this woman, the particulars whereof are too many to be considered at this time, tho' some of them may fall in our way, when we speak of the circumstances of her conversion : only in the general, our Lord Jesus, as a wearied traveller, sitting down by *Jacob's well*, and this woman coming to draw water, he asks a drink from her, both to quench his thirst, and to take occasion of conferring with her, with a design of mercy to her soul. She apprehending him to be a *Jew*, refuses to give him a drink, upon an old quarrel that was betwixt the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, whereupon

- Christ shews her how she mistook her own mercy, and that he had better water to give her, than that which she refused to give him, *ver. 10.* and that if she knew what a valuable mercy were at her hand, she would have turn'd a suppliant to him, and not suffer him to be so to her. But she still reasoning against his offer, he points out further the excellency of what he offered, *ver. 13, 14.* This raised
- some natural desire in her : but our Lord resolving to take hold of her heart, and knowing that the richest offer of his grace in the world, will work no desire in the heart of sinners, further than what is natural and carnal, unless he effectually convince them of their sin and misery, and savingly manifest himself to them ; therefore he takes this method with her. 1st, He convinces her of her sin and misery, and lets her understand that he knew all the lewdness and wickedness she was guilty of, by shewing her how many adulteries she was chargeable with, *ver. 18.* Whereupon she begins to conceive some high opinion of him as a prophet, and to seek further light from him, with reference to the right way of worshipping God ; there being controversies

controversies about religious matters, and particularly about the place of publick worship, betwixt the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*. And indeed the woman's discourse here shews, that tho' she was a profane *Samaritan*, yet she was no *ignoramus*. She had knowledge of the controversy of the day she lived in, and the grounds thereof, and knew that the *Messias* was to come; yet her knowledge was no sanctified knowledge. But now her conscience being awakened with a sense of sin, she is solicitous to have her mind informed, and accordingly is instructed at large by our Lord Jesus, both concerning the place, and the right manner of worshipping God. And thus from one thing to another, he leads her on, until, *2dly*, He manifests himself to her, *ver. 26*. Christ's discourse about the change of religion that was to take place, brought the woman to mind of the *Messiah's* coming; *I know*, says she, *that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things*: and when she is expressing her high estimation of, and great desire after this coming *Messias*, Jesus says unto her, *I that speak unto thee, am he*. 'Christ may be present with people, and speaking to them, and yet they can't know it, till he reveals himself, as here he did to this woman, *I that speak unto thee, am he*.

No sooner did Christ thus kindly discover himself unto her, than immediately this sweet conference is broken up by the return of the disciples, who had *gone to the city to buy meat*, *ver. 8*. The sweetest fellowship with Christ on earth, is but of a short duration, and the most pleasant manifestations may meet with very sudden interruptions, and poor sinners may have such a sweet time in Christ's company, that even the company of disciples may be an interruption to it.

But now how she was affected with this discovery is evident from two things. *1st*, She forgets her errand that she came upon ; she left her water-pot, and went her way. Having got a taste of the excellency of Christ, and a drink of the living water that he gave her, she minds no other water now, nay, she forgets all other things that before were in a great esteem with her. *2dly*, She spreads the name and fame of Christ in the place where she dwelt, *Come see a man*, says she, *that told me all things that ever I did : is not this the Christ ?* Wherein we may notice, 1. An invitation, *Come see a man* ; having got a taste of his goodness, she would have the men of the city to taste and see with her. 2. A commendation, a man *that told me all things that ever I did* ; a man that hath discovered himself to be God as well as man, in that he hath ript up my heart and life. He had discover'd her lewdness to her, and thereby represented all other things to her as seen by him. There is here implied a humble sense she had of her sinfulness, which Christ hath given her a discovery and conviction of, and by his searching word she understood that he was the searcher of hearts, and so commends him as *a man that told her all things that ever she did*. 3. A conclusion, by way of interrogation and expostulation, *is not this the Christ ?* importing no manner of doubt about it in her own breast, but a strong affirmation pointing at him unto them. He had told her what she was, and in this glass she saw her own vileness ; and he had told her what he was, and in this glass she saw his glory, and by both these means he had discovered himself to be the true *Messias*, the God-man, the promised *Emmanuel*, *God with us* ; and her heart being full of Christ, and overflowing with the living water of the Spirit that he had given her, it vented itself and ran over in his praise

praise and commendation unto others, *Come see a man that told me all that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* I shall endeavour some further explication of this text, upon a note of doctrine. Passing over many others, what I mainly fixt upon is,

Obf. *That those saving discoveries of Christ, that make persons condemn and abase themselves to the lowest, lead them at the same time to commend and exalt Christ to the highest.*

Self-searching, soul-humbling, and sin-discovering manifestations, issue in Christ-exalting commendations. I think 'tis remarkable in this woman, that kindly humiliation did not take place in her, till after that Christ had clearly manifested himself to her, saying, *I that speak unto thee, am he.* 'Tis true, when Christ first discovered her wickedness and lewdness to her, she appeared to be self condemned and convicted saying, *I perceive that thou art a prophet, and a true prophet indeed, that can tell me how many acts of lewdness I have been guilty of ;* her conscience flying in her face, and subscribing to the truth of what he told her : but yet, as her first conviction appeared to be very partial and weak, in that (as some think) she seemed to shift any discourse, about her own vileness, and started a question about a national difference betwixt the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, to divert that subject concerning her baseness ; so I think we may conclude, that her convictions before, were very legal, driving her rather to her works and duties than to Christ ; for instantly she falls a questioning him about the means of worshipping God, as if now she was convinced of her sin against God, her only way of getting to his favour, was by her endeavouring to please him by her duties of worship, whom she had displeased by her wickedness and lewdness. And indeed the first thing that an awakened conscience looks

looks to, is the law, *the first husband*. But now when once Christ discovers and manifests himself to her, she is kindly humbled into a sense of her vileness, yea, and of all her heart and life-wickedness represented under that, and in the light wherein Christ discovered himself, she saw all her abominations ; *he told me all things that ever I did*. She is now humbled and abased to the lowest. Why ? Her sense of sin is not now partial, but full, *he told me all things that ever I did*. Neither is it now legal, but evangelical ; for it was now in the glass of a saving manifestation, in the glass wherein Christ discovered his glory and excellency, that she saw all her own filthiness and deformity. And while she is thus debased and humbled by the discovery of Christ, how does she commend and exalt him to the highest ? She commends him to her neighbour-citizens, and puts the greatest honour upon him both as the true God incarnate, that by his omniscient eye could see, and so declare to her *all that ever she did*, and as he is the true *Messias*, the anointed of God, *Is not this the Christ ?* The truth of this doctrine might be cleared from many scripture-passages. That saving discoveries of Christ, tend to make persons condemn and debase themselves, and to commend and exalt Christ ; as it was with *Job*, chap. xl. ver. 4, 5. God having manifested his glory, he cried out, *Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth*, as being unworthy to speak in the presence of such a glorious one ; therefore he adds, *Once have I spoken, but I will not answer ; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further* : and *Job* xlii. 5, 6. See how the discovery of Christ makes the prophet *Isaiah* to condemn and debase himself to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest, *Isa.* vi. 1, 5. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, *high and lifted up, and his train*

train filled the temple ; then says he, *Woes me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* To this purpose we may see *Isa. xlv. 22.* and downward, *Look to me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.* Why, what will issue upon that saving sight of Christ ? both the abasing of himself *ver. 23.* *To him every knee shall bow,* and the high commendation and exaltation of Christ, *Surely, ver. 24. 25. shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength ; in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* But passing many other proofs, I suppose it will be found evident in the experience of all saints, that every manifestation and discovery of Christ tends to work both these effects at the same time, even to make them condemn and debase themselves to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest. This subject is very large, but I design, for shortning the work, to confine my self especially to the circumstances and effects of the discovery that Christ here gives of himself to the woman of *Samaria* in the following method. I. I shall shew what we are to understand by Christ's manifesting or discovering himself to a person. II. What are these sin-discovering and soul-debasing effects of Christ manifesting himself ; or when may one be in a case to say, that Christ hath told him all things that ever he did ? III. What are these Christ-exalting commendations, wherein such discoveries of Christ vent themselves ; and so notice the particular import of what the woman here says, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* IV. I will shew the reasons of the doctrine ; whence it is that saving discoveries of Christ have such a self-debasing and

and Christ-exalting influence. And then, V. Make application of the whole.

I. I will speak a little of Christ's discovering and manifesting himself to sinners. And here I would confine myself to the circumstances of the discovery that he makes of himself to this woman, which wrought this effect in her, and which in most particulars will be found to agree with all the saving manifestations that our Lord makes of himself to his people, either at first conversion, or any renewed visit he makes to them. And here we may notice, 1. Some things relating to the means of the discovery that Christ makes of himself to this woman. 2. Some things relating to the manner of it.

1st, There are some things in the context relating to the means of this discovery. 1. One of the more remote means was, his taking occasion to come to a place where she was also to come, and so casting himself in her way, as it were. This is noticed very remarkably, *ver. 4.* of this *chapter*, where it is said, *He must needs go thro' Samaria.* Whatever other reasons there were for his going this way, here was a special one; he must needs meet this woman, and with those *Samaritans* (whom on this occasion) he converted to the faith. If there be but one soul that Christ hath an errand to, the world will not keep him away from the place where that soul is. He must needs go thro' that place; there is a sweet necessity he lies under; he must needs bring a gospel ministry there, he must needs bring gospel ordinances where he has any souls to meet with, and discover himself savingly unto. They to whom Christ hath discovered himself will find a merciful providence exercised about them, in his ordering their lot so, that either they are brought to the place where Christ and his ordinances are, or Christ and his ordinances come to the place

place where they are. A second more remote means of this discovery is our Lord's ordering matters so, as her secular errand is made the occasion of her spiritual good and advantage, *ver. 7. There comes this woman of Samaria to draw water.* Providence may be intending much mercy to those who are both very unworthy of it, and very unconcerned about it. Little was this sinful woman minding any other thing but to draw water, yet a happy providence made her to meet with the Saviour of sinners. Some have come to ordinances, as this woman did to *Jacob's well*, with no other view, save upon some secular and carnal errand; may be to draw the water of damnation to themselves, or to draw in some applause to themselves amongst their neighbours, or merely from custom and curiosity, little minding any saving good, which yet the Lord hath prevented them with. A third mean of this discovery is, Christ falls a discoursing with her, and upon occasion of his seeking, and her refusing him a drink of water, he shews his pity and compassion on her, as an ignorant and unsensible sinner, having no knowledge or sense of her real want and necessity with respect to that *better water which he had to give*; and particularly, he lets her know, that *the well of living water was in his hand*, to dispense as he pleased; and that as he offers his grace before we ask it, so he will not refuse it to them who ask it upon his offer and promise. *If thou had'st known, thou would'st have asked, and I would have given thee living water*; and besides, in his discourse he commends his water to her, *ver. 14.* his gifts, his graces, his Spirit, as a well above all wells, *a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, and all to be freely dispensed by way of gift and donation; and this is the way he deals still with sinners in the free dispensation of the gospel. A fourth mean of this discovery

discovery is his working a work of conviction upon her conscience, by shewing her transgressions to her, and setting her sin in order before her, *ver.* 18. and thereby discovering his prophetic office to her, and raising some esteem of him as a prophet, *ver.* 19. The freest offers do not prevail with sinners, till they be convinced of their sinfulness and misery. Indeed it is not every sight of sin that will convince the sinner ; but Christ must set it home upon the conscience, and discover sin to them marked by his all-seeing eye, his all-searching eye ; for the woman knew pretty well how matters were with her, and yet without any due sense, till he ript up her bosom, and made her see and understand that all her sins were *naked and open unto the eye of him with whom she had now to do* ; and tho' she did not yet know him to be the Christ, yet she begins to have some high thought of him as a prophet that had the mind of God, and by whom God was discovering her sinfulness to her. But it does not appear as yet that she perceived any thing in him above ordinary prophets ; so gradually, by little and little, did he manifest himself to her. Only it is evident here, that in God's order and method of working effectually on the hearts of sinners, as there is a discovery of sin that goes before a discovery of Christ, without which persons do not see their need of Christ ; so the more that Christ discovers sin, and touches the sinner's heart therewith, it breeds the more respect and estimation of him, tho' it may be very weak and low at first. A fifth mean of this discovery is his opening up to her the nature of true spiritual and acceptable worship, *ver.* 21, 22, 23, 24. Here he gives her such instruction, as might tend to let her see that he was a prophet above all prophets, that knew what changes were quickly to fall out with reference to the place
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of religious worship, and what sort of worship God would have, what a spirit he is, and what spiritual service he requires. As faith comes by hearing, so discoveries of Christ, the glorious object of faith, come by the means of instruction and divine teaching, such as the Lord Jesus here gives this woman. And this paves a way to a sixth mean of this discovery, namely, his working in her heart a kindly remembrance of an high esteem of the *Messias*, ver. 25. The longer she conversed with Christ, she is the more enamoured with him. Tho' he disclaimed the *Samaritan* worship, and declared they had no warrant for their religion; yet having at the same time shewed that the *Jewish* worship was warrantable by the word of God, though yet their temporary *way of worship* was what his coming to the *world* was to give a burial to, and to abolish, upon which, a more excellent *way* of worshipping God was to succeed; I say, the more she hears him speak, the more she is enamoured with his discourse, and filled with great respect and regard to the *Messias*, from whom she expected such instructions as that: *I know that Messias comes, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things*; not knowing as yet, that she was speaking to him. She is speaking with a very high estimation of him, as the great teacher of his church, that would fully reveal the counsel of God concerning his service, and means of salvation. And now, the *woman*, by these means, being brought to have precious thoughts of Christ, and to give such a notable evidence of her faith concerning him, then he discovered himself, saying, *I that speak unto thee, am he*: When people are brought to sublime thoughts of Christ, then it is certain, Christ is not far off from them: thus ye have the means. We shall,

2dly, Notice the manner of the discovery that Christ makes of himself, *I that speak unto thee, am he.* Here is a clear manifestation and revelation that Christ himself gives of himself, *I that speak unto thee, am he.* It is not ordinary for Christ to give such testimony of himself, there must be some rare thing here ; for when *John's* disciples came to ask him, *Art thou he that should come, or may we look for another?* He does not say, *I that speak unto thee, am he ;* nay, but go, tell *John* what you hear and see ; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them ; let him draw the conclusion from these premises, whether I am he or not ; but here *Matth. xi. 5.* he gives us as clear a discovery of himself as in all the book of God, out of his own mouth. We know *Peter* gave a clear testimony, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God ;* the Father gave a great testimony of him, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* But that Christ gave as clear a testimony of himself, is rarely to be found in all the new testament : yea, this discovery of himself is the more remarkable, because he forbade his disciples, at that time, to tell expressly who he was ; and when *Pilate*, and *Herod*, and others ask him, *Who art thou ?* he either gave them a very dark answer, or none at all. Christ is not lavish of his commendations in this manner ; therefore there is some speciality here, and yet there is something in the manner of Christ's manifesting himself to her, that is common to all the children of God, to whom he savingly manifests himself.

1. It was in a word, a home-word spoken to her heart, that he discovered himself, *I that speak unto thee, am he.* It was by speaking to her that he manifested himself ; so it is in the word that he discovers himself to his own, that word that comes
into

into the ear of others, comes into their heart ; th joyful sound goes thro' the very soul of the man, in a secret indiscernable manner. This is plain in the case of this woman, both in respect to the *word* that he spake for her conviction to discover her sin, and in the *word* that he spake for her consolation, discovering himself as the Saviour. In the former, he had said, *I know, this is not thy husband that thou hast* ; the *word* went to her heart, that is a true *word*, says she, spoken by a true prophet, for I am living in *whoredom*. Thus God, in dealing with sinners by his *word* externally, makes it have an internal sound in the heart ; he whispers in the ear of a sinner, and makes him think, O that is very true, I am just guilty of yon sin, I cannot reclaim against what the minister says, all is true, I must take with the charge of God's *word* : so with respect to the latter, when he discovers himself savingly, it is in the *word* of grace, it comes into the ear, but the finger of God sets it down to the heart, the *God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart* ; and it is in the glass of the *word* that this light shines, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*.

2. It was a particular discovery, *I that speak unto thee, am he* ; to thee ; so when God in Christ discovers himself, it is a particular discovery, *he calls his own sheep by name*, John x. 3. As the *word* of conviction is particular, so the *word* of grace is particular, as if God were dealing with none other but that person. O has he spoken to thee, man, to thee, woman, in particular, by his *word*, and set it home upon thy heart ?

3. It was an immediate discovery he himself made of himself. This indeed is not to be expected in the manner that the woman here was privileged with : but tho' it is not now in an immediate,

— diate, but in a mediate way ; yet, where he savingly manifests himself, he takes the means in his own hand, and makes the soul find, that it is none other but himself that is dealing with it ; it is not the voice of men or ministers, but the voice of God that it hears, 1 *Theff.* ii. 1, 3. 'The word comes with such life, light and majesty, that the soul finds it is indeed the word of God, it has a heavenly relish with it. And hence,

4. It was a clear and demonstrative discovery ; *I am he*, says Christ to the woman. Saving discoveries are by way of demonstration, as the word imports, *John* xvi. 9. Thus he manifests himself to his people, as he does not manifest himself to the world, who remain encompassed and enveloped with the clouds and mists of gross darkness and ignorance, amidst all the literal knowledge they enjoyed.

5. It was a gradual discovery, by little and little, from one step to another, till he made all his glory pass before this woman ; even so where he manifests himself savingly, he does it gradually ; *his goings forth are prepared as the morning*. The work that is very sudden, seldom proves very sound. It is observed of the bad ground, that the seed sown did suddenly spring up. God's ordinary way of manifesting himself is gradual ; the *path of the just shines more and more unto the perfect day*. Then,

6. It was a sensible discovery that he gave of himself to this woman ; *her time was a time of love*. After he had let her see that she was lying in her blood, and in the puddle of pollution, and after he had filled her heart with precious thoughts of the *Messias*, the deliverer, he would no longer hide himself from her ; O how sweetly and sensibly does he manifest himself to his people, when they are apt to think he is far from them ! As this woman was speaking
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of the *Messias* as the glorious person whom she wist not if ever she would have the happiness to see, *Behold*, says Christ, *I that speak unto thee, am he.* O, says the soul, will ever I get a sight of Christ, I know not if ever I'll be so happy ; why then, usually, he lets them know he is not far off.

7. It was a wonderful discovery he made of himself to this woman, there were many wonders in it : and indeed whenever Christ manifests himself to any soul, it will see some such like wonders as she saw. O wonderful, might she say, is he speaking to me, such a poor woman as I am, and such a base woman as I have been ! Why, as there was no likeness or relation betwixt him and her, but on the contrary, a stated enmity and alienation, for the *Jews* had no dealing with the *Samaritans*, yea, but he must deal with her, tho' she was no good woman ; nay a common whore, lying in whoredom. O wonderful ! tho' ye were never such a great sinner, yet Christ is content to speak to you, and to speak with you, for your everlasting good ; and it is an ill tale that may not be heard ; will ye allow Christ to speak to you ? Was it not wonderful that Christ should speak to this woman, in such a manner as he did ? How kindly does he speak to her, that he might win her heart with his love, and kill her with kindness ? One might have thought he would call her a base, filthy devil, as it was said to himself most blasphemously, *Say we not well, thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil* ; it was true of this woman of *Samaria*, she was a *Samaritan* that had a filthy devil ; yea, the *Jews* took all the *Samaritans* for incarnate devils, but does Christ call her so ? Nay, and it adds to the wonder of his discovering himself to her, that she was a sligher of Christ, he was undervalued by her, *Art thou greater than our father Jacob ?* says she, *ver. 12.* yea she

refused him a drink of cold water ; yet he bears with all these affronts, and manifests himself to her, even to her. O wonderful ! do not several such wonders take place, when the Lord comes and manifest himself to you ? O believers, O sinners, are there not wonders enough to be observed anent this glorious person's shewing himself ? he might dwell in heaven to all eternity, as he dwelt in heaven from all eternity, and be for ever happy ! the Father was good company to him, and he needed none of your company, he had infinite delight in himself, more than in all his creatures ; yet for all this, that he should speak and shew himself to you, how wonderful is it ? His discoveries are wonderful, in that he seeks nothing of us : 'tis true, he made the fashion of seeking a drink of water from this *woman*, but that was only by the by, he got meat and drink enough, when he got the *woman* to himself ; the great thing he was seeking, was to get the *woman* divorced from all her base husbands, and married to himself, yea, betrothed to him for ever ; yea, Christ's visits to some may be wonderful, not only to the sinner that gets them, but to the saints and disciples that see or hear tell of them. We are told *ver. 27.* here, that *the disciples, when they came, they marvelled that he talked with that woman* ; tho' they durst not challenge him, yet it was matter of offence to them that he so freely conversed with her. Christ can demean himself, and stoop so low to a sinner, as is marvellous to flesh and blood : there is more kindness and humility in him alone, than in all his friends. They being advanced by grace, are apt to forget themselves, and to become so proud as to despise others, tho' they themselves were once lifted up out of the dungeon, and chosen out of the dust. But then,

8thly, It was a powerful discovery that he made of himself to this *woman*, as appears by the gracious effects thereof. Now her heart goes off all things else, she forgets her *water-pot*, her mind is set upon some greater things, she ran away to the city, that she might invite others to follow him, who had so wonderfully manifested himself to her ; and indeed all saving manifestations have a power attending them. The gospel comes not in *word only*, but in *power* ; Christ's word has a drawing power. He draws with loving-kindness, while grace and love is poured from his lips. This word, wherein he visits the soul, has a winning power that wins the heart from all things, and makes Christ all in all. And his manifestations have a sanctifying, transforming power ; *Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image* : and especially they lead to self-debasing and Christ-exalting exercise. Which brings me to the

II^d Head proposed, namely, What are these finding and soul-debasing effects of Christ's manifesting himself ? or when may one be in case to say, *He told me all things that ever I did* ? 'Tis true, this is a part of what the woman spoke to Christ's commendation, as an all-knowing God, as well as to her own condemnation, as a vile sinner brought under a kindly self-debasement, by the discovery she had of Christ, both as a kindly reprover, and a merciful redeemer, a Christ, a Saviour. To give light to this particular, I shall only touch at this, How are all things told, when only some things seem to be told ? How can this woman say, *he told me all things that ever I did*, when yet it was only her whoredom and adultery that he discovered ? or when may the discovery that Christ makes of himself be so humbling and abasing, that when but a small part is mentioned, yet *all that ever we did* is discovered ?

discovered? I answer 1st, It may be said consequentially, *he told me all things that ever I did*, that is by plain consequence, as we may see what the conclusion is, when the premises are related, what the root is, when the fruit is discovered, and what the fountain is, when the streams are discovered. Even so when Christ tells a person, what evil fruit he hath brought forth, that person may easily infer that he hath told him that he is an evil tree, and by the streams of wickedness in the life, he leads people thus to the fountain of wickedness in the heart and nature. When he tells one of the black smoke that comes out of the chimney of his heart, he tells also, by plain consequence, that there is a fire of corruption within, and then is one abased to self-adorrence, when by the discovery of one sin, in the light of a gracious manifestation, he is led in a spiritually argumentative way to infer his total deprivation both in nature and practice; he may say consequentially, at least, *he told me all things that ever I did*. 2^{dly}, It may be said inclusively and virtually, *he told me all things that ever I did*; as *he that offends in one point of the law, is guilty of all*, *Jam. ii. 10.* in regard of his counteracting the authority that enjoins all; so he that is humbled deeply for any one sin, may see therein that he hath broken all the commands of God, and may be said in a part to have seen the whole. In transgressing of one command, he may see his being a transgressor of all the commands of God, and a continual transgressor thereof in thought, word, and deed, because, as *every imagination of the heart is evil, and evil continually*, so out of the heart, as out of a bitter fountain, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnessing, blasphemy, and all other pollutions beside. All the sins of people are included, inclosed, connected together as links in a chain, so that when

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one link is seen, the whole chain may be said to be seen. Suppose a chain, whereof some links are above the ground, and all the rest of it hanging down into a dark and deep pit, when the upper links are seen in their connexion with the whole, then one may be said to have seen all, because all are included and inclosed in what he saw. 3dly, It may be said potentially, *he told me all things that ever I did*, because by that one instance he gave a proof of his ability so to do. He that could tell me this, could tell me all ; he that could observe this, hath observed all that ever I did, and can as easily tell me all as tell me a part ; for none but the searcher of hearts, that sees all my goings, could have told me this. He that can save to the utmost, can see to the outermost. 4thly, It may be said representatively, *he told me all things that ever I did* ; for this discovery represented all other things, all my other sins. This representation is like that which is made in a mirror ; if one set a looking-glass before you to see a spot in your face, when you see that, at the same time you see all the spots there ; so when Christ sets the glass of his word before you, to see such a particular spot and blot, in the same glass you have a view and representation of all the spots and all the blemishes of your heart and way : for we may conceive this representation like that which is made in a map ; if one shew you, for example, a particular city in the map of the world, why at the same time he presents you to all the terraqueous globe, the whole world at one glance ; so here, when in 'the light of the Spirit, Christ discovers to you one sin, in the same map you see the whole world of wickedness, a world of atheism, enmity, unbelief, pride, self, and other plagues innumerable. Thus in the day of gracious manifestation, wherein Christ the Sun of righteousness discovers himself, the sinner that is privileged

with it, cannot but see a black sight of himself, which makes him say in effect, *He told me all the ills that ever I did*, he told me what I have been, and what I have done, that I have been a sinner in *Adam*, and a transgressor from the womb, that I have done evil as I could, and given innumerable instances of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and of an unbelieving heart, which is enmity against Christ, and of resistance to the motions of heaven, which is enmity against the Holy Ghost. When the sun shines into a dark house, by a small window, the beams discover innumerable motes and hovering particles of dust in that part of the house where the light is shining, by which we are made to see and understand, that the whole house is full of motes and dust; even so here, when Christ the sun of righteousness appears and shines in upon the dark dungeon of a sinner's heart, and discovers any motes and blots that are there, then it appears that the whole house, the whole heart and nature, is full of the dust and smoke of hell, which makes the soul cry out with *Job*, *Behold I am vile*; and hence the more precious that Christ appears in any man's eye, the more vile does he appear in his own eye, and debase himself to the lowest; he thinks himself the most loathsome sinner that ever was seen, when Christ tells him all that ever he did. So much shall suffice as to the soul-debasing effects of Christ manifesting himself, imported in that expression, *He told me all things that ever I did*; at one glance he gave me a view of all the sins that ever I was guilty of.

The III^d Head proposed was to shew, What are these Christ-exalting commendations wherein such discoveries of Christ vent themselves, and which are imported in the words of the woman here, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this*

this the Christ? Here, confining myself to the matter and the manner of the commendation in the text, notice

1st, The matter of the commendation, or in what respects she commends Christ to her neighbours; and it is particularly in two respects which are very comprehensive. (1.) She commends him in his natures. (2.) In his offices.

(1.) In his natures, as the man-god, or the god-man, that told me all things that ever I did. Here is his human nature; but O she saw his divinity through the vail of his humanity; *he told me all things that ever I did*, and gave me thus an infallible proof of his being the supreme God. She was neither an *Arian*, nor a *Socinian*, neither will any be so that gets such a discovery of Christ as she got. And surely the blasphemous *Arians* of our day, bewray their ignorance and want of true learning and spiritual knowledge, such as this poor woman had, O but a little glance of Christ's glory can make a poor illiterate woman wiser than the learned *Rabbies* that were never taught of God, and yet think themselves the only wits of the world. Those to whom Christ discovers himself, as they will see, so they will commend him to others as the God in *our nature*, God manifested in the flesh. Whoever questioned, but the Searcher of hearts, that knows all things, is the true and supreme God, that can give laws to bind the heart and consciences of men, and then rip up their hearts to them, and tell them all these things wherein they have violated and broken that law in heart or way? Yet Christ is here declared to be such an one, *He told me all things that ever I did*. Why, this can be no more denied, than it can be questioned, whether it was the great God, the true and supreme God, that gave out the law upon mount *Sinai*? No body doubts that, say you.

you. Why then, it is declared in scripture that it was this same Jesus that did so, *Psal.* lxxviii. 17, 18. The Lord is among them, as in *Sinai*, in the holy place, *thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them* : and of whom all this is spoken, the apostle shews, *Eph.* iv. 8. And every believer knows, he told all things that ever I did ; he told me all my sins and transgressions of his law, which he gave forth at *Sinai*. By a sanctified sight of some sins, he opened my eyes to see more and more, yea to see all my sins, and that I was nothing but a mass of sin, enmity and pollution ; and thus I saw the revealer to be the true and supreme God, even the eternal son of God, clothed with human nature, *a man that told me all things that ever I did*, a man that told me what none but God can do, a man that proved himself to be God, by an argument of power upon my heart and conscience, an argument drawn from his omniscient eye, and driven in upon my heart by his omnipotent hand.

(2.) In his offices he is here commended and exalted, *Is not this the Christ ?* that is, is not this the true *Messias* promised, prophesied of in the old testament ? This is her *Eureka*, like that, *John* i. 45. *We have found him, of whom, Moses in the law and the prophets did write ;* even so I have found him, might she say, he hath been with me, and I have been with him. He hath spoken to me, and I have spoken to him. He hath not only told me what I am, and what I have been, and what I have done, but told me what he is, and I have found him to be God as well as man. And who is he then, but the promised *Emanuel*, *God with us*, *is not this the Christ ?* that is, the anointed of God, to the saving offices of prophet, priest, and king ;
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this word Christ especially imports, and has a particular reference to. He is anointed as a prophet, to declare the mind of God ; anointed as a priest, to make reconciliation with God, and anointed as a king to subdue sinners to God, and make them friends that are enemies to God. *He is anointed with the Spirit above measure*, John iii. 34. To render him a fit prophet, he hath the *spirit of wisdom and understanding* above measure ; to make him a fit priest, he hath the spirit of love and compassion above measure : and that he may be a fit king, he hath the spirit of power and government : *Is not this the Christ ?* that is, *the sealed and sent of God*, clothed with a commission from God to seek and save lost sinners, John vi. 27. *Him hath God the Father sealed*, that is authorized unto this work, according as himself declares, *Isa. lxi. 1.* compared with *Luke iv. 18.* *Is not this the Christ ?* namely, he that is anointed that he may anoint, *anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.* Believers are said to receive the anointing ; but there is a vast difference betwixt the anointing of Christ, and the anointing of believers ; for Christ is the fountain from whom all the streams flow, the sun from whom all the beams of grace shine. Grace in believers, is like water in a brook ; but grace in Christ is like water in the ocean. Grace in the believer is like broken beams ; but in Christ, it is like the bright center of all light. He received the spirit of all grace for this very end, to be bestowed upon others. The first *Adam* brought an emptiness on the whole creation, but the second *Adam* came to fill all things and all persons, to fill *Jew and Gentile*, that *of his fulness we might receive grace for grace.* The oil of grace and gladness was poured out upon our *Emanuel*, on purpose that he might pour it down upon the barren mountains. Thus we see
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in what respects he is here commended, or the matter of the commendation. Let us view,

2dly, The manner of the commendation, or in what way she does. We may read in the bosom of the text, several properties of this exercise of commending and exalting Christ, which saving discoveries of him lead into. And. (1.) It is an open and public commendation of Christ, for she went away to the city, and says, *O people, come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* She being formerly a lewd woman, had given open offence and scandal to the citizens, and now, upon the discovery of her sin, and the discovery of the Saviour, she gave as open and ready evidence of her repentance and conversion, by inviting them all to *come and see* him that had given her a conviction of her sin and vileness, and a manifestation of his glory and grace. Saving discoveries of Christ will lead people as openly to glorify and honour him, as they have before openly dishonoured him. (2.) It is an experimental commendation of him ; she commends him from her own experience and feeling, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did ;* I have seen his face, and heard his voice, and felt his power, he has convinced and converted me, therefore from my own feeling and experience, I commend his grace unto you. It is like that, 1 John i. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us.* It was something like that of David, Psal. lxvi. 16. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.* Yea, he commends Christ, not only to believers, but to others, as you see his resolution is, *Psal. li. 13.* Upon his getting a new visit, and the Lord's restoring to him the joy of his salvation, and upholding him with his free spirit, *Then, says he, will I teach transgressors*

transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Thus Paul set forth the abundant grace of God from his own experience, *I was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious ; but I obtained mercy, and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, &c.* 1 Tim. i. 13, 14. They that have experience of the things of Christ themselves, will be most zealous in manifesting the things of Christ to others, and in pressing them to come to Christ, as having proof and experience of his grace ; and indeed they can best speak of Christ, to whom Christ hath spoken, and *who believe and therefore speak.* (3.) It is a charitable commendation of Christ. She is now filled with such christian love to others, and particularly to those she was most concerned with, and interested in, that she would have them all drawn to Christ. She said to the men, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did.* Perhaps there were some of them she had tempted to sin and wickedness before, now she would have them turned to Christ ; a great change. They that have seen Christ cannot but desire that others may see him too, they would have all to come and see. O, if all the world would come and see, come and wonder, come and admire him, as *Abraham* commanded his children and servants *to seek and serve the Lord* ; so if one that hath got the discovery of Christ could do it, he would command thousands to come and see him, and serve him. When Christ discovers himself, and speaks into the heart of a man, it makes the man speak good of Christ. Again, a sight of Christ's face smites the soul with a likeness to him in love ; and hence the sinner, immediately upon the revelation of Christ, is filled with a strange love, a love of complaisance to the saints, and a love of benevolence to others. (4.) It is a judicious commendation of Christ, that issues from the discovery

very of Christ. And here several things point out the judgment and wisdom by which she commends Christ unto them. It is evident, from the method she takes, or would have them to take, she is not content that they rest upon her report only, but would have them taste and see themselves : she knew that their love could not terminate savingly upon her testimony ; and therefore would have them coming to Christ himself. Again, it is evident, how judicious it was, from her endeavour to draw them to Christ, with the very same hook that caught herself. Christ spake many good words to her ; but the first thing that griped her heart, and caught her, was this, *He told me all things that ever I did*. His heart-searching and discovering word was the means of her conversion, and she would have them drawn to Christ by the same means, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* It is evident also, how judicious it was, from the gradation of her words, or the gradually rising steps of her commendation : she begins somewhat low, *Come, see a man* : she goes on to a higher note, *He told me all things that ever I did* ; and she concludes with the highest commendations of him, *Is not this the Christ ?* Not only God, but God appearing in all his glorious robes of grace, even *Emanuel*, God with us. In a word, it is evident how judicious it is, from the manner of her arguing ; she argues from his telling part of her secret wickedness, *that he told her all, q. d.* he could easily have told me all things that ever I said, and all things that ever I designed, and all things that ever I thought, as he told me what I did : Yea, I got such a broad look of all my sins in that one glass of a discovery that he gave me, that I can't but own he *told me all things that ever I did*. Again she argues from the
divinity

divinity that she saw was joined with his humanity, that he was the true *Messias* ; and hence judiciously infers, *Is not this the Christ?* She never was at a college, to learn how to frame an argument, but having been at Christ's school for a little pleasant while, she there learned some heavenly logic ; can such a man as this be any other but the Christ? The more clear discovery that any gets of Christ, the more skilful and expert they will be in commending him to others ; as we see in our apostle *Paul*, after Christ was revealed to him, what clear discoveries did he make of Christ to others, as appears in the *Acts of the apostles*, and in all his epistles. (5.) It is a pathetic commendation of Christ, that issues from the discoveries of him. Her heart is full of Christ, and full of desire to praise, and exalt, and commend him to others, and her heart vents itself in several pathetical expressions. Hence she spake first in a hortatory manner, *Come and see*, says she ; O slip not this opportunity, when such a great sight is to be seen. Next she spake in an assertory manner, she asserts some strange things concerning him, he is a man *that told me all things that ever I did* ; he is a seer and revealer of the secrets of men, and therefore must be a prophet, and more than a prophet, a revealer of the counsel of God. And finally, she spake in a questionary and expostulatory manner, *Is not this the Christ?* He can be none else but the true *Messias*, the Christ of God. She is not content to commend him in one particular, but she must go on and insist in his praise and commendation, and can't think she can commend him enough, *Is not this the Christ?* She makes no question of it herself ; and the design of her question is to put it out of question with them. Who can this be but the Christ? How can it be any other but the Christ? They

that have met with Christ, and got the heart touched by his grace, it is in a hearty cordial way they speak to him, and commend him to others. The sinner that hath met with a Saviour, O how fain would he trumpet forth his praise if he could. There is something further here that points out the pathetic manner of the commendation, and that is, an appeal to them as it were in the bosom of this question, *Is not this the Christ?* I appeal to you, might she say, if it be not so, that he is the Christ, the anointed of God. I can't think but ye must judge of him as I do, and who will not think highly of him as I do? Indeed the enlightned soul is ready to think all the world should be of his mind, the light and evidence is so clear to him. And hence they that have got a discovery of Christ, wonder that any would esteem otherwise of Christ than they. O wonder that all the world is not wondering at his glory. O what can blind them, what can bewitch them at this rate, that they are not of the same mind with me concerning Christ, and that they are not admirers of him, as well as I am. Surely there is nothing appears with such evidence and demonstration as this glory and excellency of a God-man. Who can be so stupid and senseless as to reckon otherwise, *Is not this the Christ?* The proof is so plain to me, says the soul, and the light and power so great, by which Christ is discovered to me, that it is truly irresistible, and who in all the world can possibly resist the evidence of it, *Is not this the Christ?* O how pathetic is the commendation! (6.) It is a practical commendation that issues from a saving discovery of Christ, and such is that of the woman of *Samaria* here; and hence she says not, *go see* him, but, *come see* him. They that truly invite others to Christ, will not be content only to send them to him, but they would share

share themselves of more and more of Christ. Their language is not *go see*, but *come see*. It would have argued no great esteem of Christ, nor high commendation of him, should the woman have said, I have seen him already, go ye and see him next, they might have thought she had enough of him; but *come see* him, says she, *q. d.* come along with me, and I'll go at your head like a captain, and lead the van myself. I have seen him to my heart's content, and am fond to get another sight, a new sight of him, and I would have all the people in *Samaria*, the whole town, to go along with me. I have been an ill woman, a base woman, that have led some of you to sin, and may I now be the happy instrument of leading you to a Saviour. I have led some of you to the gates of hell, O let me now lead you to the gate of heaven; if I have tempted any of you to wickedness, O let me now be instrumental in turning you to righteousness, yea to the Lord my righteousness, whom I have got a saving sight of, and therefore let me give you a good example, for all the ill examples I have given. Here was a change indeed, and a practical commendation. Surely they commend Christ most effectually, who do it not only by their profession, but by their practice, not merely by their counsel, but by their example, and who can say not only *go see*, but *come see a man that told me all things that ever I did*. It is a *come see* that makes others to go also, *Zech. viii. 21. Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts, I will go also*; there is one; *ver. 23. you find more following, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*. Thus it was not only the church's commending of Christ, but diligent seeking after him whom she so commended, that made the daughters of *Jerusalem* say, *Song. vi. 1. Whether*

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is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee? And we see how effectual this practical commendation of Christ was, that the woman gave to the *Samaritans*, as you may read, *ver.* 30, 39——42. She was the bless'd instrument of drawing many there to the Lord Jesus.

IVth Head proposed, was to give the reasons of the doctrine, whence it is that saving discoveries of Christ make persons to condemn and debase themselves to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest; or what influence a saving discovery of Christ hath upon this self-debasing, and Christ-exalting exercise; I shall consider the reasons of this two-fold effect jointly, because they necessarily go together, and are influenced by the same means. They are like the two scales of a balance, that which makes the one scale fall and go down, makes the other rise and go up; so that discovery of Christ which brings down self to the dust, does at the same time set up Christ upon the throne. When the haughtiness of man is brought down, then the Lord alone is exalted, *Isaiah* ii. 11. *First* reason then, why the saving discoveries of Christ do humble self to the lowest, and exalt Christ to the highest, is from the special light wherein Christ is seen. They that see the glory of Christ with the one eye, they see their own unworthiness with the other at the same time. The same light that discovers the holiness of God, discovers the vileness of the man. The same light that discovers the fullness of Christ, discovers the emptiness of the creature. That light that discovers his infinite merit, discovers the infinite guilt and demerit of sin. When the righteousness of Christ is seen, the unrighteousness of the sinner is seen at the same time, and in the same light; and hence no wonder, while the poor soul is astonished with the view of

God's

God's glory in the face of Christ, he is also astonished with the view and apprehension of his own baseness and brutishness, and has the meanest thoughts of himself when he has the highest thoughts of Christ. The more a man converses with Christ, the more he converses with himself, and the light that discovers Christ, discovers the soul to itself; and therefore the discoveries of Christ cannot but tend to debase self and exalt Christ at the same time. *Secondly*, When Christ is discovered, then the love of God to the soul is discovered, and this fills it with humble wonder. O, that God's love is manifested to one so full of sin and wickedness! This debases the soul in its own sight, because it knows itself to be so unworthy of his love, this works humility; but yet, unworthy as it is, the love of God is manifested to it; this quickens love in the soul, and love excites praise, O how shall I manifest love to him that hath manifested love to such an one as me! Thus the love of Christ constrains both to the debasing of self, and exalting of Christ. *Third* reason is, from the special work of the Spirit; there is a speciality in the work of the Spirit upon the soul to whom Christ is savingly discovered, *John xiv. 22.* Lord, says Judas (not Iscariot) *how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?* God manifests his love to the world in outward respects, but to his own, in his privy-chamber. It is the work and office of the Spirit to set home the love of God upon the hearts of his people, and to every one of them alone as it were, he takes them aside, that they may have some private conversation with Christ, such as this woman had, when Christ was the only preacher, and she was the only hearer. O, but the view of this distinguishing grace raises in the soul both *David's* note, *What am I, and what is my father's*

father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? and Mary's note at the same time, *My soul doth magnify the Lord.* Fourthly, The influence that the discovery of Christ hath upon this self-abasing and Christ-exalting exercise, flows from the spiritual end and design of these saving discoveries and manifestations of Christ; this is God's great end in discovering of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. *Of God, he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* For what end? *That no flesh should glory in his sight, but he that glorieth might glory in the Lord;* that is, that self may be condemned and debased, and Christ alone may be commended and exalted. And this is the great end of the Spirit's work, when he comes to testify of Christ, what is his design? Why, says Christ, *John xvi. 9, 14. He will convince the world of sin, and he shall glorify me;* that is, he will humble the sinner on the one hand, and exalt the Saviour on the other, and so lead the sinner to condemn himself, and to commend Christ. Fifthly, It arises from the special power and efficacy that is in saving discoveries of Christ, for working all saving effects; why, *Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image,* 2 Cor. iii. last ver. and changed as in other respects, so in this particularly, that self is pulled down and Christ set up; we are changed from pride to humility, from self-love to self-loathing, from self-indulgence to self-abhorrence, and from self-seeking and self-exalting, to a Christ-exalting disposition and exercise. All the graces of the Spirit issue from a saving discovery of Christ, and come in that way to a lively exercise, *John i. 14, 16. We, beholding his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.* We cannot see his fulness without sharing of his fulness; yea, to see his fulness is to share

share of it, this is the strength of that *for* which ye have in *John* iii. 2. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*; so here beholding his glory, his fulness of grace and truth, we receive out of this fulness; now the more of Christ's fulness and Spirit that one hath, the more will he have of Christ's ends before him, which is a debasing of the creature, and a glorifying of God, that he may be All in All. *Sixthly*, This exercise does arise from the divine splendor of the discovery; for when Christ discovers his face, then the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is discovered, *2 Cor.* iv. 6. When Christ is seen, then the glory of God's perfections and the splendor of his attributes are seen. Now, every thing in God dashes the sinful man that sees it, and makes him nothing in his own eyes, and at the same time makes Christ, in whom that divine glory shines, to be All in All to the man, so that he cannot but set him above all, and give him in all things the preheminance. Thus you see the reason whence it is, that the discoveries of Christ make the subjects thereof to condemn and debase themselves to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest, as the woman of Samaria here does, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?*

The Vth thing proposed, was to draw some inferences by way of application. Is it so, that saving discoveries of Christ have this effect, to make one at the same time condemn and debase himself, and to commend and exalt Christ, saying, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?* From this text and doctrine we may see and learn these following lessons.

(1.) Hence see why pride and self-conceit, self-righteousness and self-justification prevail so much

in the world and in the visible church, and what makes people, notwithstanding all that ever they did, yet to be vainly puffed up, instead of condemning and debasing themselves; why, because they never got a saving discovery of Christ; Christ hath never touched their heart, and told them all that ever they did, they are strangers to the power of the word. It is strange how wicked men will justify themselves and their wickedness, as those, *John viii. 48. Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.* Here was the greatest blasphemy imaginable to say this of Christ, yet they justify it, *say we not well in this?* Christless men will justify their ill words, and ill works, and ill actions. What say you, sabbath-breaker? why, was it not well done, say you, it was but a work of necessity, a needful business. What say you, drunkard? why, it was but a hearty bottle with my friends, and was it not well done? What say you, whoremonger? Why it was but a trick of youth, and what is the matter of that? What say you, swearer? why, it was neither cursing nor swearing that I meant, it was but a word and a word in passion. What say you, scold and railer? why, say you, I think they deserved all that I said to them; its true I loosed my tongue upon such a man, and gave him his holy-days name; and was it not well done, and well said? Indeed you'll hardly get a sinner at all, if you'll take every bodies excuse, and every bodies judgement of themselves, they will justify all that ever they did, or at least make it but a matter of indifference. A common strumpet, such as this *woman* was formerly, may think nothing of all her base and lewd behaviour. The most notorious sinner goes lightly under the burden of his sin, without any self-condemnation or self-debasement, till Christ and they meet together, and till by one glance

glance he shews them all things that ever they did.

(2.) Hence see, that the greatest of sinners may conceive hope of mercy at the hand of our merciful Lord Jesus, from such instances as this ; yet let not wicked sinners indulge themselves in sin, and presume that God will not notice their lewdness, and secret as well as open wickedness ; for the time is coming, wherein Christ will, either in a way of mercy or judgment, *tell you all things that ever you did, Psal. l. 21. Those things thou hast 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. Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver.* If this remarkable instance of grace to such a base woman be abused by you to licentiousness, and your opening a door of presumption to yourself, expecting mercy in a continued course of wickedness, you're under a terrible delusion ; for *God will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his trespasses* : but if you would creep in at the door of hope that is opened to you in such examples as this, O seek that in a merciful way he may discover your sins to you, so as to make you know at the same time that he is the Christ, the anointed of God to save you from your sin.

(3.) Hence see that the word preached does then do saving good, when it comes close home to the heart, and when Christ is seen there ; for here, see how the word of God came home with power upon this woman's heart, *he told me, he told me all things that ever I did.* The word was the searcher and discernor of the thoughts and intent of her heart, and the searching word was the strong hook that caught her ; and she saw Christ therein, *Is not this the Christ ?* Then the word is effectual, and prevails,

prevails, when Christ himself is seen ; Christ is the best preacher himself, the only powerful preacher, who by his word, can open the eyes, and by a sanctified sight of one sin, discovers all to the man, and in that discovery shews himself to be the Christ.

(4.) Hence see that saving illumination is the best antidote against *Arianism*. Here the enlightened woman professes her faith of Christ's Deity, and thereupon of his being the Christ : she sees him to be the true God *that told her all things that ever she did* ; and thence declares him to be the true *Messiah* ; *Is not this the Christ ?* If Christ were not the true God, he could not be the true *Messiah* ; and consequently, they that deny his supreme Deity, deny that he is the Christ ; and thus blasphemous *Arians* are guilty of *denying the Lord that brought them*, and they that thus deny him, were never enlightned by him. A saving discovery of Christ will afford a poor illiterate body an argument from experience and spiritual feeling, more strong and powerful (for proving the supreme Deity of Christ) than all the learned and logical argumentations in the world, which a man may be fraughted with, and yet remain an atheist. And indeed *Arians* are atheists, whatever they profess ; for *he that denies the Son, denies the Father also* ; for to deny the necessary existence of the Son, is to deny the necessary paternity of the Father, who yet is as necessarily Father as he is God ; and to deny both the Father and the Son is to deny the necessary procession of the Holy Ghost from both ; so that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are denied, when the supreme Deity of Christ is denied. O, but this atheistical world needs such a cast of enlightening grace, as this poor woman got.

(5.) Hence, see that persuasion with application is, in the nature of saving faith, both objective and
subj. &c.

subjective. Persuasion objective, assuring the man that this is the Christ ; and subjective also, assuring the man that as he is the Christ, the anointed, so he is anointed for my behalf, anointed, as the woman here suggests, as a prophet for me, to tell me *all things that ever I did* ; and at the same time that he told me all my sins, he told me that he was the Christ anointed to save me ; and hence she glories in him as the Christ. Whenever he manifests himself, faith brings in holy triumph in the Lord, even under a sight of the greatest sinfulness. Indeed such a sight as this woman got, namely, of the guilt of all the evils that ever she did, would have caused trembling instead of triumphing. If faith's view of Christ discovered to her, had not carried in the bosom of it a fiducial persuasion of his being a Christ for her, a Saviour for her, which, whenever she saw, then she was kindly humbled ; which leads to another inference.

(6.) Hence see the true gospel humiliation and evangelical repentance goes not before, but is the fruit of faith, and of Christ manifesting himself to the soul ; for then, and not till then, does she cry out, *O he hath told me all things that ever I did*. Now she sees all her sins in the brightest light. By the light of the stars we may see some things, by the light of the moon we see more, but by the light of the sun we see most of all. By the light of nature people may see some sins, by the light of the law they will see more, much more, for by the law is the knowledge of sin ; but by the light of the sun of righteousness most of all is discovered : but with this difference, that the moon-light of the law shews the disease, and no more, leaving the sinner to die of that disease and perish ; but the sun-light of the gospel discovers the remedy, *the sun of righteousness arising with healing under his wings*. And when no
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less than the blood and righteousness of God is seen to be the healing medicine, then the disease appears to have been infinitely great, and yet the sight is infinitely sweet, because it is a sight of that wonderful healing under these wings and rays of the sun of righteousness; this makes kindly pleasant humiliation.

(7.) Hence see that saving discoveries of Christ are very rare in our day; for very few are thus exercised, either in condemning and debasing themselves under a sense of all that ever they did, or in commending and exalting Christ, and dealing with others to come and see him. O how few humble walkers and hearty commenders of Christ are to be observed! Few taking kindly with their sins, and few breaking forth into the praising commendation of Christ! When this *woman* got a discovery of Christ, she kindly takes with her whoredoms and all her sins that ever she did, and zealously breaks forth into the praises and commendation of Christ. But whence is it that the land we live in, the church of *Scotland*, is not taking with, and kindly acknowledging all the sins that ever she did, and taking with all her whoredoms and adulteries, and treacherous breaking covenant with her God, to whom she solemnly gave her hand? Whence is it that there is so little zeal in commending and exalting Christ in his Supreme Deity, in a day wherein *Arian* blasphemers open their mouth against him? Whence is there so little zeal for the reviving of our broken covenants, national and solemn league, even in a day wherein the obligation thereof is denied? Why, are we neither humbly condemning ourselves, and taking with our national sins, nor highly commending Christ, and exalting him in his injured honours, truth and prerogatives, but rather winking at all the dishonours done to him?

him? Why, what is the matter? Saving discoveries of Christ, which should work the contrary effect, are very rare. When the Lord hath a mind to build up *Zion*, he appears in his glory, as he did in the days of our reformation; but now he hath justly hid himself from the present God-provoking, Christ-despising, gospel-slighting generation. But O if he would yet appear and discover his glory in the sanctuary, then we might expect reformation-times: but as matters stand, we look as if a stroke and judgment that hath been so long threatned were suddenly to light upon us with a terrible vengeance. There were little hazard of the present rumour of war, if the Lord, who is a man of war, were not against us; and if the Lord carry on his controversy, it will be little wonder, though we should see the land turned into a field of blood and desolation, before we see another communion-solemnity here. God hath born long with us, but how much longer he will do so, who can tell? Forty years peace in the church is a wonder, &c. But

(8.) Hence see that a meeting with Christ makes a marvellous change upon a person or people that are so privileged. Before this *woman* met with Christ, or rather before he met with her, she was nothing but a common strumpet; but now she is humbled to the dust for the sins she had formerly indulged herself in, and commends and exalts that Lord whom she had dishonoured. She is brought *from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God*; from being exercised in corrupting and debauching her neighbours, to a kindly concern for their souls everlasting welfare to get them brought to Christ. Saving illumination and acquaintance with Christ creates in the heart a sympathy with the case of poor christless sinners. *Come see a man that*

that told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ? This leads me to

An use of *trial* and *examination* whether you have met with Christ, and got a saving discovery of him at this occasion or formerly. O how shall I know, say you, if I have met with Christ, and if he hath discovered himself to me ? Why ? if you have, then this discovery has led you to these two things. *1st*, A humiliation of self to the lowest. *2dly*, An exalting of Christ to the highest.

1st, What self-humbling disposition and abasement hath been wrought in you ? Are you laid low in the dust, and made vile in your own eyes, by Christ discovering you to yourself ? Have you got a discovery of your own sinfulness, ugliness and unworthiness ? Hath Christ fallen a discoursing with you, and *told you all things that ever you did ?* Hath he told you of your ill life, your ill heart, your ill nature ? Hath he told you of your unbelief ? For when the Spirit comes, he *reproves the world of sin, because they believe not in him.* Hath he told you of your secret sins, and discovered to you what none but himself could tell you ? And have you taken it from himself, without saying, who has gone and told the ministers this and that of me ? Hath he told you of your wicked thoughts and intentions, and made the word the discerners of the thoughts and intents of your heart ? Hath he told you your spiritual wickedness, your atheism, ignorance, enmity, carnality, pride, self and hypocrisy, and made you to know the plagues of your own heart ? Hath he told you of the fig-leaves you have been covering yourself with, and the false refuges you have been running to, and chased you out of your refuges of lies ? Hath he told you your secret as well as open sins, and so told you some things, as that thereby he hath discovered the rest to you, and

and have you have been led by the streams to the fountain of sin within you? And has he given you, by one glance upon the map of your 'corrupt nature, a view of your total depravation? Hath he told you your proper name, by calling you a dog, and by making you take with your name, saying, *Truth, Lord, I am a dog, a devil, a monster? Behold I am vile?* Why, it is a glorious internal light that discovers this internal vileness. What makes you, with *Job*, to abhor yourself? why, it says, *Now your eyes see him*, Job xlii. 5, 6. What makes you, with *Paul*, look upon yourself as *less than the least of all saints*; yea, as the *chief* of all *sinners*, the worst of all sinners, the vilest of all sinners? why, it says, *He hath revealed his Son in you*. It is not natural for proud man to think so basely of himself; it is the Spirit of Christ that hath told you what you are. But here to prevent any mistake, it may be asked, *Quest.* May not one that hath not the Spirit of God, nor a renewed conscience, be able to discern his own vileness? *Answ.* There is a double knowledge or understanding that men may have of themselves, speculative and practical. As to the general speculative knowledge, a wicked man may have this, common sense and reason may tell him his sin, and he may know himself to be a sinner, as being guilty of gross sins, drunkenness, whoredom, swearing and the like. But there is a particular practical knowledge and understanding, which is two-fold, either from the Spirit of God without us, or from the Spirit of God within us. That practical understanding, which is from the Spirit of God without us, is what also the unregenerate may have. The Spirit of God not yet received, but without a man, may come and make such discoveries of his sin, and guilt, and wickedness, as may make him cry out, *That he is undone, undone*. Such a knowledge had

Nebuchadnezzar of the God of *Shadrach, Meshach,* and *Abednego*. Such a knowledge also it seems *Cain* and *Judas* had. But the Spirit of God within us gives us spiritual light and sense upon the conscience, and rectifies the judgment ; and whereas the Spirit of God without a man discovers sin mainly in order to hell and wrath, making him say, undone, undone ; the Spirit of God within a man makes him see the vileness of sin, and lament and mourn for that, saying, *Unclean, unclean. O wretched man that I am, &c. Behold I am vile, &c.* This affects him more than the wrath of God, yea, even when he sees the wrath of God is turned away, and that the shower is over his head, and it lighted on the head of his cautioner, even then he abhors himself for his own wickedness more than ever. This is from the Spirit of God within, and a gospel-spirit. The Spirit of God without a man, and the Spirit of God within him, differ as much as day-light differs from lightning. A flash of lightning from *Sinai*, or the fiery law, terrifies and astonishes the man, and makes him tremble and quake under a sense of sin ; but the day-light of a saving discovery of Christ makes one see himself the chief of sinners, and yet fills him with holy triumph in the Lord the Saviour. A lightning confounds and surprizes ; but the day-light gives a clear, distinct and sedate view of things as they are, with quiet and composure. Now try if you have got a humbling view and discovery of Christ, or a word from him that hath filled you with self-abasement, so as you reckon you can't have vile enough thoughts of yourself, because he hath in effect *told you all things that ever you did.*

2dly, Try what Christ-exalting and commending exercise you have been brought under, or what disposition is wrought in you to commend and

and exalt Christ to the highest. If Christ and you have met together as he did with this woman of *Samaria*, then the meeting hath wrought in you the same effect, the same disposition to commend and exalt Christ, which you may try by these particulars. (1.) If you have met with Christ in this manner, then you have seen him to be the Christ indeed, the God-man, the anointed of the Father, the true *Messias*. Hath he told you in effect, *I that speak unto thee, am he?* I that speak unto you by this gospel, am he. Hath he born home this upon your heart with convincing light and evidence, so as you have been brought to the apostle's faith, *John vi. 69. We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* The faith of this is of such great importance, that Christ hath said, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* Now hath he so spoken to you, as you were made in effect to think and say, *I believe and am sure, that he that spoke unto me was he?* It was not the minister only that I heard, but the word came with such light, life and power, that I think no minister on earth, nor angel in heaven could make the word to go through my heart as it did. It was like the sound of the voice of the Son of God. 2. If you have met with Christ in this manner, then he hath made such a gradual approach and discovery of himself to you, as to raise in you gradually more and more of a high esteem of him as a prophet sent of God to teach you, and to tell you all things, as it was with this woman. And tho' he himself and all his words are precious to you, yet there are some particular words among many, that have taken more impression, and stick more fast than others. Tho' Christ spake many good words to this woman for her instruction, yet the word that made the first and deepest im-

profession, is what she especially kept in her heart, *he told me all things that ever I did*; and what she saw in this more clearly at first, she saw more clearly after Christ gave her a clearer manifestation of himself. If the saving discovery of Christ commenced and began when he gave her the first discovery of her lewdness and whoredom, and conveyed light at the same time into her mind, to perceive that he was a prophet; yet she was much in the mist, and took not up all that was intended by this discovery, till after he clearly discovered himself, and then the former lesson is clearly taken up in all the parts of it. Therefore now, says she, *he told me all things that ever I did*. Some may have such dark and cloudy discoveries of Christ at first, that tho' they raise a high esteem of Christ, yet the soul may be at a loss to know what the full meaning of such a word is, that Christ spake to their soul, till after they get a brighter discovery of him, and then they may come to be more perfectly instructed in the same lesson, which at first they did not so well apprehend, and in this his dealing with them may be like that, *John xiii. 7. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*. (3.) If you have met with Christ in this manner, then your mind is set above the world, and you have left it behind you, as the woman here left her water-pot, and ran to the city. O when Christ appears to a man, he thinks no more of the world than of a pot-sheep; he counts all *but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*; yea, the most valuable things in the world are undervalued when Christ is discovered. As naturalists tell us, the load-stone will not draw in the presence of the diamond, neither does the world in all its glory and gallantry draw the heart of any to it in the presence of Christ. The reason of this is, the sun
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of righteousness darkens all the stars of creature-enjoyments, and makes them disappear and vanish. A drink out of the fountain of living waters makes all worldly comforts to be nothing but broken cisterns that can hold no water. They whose hearts were never weaned from the world, never met with Christ. Again, 4. If you have met with Christ, then your heart will be set upon the work of commending him to others, and particularly to your neighbours and friends, that they may come to be acquainted with him also. Thus the discovery of Christ vents itself in the woman here, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?* A manifestation of Christ gives men such a fill of the fulness of God, that they must have a vent: and as in every saving manifestation, there is something of the nature of Christ communicate, who loves to communicate of his fulness, so they to whom Christ dispenses of his grace and fulness, love to communicate also of what they have; not that the saints are to make a blaze of their religion to every one they meet with, or to cast pearls before swine; but the love of Christ discovered to them, fills them with such ardent love to him, as obliges them, in all proper ways to trumpet forth his glory and honour. They see such a glory in him, that they think all should wonder at him, and own him, *Is not this the Christ?* They reckon none so much obliged to free grace as they, and therefore they think it well becomes them to spread the favour of his name. They know also, by remembering what they themselves were before they met with Christ, they know what a sad state they are in, who want acquaintance with Christ, therefore both out of love and regard to the glory and honour of Christ, and out of love, pity, and compassion to the perishing souls of others,

they desire and endeavour to commend Christ to them, both by their words and actions, both by their talk and walk, as this woman of *Samaritania* did. What heart then and disposition have you got to commend Christ to your neighbours and friends, to your children and servants? If you have no heart nor disposition to such exercise as this, surely you can't make it out that ye have met with Christ. 5. If you have met with Christ, then it will be your hearty desire not only to commend Christ, and speak of him to others, making him the great subject of your conversation; but also to have them taste what you have tasted, and see what you have seen, without resting merely on your report, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?* Rest not on my report, might she say, but O come and see him. My friends, spiritual converse about Christ is much out of fashion in our degenerate age; yea, to enter on spiritual discourse in some companies, would be to expose a man to scorn and ridicule, a sad instance of estrangement from Christ and religion. But are there not some professors whose speech of Christ, and of the things of God, betrays and bewrays them, for either it is but the scroof of religion they talk of; for example, how well such a man preached, and how long such a man preached, and how many tables, or how many strangers were at such a communion, and all such little-worth questions, no better than idleness, treating of the shell, and not the kernel of ordinances. Or if they enter upon any substantial conversation, either they soon grow weary of that, or give evidence of such a selfish spirit, as bespeaks an inclination to commend themselves rather than to commend Christ. The import of their language is rather, come and hear me, than come and see Christ.

Christ. But O, Sirs, a meeting with Christ will fill the soul with a desire that others may share of what they share, and see what they have seen, with a desire to take the most effectual method that may be for drawing them to Christ. Hence, as this woman speaks out of her very heart, so she attempts to draw them to Christ with the very same hook with which she was drawn ashore herself. *He told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?* Therefore come see him. 6. If you have met with Christ, and conversed with him, you'll think long for another meeting with him, another sight of him, for this was the woman's disposition here, *Come see the man*; she spake as if she desired to be the foremost in returning again to see him. If you think you have got nothing of him savingly; if you have got enough of Christ, it is a sign you have got a saving sight of him, then you'll desire more, and more, and more, till you see him face to face in *Immanuel's* land. The disposition of those that have attained to a sight of Christ, and apprehended him by faith, is exemplified by the Apostle *Paul*, *Philip. iii. 12, 13, 14.* It is strange, as if they had attained nothing, apprehended nothing, in comparison of what they aspired after and would be at. *Not as tho' I had already attained, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ.* And again, *I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* It is possible that unsound professors may fancy they have attained much, and yet have attained nothing, and resting on their attainments, they rest upon nothing but a shadow. It is possible that sound believers may judge they

have attained nothing, tho' yet they have attained much, and hence neglecting their attainments, they press after more and more of Christ. As *Paul* here, *I count not myself to have attained, I count not myself to have apprehended.* What count you of your attainments, man, when the great apostle *Paul* counts nothing of his, tho' he was one of the most clearly enlightned and highly privileged men in the world? Happy is that soul who has attained the knowledge of Christ, and yet is as far from thinking that he knows or has attained as much as may suffice him, that he rather counts as if he knew nothing, or had attained nothing, and therefore presses after more of Christ. O for the other sight of him! O for the other meeting with him! O for another communion, another blink of his beauty, and glance of his glory! Thus the happy woman counts not herself to have seen or attained enough of Christ, but longs for another sight. It is an excellent mark of a meeting with Christ, to be longing for more and more of Christ here, and for full vision of him in the higher house, and to be in case practically to discover this in an exemplary commendation of Christ to others; while it is not only the matter of your religious talk, signifying only *to see him*, but the import of your exemplary walk, *Come see a man that told me, &c.*

Another *use* should be by way of *exhortation*. In a word, (1.) To you that have got a saving discovery of Christ working these effects upon you, leading you to condemn and debase yourself to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest. O let me exhort you to a walk suitable to such a meeting with Christ, that is, (1.) To a humble walk, like one to whom Christ hath told all things that ever you did. - (2.) To a holy walk, like one that would commend and exalt a holy Je-

sus, saying, *Come see a man that hath so and so spoken unto me, is not this the Christ?* (1.) I would exhort you to a humble walk. O hath he given you a sight of yourself, and of your own vileness and baseness, walk humbly with thy God, and in order to this, still keep the glass before your eye, wherein he hath discovered you to yourself. There are several glasses wherein the saints behold themselves, which makes them have low thoughts of themselves. 1. The looking-glass of the law of God, which discovers to them the vileness of their nature, thoughts, desires and affections; *when the law comes, sin revives.* The law is a light by which all things are reprov'd and made manifest, *Eph. v. 13.* Keep this glass before your eye, even you that are wholly deliver'd from the law as a covenant of works, yet make a constant use of it as a light, both a light to your head to inform and convince you of your sin and wickedness, and a light to your feet to direct you in the paths of righteousness. 2. There is the glass of a renewed understanding, and rectified judgment, that the saints see their vileness in, when they have an impartial rule and eye-salve with it, then they see themselves as they are. If a man be blind, he can't see himself, tho' he have never so clear a glass before him, *Luke xi. 35. Take heed that the light that is in you be not darkness.* Wherever spiritual light and wisdom is, there is a clear sight people have of themselves. 3. There is the glass of conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ; this every true believer carries about with him. What-
 ever the understanding sees, the conscience comes and lays it at his door, and the conscience being renewed and reconciled to God, it is then God's messenger, to inform, to rouse, to arraign, and to condemn. Conscience brings in all our unworthiness and charges us with it, and then what base and

low thoughts have we of ourselves. O I deserve to be in hell, says the soul, I deserve no mercy at the hand of God. 4. There is the glass of experience, in which every saint looks on himself, and beholds — he is vile. Why, the sad experience he hath of a treacherous backsliding heart, notwithstanding of all the love of God and Christ manifested to him ; the sad experience of the *law of the members warring against the law of the mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death*, and making him cry many times, *O wretched man that I am, &c.* the sad experience of many inward lustings, fightings, and reigning corruptions and desperate departings from the Lord ; O how vile does the saint see himself in this glass ? 5. There is the glass of the holiness of God, the glass of his infinitely pure glory, *Rev. iv. 8, 10. When they cried, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come, then the twenty four elders fell down before the throne.* What made *Isaiah* cry out of his uncleanness, but a view of this holy and infinitely pure glory of God. It was a view of the glorious holiness of Christ that made *John the Baptist* say, *O I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchets of his shoes*, and yet he hath Christ's testimony, that there was not a greater prophet than he. O how vile is a man in his own eyes when he looks to himself in this glass ? 6. There is the glass of the love of God, and of his grace and mercy in Christ. We may appeal to you that have experience of it, if any thing in the world hath a greater power to humble the soul, and to lay it in the dust, than this, even the consideration of the infinite love of God. *I was a blasphemer, and a persecuter, yet I obtained mercy.* O such a monster of sin and wickedness as I am, and yet I have obtained mercy ! O such a dog, such a devil, and yet I obtained mercy ! O when a child of
God

God sees the grace of God in the glass of manifestation, O how low does he sink in his own esteem ! All the storms and blustering winds will not melt a rock of ice ; but when the sun-beams arise upon it, how is it then melted and thawed ! Thus nothing in the world melts and thaws the hard heart so much, as the hope and sense of divine love. When a child of God sees the grace of God in the glass of commendation, as when Christ says to the soul a word like that, *Song iv. 7. Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.* What ? O what is this that a God is saying to the like of me, the blackest, the basest of all sinners : O ! how low does self sink before the love and grace of God. 7. There is the glass of the Spirit of God shining upon the word of God into the understanding and the conscience, and giving light to see into these other glasses. As he is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and giving the knowledge of the law of God, the holiness of God, the love and grace of God in Christ, for the clearest eye and the clearest glass both will shew nothing without light ; it is the Spirit of light that sets all these things home upon the soul, and makes it apply all to itself, and so it becomes *yet more vile* in its own eyes. I shall add, 8. There is the glass of the example of God, of God's humility, his stupendous humility and condescension ; God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, humbling themselves for our good. See how God the Father humbles himself, *Psal. cxiii. 5, 6. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwells on high, who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth ?* 'Tis a step of great condescension, that he should apply himself in his providence to our wants and necessities ; and especially, that he should concern himself so far with sinners, as to send the Son of his love out of his bosom

som to redeem them. See how God the Son humbled himself when he stept out of his Father's bosom, out of the ivory palaces, where he was made glad from eternity ; yea, tho' *he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; yet he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* The glass of his sufferings and humiliation, wherein he stept as far down as hell, to quench the flames of infinite wrath, is a glass indeed wherein we may see sin to be infinitely evil, and ourselves to be ineffably vile. See also how the Holy Ghost humbles himself. What a vast condescension is it for God the Holy Ghost to undertake to teach such dullards as we, to wash such lepers as we, to purge such polluted souls, and to dwell in our hearts and bosoms, so full of unfavoury steams of hell ? Hath a God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost given us such examples of humility, and shall not this move us to step a little down the hill ? O proud sinner, does God humble himself in your sight, and will you not humble yourself before him ? Can a man look into the glass of God's humility, and yet be proud ? O keep these glasses in your eye, and walk humbly before him, who hath set the glass before you, wherein you have seen your vileness, and hath *told you all that ever you did.* O maintain a deep and humble sense of your own vileness and baseness ; and the rather that such a fountain of sin and wickedness remains yet within you, as endangers you of doing all the same evils again that ever you did, even after he hath *told you of all that ever you did.* The body of sin and death that remains in you, will incline you to sins of all sorts and sizes ; surely then you can't walk too humbly and circumspectly. I know no extreme of self-abasement you can run into, but what will deserve the name of

of

of pride, rather than humility. It will be pride and not humility in you to deny any thing that God hath done for you in a way of grace, because you are so vile in yourself, that seems as if you were not pleased that God should get all the glory, but incline that you should have some of it. O proud blasphemer, come down from your altitude, and be content to own and acknowledge that grace hath done much even for you. Again, it will be pride, and not humility, for you to deny and refuse to take Christ by the hand, when you are down in the dust, or to take what help he offers you, even when you are lying in the dirt. It was *Peter's* pride to say, *Lord thou shalt never wash my feet* ; and yet no doubt he took it for humility. Again, it is pride and not humility, to deny and refuse the consolations of the Spirit, because you are conscious of your own vileness and abomination ; do not lay upon yourself a load of self-censuring more than God himself does ; *I said in my haste*, says *David*, *I am cast off from before thine eyes*, *Psal. xxxi. 22.* *David* was in haste when he said it, and so may you say, Will God allow any favour of comfort to such as I am ? It is pride and arrogancy to measure God by your thoughts, and to limit his mercy. Again, it is pride, and not humility, for you to deny him the praise and commendation due to him from you, lest you be not a fit hand for doing it. Why, says one, I think I would desire to commend Christ to others, and speak to his praise, but am fearful I prove a hypocrite, and prove a scandal to religion. Why, man, woman, whatever come of you, let not Christ want his due from you, and it shall not fare the worse with you ; therefore *walk humbly with thy God* ; or, as that word may be read, humble thy self to walk with thy God. It is best humility

to be found in the way of duty ; and it is pride to withdraw from it, upon any consideration of self-unworthiness. (2.) I would exhort you to a holy walk, and thereby to commend and exalt Christ as the *woman* of *Samaria* here did, saying both with your lip and life, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ ?* Where she both takes shame to herself, and gives glory to God in Christ ; and as our chief happiness lies in the enjoyment of God, and our holiness lies in glorifying him, which is our chief end, so the way to glorify him, is to commend and exalt Christ with our heart, and lips, and lives. The text leads me to direct you particularly to this part of holiness, namely, to commend him to all that you have access to converse with, and to exalt him before the world. Hath he met with you, as he did with this *woman* ? O then commend him, and preach forth his excellency. Here is a *way* how every private christian may be a preacher of Christ. This belongs not to ministers only, but even you who are followers of Christ among the female sex, that cannot regularly be preachers of Christ in a ministerial way ; yet, O poor *woman*, it is comfortable that you may be a successful teacher and preacher of *Christ* in a christian, charitable way, by your spiritual communication and conversation. O *woman*, commend Christ to your husband. O man, commend Christ to your wife. O parents and masters, commend him to your children and servants. O believer, commend Christ to your neighbours and friends, and all that you have regular access to. 1. Commend him humbly as this *woman* did ; he *told me all that ever I did*. She kept her eye upon her own baseness, and vileness, and unworthiness, which he had discovered to her. Saints have a double eye, a carnal eye and a spiritual eye, or the

eye

eye of sense and the eye of faith. When they look upon themselves with the carnal eye of sense, then they forget all that ever they did, and what Christ told them, and convinced them of, and are apt to gaze upon their own parts and gifts, and then self creeps in and spoils their pleasant exercise. But when they look upon themselves with the spiritual eye of faith, then they loath themselves, and commend Christ to purpose, and set him up to the highest, when self is sinking to the lowest in the remembrance of all that ever they did, as he told them. 2. Commend him highly also, as this *woman* did ; commend him as the great God, the searcher of hearts, the glorious *Jehovah* ; when *Arians* and *atheists* at this day are pulling him down, from his throne, if it were possible, O set you him up, and commend him from your own experience, as the God-man that *told you all things that ever you did*. Commend him in his office, saying, *Is not this the Christ*, the sealed and consecrated of the Father to be the prophet, priest, and king of *Zion* ? Is it not this *Jehovah Tsidkenu*, the Lord our righteousness ? Is not this *Jehovah Raphi*, the Lord our physician ? Is not this *Jehovah Shamma*, the *Immanuel*, God with us ? Is not this the promised *Messiah*, in whom all the promises of God are yea, and amen ? Is not this the only Saviour, in whom all our salvation lies, being made of God *to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption* ? O there is more to say to his commendation, than the tongues of angels can trumpet forth to eternity. Again, 3. Commend him zealously as this *woman* did. Come and see him ; it is not come and hear what I have to say of him, but come and see himself. Let those whom you commend him to, understand that what you would be at, is, That they should never rest till they see and taste, and *handle this word of life*, and know

know to their experience what you know. And thus also, 4. Commend him feelingly, as this *woman* did. *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did.* You should let strangers to Christ know that what you speak of Christ, you have felt and experienced. If you know *the terrors of the Lord*, you will *persuade men*, with an aking heart, and with holy fear and trembling; and if you know the consolations of God, you will speak of them with holy triumph, and as if your heart were leaping within you. Experience is the mother of affection, commend him feelingly and affectionately. And yet, 5. Commend him cautiously, as you also find this *woman* did. I think it is also remarkable in this short account that she gives of her converse with Christ, that she hid in her own bosom that special part of Christ's discourse to her that made most for her own consolation, particular that glorious word, wherein he clearly manifested himself to her, saying, *I that speak unto thee, am he.* No, she relates nothing of this, but tells them of that part of the conference which made most to her shame, as well as to his honour; *he told me all things that ever I did.* As if she was content that Christ should be exalted on the ruins of her reputation; to let her name be debased, that his name might be exalted. Indeed it tends most to her praise, that she commends Christ to them in that particular that made most to her shame; and she tells them no more of what he said. Here is wisdom and caution. And indeed there are some precious things that Christ speaks to his people when they are alone, that is not fit to be blazed abroad to every one, especially to those that are yet strangers to Christ. But in commending Christ to them, it is safest to treat of these particulars that make most for the debasing of ourselves, and for the exalting of Christ.

6, and *lastly*, O commend him practically, as you see this *woman* did, while she says not, Go see, but *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did.* O believer, after a communion, if you have met with Christ either now or formerly, commend him, not only verbally with your mouth, but practically with your life, saying in effect, *Come, see him.* The life of commendation, is the commendation of the life, not of the lip, that says, Go see, but of the life that says, Come, see: your *Go, see*, will not convince any that you are in earnest; but a *Come, see* may make them follow your example. When you say, go and pray, go and praise, go and worship, go and do this and that excellent service, they only hear you: but when you go before them, and say, come and praise, come and worship, come and let us seek after Christ, then they both hear and see you, and are the more apt to come and see with you. O believer, give evidence that you have met with Christ, by living *to* him as your end, and *on* him as your all; he *died that you should not live to yourself, but to him*; and he now lives, that you may live upon him. *Because I live*, says he, *ye shall live also.* O let it be seen that you are three story high, and that there is a new addition made to your spiritual stature by the light of a new discovery of Christ. The light of reason may make people, good moral men; the light of gifts, good scholars; but the light of grace and experience, good and holy christians. O beware of such a practice and conversation as will give occasion to the world to say, Take up your *communicants*, they can tittle and drink, and swear and debauch as well as their neighbours. O will you give occasion to Christ to say, *He that sat at table with me, and eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me.* These are the wounds I have got in the house of my friends.

friends. O see that your conversation be a practical saying, *Come and see the man that hath told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* And let the leading part of your practice lie in this, a going again to see Christ, and attending and depending upon him in all the duties of religion, in order to your getting more and more acquaintance with him. For as it is a saving discovery of Christ that works this self-debasing, Christ-exalting effect ; so the more of this you get, it will fit you still the more for commending of him humbly and practically. Let your walk then appear to be a gospel-walk, a walking in Christ, and a going still again and again to seek him and see him, that you may be the more like unto him, and that *beholding as in a glass his glory, you may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.* It is but a dung-hill on which the sun shines, and yet reflects no beams ; but the sun shining on a ball of silver, or upon a bright glass, or a still water, it will make another sun by reflecting the beams of it. Thus the broken beams of the glory of God shining on *Moses* in the mount, made him come down full of glory. And O the more of the glory of Christ you see, the more of the glory of God's holiness will appear about you, and the more of heaven ; of which it is said they shall *be like him, for they shall see him as he is.* The more frequently you return to see Christ, the more fit will you be for resisting the snares and temptations you meet with ; for your heart is a magazine of hell, where corruption lies, like a barrel of gun-powder, ready to take fire with the least spark of a temptation, and to blow you up in the flames ; but the more you come to see and converse with Christ, the more you'll get of the *living water* which Christ gave to this *woman*, the Spirit as a well of water springing up to everlasting

everlasting life ; and if you can get that barrel of powder sunk into the bottom of this well, or the flood of the Spirit to drown and overflow it, will you not then be more proof against all the sparks of hell, and fiery darts of the devil ? O is not the Spirit promised as *floods upon the dry ground*, to drench the dry powder ? And does not your profession oblige you to this attendance and dependance upon Christ for more and more of the Spirit ? For what mean you when you say, *Is not this the Christ ?* Do you not mean, Is not this the anointed of God, anointed with the Spirit to give the Spirit ? Therefore let your constant recourse be to him on this errand, taking as many along with you as you can, by the influence of your advice and example, saying, *Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did ; Is not this the Christ ?*

2dly, I would close with a word to those that are yet strangers to Christ, that never met with him, nor got such a discovery of him as leads to this self-abasing, Christ-exalting exercise. And may I be allowed by you, O you that are believers in Christ in this house, to personate you in a few words, and speak to these that are strangers to Christ in your name. O Christless sinner, *Come, see a man that hath told us all things that ever we did ; is not this the Christ ?* The hearts of all that are acquainted with Christ, join with me in saying to you, *Come, see him, come, see him ; that which we have heard and seen, declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us, in our fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit.* There are some here that can say, We have heard his voice telling us all things that ever we did, and we have seen his glory, as the glory of the *only-begotten of the Father, full of grace, and truth ; and is not this Christ ?* Come, see a man that hath opened our eyes, and

sometimes dispelled all our clouds and darkness ; *is not this the Christ*, anointed to be a prophet to teach and instruct the like of you ? Come see a man that hath pardoned all our sins, and washed us in his blood ; *is not this the Christ* ? anointed to be a priest to justify guilty sinners like you. Come, see a man that hath subdued all our iniquities, and sometimes given a dash to the power of sin and satan in us ; *is not this the Christ*, anointed to be a king to ransom slaves of the devil like you ? O come, see a man, of whom we can sometimes say, He hath healed all our diseases ; *is not this the Christ*, anointed to be a physician for healing such desperate diseases as yours are ? Come, see a man that hath convinced us of all our sins and vileness of heart and way, and drawn out our hearts to him as the God-man, the only Saviour, O come, see the man, the God-man ; *Is not this the Christ, Emmanuel, God with us* ? You need not say, Where shall we see him ? You have neither a journey to go down to hell, nor up to heaven ; the *word* is nigh, and in the glass of this *word* he is to be seen. All the believers here can say, We never saw him any where but in this *word* of the gospel, and in these public and private ordinances, and there he lies as open to your view as to ours. The *word* is the immediate object of our faith wherein we see him ; and when we hear him speaking to us in his *word*, and hear with spiritual understanding, then we see him. To hear and know his voice, is all one with seeing him. It is in his *word* that we hear him telling how foul and filthy we are, and thus all that ever we did ; and hear him telling how fair and lovely he is, and thus shewing us, that he is the Christ, so that we see him in what he tells us in his *word* ; and as we have seen him there, so you may see him there ; you have the same glass, the same bible, the same

same word, the same promise, the same gospel-mirroure to see him in, that ever any saint on earth saw him in, since he ascended to heaven. *The word is nigh, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth* ; O then, rest not on our report of him only, for what he hath told us concerning ourselves and concerning himself, will not profit you, if you do not come and see that our report is true. Come and see him yourself, by believing and taking it on his own word, that he is the Christ, anointed for your behoof. But what is this I am doing, speaking to you only in the name of believers ? Here (however base a worm I am) my office warrants me to speak to you in a greater name than theirs or ours, yea, in his name, the latchet of whose shoes we are not worthy to unloose ; in his name then, who is the glorious *Jehovah*, the God-man that can tell you all things that ever you did, and thereby give you convincing evidence that he is the Christ ; I call you to come and see him. He can tell you some things about you, O sinner, that the world does not know, and can't tell you. And may I presume in his name to tell you something, perhaps yet a secret, which if he would bless, you might therein hear him telling you all things that ever you did. Let me allude to what past between Christ and this woman in the context, upon their first meeting, and perhaps there is more than an allusion in it. Christ hath been at this occasion offering you the living water, and if you be saying with this woman, whether in jest or earnest, *Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not* ; Christ is in effect, saying, *Go, call your husband, and come hither* ; bring whatever husband you are in league with, that so your league and covenant with death, and your marriage with hell, may be disannulled. If you be saying with this woman, *I have no husband* ; why,

then ye may hear Christ saying in effect to you, *Thou hast well said, I have no husband* ; for as long as you are not married to Christ, you have no head, no husband, that can do you any service. But *behold, you have had five husbands*, you have had many husbands, and *whom you are now married to is not your husband*, your true and lawful husband. O harlot sinner, you have been married unto many a black husband all your days, you have been married to the law, the first husband, married to your own righteousness and self conceit, you have been married to the world, married to your lusts, yea, and married to the devil, your heart hath been joined to idols ; and now by this he is telling you all that ever you did. He is telling you what you have been, and what you have done. Have you been a common strumpet, a common whoremonger, a common drunkard, a common swearer, a common sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of prayer in secret and in your family ? Yea, you have been a hypocrite, an atheist, a blasphemer, a persecutor, a murderer, an injurious person, unjust, unfaithful to God and man, unmerciful, unbelieving, impenitent. He is telling you your secret faults, not only what you did in such a company, but what you did in such a private place. *When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee*, said Christ to *Nathanael* in another case ; so says Christ to you, when thou wast under the dark shade, hiding thyself from the eyes of men, my eye was upon thee, under the cloud of night I saw thee, and can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see, *do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord* ? yea, I say, all that ever you thought, or did, or designed to do, and I saw into thy heart and wicked nature, from whence thy atheistical practices did spring. And now if by his word he be telling you all things that ever you did, then
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what do you say to this question ; *Is not this the Christ ?* Is he at one glance giving you a view of all your lewdness, all your baseness, all your villainess ? Then do not you perceive that he is a prophet ; when he tells you how many false husbands you have had ; O, *Is not this the Christ ?* is not this the only true husband with whom your soul should match ? Is he the man that hath told you all things that ever you did ? O then, *will you go with this man ?* will you marry the man, the God-man, the Christ of God ? He is content ; even after all your whoredoms, to receive you for a bride, even after you have been adulterously matched with the devil and your lusts ; will you match with this man, and quit with all your base husbands that have been haling you to hell, and say, *What have I to do any more with idols ?* O my five husbands have ruined me, my false unhappy matches can give me no comfort, either in death or through eternity, but rather contribute to my eternal condemnation ; but here is a glorious wonderful match in my offer, *a man that hath told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* that is anointed to save me from the guilt of all that ever I did, and to save me from sin and wrath ? O then, is this a match ? Is it a bargain ? Why, say you, who is he that I may match with him ? Where is this Christ ? Behold, man, woman, he is saying to you in this word, *I that speak unto thee, am he ;* though it be by a poor sinful messenger that I am speaking to you, says Christ, yet *I that speak unto you, am he.* And now, O hath he discovered himself to you in this word, and drawn out your heart to the match, then think not strange that you meet with some interruption in his converse with you, but go your way, and leave your *water pot* behind you, and give up not only with your unlawful husbands

sbands, but even with your lawful *works* and endeavours in point of trust and confidence ; for your own black righteousness and doings of yours, will never draw a drop of living *water* to you ; but let your heart say, *In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength. I'll go in the strength of the Lord God, and make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* O may it be heard tell of you in the city of *Dumfermling*, as it was heard of this woman in the city of *Samaria*, that you have met with Christ, that by your *words* and *walk* henceforth you are determined to say, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ ?*



COURAGIOUS FAITH:

A

SERMON preached at Carnock,
July 3, 1727.

By the Revd. Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

PSALM xxiii. 4.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will fear
no evil : for thou art with me, thy
rod and staff they comfort me.*

THE words which I have read are large and copious ; and therefore, to gain time, I shall entirely wave any preamble, drawn either from the connexion, or from the penman, occasion, or principal parts of the Psalm, and come close to the words themselves.

In general, we may take them up as the language of a victorious and triumphant faith, viewing the countenance of a reconciled God in Christ, trampling upon all the imaginary evils of a present world ; yea death itself, as things not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. Yea, tho' I walk, &c. where we may notice the particulars following ; (1.) The present condition of the believer while in this world ; he is considered under the notion of a traveller, for he is walking

toward his journey's end. (2.) We have the supposed danger that may cast up in his way or walk; he may come to the valley of the shadow of death, that is, he may meet with troubles in his way, that carry the shew or appearance of the greatest dangers; yea, even of death in them. (3.) We have the courage wherewith faith inspires the believer, upon this supposed event of being obliged to walk through the valley of the shadow of death; *I will fear no evil*, says faith. (4.) We have the ground of this courage and confidence, which is expressed two ways; 1. More generally, thou art with me. 2. More particularly, thy rod and staff they comfort me. And thus we have the words resolved into their several parts. I shall not stay at present upon any critical explication; what is needful will occur.

From them I notice the following doctrines. *Observe*, 1. That believers are not residents in this world, but travelling through it to their own home. Hence *David* here speaks of his present condition under the notion of a traveller walking through a valley. *Obs.* 2. That believers in their journey must lay their account with melancholy, yea death-like dispensations, trials that portend death and ruin. Hence *David* supposes that he may walk through the valley of the shadow of death. *Obs.* 3. That true faith inspires the soul with an undaunted courage to encounter all imaginable dangers in the way. See with what an heroic spirit *David* here expresses himself, under the influence of the Spirit of faith, *I will fear no evil*. *Obs.* 4. That which gives so much courage to the believer is, that by faith he takes up a reconciled God as present with him in the midst of his greatest troubles. *I will fear no evil, for thou art with me*. *Obs.* 5. The consideration of God's pastoral care
and

and providence toward his people is very comfortable in the midst of trouble. For in this sense some understand the words, being, they think, an allusion unto a shepherd, who with his rod and staff protects and defends his flock against wolves and such ravenous beasts. *Obj.* 6. The faithfulness of a promising God is a comfortable rod or staff in the hand of faith, to bear up the believer in his travels through the wilderness. In this sense others take the words ; for by the rod and staff they understand the divine promise, and the faithfulness of the Promiser, to which faith leans with confidence, in opposition to all staggerings thro' unbelief. Thus you see, the words cast up a large field of matter, which it is not possible for me to undertake at present.

The doctrine I shall insist upon at present, is the third in order, *viz.*

That true faith is a couragious grace ; it inspires the soul with a holy and undaunted boldness amidst the greatest dangers. Or, you may take it thus ; That true faith is a noble antidote against intimidating fears in a time of trouble. This you see plain in the words. *David* here, being under the influence of the Spirit of faith, cries out with a holy fortitude of spirit ; yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, &c.

The method I propose is, 1. To notice some of those evils that are ready to intimidate the spirits of the Lord's people, when they look on them with the eye of sense and reason. 2. Give some account of faith, and prove that it inspires the soul with courage and boldness amidst all these evils. 3. Give some account of that christian fortitude and boldness that is the fruit of faith. 4. Enquire into the influence of faith upon this boldness and fortitude

fortitude of spirit, and how it prevents intimidating fears amidst these evils. 5. Make some *improvement* of the whole by way of application.

First thing in the method is, to notice some of those evils that are ready to intimidate and discourage the hearts of the Lord's people in a time of danger.

1st Then, sometimes their spirits are ready to be stricken with fear of their own weakness and insufficiency for the work that the Lord is calling them to engage with, whether it be salvation, or station and generation-work. *Jer. i. 5, 6.* there the Lord tells the prophet, *verse 5. Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee ; before thou camest forth out of the belly, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.* By this hint, *Jeremiah* is made to understand that the Lord was about to send him on a very dangerous errand : well, the prophet, through a sense of his inability in himself to manage such a hard work, cries out, *verse 6. Ah ! Lord God, behold, I am a child and cannot speak.* His heart fails him in such an undertaking, and he is afraid to meddle with it. The same we see in *Moses*, when the Lord called him to go unto *Pharaoh* king of *Egypt*, and require him to let the children of *Israel* go out of his dominion, *Exod. iv. 10.* What an impertinent apology makes he for himself, through the prevalency of unbelief ? Oh ! my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant ; but I am of a slow speech, and of a slow tongue. Yea, after the Lord had chastised him for his unbelief, and given him a special promise of his assistance ; yet he adds, *verse 13. O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.* From all which it is plain, that sense and reason foster un-

believing

lieving discouragements, in the work of the Lord ; and no wonder, for they look only to the fund of created grace within, but not to the strength and grace that is in Jesus Christ, secured by a well-ordered covenant.

- 2dly, The spirits of the Lord's people are ready to be frightened with the might and multitude of their enemies they have to grapple with in their way through the wilderness. This world is a den of lions, and mountains of leopards, where the believer must engage with principalities and powers, &c. He is many times like a besieged city, surrounded with dangers on every side ; and in this case he is ready to cry with *Jehoshaphat*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. *We have no might against this great company that cometh up against us ;* or, like the house of *David*, moved like the trees of the wood, because of great and dangerous enemies that pursued them. Sense and reason looks only to the power of the enemy, but overlooks the power of God ; and therefore cries, one day or other I shall fall by the hand of my enemies.

3dly, The spirits of believers are sometime intimidated with a sense of guilt, and the awful terrors of vindictive anger and wrath pursuing them on the account of sin. Hence *David* cries out, *Psal.* xl. 12. *Innumerable evils compass me about,* &c. So, *Psal.* xxxviii. 5. *Job* vi. 4. *The arrows of the Almighty are within me,* &c. likewise, *Psal.* lxxxviii. 15. *While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.* When sin presents itself to the soul's view, and the Saviour is out of sight, it remembers God and is troubled ; and no wonder tho' in that case he cry out, *If thou, Lord, mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand ?*

4thly, Sometimes they are struck with fear through the prevalency of indwelling sin, enmity, unbelief,

unbelief, ignorance, carnality and the like ; swarms of heart-lusts, like an impetuous torrent, break in upon them ; in which case they fear lest they be carried away to the dishonour of God, the ruin of the soul, and the wounding of religion. This made David to cry, *Psal. xix. Who can understand his errors ? Psal. lxx. Iniquities prevail against me, &c. Paul, Rom. vii. I am led captive unto the law of sin. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death ?*

5thly, Sometimes their hearts are intimidate with the black clouds of desertion, that overcast the sky, and interrupt the sweet manifestations of the love of God. In that case, they are like the disciples on mount *Tabor* ; when, after a sight of the glory of Christ, the cloud overshadowed them, then they were afraid : or like David, *Psal. xxx. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled ; immediately after he had been saying, Lord, by thy favour my mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved.*

6thly, Sometimes their hearts are intimidate with the noise of great waters, I mean, the shakings and reelings of this lower world. Sometimes providence has such an awful aspect, as if it were going about to shake heaven and earth ; the mountains are removed and cast into the midst of the sea, and the waters thereof roar and swell ; the mountains melt, and the perpetual hills bow at the presence of the Lord, when he appears in his terrible majesty : in such a case as this, the prophet *Habbakkuk*, chap. iii. 16. cries out, *When I heard, my belly trembled : my lips quivered at the voice : rottenness entered into my bones. And David, Psal. cxix. says, My flesh trembleth because of thee, and I am afraid at thy judgments.*

7thly, Sometimes they are afraid at the wrath of man, and the fury of the persecutor : sometimes the

the Lord, for holy and wise ends, lets loose the feed of the serpent, the rage and fury of man, under the influence of natural enmity : and in this case, they are ready to be stricken with a sinful and slavish fear, *Isa. li. 13. Thou hast feared every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy.*

8thly, The dangerous situation of the church and cause of Christ is sometimes matter of fear unto the saints of God. When the ark of God was in the open field, *Eli's* heart fell a trembling. When men are allowed to lift up their axes upon the carved work of the temple, when the boar out of the wood, and the wild beast of the forest is devouring the Lord's vineyard, and the foxes spoiling the tender vines ; then, and in that case, the true children of *Zion* are ready to say with the church, *Lam. i. 10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things ; for the heathen hath entered into the sanctuary, and her stones are poured out upon the top of every street.*

9thly, Sometimes we find them stricken with fear at the thoughts of the awful approach of death, the king of terrors ; as we see in the case of *Hezekiah*, when the sentence of death was past upon him, *Isa. xxxviii. 10. I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living : I shall behold man no more, with the inhabitants of the world. Like a crane or swallow, so did I chatter : I did mourn as a dove : mine eye fails with looking upward : O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.* Some are said to be held in bondage all their days through fear of death. Thus I have told you of some of those evils that are ready to intimidate the hearts of the Lord's people.

Second thing is, To give some account of that faith which fortifies the soul against the fear of these evils. I don't design at present to insist upon the nature of faith, having not long ago insisted on this subject: only I offer you, 1. Some of its names. 2. Its ingredients. 3. Some of its concomitants.

1st, I offer a view of it in it's scriptural names. Sometimes it is called a trusting in the Lord: What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee; tho' he should kill me, yet will I trust in him. Sometimes 'tis called a looking to the Lord: *They looked unto him and were lightened. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. Let us run our race, looking unto Jesus.* Sometimes a staying ourselves on the Lord, *Isa. xxvi. 4. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, &c.* Sometimes a casting of our burden on him, *Psal. lv. 22. Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee, &c.* Sometimes 'tis called a fleeing to him as a refuge, as the man-slayer fled to the city of refuge, when pursued for his life, *Psal. cxliii. 9. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies; I fly unto thee for help.* Faith is a flying in under the wings of Christ's mediation and intercession; as the birds under the wings of the dam.

2dly, I would give you some of the ingredients of that faith which fortifies the soul against the fear of evil. (1.) Then, it has in it a knowledge and uptaking of a *God in Christ*, revealing himself as reconciled, and making over himself to us in a well-ordered covenant: for 'tis only a God in Christ that can be the object of our faith and love; and *they that thus know his name, will put their trust in him.* (2.) It has in it a firm and fixed persuasion of the *truth and certainty* of the whole revelation of his mind and will in the word, and particularly of his

his promises as yea and amen in Christ. Hence *Abraham's faith* (*Rom. iv.*) is described by a persuasion; *he was fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* And 'tis said, *Heb. vii. 13.* of the Old-Testament worthies, who died in faith, *They saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them.* (3.) It has in it an application of the promises to the soul itself in particular; so that it not only looks on it as true in general, but true to me. The man finds the promise indefinitely indorsed to every man to whom it is intimate, *Acts ii. 38.* *The promise is to you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off, &c.* attended with this declaration and promise, that whoever believes, *sets to the seal, that God is true*; and that *whosoever believeth, shall not perish*: therefore the man takes it home to himself in particular, as a security for all the grace that is contained in it, saying, *I believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ I shall be saved. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice*; and, *in this will I be confident.* (4.) It has in it a persuasion of the power, love and faithfulness of the Promiser: a persuasion of his power to do as he has said; as *Abraham, Rom. iv.* *he was persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* A persuasion of his love; *How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!* &c. A persuasion of his veracity and faithfulness, that *he is not man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent.* (5.) It has in it a renouncing of all other refuges, as intirely insufficient to shelter the soul against those evils wherewith it is surrounded, *Hos. xiv. 3.* *Asshur shall not save us, &c.* *Jer. ii. 23.* *In vain is salvation expected from the hills or multitude of mountains.* (6.) An expectation of help and safety from a God in Christ, against all those evils that the man is pursued with, *Psal. lxii. 5, 6.* *My soul, wait thou only*

only on God ; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation ; he is my defence : I shall not be moved. Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. I looked on my right-hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me ; refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my refuge and portion in the land of the living. (7.) This faith has a leaving of ourselves and all our cares and concerns upon him, to be disposed of according to his will and pleasure. The man is content to take what lot God in his providence shall see fit to carve out for him, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city : if I find favour in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no pleasure in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

3dly, I will give you a few of the concomitants of this faith, which guards the soul against intimidating fears in a time of danger. (1.) then, It is accompanied with a blest quietness and tranquillity of soul, amidst all the dangers of a present life. Hence, says the Lord to his people, Isa. xxx. In quietness and confidence shall be your strength. The man having run in under the wings of Shiloh, the perfections of a God in Christ, he cries with David, I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep : for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety, Psal. iv. last. (2.) It is accompanied with a waiting upon the Lord in a way of duty, for his gracious presence either in grace or providence : He that believes, does not make haste. The vision is for an appointed time ; tho' it tarry, wait for it, &c. Micah. vi. 7. I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, &c. Psal. cxxx. My soul waiteth for the Lord, like them that wait for the morning, &c. (3.) 'Tis always accompanied with prayer, earnest prayer, at a throne of

of grace. Faith having got the promise in its arms, it runs straight to a throne of grace with it, to sue for the promised blessing, *Psal. lxii. 8. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him.* Prayer is just the breath of faith; and to pray and not to believe, is to beat the air; and to believe and not to pray, is nothing but a presumptuous confidence, that will never bear a man through in the evil day. (4.) It is accompanied with a holy obedience or regard unto all God's commandments, *Psal. cxix. 166. I have hoped for thy salvation, and I have done thy commandments. Spew me thy faith by thy works,* Jam. ii. 18. Let us never pretend to believe the promise, if we don't keep his commandments, *Psal. l. 16. Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction? &c.* (5.) 'Tis frequently accompanied with a soul-ravishing joy in the Lord, *Isa. xii. 2. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid:* and then it follows, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* *Psal. lxiv. 10. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.* 1 Pet. i. 8. *Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, tho' now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Hab. iii. 17, 18, 19, &c. Thus I have given you some account of that faith that fortifies the heart against the fear of evil.

I shall now endeavour to prove and make it evident, that faith doth indeed inspire the soul with a holy boldness and courage, or that it is a noble antidote against the intimidating evils that threaten danger, and this will appear from the following particulars. The courage of faith appears,

1st, From that serenity wherewith it possesses the soul, amidst those evils and dangers that threaten it with utter ruin ; *Psal. xxxii. 6, 7. Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble : thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Psal. xxxvii. 3, 5. Though an host should encamp against me, yet I will not fear ; though war should arise against me, in this I will be confident. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion ; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock.* The man, through faith, like *Noah*, sings in the very midst of the waves, without fear of being swallowed up.

2^{dly}, The courage of faith appears in the hard work and service that it will adventure on when the Lord calls. *O* says faith, when it hears God saying, *Whom shall I send ? and who will go for us ? Here am I, send me ; I can do all things thro' Christ strengthening me ; He has promised to bear my charges, and therefore I will go in his strength, &c.*

3^{dly}, From the enemies and dangers that it will look in the face, without being daunted. The three children when the wrath of the king was like the roaring of a lion against them, threatening them with a burning fiery furnace seven times heated, their faith enabled them to a holy and indifferent boldness ; *We are not careful to answer thee, O king, in this matter ; the God whom we serve will deliver us.*

4^{thly}, The courage of faith appears in the bold and daring challenges that it can give to all enemies and accusers. *O*, says *Paul*, *Rom. viii. 32, 33. Who can lay any thing unto the charge of God's elect ? The challenge is universal, in respect of all accusers, in respect of all accusations, and in respect of all the accused ;*

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Who can lay any thing, &c. And then you have another challenge of faith in the close of that chapter, *Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, &c.*

5thly, From the weapons which it wields, which no other hand but the hand of faith can manage. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, that is the weapon which faith deals with. With this weapon, Christ the captain of salvation teaches us to fight by his own example, *Matt. iv.* *Thus and thus 'tis written.* And 'tis the truth and faithfulness of God in his word, that is the shield and buckler whereby faith encounters its enemies.

6thly, From the battles it has fought, and the victories it has gained over the stoutest and strongest enemies. This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. It resists the devil, and makes him to flee like a coward; it presents the blood of the Lamb, and bears witness to the truth of the word, and so it defeats the old serpent, *Rev. xii. 7.* *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.* It treads upon death as a vanquished enemy; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? &c. Thus faith puts to flight the armies of the aliens.

7thly, From the heavy burdens it will venture to bear upon its back, without fear of sinking under the load. The cross of Christ is a burden that frightens the world to look to him, or own him; but faith takes it up, and takes it on, and cries, O the world is mistaken; for his yoke is easy, and his burden is light; and his commandments are not grievous. Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, they work for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

8thly, From the hard and difficult passes that faith will open. When the way seems impassable,

it sees the *breaker going up before it* ; and therefore, tho' heaven, earth, and hell stood in the way, it will clear the road of all difficulties. *Pihabiroth* and *Baalzephon*, impassable mountains on every hand, the *Red-sea* before, and an enraged powerful enemy behind ; can there be any door of help ? Yes, says faith, only stand still, and see the salvation of God ; and thereupon the waters divide, and a lane is made through the depths of the sea for *Israel*. If we have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, we may say to this, and that, and the other mountain, Be thou removed, and it shall be done.

9thly, The courage of faith appears, from the great exploits that it hath performed ; for which I refer you to *Heb. xi. per totum*, particularly, *ver. 33, 34, 35.* and does not this say, that 'tis a bold and couragious grace ?

10thly, From the trophies of victory and triumph that it wears. It takes up the trophies of Christ's victory over sin, satan, hell and death ; and cries, I will be joyful in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banner. O, will faith say, There lies the head of the old serpent bruised by the seed of the woman. There lies the curse of the law, that hand-writing that was against us, torn by the nails of his cross ; he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. There stands the world, and it's good and bad things, as a mass of meer vanity overcome by Christ ; and therefore I'll tread upon them as dung and lofs, that I may win Christ, who is All in All. There lies death and the grave, slain by the death of Jesus ; and therefore I'll play at the den of this lion and cockatrice, for it cannot hurt me. Thus it appears that faith is a couragious grace, which fears no evil.

Third thing in the general method was, To speak a little of that christian fortitude and boldness which makes a believer to fear no evil. All that I shall say upon this subject shall be, to offer the few following views for clearing it.

1st, The seat and subject of this christian fortitude is the heart of a believer, renewed by sovereign grace, and therefore it can never be found in the heart of a natural man. Indeed we find something that goes under that name, but is falsely so called amongst natural men; a natural boldness and hardiness of spirit to encounter dangers, yea, even death itself, in the pursuance of their designs. The soldier, at the command of his general, will go forward in battle, though he should die upon the spot; the mariner and merchant will risque his life through storms and waves, without any great concern: but alas! while a man is destitute of the grace of God, all these flow only from pride, covetousness, revenge, or some such reigning lust that must be maintained and supported, or at best from the natural temper of the mind, or some carnal ends and motives. That which is born of the flesh, is still flesh. The fortitude or boldness that I now speak of, is only to be found in a heart or soul changed and renewed by the power of divine grace, the faith of God's operation (as I said) being the very spring and root of it: and hence it is, that we shall find this true christian fortitude, sometimes manifesting itself in these who as to their natural temper, are the most timorous and faint-hearted; for it makes the feeble as *David*, and as the angel of God before him. God says to them that are of a fearful spirit, Be strong, fear not; and then the man that quaked at the shaking of a leaf, becomes bold as a lion.

2dly, Let us view the object of this christian fortitude, or that about which 'tis exerted, viz. truth and error, sin and duty. As to the concerns of a present life, worldly interest and claims, or yet matters of indifferency, which a man may do or forbear without sin on either side, the spirit of christianity is the most yielding thing in the world; our holy religion teaches us, as to the affairs of this life, rather than enter into litigious pleas, to quit our worldly claims; which I take to be the meaning of Christ, when he says, *Mat. v. 40. If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also*: and as to matters of indifferency, we are to become all things to all men, that we may gain some. If the eating of flesh will offend my brother, says *Paul*, I will eat no flesh while the world stands. So that, I say, this christian fortitude is not expressed about these things, but about truth or error, sin or duty; here it is that the christian is to make his stand; he is to be valiant for the truth, to contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints; to buy the truth at any rate, and to sell it at no rate; no, not the least hair or hoof of truth is to be parted with, tho' heaven and earth should mingle for his adhering to it in opposition unto these errors that have a tendency to obscure or destroy it. And the same thing takes place as to the matters of sin or duty, in which we are to resist even unto blood, striving against sin, in regard the greatest of sufferings are to be chosen rather than the least of sins: the reason of which is obvious, because, by the one, we are only exposed to the displeasure of men, but by sin we expose ourselves to the displeasure of God, and dishonour him.

3dly, View this christian courage and fortitude as to the nature of it. It takes in, I think, these things following,

lowing, (1.) A clear and distinct knowledge and up-taking of the truth as it is in Jesus, accompanied with a firm persuasion and assent of the soul unto it, and experience of the power of it upon ones own soul. Without this, a man, instead of being valiant for the truth, will, like the weather-cock, be turned aside with every wind of error or temptation. (2.) It has in it a making the truth of God in his word the proper boundary both of his faith and practice. He will not embrace for doctrines the commandments of men ; no, but he will bring matters to the law and testimony, to be tried at that bar ; for, if they speak not according to these things, it is because there is no truth in them : and whatever will not abide the trial there, he throws it away as the spawn of hell, whatever human authority it may be supported with. God only is Lord of the conscience, and that he will subject to no authority but God only. (3.) It has in it a tenacious adherence unto truth and duty revealed or enjoined in the word of God, and a refusing to quit it upon any consideration whatever, or whatever be the event. This is called a *keeping the word of God's patience*, Rev. iii. 10. and a *holding of the testimony*, Rev. vi. 9. *I saw, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held. A holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, Heb. x. 23. This I take to be imported in that advice *Barnabas* gave unto the disciples at *Antioch*, that *with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*, Acts xi. 23. (4.) This christian fortitude has in it a holy contempt of all that the man can suffer in a present world, in adhering to truth and duty. The man is easy about all the world, and its frowns or flatteries, if he can have God's testimony, and the testimony of a good conscience. If God be for us, says the

man, who can be against us? Let devils and men rage and roar, their wrath is bounded, it shall praise the Lord, and the remainder of their wrath will he restrain. He endures, as seeing him that is invisible. He has his eye fixed upon another world than this; and therefore he is ready to say, *The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the exceeding glory that is to be revealed; our light afflictions which are but for a moment, they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at things that are seen, but at things that are not seen: for things seen, are temporal; but things not seen, are eternal.* (5.) It has in it also a chearfulness, alacrity and equality of spirit, under all the turns of a man's lot in the world, in following the Lord, and adhering to his cause and interest, *Phil. iv. 11, 12. I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content: I know how both to be abased, and how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed, both how to be full, and to be hungry; both how to abound, and to suffer want.*

4thly, This christian fortitude or courage hath the following properties. (1.) It is distinct as to the ground it goes upon; and so 'tis quite different from a blind zeal, which does more harm than good to religion. I bear you witness, (says *Paul* of his country-men the *Jews*) ye have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (2.) It is a holy boldness; for it stands in opposition to sin or error. The wicked world are bold to sin, but the christian is bold to withstand it, and bold to lift up a banner for truth, when others are so bold as to pull it down. (3.) 'Tis a humble and self-denied boldness. The man is not bold or confident in himself, or created grace, as *Peter*, when he said, *Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not*

I : no, but he is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; and when he has been helped to make a stand for the Lord, or for his cause, he will not be ready to sacrifice to his own net, like *Jehu*, come and see my zeal for the Lord of hosts : no, but with *Paul*, he will be ready to say, Not I, but the grace of God in me : not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory. And therefore, (4.) 'Tis a very meek boldness. *Moses* was the meekest man upon earth, and yet his meekness was consistent with such boldness of spirit, as to go, at God's command, to *Pharaoh*, and require him to let *Israel* go, under very awful certifications : and when *Pharaoh* was brought so far down from his former altitudes, as to allow them to go, only to leave some little thing behind ; he boldly tells him, not a hoof was to be left behind, *Exod.* x. 26. and yet in all this *Moses* retained his meekness of spirit ; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

5thly, This christian courage and boldness, it's proper season for exerting itself is when duty is attended with danger, or when the profession of our faith is fair to expose us unto the rage and persecution of men. A coward will appear couragious when there is no enemy to withstand him ; but true courage discovers itself in standing the shock and attack of the enemy : so true christian courage discovers itself in a time of danger, when truth is falling in the street, to take it up then ; or, when the following of the Lord in the way of duty exposes a man to hazard and danger, for a man to set his face to the storm like a flint, that is, I say, the proper time for christian courage to exert itself. This you see in the case of the three children, when threatned with a burning fiery furnace if they would not worship the golden image ; we are not careful to
answer

answer thee in this matter, *O king, we will not worship the image thou hast set up ; the God whom we serve, is able to deliver us.* And we see the same in *Daniel*, when a proclamation was issued out, forbidding any petition to be asked either of God or man, but only of the king, for thirty days, he goes into his house, and casts open his windows, so as all might take knowledge of him, and praises and gives thanks unto his God three times a day, tho' he knew the upshot of it would be, his being cast into the lions den. The proper season of this christian courage is a time of hazard attending duty. Alas ! 'tis to be feared, that among the many crowds that seem to follow Christ, and profess his name in a day of prosperity, he would have but a thin backing of them, if providence were calling them to follow him to a *Calvary* or a gibbet. The seed that fell upon the stony ground had goodly braird for a while ; but, wanting root and deepness of earth, it withered when the scorching sun of persecution and trouble did arise upon it.

6thly, The fruits and effects of this christian courage and boldness in cleaving to the Lord and his way in a time of danger, and in holding his testimony, are very sweet and glorious : for, (1.) 'Tis a seal added unto the truth of God, in the view of the world, and lets the blind world know that there is more value in the truth of God, and a matter of greater importance, than they imagine ; and, by this means, truth is brought forth unto victory, notwithstanding of all the attempts of hell to obscure and bury it. (2.) Christian courage and boldness in owning the truth, especially in the face of danger, strikes a damp upon the very hearts of persecutors and oppressors of it, and puts them to a stand ; as we see in the instance of the apostles, *Acts iv. 13.* When the *Jewish Sanhedrin* perceived

ved the boldness of *Peter* and *John*, and took knowledge of them that they had been with *Jesus*, they were brought to their wits-end, and say one to another, What shall we do with these men? (3.) It serves to hearten the spirits of those who love the truth, and affords matter of praise when they see these that are in the high places appearing valiant for the truth; as we see in the same *Acts* iv. 23, 24. When *Peter* and *John* are let go, and when they come to their own company, making a report of *all* that had happened, they lift up their voice with one accord, and praise the Lord, (4.) A bold appearance for the truth and cause of *Christ* is a sweet evidence to a man of his own salvation, and that he shall be owned of the Lord another day; for, says *Christ*, he that confesses me before men, him will I confess before my Father, and before his angels. To the same purpose is that of the apostle, *Rom.* x. *With the heart man believes unto righteousness, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Thus I have given you a six-fold view of that christian fortitude and courage which is the fruit of faith.

The *fourth* thing in the method was, to enquire into the influence that faith has upon this boldness. Unto which I answer in the particulars following;
1st, Faith serves to inspire the soul with christian fortitude and boldness, by presenting God to the soul's view in his glorious majesty; at the sight of whom, the fear of man, and all the dangers of time, do intirely evanish and disappear. Hence is that of *Moses*, *Heb.* xi. 27. *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.* Why, what was it that cured him of the fear of *Pharaoh's* wrath? We are told in the close of the verse, *That he endured, as seeing him that is invisible.* O sirs, when the eye is opened to see the infinite majesty, greatness, excellency

excellency and power of the great JEHOVAH, it would choofe rather to venture upon the fury of all the devils in hell, and men upon earth, than adventure to difpleafe him, by parting with the leaft truth he has revealed, or by breaking one of the leaft of his commandments. It renders the foul unshaken under all trials ; hence is that of *David*, I have fet the Lord always before me ; becaufe thou art at my right hand, I fhall not be moved.

2dly, Faith infpires the foul with chriitian boldnefs and fortitude, by enabling the foul to make a right eftimate of the truth, which is the great matter of strife and contention in the world. The devil deserted or abode not in the truth of God ; and the way he ruined mankind at firft, was by mincing away the truth of God's threatning, *In the day thou eateft thereof, thou fhalt furely die* : hath God faid fo and fo ? And fuch is his enmity at the truth of God, that his main efforts are to bring it into difcredit, and to bring thofe that profefs Chrift, either to difbelieve it, or deny it, or desert it. Now faith gives the foul a juft view and uptaking of the value of every truth of God ; yea, of thefe that would appear lefs fundamental, that it will not quit with the leaft hoof, tho' heaven and earth fhould mingle. O, fays faith, I fee that God has fuch a value and efteem for his truth, that he will rather throw heaven and earth back unto their original nothing, than let one jot of it fall to the ground ; how then fhall I give it up ! In a word, truth, particularly revealed truth, is juft the food on which faith lives ; and faith is nothing elfe but a fetting to the feal that God is true. Take away the truth, and faith is not ; and therefore it is that faith and truth do fometimes exchange names ; *Jude 3. Contend earneftly for the faith once delivered unto the faints* ; the meaning is, contend earneftly for the truth delivered

red to the saints. Faith and truth are exceedingly related, the one cannot subsist without the other ; and hence it is, that faith inspires the soul with courage in owning it, and cleaving to it, and fears no evil in so doing.

3dly, Faith inspires the soul with courage, by curing it of the fear of man, which causes a snare. What was it but the fear of man that made *Abraham*, and *Isaac* also, to tell a lie? What but the fear of man made *David* to feign himself mad, and *Peter* to deny his Master? Now, faith, when in a lively exercise, sets man in his proper light, and discovers him to be what he really is. For, 1. True faith tells the soul, that man is an inconsiderable creature before God, *Isa.* xl. 15, 16, 17. *Behold, the nations are before him but as the drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the ballance : behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations are before him as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing and vanity.* Faith sees the great armies of enemies to be no more than a swarm of impotent flies before God : hence is that challenge unto *Israel*, trembling at the fury of the enemy, *Isa.* li. 11, 12, 13. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor!* O Sirs, if the majesty of such a challenge were but laid home upon our spirits, we would make little account of poor man and his displeasure, in cleaving to the Lord, and his truths and way. 2. Faith tells the soul, that as man is an inconsiderable creature, so he is a mortal dying creature ; and that every day he dies, all his thoughts and designs perish,

Perish, *Isa. xl. 6, 7, 8. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.* Now, faith sees that to be true, and so it cures the soul of the fear of man. 3. Faith tells the soul, that any little power that man hath, is bounded by an over-ruling hand; and that he can go no further, in pushing his resentments, than God allows him, *Psal. lxxvi. 10. The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of his wrath shalt thou restrain.* Hence is that of Christ unto Pilate, who was making his boast, that he had power to take away his life, or to save it; Thou hast no power against me, but what is given thee from above. As he sets bounds unto the raging sea, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; so he sets bounds unto the rage of man. 4. Faith views man as a guilty criminal before God, the righteous judge of all the earth; and the conscience of guilt strikes them with fear and terror; especially when there is valiant contending for the truth, which they are endeavouring to stifle and suppress. Hence it was that *Felix*, when sitting upon the judgment-seat, fell a trembling before *Paul* at the bar, I mean, *Paul* when he spake of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. They may well touch the body, the estate, the name, and such external things; but they cannot harm the soul, which is the more noble part of the man. Hence is that needful caution of Christ to his followers, *Fear not him that can kill the body, and when he hath done, cannot reach the soul: but fear him that is able to cast both soul and body into hell, Luke xii. 4, 5.* They cannot thunder with

a voice like God ; they cannot blot your names out of the book of life, or shut the gates of heaven, or open and shut up your souls in the prison of hell. Faith sees that the man's enemies in owning the cause of truth, are God's enemies ; and all the enemies of God shall perish. Thus you see what a view faith gives of all the children of men, and their wrath ; and this it is that inspires the soul with a holy boldness, and undaunted courage, in the face of the greatest dangers.

4thly, Faith inspires with christian courage in time of danger and trouble from the world, by viewing the in-side of troubles for Christ, as well as the out-side of them. When we walk by sense, and not by faith, we will soon be dispirited in a day of trouble and danger, and be ready to cry, There is a lion in the way, there is a lion in the streets, the way is impassable. Banishments, prisons and death, have something in them that are horrible to nature and sense. But now, faith looks to the in-side of troubles, and considers what God has made, and can still make these unto his people : it considers how joyful the Lord's people have been in tribulation ; what honey they have found, even in the carcass of a lion ; what songs he has given them in the night in stocks and dungeons, and what glorying in tribulation ; how he has brought into their bosom an hundred-fold of a reward even in this life ; how many of the Lord's people have found themselves quite mistaken concerning a suffering lot, when once they have fairly ventured upon it in following the Lord ; that which at a distance looked like a serpent, has been found to be a rod in the hand ; a prison has been turned into a palace to them, so that they have been more loth to come out of prison, then they were to enter into it. O sirs, the consolations of God which are
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not small, they infinitely counterballance all the gall that is in the cup of suffering for Christ.

5thly, Faith inspires the soul with courage, by laying the glory that is to be revealed in ballance against all the sufferings of this present life, and then it cries, They are not worthy to be compared together, *Heb. x. 34.* the saints there, they *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.* Faith views the certainty of the reward of glory ; for 'tis the evidence of things not seen ; and thereupon it cries, Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Faith views the greatness of the reward, saying, our light afflictions, they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Faith views heaven and glory to be near at hand, that there is nothing but a partition-wall of clay, nothing but the breath of the nostrils between the soul and the immediate enjoyment of God ; and thereupon it cries, with *Paul*, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all.

6thly, Faith inspires the soul with christian courage, by clearing the heart and soul of the guilt and filth of sin. A man can never be a true sufferer for Christ, while conscience is roaring, and telling him that he has an angry God to meet with on the back of death : hence we find that the spirit of a sound mind and a spirit of slavish fear are opposite, *2 Tim. i. 7.* A spirit of a sound mind ; some understand it a mind purified from the guilt of sin : now, faith is a grace that has a mighty influence this way, *Acts xv. 9. Purifying their hearts by faith.* It brings the soul to the *Jordan* of a Redeemer's blood, and washes it from sin and from uncleanness ; it wraps up the soul in the white robe and mantle of the everlasting righteousness of Christ,

Christ, and then it can with a holy boldness cry, And who is he that will contend with me? He is near that justifieth. Hence is that, *Rom. v. 1, 2, 3. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, &c.*

7thly, Faith inspires the soul with courage and constancy in an evil day, by keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, according to that advice of the apostle, *Heb. xii. 2. Let us run our race with patience, looking unto Jesus.* And here I'll tell you of a few things in Jesus that serve to inspire the soul with holy courage and magnanimity. (1.) Faith sees Christ upon its head, as the great captain of salvation, giving out the word of command, Fight the good fight of faith, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong. And having him as a leader and commander, the man *waxes valiant in fight*, knowing that nothing but weakness is in the way. (2.) Faith views the example of Christ, how he encountered the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the fury of devils, and rage of men, with undaunted resolution, in order to our redemption: and the valour of the general inspires the soldier with courage to follow him through all imaginable danger. (3.) Faith sees all fulness of grace treasured up in Christ, the head of the mystical body, for the supply of every particular member according to his need; and then the man cries out, with courage, as *Paul* did, I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. He becomes strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. (4.) Faith sees a reconciled God in Christ smiling on the soul, and standing on its side; and this gives courage. The Lord of hosts is with us, and the God of *Jacob* is our refuge. O sirs, a God in Christ is not a God against us, but *Immanuel*, God with us; and this makes the soul to cry, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. (5.) Faith

keeping its eye on Christ, sees victory secured in the end of the day ; yea it sees the victory already obtained in him, it sees the spoils of the enemy in his hand, and him triumphing over, and treading upon his enemies and his footstool : and this, O this fills the soul with holy courage, saying, We are more than conquerors thro' him that loved us ; thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus you see whence it is that faith inspires the soul with courage and boldness. Many other things to this purpose might be insisted upon, but I pass them, and go on to the

Fifth thing, which was the application.

Use 1. May be of information, only in two words. (1.) See hence the excellency of the grace of faith. Why, 'tis a bold, a daring and courageous grace ; hence commonly opposed unto fear. Why art thou fearful, O thou of little faith ? Faith — pulls up the heart and spirit in a time of danger, and cries, Courage, for the day is mine own ; I see the captain of salvation, who was made perfect through suffering, with the spoils of hell and earth in his hand. (2.) See hence the evil and danger of the sin of unbelief : why, it intimidates the soul, and gives birth and being unto a dastardly and cowardly spirit, and either makes a man to stagger, or else turn back and cry, 'The way is impassable. Hence the fearful and unbelieving are linked together, *Rev.* xxi. 8. O first, except we believe, we shall never be established in an evil day. *Moses*, you heard, endured, as seeing him that is invisible.

Use 2. Shall be of trial, Whether you have a faith that will carry you through, and inspire you with courage in an evil day ? I'll give you the few following marks whereby you may try it. (1.) 'Tis

a faith that springs out of the ruin of self. Whenever faith springs up, self goes down ; self-wisdom, self-righteousness, self-sufficiency. You have seen your own wisdom to be but folly ; I am more brutish than any man, &c. Self-righteousness, you have seen it to be nothing but filthy rags, saying with the apostle, Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ. Self-sufficiency and strength, you have seen it to be emptiness, saying, In me dwelleth no good thing. (2.)

'Tis a Christ-exalting faith, it sets him on high ; To you that believe, he is precious. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? (3.) 'Tis a feeding and soul-nourishing faith ; it eats the flesh, and drinks the blood of the Son of Man. Christ in the word of grace is like its necessary food ; hence it is that the christian is a growing creature, he increases with the increase of God ; like a *new-born babe*, he drinks in the sincere milk of the word, and so grows thereby. (4.) 'Tis a faith that works by love. It views the glory of Christ, and the heart follows the eye, and causes it to burn with love to him, and desire after him ; and this love to Christ makes the man to love every thing that pertains to him : he loves his word, and esteems it above gold, &c. he loves his ordinances, where he gets fellowship with him ; I love the habitation of thy house, &c.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord God of hosts ? &c. He loves his ways ; wisdom's ways are pleasantness, &c. He loves his people, and all that have the spirit of Jesus ; by this we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He loves the very cross of Christ above the pleasures of the world, like *Moses*, who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of *Egypt*. (5.) 'Tis a fertile or a fruitful faith, that is always exciting the man to

the study of holiness in all manner of conversation. 'Tis an obedient and a working faith ; for faith without works is dead. As works without faith are but dead works, which cannot be accepted by a living God ; so faith without works is but a dead faith, which will soon wither, and come to nought, particularly in a day of trial, like the faith of the stony-ground hearers.

Use 3. Is of exhortation. And my only exhortation is, that you would not only believe, but study to have a faith that will inspire you with that courage which acted *David* in the text, when he said, Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. And, to excite your christian fortitude and courage, consider by way of motive, 1. That the day we live in, requires it ; the winds and tide of error and defection are blowing and running hard ; the judicatories of the church are stricken with such a spiritual frenzy and madness, that instead of acting in an agreeableness to the trust committed to them by the Lord in opposing error and corruption, they are patronizing and setting up the right-hands of the wicked, and opposing and oppressing all that have any shew of serious godliness, or that open a mouth against the courses of defection they are engaged in : and who knows but a storm may be at the door, which will make us all to stagger ? And therefore, I say, 'tis needful. 2. Consider, That Christ was bold and couragious in our cause ; and shall not we be bold and couragious in his cause ? See with what courage he takes the field, *Isa.* 1. &c. 3. Christ the captain of our salvation commands and requires his followers to take courage, and to be bold in him ; he would have us to be strong and of good courage, as he said to *Joshua*: stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, and be strong in the Lord,

Lord, and in the power of his might. When their spirits are beginning to droop, he says, Fear not them that kill the body, &c. 4. The eye of our great captain and general is upon us, and let that inspire us with courage. If a soldier knows that his captain is looking on, it will make him venture upon death and danger. Sirs, he that is invisible, our glorious leader and commander, is standing by, noticing how every one of us acquit ourselves in our warfare with sin, satan and the world: his eyes are as a flame of fire, searching *Jerusalem* as with lighted candles; and should not this inspire us with courage? As it is a pleasure to him to see his soldiers brisk in the day of battle, so it sensibly touches and wounds him when they faint and go back, as though his cause were not worth the contending for. 5. Take courage, believer, for the cause is good; you fight for the honour of your God, for his precious truths, and for the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free; yea, for the defence of every thing that is valuable to ourselves and our posterity. The liberties and privileges of the church and kingdom of Christ in this land hath been handed down to us at the expence of the blood of Christ, and the blood of many of his martyrs; and shall we not take courage to maintain and defend what has been transmitted to us at such a dear rate? 6. The enemy is but weak, and a couragious stand will make them to give way. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you: so resist his emissaries, that are carrying on a course of defection, and they will give back; or put them to such a stand, that they will be at their wits-end, as we see it was with the *Jewish* court, &c. Acts iv. &c. You know when *Goliath* was slain by *David*, the heart of the *Philistines* failed them, and they fled. Sirs, *Goliath* is slain by Christ; he,

through death, hath destroyed him that hath the power of death, and therefore a noble stand against his armies will soon dispirit them. 7. Take courage, believer, for *Jehovah*, God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is on your head, *Mic. ii. close*. And, if everlasting strength be on your side, what have you to fear? *Psal. xli. &c.* 8. The victory is sure, the spoils are already in the hand of our glorious general, and he has promised to give the victory to all that are faithful unto the death, in cleaving to him and his way; and therefore up the heart. You see what a train of promises are made to the overcomers, *Rev. ii. iii. chapters*.

I conclude with a few advices, in order to your being fortified with christian courage against the shadows of death that may cast up in your way through the wilderness.

(1.) Take care that your covenant with hell, and your agreement with death, be broken, and that you be really settled by faith upon the foundation that God has laid in *Zion*. O see that you be not building upon any foundation of sand with respect to your eternal concerns, but that you be really built upon the rock Jesus Christ; for another foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. You may read, to this purpose, *Mat. vii. 24, 25, 26, 27.* where you see that there are but two foundations that all men are building their hope of salvation upon, either upon the rock, or upon the sand. Christ himself is the rock, and all other things else, whether general mercy, self-righteousness, common graces or attainments, they are but foundations of sand: and you see also, that when storms of trouble blow, the house built upon the rock stands the shock, but the house built upon the sand falls, and great is the fall of it. And therefore my advice unto you, in order to
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your standing when storms blow that have the shadows of death in them, is, for the Lord's sake, take care that the foundation be well laid upon Christ; so that ye be joined to him by the bond of faith of God's operation ; receive him, and rest upon him as made of God unto you (sinners) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

(2.) Study not only to have faith in the habit, but to have faith in a continual exercise ; for faith, like the spring of a watch, sets all the other wheels, I mean, the other graces of the spirit, a going ; such as love, repentance, fear, hope, patience, and joy in the Lord : and, while these are kept in exercise, there is no fear though the shadows of death should stretch themselves over us. Hence the apostle exhorts christians *above all to take the shield of faith*, Eph. iv. 16. because all depends upon the grace of faith, which itself depends upon Christ ; I can do all things, (says *Paul*) through Christ strengthening me. Faith speaks like a little omnipotent ; faith is a victorious grace, that overcomes the world and all difficulties in its way. By faith it was that these worthies, *Heb. xi.* did wonders ; *by faith they quenched the violence of fire, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, and raised the dead out of the grave ; by faith they endured cruel mockings and scourgings, &c.* When created comforts vanish, riches, relations, pleasures ; well, in that case, faith will look to the Lord, and have a respect to the Holy One of *Israel* ; when sense can find nothing to stay upon, all props are withdrawn, faith will stay itself upon the Lord ; when the promise seems to fail, faith will wait, and not make haste ; when the strength of created grace begins to fail, faith will stay and sit down upon everlasting strength, *Isa. xxvi. 3.* So then, study to have faith in exercise.

(3.) Study to get your hearts steeled with christian fortitude and courage, which is the natural fruit of that faith which worketh by love. We have a noble pattern of this, in the glorious captain of salvation, whose followers we are called to be, particularly in a suffering lot: he set his face like a flint, and challenges all his enemies to encounter him, *Isa. l. He is near that helpeth, who will contend with me? &c.* Paul followed his Master's example; when he was told that bonds and afflictions did abide him, *Acts xx. 24.* he answers, none of these things move me; I am ready not to be bound only, but to die, &c. And when he was to appear before that cruel monster, *Nero*, and no man to own him or stand by him, yet he stands his ground, resolving rather to die on the spot, than dishonourably to recede from his principles and profession. What holy courage breaths here in the words of *David*? Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, &c.

(4.) Another advice I give you is this, Study to get rid of the idol of self, self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-sufficiency. If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. The prevalency of self was the forerunner of *Peter's* fall; tho' all men should deny thee, yet so will not I. He was too confident of his created grace and strength; and the Lord, in order to humble him, and unbottom him from this kind of confidence, will let him fall into a mire of sin, and deny him in the hour of temptation, at the voice of a silly maid. There are two things wherein the strength of the christian lies; 1. Self-diffidence. 2. Confidence in the Lord. If these two be maintained, they will make the believer stand when the darkest shadows of death are round about him. We
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are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of the Lord. This is just the way and work of faith ; it travels between self-emptiness and all fulness, between self-guiltiness and everlasting righteousness, between self-weakness and everlasting strength : hence *David*, I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.

(5.) Study to get your hearts weaned from, and mortified to the world, and all the fading interests and enjoyments thereof. The world is a dead weight upon the soul, especially in a day of trial, where the love of it has the ascendant and prevalency in the heart : hence we are told, that *Demas* forsook *Paul* and the profession of christianity, by having loved this present world ; If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And, if the love of the Father be not in us, 'tis impossible we can stand in a shaking day. There are these things in the world that we would study to be mortified unto, in order to our standing in a time of trial. 1. Our worldly estates and riches. The love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted, they have erred from the faith, &c. O what a scandal is it to christianity, to see men professing Christ and christianity, so wedded to the world, and the perishing riches of it ! In order to our getting it under our feet, let us view it in the light wherein God has set it to us in his word : his verdict of things is the truest ; and, if we believe him, all that is in it is mere vanity, vanity of vanities, &c. Let us contemplate things above, and look at things not seen, &c. What will it appear when we are a little beyond death ? 2. Let us study to be mortified to our worldly credit, our name and reputation in the world. It commonly goes very near us, and it was among the sharpest of trials
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that the worthies met with, *Heb. xi.* when they endured the trial of cruel mocking. 'Tis no easy thing to proud nature to have our name and reputation torn by reproach, and cast out as evil : yet, I say, if we would stand in a day of trial, we must lay our worldly name and credit at the feet of Christ. He was content to have his name, which is above every name, blackned with reproach for us ; he was called a blasphemer, a wine-biber, a friend of publicans and sinners, an affecter of popularity ; yea, a devil : but he endured the cross, and despised the shame of it. Sirs, let us remember that we are neither to stand or fall according to the world's verdict of us : *'Tis a small thing for me to be judged of men ; he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* Let us remember, that there is a real glory in bearing reproach for Christ and his cause : *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.* 3. Let us study to be mortified to worldly ease, quiet and liberty. *Paul* lays his account with bonds for the name of Christ. Sirs, what signifies the being, like *Paul* and *Silas*, shut up in a dungeon for Christ, and under chains, if his presence be with us, as it was with them ? &c. A prison has been hanelled by the most eminent of the saints now in glory, *Jer. xxx. 2. Mat. iv. 12. Acts v. 18.* But God loosed his prisoners, and set them free at length. Commonly when men are cruel, the Lord is kind : he looks down from heaven, to hear the sighing and groanings of his prisoners, &c. A prison, or confinement by men, is not hell ; men have their prisons, and God has his. We read of these who sinned in the days of *Noah*, that are now in the prison of hell, 1 *Pet. iii. 19.* that is a terrible prison indeed, no relief there : little hazard of mens prisons, if that be all the hell we are to endure. 4. Let us study to get our affections morti-

mortified even to the inordinate love of life. This indeed is a hard lecture, yet it is a lecture that we must learn, if we be the followers of Christ, when a day of trial comes. Sirs, if ever you took on with Christ the captain of salvation, you have laid your lives at his feet, and all the comforts of life, to be disposed of by him, &c. Die we must one time or other, and we can never part with it more honourably than in the cause of Christ, &c. Christ parted with his valuable life for us, and shall we spare our poor miserable life for him? Again, think what a life of glory you enter into, when you lay down your life for his cause, &c.

(6.) In order to our being prepared for encountering the shadows of death, secure these three good things, and there is no fear; a good God, a good cause and a good conscience. 1. Secure the presence of a reconciled God in Christ. It was the faith of this, that made *David* so bold here in the text; Though I walk through the valley, &c. His promise is sure, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, &c. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, &c. Let faith fasten on his word, and say, this God is my God for ever and ever, and he shall be my guide even unto death. 2. Secure a good cause. 'Tis a miserable, heartless thing for a man to suffer as an evil doer, to suffer as a busy-body in other mens matters; but to suffer for Christ, for the doctrine, discipline, worship and government of his house, to suffer for his members, or cleaving unto the least of his truths, is comfortable and creditable: and we are to account it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations and trials on this account, even, tho' but the least hoof of divine truth be concerned; for better heaven and earth were unhinged, than one jot or tittle of the truth of God be suffered to fall

to the ground. 3. Secure a good conscience to bear you company ; for this is like a bird in the bosom, that makes the countenance glad, even when storms blow hard from without. This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, &c. And in order to your having a good conscience, get it sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, and keep it at the greatest distance from every thing that may defile it, even tho' it should offend the whole world in so doing.

(7.) Keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus as our glorious pattern, and see him within the vail, with the spoils of hell in his hand, *Heb. xii. 2. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, &c.* View him as the renowned captain of salvation, coming from *Edom*. Eye him, 1. As our Redeemer that has satisfied justice for us : so did *Job* ; *I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.* This put him in case to look death and the grave in the face. 2. Eye him as your leader, and the *captain of salvation made perfect through sufferings*. He did wade a sea of blood and wrath, and he is now on the other side, crying, *Fear not, for I was dead, and am alive.* 3. Eye him as your head of influence, and wait for supplies of grace from him ; for he will not be wanting to give out life and strength to his members, as he has service for them, &c. 4. Eye him as a head of government, having all power in heaven and in earth in his hand, for the benefit of his 'mystical body : for this will make you sing in the midst of tribulation, saying, *The Lord lives ; blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted. The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Selah.*

* The BELIEVER'S Journey from the
Wilderness of this World, to the
heavenly *Canaan*.

B E I N G

S E R M O N S preached after the Administration of the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* in *Edinburgh*, March 6 and 7, 1732. and afterwards enlarged upon in several Sermons at *Sterling*.

By the Revd. Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

C A N T. viii. 5.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

I N the beginning of this chapter, we find the church under the notion of the spouse or bride, breathing after further degrees of familiarity and fellowship with Christ, the glorious bride-

* *The occasion of this publication is, about a twelvemonth ago there were printed in one sheet of paper, and published without the author's knowledge or allowance, some incorrect and spurious notes of these sermons, under the title of, The character of a soul espoused to Christ: with the publication and dispersion of which, the reverend Mr. Erskine was so much offended, that he caused apprehend some who were selling them; and the spurious papers being at the same time seized, were burnt publicly, by order of the magistrates of Sterling.*

And the true notes being much desired by many who heard them delivered, the reverend author has, for the satisfaction of such, and for the vindication of truth and himself, allowed them to be published.

groom of souls, than she had ever yet attained to ; *Oh that thou wert as my brother, that suck'd the breasts of my mother !* Observe, they that know the Lord, will follow on to know him ; they'll forget things that are behind, and reach unto those things that are before. The spouse, altho' she had been brought into the banquetting-house, and allowed to sit under his shadow with great delight, yet here we find her pleading for further intimacy, renewed manifestations and discoveries of him : a believer can never be satisfied with any degree of nearness, till he come to be swallowed up in the immediate vision and fruition of him in glory. This request of the spouse she inforces with several arguments : she tells him, *ver. 2.* in the close, *that she would cause him to drink of her spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranates ;* that is, she would entertain him with the fruits of his own spirit, the graces of his own operation, which are the only entertainment he is delighted with, and the best that her mother's house could afford. Observe, that a believer thinks nothing too good for the entertainment of his blessed Lord ; if he had ten thousand heavens of glory at his disposal, they should be all at his service : they cast their crowns down at his feet. Our blessed Lord's tender heart will not allow him to restrain or keep up himself long from the soul that is panting after nearness to him ; for we find, *ver. 3.* he grants her suit, and allows her a renewed discovery of his tender love, insomuch that she is made to own, *his left-hand is under my head, and his right-hand doth embrace me.* Upon which, *ver. 4.* she expresses her care and concern to prevent any further interruption of her fellowship and communion with her Lord, either by herself or others ; *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love till he please.* The daughters

ters of *Jerusalem*, particular believers, being supposed to be witnesses of this blessed intimacy between Christ and the spouse, and unto the actings of her faith and love upon him ; they are introduced in the words of the text, expressing their wonder and satisfaction at the blessed interview between Christ and his beloved spouse, even here in a militant state ; *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved ?*

In the words we may notice, (1.) The designation given to this world, with reference to the church and people of God ; 'tis but a wilderness, or a weary land, through which they are travelling toward their own home. (2.) We have the course they are steering while in the wilderness : they are not sitting still in it, or going further into it, as if it were their home ; no, they are *coming up* from the wilderness : Their affections are set upon things that are above, and not upon things that are below ; they have got a tasting of the grapes of *Eshcol*, they have got a view of the land afar off, and of the King in his beauty, which makes them disrelish this present world, and look and long, not for the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, and which are eternal. (3.) We have the spouse's posture as she comes up from the wilderness ; she is *leaning*. *Hebreans* observe, that this is a word not elsewhere used in scripture ; the seventy interpreters translate it, *confirming* or *strengthening* herself : it plainly supposes the spouse's weakness and impotency in herself to grapple with difficulties in her way through the wilderness, together with her dependance on the grace and furniture that was laid up for her in Christ ; and that she must needs sag and fail in her journey, without new supplies and communications of light, life and strength from him, in whom all fulness dwells. (4.)
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We have the blessed stay and prop on which she leans and rests her weary soul, in coming up from the wilderness ; 'tis upon her *beloved*, that is, upon Christ, whose love and loveliness had ravished her heart, and drawn out her cordial assent and consent to him as the bridegroom of souls, who had betrothed her to himself in mercy, faithfulness and loving-kindness. 'Tis pleasant here to observe how the heart of God the Father, and the heart of the believer jump and centre upon Christ ; *This is my beloved Son* (says God the Father) *in whom I am well pleased ; He is my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.* And O ! says the believer, as he is the Father's beloved, so he is my beloved too ; he is just the darling and delight of my soul : *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none in all the earth I desire besides thee.* (5.) We have the influence or impression that this pleasant sight has upon the daughters of *Jerusalem* expressed in a way of question, *Who is this ?* This is not a question of ignorance, as tho' they wanted to be informed who the spouse was ; but, 1. 'Tis a question of wonder : they are struck with a holy amazement at such intimacy between parties that are at such infinite distance ; that the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, should admit dust and ashes, defiled with sin, the abominable thing that his soul hates, into such friendship and fellowship. 2. 'Tis not a question of contempt, but of esteem. Although believers, who are the spouse of Christ, be in themselves despicable and polluted ; yet by virtue of their relation to Christ, they are worthy of the highest esteem, being made beautiful through the comeliness that he puts upon her. 3. 'Tis a question of *approbation* and *commendation* : they hereby express their satisfaction with her practice, and the exercise of her faith in coming up from

from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved, as the safest course she could take, for accomplishing her journey to the *Canaan* that is above, through the dens of lions and mountains of leopards. Observe, That it is, and will be the pleasure and satisfaction of a gracious soul, to see others thriving and prospering in the Lord's way, and in acquaintance with Christ, even tho' they themselves be outstript and darkened thereby in the world's view. The words would afford a great variety of doctrines, but I confine myself unto this one

OBSERV. That it is the undoubted duty and the laudable practice of believer's, truly betrothed to Christ, to come up from the wilderness of the world toward the land of rest and glory that is above, staying and leaning their souls upon him as their beloved. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?*

The doctrine being clearly founded on the words, I shall not stand on the confirmation of it, but shall, through divine assistance, endeavour to speak to it in the following method and order ;

(1.) Give you the *characters* of the soul espoused or betrothed to Christ. (2.) Speak a little of the *world*, the place of the believer's residence, under the notion of a *wilderness*. (3.) What may be the import of the *spouse's coming up* from the wilderness. (4.) Speak a little of her posture ; for she comes up, *leaning on her beloved*. (5.) Enquire into the *grounds* and *reasons* of this doctrine, why the spouse of Christ cometh up from the wilderness, and why she comes leaning on her beloved. And then, (6.) Apply the whole.

First thing is, To give you the *character* of a soul truly espoused to Christ ; and I shall endeavour

to draw the character from the text and context.

1st Then, He is one that is always breathing to more and more nearness to the Lord, and a more intimate fellowship and acquaintance with him. Hence the spouse here, *ver. 1.* notwithstanding all she had found, cries out, *O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother !* Some make this to be a wish or a prayer of the Old Testament church, for the actual incarnation of the Son of God ; as if she had said, *O that that happy day were come, when thou shalt actually become the seed of the woman, a child born to us !* I think, if thou wert actually incarnate and clothed with my nature, I would not keep at such a distance, but would enter with boldness into the holiest, through the vail of thy human nature. Whether that be in it or not, yet 'tis plain that the words express a desire after more intimacy and nearness than she had yet enjoyed. Sirs, if you be espoused unto Christ, whatever nearness or access you have had, you will desire more, and be ready to cry with *David*, *Psal. xlii. 1. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* Whenever any cloud overcasts your sky, you will be ready to say, *O that I knew where I might find him.*

2^{dly}, The soul espoused to Christ will not be ashamed to own him before the world, as you see in the close of *ver. 1. When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, and should not be ashamed.* We are commanded to *kiss the Son, lest he be angry*, *Psal. ii.* And they that are espoused to him, they kiss him with a kiss of affection and love, and with a kiss of subjection and reverence, and are not ashamed to do it before the profane carnal world, who perhaps may be ready to laugh at them for their religion ; no, they'll confess him and his cause and interest, what-
ever

ever be the hazard, knowing that they who confess Christ before men, he will not be behind hand with them, but will confess them before his Father, and before his holy angels. Sirs, beware of suffering yourselves to be bantered or laughed out of your religion in this degenerate day : *For he that is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my Father, and before his angels.* Christ despised the shame and ignominy of the cross for us, and therefore let us despise the reproaches or the revilings of the world in owning him.

3dly, The soul that is really espoused to Christ, is heartily concerned for the good of his mother-church, and to have the Lord's gracious and sensible presence in his ordinances ; that he may be a public good to others, as well as to itself. This disposition you see in the spouse here, *ver 2.* in the beginning, *I will bring thee to my mother's house ;* as if she had said, I would make it my business to have the Lord brought back into the assemblies and dwelling-places of *Zion*, that he might be the glory in the midst of her. Sirs, the Lord is angry with our mother at this day, he is threatening to break up house with her ; there is little of God to be seen or felt in our judicatories, in our ordinances, in preaching, in hearing, in communicating ; an *Ichabod* may be read in every corner : little of the life and power of religion is to be seen among magistrates, ministers or people. Well, if you be espoused to Christ, you will study to wrestle, and bring him back again to your mother's house, especially when you find him in a sensible way present with your own soul ; according to the practice of the spouse, *Cant. iii. 4.* *I found him whom my soul loveth ; I held him, and would not let him go till I brought him to my mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived me.*

4thly, The soul espoused to Christ is one that is fond of the instructions of his word and Spirit ; as you see in the spouse, in the middle of *ver. 2.* This is one of her great designs in bringing Christ unto her mother's house, that so she and others might have the mysteries of the kingdom, and secrets of the covenant, and the wonders of his law more clearly opened and unfolded. Christ is the sun of righteousness, the light of the world ; he is made of God unto us *wisdom*, the great *prophet* of the church, the *interpreter among a thousand* : and when he comes unto a land or place in the power of his Spirit accompanying his word, the oracles of heaven are then opened, and the mysteries of the kingdom are unveiled, *the people that sat in darkness are made to see great light* ; and, O this is the delight and desire of every soul truly espoused to the Lord.

5thly, The soul espoused to Christ is one that is desirous to give him the best entertainment that it is capable to afford ; as the spouse in the close of *ver. 2.* *I would cause thee to drink of my spiced wine, and of the juice of my pomegranates.* Christ entertains his spouse with *fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined* ; and they that taste of this food, they are so ravished with it, that they know not what requital to make him ; but they would give him the best entertainment that they can imagine, if they had it.

6thly, The soul espoused to Christ is one that would just lie and lodge in the arms of a redeemer, *ver. 3.* *His left-hand shall be under my head, and his right-hand shall embrace me.* To the same purpose is what we have, *ver. 6.* *Set me as a seal upon thine arm* ; as if she had said, let my life, my soul be hid with Christ in God ; let me be incircled in his everlasting arms, and the eternal God my refuge

As it is the desire of a gracious soul to have Christ lying as a bundle of myrrh between its breasts, so it cannot rest till it be in the arms and bosom of him who is in the bosom of the Father ; and Oh, when it comes there, the soul cries, This is my rest, here will I dwell, for I like it well.

7thly, When the soul wins to any nearness to the Lord, 'tis afraid of every thing that may stir up his displeasure, or provoke him to withdraw ; as you see it was with the spouse, ver. 4. *I charge you, O ye daughter of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awake my love till he please.* The poor soul that is admitted to nearness to the Lord, is afraid of the least squint look to the world, self, or any of Christ's rivals ; afraid of the workings of a remaining body of sin and death, pride, vanity, or any thing else that may provoke him to cover himself with a cloud in his anger. The man knows to his sad experience, that his iniquities separate between him and his God ; and therefore he watches against the least appearance of evil. Oh there are but few tender christians in our day, and hence it comes, that there is so little of sensible communion with the Lord ; for communion with God can only be maintained in a way of holiness, and habitual tenderness of walk, *Psal. xxiv. 3. Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord ? and who shall stand in his holy place ?* ver. 4. *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, &c.*

8thly, The soul espoused to Christ is one who is bending his course heaven-wards, and has his back turned upon this world, as an howling wilderness. *They desire a better country, that is an heavenly ; they are looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ;* and therefore they look upon this world and the things of it, with a holy contempt and disdain ; as you see in the spouse here,

she is coming up from the wilderness toward the promised land of glory.

9thly, He is one whose life in this world is a life of faith and dependence on Christ, as you see in the spouse here ; as she travels through the wilderness, she leans on her beloved. Here we walk by faith not by sight : *the life I live is by faith on the son of God*. But of this, more afterwards. Thus I have glanced at the character of the soul espoused to Christ, as it lies in the preceeding context.

The *second* thing was to take a view of the place of the present residence of the spouse of Christ ; 'tis a *wilderness*, a very unheartsome lodging : for,

1st, You know a wilderness is a *solitary* place, *Psal.* cvii. 4. 'tis said there of exiles or travellers, *That they wandred in a wilderness, in a solitary way*. O what a weary solitary place is this world unto God's people ! especially when, to their own sense and feeling, the Lord is withdrawn from them : the whole world looks void and empty ; all the riches, pleasures, relations and comforts of time cannot fill his room ; so that they are in a manner wild, and know not what to do, or whether to turn them, when Christ is away. Hence is that of *Job*, xxiii. 8, 9. *Behold I go forward, but he is not there ; backward, but I cannot perceive him ; on the left-hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him : he hideth himself on the right-hand, but I cannot see him. O that I knew where I might find him !*

2dly, A wilderness is a *misty* and *foggy* place, where noisome steams and vapours arising out of the earth, darken the sky ; which are both prejudicial to health, and ready to lead the traveller out of his way : such a part is this world to the
Lord's

Lord's people. What hellish steams and vapours are cast up by Satan, the god of this world, to bewitch the traveller to glory, whereby he is in danger of losing his way and spiritual health at once? Never was there an age wherein such pestilential vapours of error, blasphemy, carnal policy and profanity, did more abound, than in this day wherein we live; the mouth of the bottomless pit is as it were opened, and blasphemy and errors cast up, to darken and obscure the sun of righteousness, &c.

3dly, A wilderness is a barren place; it affords little or nothing for the support of human life: hence it is said of the travellers in a wilderness, *Psal. cvii. 5. They were hungry and thirsty, and their soul fainted in them.* Such a place is this world to God's people; 'tis a barren land which yields nothing but swines husks, vanity and vexation of spirit, which the men of this world make their food and their all: hence *David* complains that he was in a dry and thirsty land, where there was no water. It is true indeed, the travellers to glory have their wilderness-meals to keep in their life, in their journey: but no thanks to the world for that; for the food they live upon does not come out of the earth, the wilderness of this world cannot afford it; no, but, like the manna that fed *Israel* in the wilderness, it comes from above.

4thly, A wilderness is a place of danger; thieves, and robbers, and beasts of prey frequent the wilderness, whereby travellers are in danger of being spoiled of their life and substance. Such a place is this world to God's people; 'tis called a *den of lions*, and a *mountain of leopards*, *Cant. iv 8.* Here it is that the great *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, the destroyer of mankind, with all his hellish legions form their camp, watching all opportunities to devour

and swallow up the traveller to glory. Hence the devil is called the ruler of the darkness of this world, and he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And tho' hell and its armies shall never so far prevail, as to keep the believer out of heaven ; yet they will study to wound him, and make him go halting thither. And, first, you who have been at a communion-table, had need to take heed to yourselves when you go out into the wide wilderness ; for, I assure you, Satan will be seeking to winnow and sift you as wheat : if you be only professors, and no more, he will study to trip up your heels, and make you a scandal to religion : but if you be real believers, and have met with the Lord, the pirate will be upon you to spoil you of your loading : and therefore be sober, be vigilant ; for you are yet within the devil's territories.

5thly, A wilderness is an unsettled place ; many heights and hollows, turnings and windings in a wilderness : sometimes a traveller in a wilderness will be on the top of mountains, sometimes down in the valley ; sometimes his sky will be clear, and sometimes cloudy ; sometimes a storm, and sometimes a calm. Just so is it in the case of the believer, while hereaway : sometimes he is on the mount of communion ; at other times in the valley of desertion : sometimes he is in mount *Zion*, where he enjoys a pleasant calm ; at another time he is brought to mount *Sinai*, where a storm of [the] thunder of the law startles him : sometimes the candle of the Lord shines on his head, and thro' the light of the Lord he walketh thro' darkness ; at other times he walks in darkness, and can see no light, so that he is made to cry, *Oh that it were with me as in months past !* &c.

6thly, Many pricking briars grow in the wilderness, many rough ways, which are uneasy to travellers. Just so here, the believer passing through the world, has the rough and thorny paths of affliction to travel: *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven*, John xvi. and last verse, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*. The cloud of witnesses, who are now surrounding the throne, they come out of much tribulation. See what troubles they endured, *Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38*. Thus you see in what respect this world, the present abode of the believer, is called a wilderness.

Third thing in the method was, To speak a little of the course that the spouse is taking, or the airth toward which she is bending while in the wilderness: she is not going down, but coming up from the wilderness. And this, I conceive, may imply these things following;

1st, That believers, or those who have really taken Christ by the hand, they have turned their back on the ways of sin, which lead down to the chambers of death. The way of the men of this world, 'tis a down-the-hill way, which is indeed easy and natural; but like a rolling stone upon the precipice, they roll on till they land in the bottomless gulph of eternal misery; but now the soul espoused to Christ has forsaken the down-hill way of this world, and steers a quite opposite course; they will not be conformed unto the world, or the course of the world, even tho' the world should account them for signs and wonders, because they will not run with them unto the same excess of riot.

2dly, This coming up from the wilderness implies, that believers are pilgrims on the earth, and that this world is not their home. This is what

David, a great king frankly owned in the midst of his wealth and grandeur, *Psal. cxix. 19. I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me.* And this was the confession of that cloud of worthies, *Heb. xi. 13. of whom the world was not worthy ; they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

3dly, It implies a dissatisfaction with, and a disesteem of this world, and all things in it ; and therefore she has her back turned upon it, and her face toward a better airth : like the poor prodigal, he can find nothing in the far country but hulks that are only fit for the swine ; or like *Solomon*, they see all here-away to be but *vanity of vanities, all vanity and vexation of spirit ;* and therefore *they look not at the things that are seen, which are temporal and fading.* Like the woman cloathed with the sun, she tramples upon the moon ; or with *Paul*, accounts them no better than *dung and loss.* O, sirs, whatever bulk this world, and the glaring beauty of it may have in your eyes now, yet it will appear but a very little thing, yea, worse than nothing, when you are but one moment on the other side of death : and therefore, O set not your hearts or eyes on that which is not ; put up *David's* prayer, *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*

4thly, This coming up from the wilderness implies, that tho' she could find no rest nor quiet here-away, yet she expected a quiet rest on the other side, or beyond the wilderness. If she had no view of a better country, she would pitch her tent, and with *Peter*, build tabernacles in the wilderness, and not come up from it. *There remaineth a rest for the people of God, Heb. iv. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord ; they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.* Up thy heart, believer, the day of thy complete redemption from sin and sor-

row draweth nigh ; thy sighs ere long, will end in songs, thy labour in eternal rest, thy warfare in victory forevermore.

5thly, This coming up from the wilderness implies motion, and progress in her motion heavenwards. The ransomed of the Lord, they are looking with their faces towards Zion, and *they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands waxeth stronger and stronger. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Whatever length we are come in religion, we must not sit down as if we had attained, or were already perfect ; no, but we must forget things that are behind, and reach forward to things that are before.

6thly, This phrase of coming up from the wilderness implies, that religion is an up-the-hill work and way ; for the spouse's way here is represented under the notion of an ascent. There are a great many hills and mountains, believer, that lie cross thy way to glory. I only tell you a few of them.

(1.) There is a hill of *remaining ignorance* that the believer has to climb, in coming up from the wilderness ; for we know but in part, and now we see darkly, as through a glass. He has got some twilight blinks of the glory of the Lord, and of the mysteries of the kingdom ; but O they are so faint and languid, that he is ready to think he knows nothing at all. Hence is that complaint of holy *Agur*, while wrestling up this hill, *Prov. xxx. 1. I'm more brutish than any man, nor have I the understanding of a man : I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.*

(2.) There is the hill of *prevailing unbelief*, which stands upon the top of the former ; ignorance being the very root and foundation of unbelief.

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The poor believer is many a time put to a stand while climbing up this hill, as you see in this holy man, *Psal. lxxvii.* What but the prevalency of unbelief made him to cry, *Is his mercy clean gone? has he forgotten to be gracious? has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* David gets such a back-set with this hill of unbelief, that he, sometime a day, cried out, *All men are liars*, the prophets of God not being excepted. Oh how much need of that caution, *Heb. iii. 13.* *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

(3.) A mountain of *guilt* casts up to the believer in his travelling through the wilderness, which sometimes seems to tumble upon him, and crush him under the weight of it. Hence David cries, *Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear:* and at another time, *Psal. xl. 12.* *Innumerable evils compass me about, mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up, &c.*

(4.) A hill and mountain of *divine hidings* and *withdrawings* casts up in the wilderness, and this joins with the former; for 'tis our iniquities that separate between us and our God, that he hides his face from us: and O, when the believer is wrestling with this hill, he walks in darkness, and sees no light; which makes it exceeding melancholy. Hence Job, *I go mourning without the sun;* and the church, *Isaiah xlix. 15.* *Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten.*

(5.) And while the believer is involved among the dark clouds of desertion, mountains of wrath sometimes cast up in his view; as you see in the case of Job, chap. iv. 6. *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, &c.* And Heman, *Psal. lxxxviii.* *While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted: thy terrors have cut*

cut me off, &c. Sometimes a hill of strange and cloudy dispensations cast up in the wilderness, that he knows not what to make of them : God's way to him is many times in the sea, and his paths in the mighty waters. How was *Jacob* overfet with dark dispensations, when he is made to cry, *Joseph* is not, *Simeon* is not ; and yet ye will take *Benjamin* away also : *me have ye bereaved of my children, all these things are against me.* *David*, the man according to God's heart, when he took a view of that dark dispensation of the prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the truly godly, he is so overfet with it, that he is at the point of giving up with religion altogether, as a vain thing, *Psal lxxiii.* 13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, I have washed my hands in innocence.*

(6.) Sometimes a hill of disappointments faints the believer's heart. Perhaps he was expecting a meeting with God in his ordinances, some supply, some communication of the Spirit, some influence and watering ; but alas ! he finds ordinances to be dry breasts, or, like the brooks of *Tema*, where no water is ; and thereupon the poor and needy soul is ready to faint, and their tongue to fail for thirst. Such a melancholy disappointment the spouse meets with, *Song iii.* at the beginning, *By night on my bed I sought him, but I found him not, &c.* I might tell you of the dark hills of temptation from hell, and oppression from the world, and the workings of remaining corruption ; but I do not insist. Only from what has been said, you may see, that religion is an up-the-hill way ; they who expect to win heaven in a way of sin and sloth, they'll land in hell : for, *if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear ? The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, &c.* So much for the third
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thing, what is implied in coming up from the wilderness.

Fourth thing was, To speak to the spouse's posture ; she comes up leaning on her beloved. But I shall wave this at present, and only make some practical improvement of what has been said in a doctrinal way.

Use first of this branch of the doctrine, may be information, in the few following particulars. Is it the duty and practice of believers to come up from the wilderness of this world, and to aspire after better and greater things than are here-away ? Then,

1st, See hence the paucity of true believers who are espoused unto Christ. Why, the greatest number, instead of coming up from the wilderness, are going down the wilderness : Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Oh what shoals of people are there in the world, whose god is their belly and who mind earthly things ? But how few are they who have their affections set upon things above, and who are really pointing heavenwards ? Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. The world perhaps may laugh at them who keep the narrow way of true religion ; but behold the end of the day. The triumphing of the wicked is short, for they shall lie down in sorrow : but as for the righteous and the upright, mark him, for the end of that man is peace ; his weeping endures but for a night, joy shall come in the morning.

2dly, See hence why believers are called men of another spirit than the rest of the world. 'Tis said of *Caleb* and *Joshua*, that they were of another spirit ; and the apostle, speaking of himself and other believers, says, We have not received the spirit

spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. Why, here is the ground of it, other men are of a mean sordid spirit, and are content with the wilderness, and fill their belly with the husks that they find in the wilderness; but 'tis otherwise with the true believer, he comes up from the wilderness, he seeks and affects these things that are above, where Christ is at the right-hand of God. The world generally have a mistaken notion of true greatness of spirit; they fondly imagine, that it lies in pushing their resentment against these that injure them; or in pushing their fortune, as they call it, in scrambling up to the pinacles of worldly honour, riches or preferment: whereas true greatness of spirit lies in a contempt of all these things, in comparison of things that lie beyond the wilderness: it lies in looking not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. O sirs, we sink our souls below their original make and excellency, when we lie down with the serpent, to lick up the dust and vanity of this world: true greatness of spirit is, with the spouse of Christ, to soar above the world, to mount up with wings like eagles, to things calculated for the soul and its heavenly nature.

3dly, See hence the excellency of the christian religion, which makes a discovery of things that lie beyond the wilderness of this world, and calls a man to come up from the wilderness in order to his being possessed of them. Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The heathen philosophers had indeed some foolish guesses about another world, a life to come; but how strangely were they in the dark about it! One of the best of them, when he was dying, told his friends, That he was persuaded of a future state; but whether he

he was going to a state of happiness or misery, he did not know. But now the christian religion brings life and immortality (I say) to light, and opens a way and passage to a happy eternity: 'tis like mount *Pisgah*, from which one may stand and discover the goodly land that lies on the other side of *Jordan*. *David*, Psal. xvi. when he wins up to the top of it, and gets a view of the glories of heaven and eternity, he cries out like a man in a transport, My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: why? Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right-hand there are pleasures forevermore.

4thly, See hence a good reason why the saints express such longings to be away out of the body. I desire to be dissolved, says *Paul*; in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be cloathed upon with our house which is from heaven: why? 'Tis no wonder; for this world is but a wilderness unto them. And how natural is it for a traveller in a wilderness to wish and long to be at home in his own country, and among his own kindred, where their inheritance lies, even an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away?

5thly, See a good reason why the saints should possess their souls in patience under all the trials of a present life. Who is that, travelling thro' a wilderness, does not lay his account with inconveniences and difficulties? But besides, believer, thou art coming up from the wilderness, and e're long thou will come out of it, and beyond it altogether. In the world (says Christ) ye shall have tribulation; but look beyond the wilderness to thy fellow-travellers, whose journey is ended. *Who are these that are clothed in white robes? and whence came they?* Rev. vii. 13. You have the answer in the verse following

allowing, *These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: and they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.*

Wait a little, believer, and thou shalt be there also; and then thy present light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall resolve in a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and God shall wipe away all tears from thine eyes.

Use second of this doctrine may be of reproof. Is it the duty of believers, and their practice, to come up from the wilderness of this world? Then,

1st, It reproves those who sit down in the wilderness, and take up with it as their home; like the fool we read of in the gospel, who, when he had amass'd a great deal of worldly substance together, he cries, Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. But, Sirs, read what followed in that parable of the rich fool; perhaps God may come and say, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be taken from thee, and then whose shall these things be? You who are perhaps clothed in purple and fine linen, and fair sumptuously every day, and have no thoughts of another world, look to it in time, lest in a little you be weltering among purple flames, crying for a drop of water to cool the tip of your tongue.

2^{dly}, It reproves these who, instead of coming up from the wilderness, are going down the wilderness. The way of sin is said to be a downward way, and leads unto hell beneath; and this road all the profane world are taking. You may see a roll of their names, and where their landing will be, *Rev. xxi. 8. The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake*

lake which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death.

3dly, It reproves those who to men would appear to be coming up from the wilderness, and yet are steering a quite other course : such as the painted sepulchre, who goes under a mask of religion, and yet is rotten at the root ; he is going down the wilderness, instead of coming up. Christ has pronounced many heavy woes against you, and therefore the sinners in *Zion* shall be afraid, &c. Again, the *Moralist*, whose outward walk before the world perhaps is, touching the law, blameless, and yet never comes to him who is the end of the law : your morality and civility will be found wanting a true root, not being grounded and grafted in Christ, of whom only our fruit can be unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life. The same we may say of the *Legalist*, he is but going down the wilderness, all his righteousness will be found to be as filthy rags ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified. Again, the carnal *Gospeller*, whose language is, let us sin because grace doth abound. Sirs, whatever may be your evangelick notions, yet if the grace of God in the gospel don't teach you to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to walk soberly, righteously and godly, you are not coming up, but going down the wilderness. *Jude* 4. they are ranked among the number of ungodly, who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness. The secure sleepy sinner, that was never awakened to see his danger, but is crying with the sluggard, Yet a little sleep and slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep ; you are going down the wilderness, for sudden destruction is pursuing you.

4thly, This doctrine reproves those who make a feint to come up from the wilderness, but immediately

ately they turn heartless in the journey : they cry, there is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, and therefore turn back, and steer towards another airth. Of this sort are all backsliders, who put their hand to the plough of religion, but look back again. What an awful sentence is it that God hath pronounced against such, when he says, that they shall be filled with their own ways, and be led forth with the workers of iniquity !

5thly, This doctrine reproves those who hinder the spouse of Christ, or hurt her in her way, as she is coming up from the wilderness. We find the spouse frequently complaining of injuries, even from these from whom other things might have been expected ; she complains that her *mother's children were angry with her*, chap. i. 6. these who were mother's children, but not father's children with her ; members of the visible church, but were never born of God, they were angry with her : and with them joined the corrupt clergy of that day, and they continually abused her ; hence she complains, chap. v. *The watchmen that went about the city, they found me, they smote me, they wounded me, they took away my vail from me.* They were called watchmen, and got themselves into that office for a piece of bread : but instead of watching against the enemy, they opened the gates to the enemy, and suffered foxes to come in and spoil the vines ; instead of comforting her, and pouring oil into her wounds, they themselves smote and wounded her, by stripping her of the sacred rights and privileges allowed her by her great husband. Instead of drawing a vail over the infirmities and weaknesses of real believers, they studied to expose them as a company of hypocrites, and loaded them with a great deal of invidious calumnies and reproaches, that so they might with the better colour

of equity, harass and persecute her. The application of all these things is easy : even in our own day, what melancholy cries and complaints are going up to heaven, through several corners of the land, to the *God of Sabaoth*, the great King of *Zion*, against some set of men, who meet together in a judicative capacity even in this city ? And I don't know but some of them may be hearing me. I shall only say, That the injured little ones of Christ will have a day about with these that carry it against them now ; before the whole scene be over, there will be wound for wound ; tribulation will be rendered unto them that trouble the spouse of Christ : and when the reckoning comes, the great men, and the mighty men, the man with the gold-ring, which are now adored, as if they were the only persons to be owned in the planting of churches, they, and those that join hand with them in conspiring to hurt the little ones of Christ, will be crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the Lamb ; when the poor people of God, that were accounted as the dross and off-scourings of the earth, will be sitting upon the bench with Christ, every one of them shining forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. I conclude this with a word of advice unto Christ's oppressed people, and you have it, *Jam. v. 7, 8.*

Use third of this doctrine shall be by way of trial and examination. That which I would have you try is, wherefore are you in this world as in a wilderness, or are you in it as your home ? and whether are you sitting down in the wilderness, or are you coming up from it ? I am ready to think, that in these words there may be an allusion to *Israel* in their travelling from *Egypt* to *Canaan* : therefore, with allusion to their journey toward
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the promised land, which was typical of the true church of God travelling thro' this wilderness unto glory, I would, by way of trial, ask the few following questions.

1st, Hath your *Ægyptian* bondage been loosed in a day of power? Has God, as with a high hand and stretched-out arm, brought you out from under the dominion of sin and satan, these oppressing task-masters? and has he made you to see these *Ægyptian* enemies overthrown in the red-sea of the death and sufferings of a glorious redeemer, while you by the same means made your escape? This is God's way of dealing with all his own *Israel*; he first makes them to groan under the fears of sin and wrath, and then opens up a way for their escape by the death and blood of the Lamb. So then, has the Son of God made you free? If so, you are free indeed. But,

2dly, I ask, has God ever brought you to the foot of *Sinai*, and discovered himself in such awful majesty, greatness, and in the holiness and severity of his law, as has persuaded you that there is no dealing with God without a Mediator? The law was published at mount *Sinai* because of transgression, and that it might be a school-master to lead them unto Christ: so then, I ask, if you have seen such a distance between God and you, such holiness and perfection in his law, as has made you fly to him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth? If so, you are indeed coming up from the wilderness towards the promised land; but, if not, 'tis a sign you are yet in the *Ægypt* of a natural state.

3dly, Have you ever seen the tabernacle that God reared, and the glory of God in it? You know, the tabernacle in the wilderness, it was the symbol of God's presence among *Israel*, in which

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the law was kept ; and the glory of the God of *Israel* was therein discovered in the view of *Israel* : this was a type of Christ, the true tabernacle which God hath reared. Now, I say, have you seen this tabernacle a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself ? Have you seen the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, and the law magnified and made honourable in him ? And, are your motions through the wilderness, and your way to the land of promise, directed by viewing this tabernacle ? according to that of the apostle, *Heb. xii. 1. Let us run our race, looking unto Jesus.* And, are you made to go singing in the way of the Lord through the wilderness, because great is the glory of the Lord ?

4thly, I ask, how are you fed in the wilderness ? *Israel* in the wilderness were not fed with the fruit of the earth, but with manna rained from heaven : so God has a way of feeding his true *Israel* in the wilderness with the manna from heaven. Christ the bread of life comes down in the dispensation of the word, and they gather it by faith, and feed on it : and Oh, but this manna had a pleasant taste with it to the spouse of Christ coming up from the wilderness ! They can say in some measure of sincerity, with *Jeremiah, Thy word was found by me, and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.*

5thly, Are you frequently drinking of the water of the rock ? You know there was a rock smitten, out of which streams of water issued, which followed *Israel* till they came to *Canaan* ; this rock was Christ, who being smitten with the rod of his Father's anger, refreshing streams of grace and consolations of the Spirit have issued, which make glad the city of God. Now, what experience have you as to this ? Is Christ to you like rivers of waters

ters in a dry place? And are you made now and then to see the accomplishment of that promise, *Isa. xlv. 3. I'll pour water on the thirsty, and floods on the dry ground?*

6thly, Have you seen the mystical brazen serpent? and have you got health conveyed to your souls by looking on it, when stung by the fiery serpent in the wilderness, or when wounded by the fiery darts of satan? For as *Moses* lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the son of man lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, that whosoever believes on him, or looks to him, by faith, may not perish, but have everlasting life.

7thly, What is it that keeps up your heart in your journey through the wilderness? If God had not made a promise of *Canaan* to *Israel*, and engaged his veracity to bear them company in their journey, they had not gone out of *Ægypt*; and it was the faith of God's promise that spirited and enlivened them in their travels and battles. Just so is the case here; God hath made a promise of life and rest on the other side of death, through Christ, and that he will be their God and their guide; that his Son, the Angel of his presence, shall be your leader and commander: now, if you be really coming up from the wilderness to the promised land of glory, 'tis the faith of God's promise that bears you up, and carries you through in your travels, and in your wilderness-work and warfare. Hence the spouse here, she is said to come up leaning on her beloved, resting on the promise of a God in Christ for a through-bearing, and for a comfortable landing at last.

8thly, What pillars of smoke are you sending up from the wilderness? The offerings of *Israel* in the wilderness, they went up to heaven like pillars of smoke towering upwards; so you will be frequent-

ly sending up the sacrifices of prayer, and of praise and holy meditation ; your affections, like the smoke of the sacrifice, will be soaring heavenward.

9thly, You will be frequently casting your eyes on the promised land that lies beyond the wilderness, and longing with the church to be there, *Cant. ii.* and last, *Till the day break, and the shadows fly away : turn, my beloved, and be thou as a roe, or as a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

Use fourth, shall be of exhortation, to follow the example of the church of God here, in coming up from the wilderness towards the promised land of glory above : or, as the apostle words it, *Col. iii. If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is at the right-hand of God. Set not your affections on things that are on the earth, but on things that are in heaven.* By way of motive, I offer these considerations ;

Consider, (1.) What the wilderness of this world is, from which you are called to come up. Beside what was said of it in the doctrinal part, I shall add these things following, to wean your hearts and affections from it. 1. This world is but the reprobate dogs portion, *Psal. xvii. The men of the world, whose portion is in this life, and whose belly, &c.* It was a common saying of *Luther's*, That the whole *Turkish* empire was but a crumb cast unto a dog. Now why should we cast in our lot among the dogs, who profess to be of the church of God and the spouse of Christ ? 2. This world is groaning under the curse of God ; Cursed is the ground for thy sake, said the Lord to our first parents, immediately after they had sinned : and under the weight of this curse the whole creation groans and travels in pain even till now. Oh who would be content to sit down where the curse of God dwells ? 3.

Consider

Consider, that the wilderness of this world has been a shamble, defiled with blood, with the blood of Christ, and with the blood of an innumerable company of martyrs, from which it has never been purged as yet. It may be called *Golgotha*, the place of a scull; and *Aceldama*, a field of blood. This earth has been stained, and this land and this city in particular have been stained with the blood of Christ mystical; and 'tis to be feared that the guilt of that blood is crying to heaven, like the blood of *Abel*, against the land, and against the place: now, I say, is not this sufficient to wean your hearts from the wilderness of this world, that it is a field of blood, a place of butchering and slaughter of Christ personal and mystical. The men of the world, who take up with it as their home, they are just like the possessed man we read of in the gospel, lodging among tombs and sepulchres. 4. Consider, that the wilderness of this world is just the gallery where the devil, the god of this world, that *Apollyon*, walks up and down seeking whom he may devour. *Job* i. says God, *Whence comest thou Satan? I come, says Satan, from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down in it.* Some think that the devil uttered these words with an air of haughtiness and pride, as if he made his vaunt before God, that he was the prince of this world, and the kingdoms of it and their glory were his; so that the meaning of the devil's answer is as if he had said, Why, says he, where should I be, but travelling in circuit through my own territories? Now, why should we not come up from the devil's quarters and territories? Who loves to be at home in the devil's quarters, in the very den of that lion and leopard, but only they that are his devoted slaves and vassals? 5. Come up from the wilderness, for it is but a mere empty shadow;

dow, and all the glory of it is but a piece of moonshine. Why should we set our hearts upon that which is not, and which perisheth in the very using? You have seen bubbles of water blown up by children, sparkling with a variety of beauteous colours, but which just perish in a moment; and what is the whole visible creation that we now see, but just a great bubble blown up by the breath of the Almighty? By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. It makes a gay and glorious appearance, but alas! 'tis all imaginary, a mere shadow, a vapour, which appears for a little and then vanishes. Now, who would be content with such an imaginary thing as this? 6. Come up from the wilderness of this world, for 'tis condemned to be burnt. It was a piece of madness in *Lot* to linger in *Sodom*, when he was told it was to be consumed with fire and brimstone: the same madness possesses those that will not come up from the wilderness into a place of safety, when God has told them in his infallible word, that *the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and be dissolved, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works thereof, shall be burnt up.* Now, I say, put all these things together, and see if there be not weight in them to wean your hearts from this world, and to engage you to follow the practice of the spouse, and come up from the wilderness.

Consider, 2dly, That there is a better country beyond the wilderness of this world. *Heb. vii.* 'tis said of the worthies, *That they desired a better country, that is an heavenly.* 'Tis a better kingdom than the kingdoms of this world, even an everlasting kingdom; a better inheritance, even an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, which fa-

deth.

deth not away ; a better city, even a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ; a better house than our cottages of clay in the wilderness, even a house of many mansions, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

But more particularly, to encourage you to come up from the wilderness unto this better country, consider,

(1.) That there are better joys and pleasures to be had there than in the wilderness. This world is but at best a *Bochim*, a valley of tears, a house of mourning ; but the land afar off, that lies on the other side of the wilderness, is a state of pleasure, of continual joy and pleasure, where the ransomed of the Lord shall have songs and everlasting joy upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall ever flee away. The joys and pleasures of this world, they do not satisfy : he that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver : hence in the midst of their sufficiency, the covetous worldling is in wants ; and in the midst of their laughter, their heart is sorrowful : but now the joys of the land of glory, they are full of joys, *Psal. xvi. close, in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right-hand are pleasures forevermore.* The joys of the wilderness they are transient : hence the triumphing of the wicked is short ; they take up the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ ; they spend their days in wealth and ease, but in a moment they go down to the grave : but the joys of the land of glory (as you heard just now) are everlasting, and shall run parallel with the endless ages of eternity. (2.) There are better riches in the land afar off, than these that the wilderness of this world affords. As for the riches of this world, the moth and rust corrupt them, thieves break through and steal them ; *Solomon* who was master of more of this world's riches than any man else,

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else, he pronounces them *all vanity and vexation of spirit* : but now the riches of that better country beyond the wilderness, are far better, in respect of plenty ; *for the riches of that land are unsearchable*, Eph. iii. 8. Better in respect of value ; for the gold of that land is *better than the gold of Ophir* ; 'tis gold tried in the fire, yea, *the gold and the silver cannot equal it* : 'tis better in respect of perpetuity ; *the riches of this world they make themselves wings and fly away*, but *the riches of glory, they are durable and everlasting*. Hence Christ exhorts to provide for ourselves *bags that do not wax old*. (3.) The honours of that better country are better than the honours of this world. What is it to sway a scepter on earth, in respect of *ruling the nations with a rod of iron* ? What is it to sit upon an earthly throne, in respect of *sitting on the same throne with the Son of God* ? ver. 3. at the close. What is it to be an heir of an opulent estate, or of a kingdom upon earth, in respect of being *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled* ? &c. (4.) We invite you to come up to a far more peaceable land than is the wilderness of this world. O, sirs, you and I may know to our experience, that this is a fighting world, 'tis a place of strife ; and some may say with Jeremiah, *Wo's me, my mother, for thou hast born me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth. Without are fightings, and within are fears. Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts. We must run with the footmen, contend with horses, and then go down to the swellings of Jordan*. But Oh ! sirs, come up from the wilderness ; for the land beyond it is a land of peace, and quiet, everlasting rest ; and this rest remaineth for the people of God, where wars jars, and contentions and strifes, shall come to an eternal end : *They shall enter into peace, they shall rest*.

in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. (5.)

That land beyond the wilderness is a far more pure and holy land than this wilderness is. This world cannot be your rest ; for 'tis polluted ; the inhabitants of it are of polluted lips, lives and hearts ; and 'tis hard for a man to keep his garments clean, as he is travelling through it to eternity ; but that land of glory beyond the wilderness, 'tis the holy land in the most proper sense ; *for there can in no wise enter into it any thing that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.* All the inhabitants are such as *have washed their hands in innocence, washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* (6.) That land that lies beyond the wilderness is a far more durable land than this is. This world is subject to innumerable vicissitudes and sorrows ; a fertile land may be turned unto barrenness, a peaceable land may soon be turned unto confusion. The confused noise of the warriour, and garments rolled in blood, may be seen and heard in it ; and, e're it be long, the whole visible frame of nature will be unhinged, &c. But now, heaven is an abiding country, an abiding city ; it hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The city of the *New Jerusalem* is built four square, to shew the stability of it ; it fadeth not away, and the inhabitants of it shall go no more out, &c. Oh then, be persuaded to come up from the wilderness to the better country, the proper country of the saints.

Consider, 3^{dly}, by way of motive, what a light-some way is opened from the wilderness to that better country that is above, and let this invite you to come up. The way to heaven, after the breach of the first covenant, was block'd up by the law and justice of God ; the offended majesty of heaven had rolled mountains of fiery vengeance in
man's

man's way to heaven ; the cherubim with his flaming sword, turning every way, rendred it altogether impassible : but, O thanks to the glorious *Emanuel*, who as the breaker has gone up before us ; he has rolled these mountains out of the way, he has opened up the passage from the wilderness to *Canaan*, by his death and blood ; yea, he as our king, captain and general, has gone before us, *Jehovah* is on the head of the travellers to glory : and therefore be encouraged to come up from the wilderness, set your faces towards *Zion*. And, to encourage you I'll give you a few qualities of the way you have to travel. (1.) 'Tis a new way, *Heb. x. 20.* *Adam's* way in innocence by the works of the law is abolished ; but here by the gospel, there is a new way opened ; a way that is calculated, not for a righteous or innocent person but for a sinner, a lost sinner ; and Christ calls not the righteous, but lost sinners of *Adam's* family, to take this way. And then 'tis new, because it never waxes stale, will never be out of request. (2.) The way to the better is a living way, not only because it leads to everlasting life, but a living Christ is the way ; and so soon as ever a sinner sets the foot of faith in this way, he begins to live a life of justification, a life of sanctification, a life of consolation : *for he that hath the Son, hath life ; and whoever believes in the name of Christ, tho' he were dead yet shall he live, and shall never come into condemnation.* (3.) The way to glory is consecrated for us ; the great God has opened and devoted this way for the travellers to glory. The revelation of it is to us, and the revelation from him to walk in it is to us : O then, let us come up from the wilderness, since God had a view to your salvation in opening it. (4.) The way is a free way ; 'tis free to all comers. 'Tis like the kings high-way, that
every

every man has a privilege to walk in ; whoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely. And then 'tis free, in regard that the traveller has his charges born, and every thing needful for carrying him on laid to his hand, without money, and without price. All fulness is in the way, and out of this fulness we all do receive, and grace for grace. (5.) 'Tis a cleanly and holy way, *Isa. xxxv. A high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it.* The way of believing in Christ, as 'tis the first and fundamental act of obedience to the law of God, so 'tis a spring of holiness and obedience to all the other commands of God ; hence all true obedience is called the obedience of faith. The man that is heartily engaged in the way of believing, he has his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water ; and his daily work is to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. (6.) 'Tis a safe way, in which you come up from the wilderness ; for the way-faring man, tho' a fool, shall not err therein : tho' he may fall, yet he shall arise ; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. The Lord is the man's strength : and therefore he shall hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger till he come to Zion. (7.) 'Tis a pleasant way, *Prov. iii. 17. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* And how can it be but pleasant ? for here is every thing needful to the traveller. Here is meat for the hungry traveller ; I am the bread of life : here is drink for the thirsty, even the water of life, issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb : here is clothing, yea, white raiment, and the garment of salvation for the naked soul : here is light to the soul in darkness ; the Lord shall be thy everlasting

verlasting light ; and thy God, thy glory : here is a shadowy rest to the traveller when he is weary ; I sat down under his shadow with great delight ; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right-hand ; the sun shall not smite thee by day, neither the moon by night : here in this way you have a good guide to lead you, one who leads the blind in the way they know not, and who at every turn is crying, this is the way, walk ye in it. And that which contributes much to render it pleasant is, that the way is well beaten, 'tis a troden path, and you have a whole cloud, an innumerable company of travellers, both going before you and coming after you, and going along with you, *Heb. 1. Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run the race, &c.* (7.) The way that comes up from the wilderness to the land of glory, is a peaceable and quiet way. There is nothing but noise and din, and perpetual disturbance in the ways of sin, and the way of men of this world ; but Oh there is perfect peace in this way that leads to *Zion, Isa. xxvi. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusted in thee.* Indeed you may, and will have disturbances from without, in the world, ye shall have tribulation ; but all the noise and disturbances from without cannot marr the quiet the soul has within : no, no ; *In me ye shall have peace ; be ye of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.* Thus you see, that every thing invites you to come up from the wilderness towards that better country that is above.

I shall conclude this exhortation with a few words by way of counsel and advice. If, after all that has been said, you have a mind to come up from the wilderness towards the land of glory above, then take the few following advices ;

1st, Keep your eyes fixed, as you come up from the wilderness, upon an invisible God, on the glorious *Emmanuel*, upon the unerring rule of the word, upon a well-ordered covenant, upon the cloud of witnesses that have gone before you, and on the glorious land that lies on the other side of the wilderness.

2^{dly}, Another advice I give you is, If you would make your journey comfortable, or ever arrive at the end of it, study to keep in with these three. (1.) Keep in with God, do nothing that may provoke him to hide his face; for if you do, it will cost you dear, you will walk in darkness through the wilderness: but Oh! in his favour is life; every blink of his countenance exhilarates the spirits, and then the joy of the Lord is the soul's strength, &c. (2.) Keep in with conscience; this is our rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, &c. (3.) Keep in with them that fear God, and cleave to the word of his testimony; keep close by your fellow-travellers, that are bound for *Zion*. My delight (says *David*) is with the saints, the excellent of the earth, &c.

3^{dly}, There are some things that you should endeavour to keep under your foot, if you would come up to the heavenly *Canaan*; 1. The moon of this world, *Rev. xii. 1* If it be got into your head and heart, it will be sure to turn you out of the way; for the friendship of this world is enmity with God: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 2. Carnal policy and wisdom; for the wisdom of this world is but folly to God. *Paul*, whenever it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, immediately he consults not with flesh and blood. It is said of *Babylon*, that her wisdom and understanding perverted her;

especially it perverts us in the things of Christ, and is like to ruin the interest of Christ in the land at this day. 3. Self-righteousness, let that be kept under your feet ; for this ruined the poor *Jews*, and brought on a sentence of excommunication upon them, whereby they were cast out of the church of God : they went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God ; and so Christ himself became a stumbling-stone, and a rock of offence, 4. Keep the lust and corruption of the heart under your feet. This will keep you in continual work ; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. *Paul* had much ado with a body of sin and death, *Rom. vii. We must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof. If we live after the flesh, we shall die ; but if we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.* 5. Keep at a distance from the infection of bad company. Say, with *Jacob*, Oh, my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united : for evil communications corrupt good manners. The last advice I give is, to follow the example of the spouse here in the text, to come up from the wilderness leaning on the beloved, living a life of faith on the Son of God. But this leads to the second branch of the doctrine.

The

The Substance of some Discourses upon the same Text, at *Stirling*.

Cant. viii. 5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?*

THE doctrine insisted upon from these words at another occasion, was, That 'tis the commendable practice of a soul truly espoused unto Christ, to come up from the wilderness of this world toward the land of rest and glory above, staying and resting themselves upon him as their beloved. Here I endeavoured, 1. To give the character of a soul truly espoused to Christ, drawn from the context. 2. I spake of this world, under the notion of a wilderness. 3. Shewed what is imported in the spouse's coming up from the wilderness. These particulars, I say, were discoursed, and this first branch of the doctrine applied in several uses; the reasons of this branch of the doctrine being adduced in the application, by way of motive, to persuade sinners to turn their back on the wilderness, and to come up towards the promised *Canaan* above.

I proceed now to the *second* branch of the text and doctrine, which was the *fourth* thing in the method; namely, To speak a little of the spouse's posture in coming up from the wilderness; she comes leaning on her beloved. 'Tis the life of faith upon the Son of God that is here intended; and this expression of faith it implies these particulars following:

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1st, The spouse's weakness and inability in herself to grapple with the difficulties of her way through the wilderness ; that she could never surmount them by the strength of natural, or yet of any created grace in her. Man in his natural state is wholly without strength ; so disabled by the fall, that he has no power for any thing that is spiritually good : yea, believers themselves, tho' they have received a new stock of supernatural grace, yet this inherent grace of theirs is such a feeble creature, and the opposition it meets with from corruption within, and temptation and affliction without, is so strong, it could never bear the believer through his wilderness work and warfare, without continual supplies of strength from the glorious head, in whom dwells all fulness of grace and truth, of merit and spirit. Hence *Paul*, tho' he had received a very large measure of grace from Christ, yet declares, that he *was not sufficient of himself, to think any thing as of himself, but his sufficiency and ability was of the Lord*. So whenever a believer begins to think that his mountain stands strong through the strength of any grace he has received, presently the Lord withdraws the influence, and suffers him to find his weakness and inability, that he may not trust in himself, but in him who is the strength of *Israel*! And therefore,

2^{dly}, The expression of leaning on her beloved, it implies, That however weak and insufficient she was in herself, yet there was almighty strength in her husband and head, on whom she leaned. Christ is the strength of the poor and needy in their distress ; he is the glory of their strength, the power of God, the man of his right-hand, whom he hath made strong for the designs of his glory in our salvation. *I have laid help* (says the Lord) *upon one who is mighty to save*. The arm of *Jehovah* is thro' him

him reached forth to help, and strengthen, and uphold the believer in his wilderness-difficulties ; and therefore he goes in this his might, saying, with *Paul*, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.*

3dly, This leaning on her beloved implies a blessed knowledge or acquaintance with the Lord Jesus. She had got a saving discovery of him by the word and Spirit of the Lord, which induced her to lean upon him ; for we do not use to lean upon an utter stranger, of whom we have no knowledge. The foundation of faith is laid in knowledge : not simply in a head-knowledge, attended by external revelation, for there are many learned unbelievers ; but in a heart-knowledge. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, is made to shine into the heart, and this is the very beginning of wisdom. Hence *Paul* describes his first conversion by it, *Gal. i. It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.* And the promise of faith, that radical grace, is expressed by knowledge ; *I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord ; they shall know, and follow on to know him, till they arrive at a mid-day vision and fruition of him in glory.*

4thly, The expression implies, not only knowledge, but intimacy and familiarity ; for we use to lean upon them with whom we are intimately acquainted. *Verily* (says the apostle *John*) *our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus.* The whole book of the *Song* is designed to describe this fellowship between Christ and the believing soul : they who know it in an experimental way, will be ready to say with the spouse, *His left-hand was under my head, and his right-hand did embrace me ; he brought me to his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.* There is more real pleasure and

satisfaction in one moment of fellowship with the Lord, than in all the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season : hence *David*, *Psal.* lxxxiv. *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand ; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of sin.*

5thly, This leaning posture implies Christ's nearness to the spouse ; for we cannot well lean upon a person that is at a distance. True, indeed, Christ was at a great distance from the spouse as to his corporal presence, for he was not yet come in the flesh ; and now, under the New-Testament dispensation, he is gone within the veil, and the heavens are to contain him till the time of the restitution of all things : but yet faith has a way of bringing Christ near, and of taking him up in the word of promise, and so leaning on him by virtue of his word. And therefore, say not in thine heart, who shall bring Christ from above ? for the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and heart, that is, the word of faith, which we preach. *Sirs*, tho' Christ be ascended as to his human nature far above all heavens, yet he is as much present to faith, as tho' his body were still upon earth ; lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world : and accordingly, faith eying him in the word of faith, leans on him, as one that is not afar off, but near at hand.

6thly, It implies a trusting, resting, or recumbency of her soul upon him, under all her weights and burdens, which she rolls over on Christ, *Psal.* lv. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee.* *Mat.* xi. *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give rest unto your souls.* *Psal.* xxxvii. *Rest on the Lord, and wait patiently upon him.* As the feeble wife leans on her husband, or the weak child on its parent, with confidence that he will support him ; so the believing soul leans or rests

rests on Christ, with a persuasion of support and through-bearing ; that, according to his promise, he will strengthen, help and uphold to the end, with the right-hand of his righteousness.

7thly, It implies that there is something in Christ that the hand and arm of faith stays or leans upon, as we come up from the wilderness. Sometimes faith stays itself on the person of Christ, as he is *Emmanuel*, God with us ; sometimes upon his love, which passeth knowledge, *Psal. xxxvi. 7. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God, therefore the sons of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings :* sometimes it stays itself upon his name ; for they that know his name will put their trust in him : sometimes on his mission, as the Sent of God, the great apostle of our profession ; it takes him up as God's legate, his ambassador-extraordinary, sent to seek and to save that which was lost : it leans upon his general office as Mediator, for peace and reconciliation with God ; upon his prophetic office, for instruction and illumination in the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom ; upon his priestly office, for reconciliation and acceptance ; upon his regal or kingly office, for sanctification and deliverance from the power of sin and Satan : it leans upon his fulness for a supply of all wants, believing that that fulness of grace that is in him, is to be communicated ; *for he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among us :* it sometimes leans upon the relations that Christ has come under to his people in the word, as a friend, a counsellor, a physician, a leader and commander. You see here, that the spouse comes up from the wilderness, leaning on him in the relation of a bride-groom and husband : but of these things I may discourse more fully in the application.

I should next give the reasons of this branch of the doctrine, why it is that the believer comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved ; but, as I did in the former branch, I shall improve them as motives to enforce the exhortation which I have in view from this branch of the doctrine.

And the exhortation is, To follow the commendable practice of the spouse in coming up from the wilderness of this world, towards the land of glory, leaning on him as your beloved ; or which is the same thing in other words, study, while you are travellers on the earth, to live by faith on the Son of God. This was the practice of *Paul the great apostle of the Gentiles, Gal. ii 20. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me ; and the life I live is by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* This was the practice of that cloud of witnesses who have travelled to glory before us, *Heb. xi. 13. All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth.*

But now, in pursuing this exhortation a little, I shall, 1. Endeavour to illustrate and clear it, in answering a few questions. 2. Enforce it with a few motives. 3. Conclude with a few directions.

First, I would illustrate this exhortation, by answering a few questions. And the

1st Question which may be offered is this ; You exhort us to a life of faith on Christ, but pray tell us, in the first place, what it is to live upon him by faith, and what influence faith has upon our journey while in the wilderness ?

This question was in some measure answered already, in giving the import of the expression in the text, the spouse's leaning on her beloved. I shall further add, That this life of faith, it does not lie in one single act of believing, but in the continuation of faith or believing through the whole course of your life in the world ; *the life I live in the flesh, that is, while I'm in the body, is by faith on the Son of God.* Some are ready to imagine, that when they have once believed in Christ, they have no more ado but to look back on their first closing with Christ ; and upon that act of faith they rest, as their security for life and salvation, without any great concern to repeat and renew it. I'm afraid, if this be your way of doing, you are yet strangers both to faith in the first and after actings of it. Men are called believers, not because they have put forth one single act of faith, but because they are, or should be continually believing. 'Tis true, the first act of faith ties the knot between Christ and the soul, that shall never be loosed through eternity ; but where this act of faith has been exerted, there will be frequent attempts towards the repetition of it. Faith is called an eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the son of man. Now you know, 'tis not a man's taking one single meal in his whole life that will subsist his body, but he must be eating and drinking every day, and frequently through the day, otherwise his natural life would soon languish : so here, here must be a continual feeding upon the incarnation and satisfaction of Christ, in order to the preservation and maintenance of the spiritual life of the soul ; the life of the soul can no more be maintained by one act of faith, than the life of the body can be maintained by one meal for any long space of time. Faith is called a drawing water out the wells of salvation,

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Isa. xii. It will not do our business to come once to the well, the water in the cistern will soon be spent, and therefore we must be daily coming back to the fountain for new water : so here the life of faith is a continual coming to Christ, and a *receiving out of his fulness, grace for grace.* Grace received into the vessel of the soul will, like water, soon stagnate by reason of the corruption of the vessel, and it will soon be spent ; what we get this day will not serve us the next ; and therefore there must be a continued application to him for new supply, a continued drawing water out of the wells of salvation. The branches live every day upon their root ; the branches draw, and the root communicates sap unto them for their nourishment and growth : so here, As the branches cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye (says Christ) except ye abide in me. This continued believing is called, *Col ii. 19. a holding the head, from which the whole body, as by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increase with the increase of God.* The members of the natural body, they are continually receiving life, and spirit, and conduct from their head ; so by the faith of God's operation, whereby we are united to Christ, we are continually receiving that grace and fulness that is in him, till we come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And this is the life of faith that I exhort you to, in order to your comfortable journey through the wilderness of this world.

There are two ways by which your life will be maintained and nourished from Christ thro' eternity ; one in this world, and another in the world to come. So long as we are in this world, we are like children in the mother's belly, entirely nourished and maintained by faith (like the string by which

we are nourished in our mother's belly) which sucks in the life, righteousness, and fulness of Christ into the soul: but no sooner do we pass out of this world into the life of glory, but the string of faith is cut, and then we come to be nourished another way, namely, by immediate vision of the Lord. As the child is nourished in the womb till it is fully ripe for the birth, so faith nourishes the soul till it be fully ripe for glory; and then faith is turned into full fruition, and immediate enjoyment.

To illustrate this matter, I shall in a few particulars shew the influence that faith has thro' the whole of the christian's work and warfare in the wilderness, from first to last.

(1.) 'Tis faith that gives the soul the first knowledge of Christ, and of the way of salvation through him; 'tis the eye that first spies him out, as the all-sufficient Saviour provided by God the Father. When the poor soul has been, as it were, beaten, battered and tossed among the waves and tempests of law-terrors, and apprehensions of eternal wrath and vengeance, in which case it has been as it were casting its most valuable goods over-board, its own righteousness, morality, civility, its duties, abilities, legal attainments, and every thing else; now, while the soul is in this condition, every moment expecting to be swallowed up in the great deeps of the sea of God's wrath, faith as it were steps up to the top of the mast, and gets a view of Christ, and of salvation in him; and thereupon the poor soul cries out, Oh there is Christ, let me get aboard of him; Oh there is the rock of ages, I'll venture my all upon him; Oh there is a strong hold and refuge, I'll flee in unto him; Oh this is my rest, here will I dwell, for my soul likes it well. Thus, I say, it is by faith, that we first enter into a state of grace, peace and righteousness; according to that
word

word of the apostle, *Rom. v. 2. We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.* When the soul was surrounded with nothing but the black thoughts of despair and ruin, faith lands the soul in a safe harbour : therefore *he that hath believed* is said to have *entered into his rest*, *Heb. iv.*

(2.) 'Tis by faith that the union is made up between Christ and us. Indeed there is a radical union that we have with Christ before faith ; for he takes hold of us first by his Spirit, before we take hold of him by faith : but yet the union is made up on our part by faith, 'tis that which ties the marriage-knot. 'Tis not love, but consent, that makes marriage between man and woman : so here, 'tis the soul's coming off from the law, and all other husbands ; its coming off from its own righteousness, and submitting unto Christ, as a Saviour, a husband and a surety ; this is it that makes up the union, and this is done by faith. There are two things that marry Christ and the soul together, as is plain from *Hos. ii. 19.* The first is on God's part ; he says to us in the covenant, and by his Spirit, *I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness and loving-kindness* : There, I say, is God's part. But what is it on our part that makes the marriage ? It follows, *And thou shalt know the Lord*, that is, thou shalt believe in him ; for this is the way that faith is commonly expressed by in the Old Testament, *viz.* by the knowledge of the Lord. 'Tis faith that brings Christ unto the heart, and reveals him to the soul in all his glory and excellency.

(3.) As union, so our communion with Christ is by faith. There are two things requisite in order to our having fellowship with another ; the first is, to make the person real and present ; and the second is, to have a familiar access with boldness unto him : now, 'tis faith that doth both these.

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'Tis faith that makes God in Christ present unto the soul ; for it sees him that is invisable : yea, it brings Christ, and God in him, down from heaven unto the heart ; hence Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith. 'Tis not love that can make another person present ; it may indeed set the fancy a-work to frame the picture and image of the person beloved, but it is only faith that can view God in Christ as present in and with the soul. And then, 2dly, 'Tis faith that gives us familiarity and boldness of access unto the Lord, *Eph. iii. 12. In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.* And 2. *Cor. iii. 9. Beholding him with open face,* we come to him ; *with open face*, that is, with confidence and boldness. *Psal, xxxiv. 5, They looked unto him, and were lightned ;* and what follows ? *their faces were not ashamed ;* that is, when they viewed Christ by faith, they had boldness of access unto God in him. The communion that we have with Christ is frequently compared unto eating and drinking, *John vi.* because 'tis faith alone that fetches nourishment from Christ, and makes a person to find a sweetness that is in him, and draws vertue from him : and thus it has the most close and intimate union and communion with him, insomuch that he is one with the soul, and the soul one with him.

(4.) As faith brings us into union and communion with Christ, so faith brings the Spirit of God down into the heart. I own indeed, that, in the work of regeneration and conversion, he is like the rain, that waits not for the sons of men ; he comes unsent for, or unsought for ; *he is found of them that seek him not.* Faith has no instrumentality there ; faith itself is a part of the new creature, that is formed by the hand of the Spirit. But, I say, faith brings the Spirit into the heart, as a Spirit of sanctification

cation, and consolation, *Eph. i. 12. 13. In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Gal. iii. 14. we are said to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith. All the fulness of the Spirit dwells in Christ, for the use of his mystical body ; now, 'tis by faith that this fulness is received, even grace for grace.*

(5.) I might tell you further, That our standing in a state of grace is by faith. As we have access or entrance into a state of grace, so we have standing in that state by faith, *Rom. ix. 2. 1 Cor. i. last, By faith we stand. 1 Pet. ii. 4. we are said to be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.* There you see, that faith is joined in commission with the power of God, to keep the believer. Doth the power of God keep you ? so doth faith. God is not shy of ascribing that to faith, which is peculiar only to himself ; because faith ascribes all to the power of God, and gives him the honour of every thing that it doth. Hence we are said to be kept by the power of God, thro' faith unto salvation. When other graces, such as love, repentance, &c. do sag and fail, and have as it were their heels tript up, faith will stand its ground. Hence, *Eph. vi. 16. there is a particular mark of distinction put upon faith beyond all the other pieces of armour ; Above all things, take the shield of faith.* When a man's head-piece is cracked, his sword, his breast-plate, and other pieces of armour is taken from him, yet his shield will do him good service ; he will lie under it, and thereby defend himself against all the strokes and blows that are levelled at him ; let the devil, corruption and hell, rage and roar as they will, yet faith will keep its grip, and maintain its ground : let satan cast his fiery darts, faith quenches them, *Eph. iv. 16. Let in-dwelling sin roar and rage, faith will say, Let it rage, yet it shall never*

ver reign ; for God has said, that sin shall not have dominion : yea, let God himself carry as an enemy, and set himself in battle-array against the soul ; yet even then faith will look in his face, and say, *Though thou shouldst even kill me, yet will I trust in thee*, Job xiii. 15. When other graces are fainting, and crying, We know not what to do ; faith will say, Mine eyes are towards thee, I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me ; tho' I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me, &c. When other graces, like poor faint-hearted things, stand as it were trembling, and crying, Who shall deliver us ? Faith will lift up the head, and cry, Thanks be unto God, that giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(6.) 'Tis faith that fetches in peace and quiet to the soul in the midst of trouble, whether from without, or from within. When nothing but storms from heaven, earth and hell, are blowing on the soul, faith will cast out its anchor of hope, and keep the soul steady and quiet, saying with *David*, *Psal. xlii. 12. Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? Why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.* To the same purpose is that famous text, *Isa. xxvi. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* And how is the mind stayed on the Lord, but by faith ? Oh, says faith, let me have what tribulation I will in the world, yet in Christ I shall have peace ; *This man shall be my peace, when the Assyrian comes into the land.*

(7.) Faith not only brings peace, but joy into the soul, amidst all other disturbances from without. Hence we are said to be filled with joy, as well as peace, in believing. And *2 Pet. i. 1. Whom having not seen, we love ; in whom, though now we see him*

him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The language of faith is, *Psal. xlv.* at the beginning, *God is our refuge and strength ; and therefore, though the mountains should be removed, yet there is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God.*

(8.) 'Tis by faith that we are recovered after falls into sin. Many a time the devil, the world, temptation and corruption, so far prevail against the believer, as to trip up his heels ; *the righteous man he falleth seven times a-day* : now, in such a case, what is it that recovers him ? 'Tis faith ; *Though I fall, I shall arise, faith faith, for the Lord upholdeth me with his hand.* Oh, sirs, if you let faith go, when when you fall into sin, you cannot miss to fall into the bottom ; just like a man climbing up a ladder, if his foot slip, and he quit the grip of his hand also, what can hinder him from falling down to the ground ? When Christ foresaw that *Peter* would sin by denying him, what said he ? I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; as if he had said, I plainly see that thou wilt deny me in the hour of temptation, but I have prayed that thy faith may not fail, and that is the thing that will recover thee. Oh, Sirs, when you fall into any sin, study to renew the acts of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ ; according to that advice of the apostle, *1 John ii. 1, If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father ;* as if he had said, The only way for a fallen saint to recover himself, is by faith to go to Christ as the great advocate and propitiation.

(9.) I might tell you further, That faith is as it were the mother-grace, the radical grace, on which all the other graces of the Spirit do depend : if faith be lively, so will all the other graces be ; if faith be languid and faint, so will all the other graces be ; if faith be set a-work, it, will work by love, that celestial

stial fire will burn, the fountain of holy sorrow will flow ; They shall look on him whom they have pierced and mourn : the foot of obedience will be active to run the way of God's commandments.

(10.) Faith carries the soul on high, above time and time's enjoyments ; it mounts up with wings as eagles : it carries the soul to mount *Nebo* and *Pisgab*, and gives the soul a view of the goodly mountain, even *Lebanon* ; and then the believer is like the woman clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet.

To conclude, As 'tis by faith that you must live, so 'tis by faith you must die, and shoot the gulph comfortably. 'Tis said of the worthies, *Heb. xi. All these died in faith.* Faith, as it were, lays its head in Christ's bosom, and says with a holy confidence, *Into thy hand, O Lord, I commit my spirit.* Faith, leaning on the staff of the divine promise, can say with *David, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me, thy rod and staff shall comfort me,* *Psal. xxxiii.*

4. A second question, that may be moved for clearing this exhortation, is, *What is in Christ that faith lives and leans upon, in its passage through the wilderness ?*

Ans. Christ is such a suitable good, that there is no case the soul can get into in its wilderness-condition, but faith will always find something corresponding to its necessity in him. Is the soul in darkness ? he is the sun of righteousness, the bright and morning-star : is the soul in danger ? he is a shield, a hiding-place and refuge : is the soul in trouble ? he is a rest to the weary, he is the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, he is bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty soul. But, more particularly, there are these things following in Christ, that faith

lives upon in the wilderness, and which it finds like marrow and fatness to the soul.

(1.) Faith lives and leans upon the name of Christ ; for his name is a strong tower, to which the righteous flee, and are safe : hence we are so frequently exhorted to trust in the name of the Lord. O he has a great name, and pleasant name, a name above every name, and at his name every knee shall bow. Whenever a believer engages with work, he is to do it in the name of the Lord ; *Whatever ye do, in word or in deed, says the apostle, do it all in the name of the Lord, to the glory of God by him.* And whenever we go a warfare against sin, satan, or the world, we are to do it in his name ; otherwise we can never prosper. This was the way of the church ; *We will be joyful in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banner.* Whenever we go to God in prayer, we are to present our persons and petitions in the name of Christ ; *Whatever ye ask the Father in my name, he will do it.* Oh, sirs, the name of Christ works wonders, when 'tis managed in a way of believing. When the disciples, or apostles went forth and preached the gospel among the nations, they went forth in the name of JESUS ; and when they wrought miracles, they did it in the name of JESUS CHRIST, *Acts iii. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and walk,* said Peter and John to the cripple man ; and presently he arose. God is so delighted with the name of Christ, that for the sake of that name he will any thing to us or for us ; and therefore let us live by faith and lean upon his name, as we come up out of the wilderness.

(2.) Faith lives upon the flesh of Christ, that is, upon the human nature as it stands personally united unto the divine ; *My flesh is meat indeed.* You know,

know, *Israel* in their travels thro' the wilderness to *Canaan*, which was a shadow or type of our travels through this world unto glory, they lived upon the manna that was rained from heaven upon the camp; but O, sirs, that was but a shadow of the true bread of life, an incarnate God, that we present to you in this gospel, *John vi. 32. My Father giveth you the true bread which is from heaven.* And again, says Christ, in that same chapter, *Except ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the son of man, ye have no life in you.* This seems to be a hard saying to a blind carnal world, and they are ready to think or say, with these *Jews*, *John vi. How can Christ give us his flesh to eat?* But whatever we may think of it, the flesh of Christ, or his human nature as it stands united to the divine in the person of the Son, when taken up by faith in the light of the Word and Spirit, it is the sweetest meal and banquet to a believer in heaven or earth; no meat or drink like it to a poor perishing soul: and a believer, in travelling through the wilderness, he is always taking a look of an incarnate Deity, and thus he is enlightened, strengthened, quickened, and comforted. O, sirs, what think ye of this food? I am sure, if ever ye tasted of it, you will be ready to say, *'Tis like wines on the lees well refined, and fat things full of marrow.*

(3.) Faith lives in the wilderness, not only on the flesh of Christ, or the mysteries of his incarnation, but upon the blood of Christ; by which I understand his satisfaction, which is frequently in scripture expressed by his blood: behold the blood of the covenant, that is, the satisfaction or death of Christ, that whereby the covenant is confirmed. This is drink indeed to the believer, in passing thro' the wilderness. Let the believer get a draught of this red wine of the blood of the slain Lamb

of God, he is able to go forth like a giant, or a strong man, to encounter all the powers of hell. *Rev. xii.* 'tis said of the saints in their wars with the devil, *that they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb*, that is, by faith's improvement of the death and satisfaction of Christ. Let faith be but set a-work upon the death and blood of Christ, it can look God himself in the face with an undaunted boldness, without fear of danger, or without fear of being rejected; *Having, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near, &c.* Let faith act on the blood of Christ, it can go to God in prayer, and ask any thing that lies within the compass of the whole testament of Christ; for whatever is in the testament, is the purchase of his blood. O, will faith say, give me peace, give me pardon, give me light, life, strength, grace or glory, give me the Spirit; for here is the blood of the Lamb that bought it. Let faith be acted on this blood, and the man dare with courage, comfort and joy, look death, eternity and a tribunal in the face. Why? Because faith sees the curse of the law abolished, death unstinged, the grave vanquished, and a tribunal sprinkled by the blood of Jesus; the gates of glory are opened to receive the soul that is sprinkled by the hyssop of faith dipt in the blood of the Lamb.

(4.) Faith lives in the wilderness upon the life of Christ; Because I live, ye shall live also. I live, says *Paul*, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and then follows. The life I live is by faith on the Son of God. Faith's way is to follow Christ from his birth to his cross, from his cross to his grave, and from his grave to his life again; and then it cries in a way of triumph, He who was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore: I know that my redeemer liveth; and he lives as my head, my representative, my husband

husband, my advocate, my king, my priest, my prophet, and my All and in All. O, Sirs, the resurrection of Christ unto life, never to die any more, *Ma* is a sweet and pleasant banquet in the wilderness, by which we are begotten again unto a lively hope of the inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled.

(5.) Faith lives upon the advocacy and intercession of Christ ; If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who makes intercession for the transgressors. And O how sweetly doth the soul feed here by faith ! O, will the soul say, I may be condemned by the world, or by the law, or by conscience ; yet I know that I shall carry the day in the court of heaven, because my advocate is the Lamb in the midst of the throne : he never lost a cause, he has the Father's ear ; he has such an interest and moyen in heaven, that all power in heaven is his, and his will is a law in the higher court. *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me, &c.*

(6.) Faith lives upon the word of Christ, as it comes up from the wilderness. Christ has past his word in his testament, and he has sealed it with his blood, and he lives as the executor of his testament ; and I know, will faith be ready to say, that the spirit of Christ will take all that is in his testament, and shew it unto me, and shew it so as to make all the testament and latter-will effectual : and therefore in his word do I hope ; his promise is not yea and nay, but 'tis always yea and amen in him. O, when faith gets the word of promise, the confirmed testament of Christ in its hand, how will it go to God, and crave the fulfilling of the latter-will of his own Son, saying, with *David*, Remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope ?

(7.) Faith lives and leans on the righteousness of Christ ; particularly in the matter of justification and acceptance : it casts away all the works of the law like dung and loss, saying, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.

(8.) Faith leans on the fulness of Christ, and says, Out of his fulness do all we receive, and grace for grace : my wants are great, I'm just made up of wants ; but O what wants will not the all-fulness of the God-head dwelling in Christ supply ? for he fills All in All. What is my poor empty vessel unto that ocean that is in him ? I'll go with confidence, for that fulness is in him for my use ; for he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious.

(9.) Faith lives on the offices of Christ, his general offices as a mediator and redeemer, and his particular offices as prophet, priest and king. O, will faith say, no man taketh an office upon him, but with a design to execute the duties of his office. Will any man pretend to be a magistrate, a minister, an advocate or judge, and yet live in the neglect, or refuse to discharge the duties of such an office ? The world would look on him as very unfaithful : and shall we imagine such a thing of Christ, who is faithful in all his house ? O, will faith say, he is a Mediator and peace-maker, and therefore I trust that he will make my peace with the offended Majesty of heaven ; he is a Saviour and Redeemer, and therefore I trust he will deliver me from the hands of all mine enemies ; he will save from sin, because it is his office to finish transgression, and make an end of it : he is a prophet, and therefore I'll trust that he will teach me the good and perfect will of God, open the secrets of his covenant, the mysteries of his kingdom unto me : he is a priest, and the great High-priest of our profession now under the New Testament ; and therefore he will, by the
great

great sacrifice of atonement, purge away my sins, and make my person and duties acceptable unto God : He is a king, and therefore he will subdue my corruptions, and sanctify me throughout, in soul, body and spirit : he is a shepherd, and therefore I trust he will feed me, and lead me in his pastures, and I shall not want : he is a physician, his name is *Jehovah-Rophi* ; and therefore I trust he will heal all my diseases, he will open my blind eyes, he will cure the obstinacy of my will, the hardness of my heart, the carnality of my affections : he is the captain of salvation, who leads many sons into glory ; and therefore I trust he will fight all my battles, and make me a conqueror, &c. Thus, I say, faith comes up from the wilderness, leaning on the offices of Christ, general and particular. I shall only add,

(10.) That faith comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon the divine attributes as they are manifested and displayed in Christ. God, absolutely considered, is the sinner's terror ; and every attribute of God, taken up absolutely, or in a law-view, breathes nothing but wrath and ruin to the whole tribe of *Adam* in their fallen state : but God manifesting himself in the flesh, or in the nature of man, through his death and satisfaction, every attribute of the divine nature presents itself as with a pleasant smile, inviting sinners to come up to him as an object of trust ; and accordingly faith leans upon these attributes of God, as the soul comes up from the wilderness. I shall only instance in these few ;

1. Art thou surrounded with troubles on every hand, art thou called to engage with work thou art not able to manage ? Well, here is the arm of omnipotence stretched out to *strengthen, help and uphold*, Isa. xli. 10. And accordingly faith leans upon the power of God, according to that command, Isa. xxvi. 3. *Trust in the Lord for ever : for is the*

Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Paul leaned on the power of God when he cried, I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. So did the three children; Our God whom we trust is able to deliver us. So did Abraham; he was persuaded that he who had promised, was able also to perform, &c.

2. Art thou at any time brought to thy wits-end, that thou knowest not what to do? Well, in that case, faith leans on the infinite wisdom or omniscience of a God in Christ, 2 Chron. xx. 12. *Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are towards thee. The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous.* When the poor soul has been trying and searching itself, and, alas! is afraid it be deceived by a treacherous heart; in this case, faith will have recourse unto the omniscience of a God in Christ, and say, *Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, &c.* When the poor soul is afraid of the secret plots of satan, or of his confederates; in this case, faith leans upon an omniscient God in Christ, who discovers deep things out of darkness, and brings to light the shadow of death.

3. Is the believer in the wilderness deserted by friends, or separated from them by banishment imprisonment, or the like, saying with the church, *Psal. cii. 6, 7. I am like a pelican in the wilderness, like an owl in the desert; I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the house-top?* In this case, faith leans upon the immensity of a God in Christ, and is ready to say, *Though I be alone and forsaken by all creatures, yet I cannot be parted or separated from my God; for a whole God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is every where present: Do not I the Lord fill heaven and earth? and, My way is not hid from the Lord, and my judgment is not passed over from my God: And, My fellowship and converse shall be with him, when I cannot have fellowship with my friends and familiars, who are removed far from me.*

4. O but, may the believer say, I'm a vile polluted creature, defiled in heart, lip and life ; and therefore the holiness of God is a terror to me, that I dare not so much as look towards the place where his honour dwells ; he is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity. *Ans.* The very holiness of a God in Christ, which thou makest use of to discourage thy faith, is glorious matter of support and encouragement : for faith's way of arguing from God's holiness is this ; God is infinitely pure and holy, and therefore he will sanctify and purify me from iniquity ; he hates sin and punishes it, and therefore he will destroy my lust : for 'tis not my person, but my sins and lusts, that are the objects of his hatred. If the rod come, why not ? For thereby he will make me a partaker of his holiness, and purge away my iniquity. 'Tis mine iniquity, and not me, that he will visit with the rod, and my transgression with stripes ; 'tis not me, but my sins that he designs to destroy. But,

5. Say you, Can faith lean upon the justice of God ? *Ans.* Yes it can : for though this attribute be a rock of offence, to grind the wicked into powder ; yet 'tis a rock of sweet repose and rest to the believer. O, will faith say, Lord, I have indeed sinned, and deserved thy wrath ; and, if thou mark iniquity, I cannot stand : but here is my relief, my surety has done and suffered all that the law required ; *He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, &c.* and 'tis inconsistent with justice to punish the same transgression twice ; hence faith concludes with *Paul, There is therefore now no condemnation ; who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? &c.*

6. Faith sweetly leans upon the goodness, mercy and love of God in Christ. O, will faith say, Has God been so good, and gracious, and merciful, as

to send his only begotten Son, &c. has he given him unto the death to be a curse, and to be made sin for me ; and will he not do every other thing? *He that spared not his own Son, but gave him unto death for us all; how will he not with him freely give us all things? O how excellent is this his loving-kindness ! therefore the Sons of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*

7. Faith leans on the truth and faithfulness of God in Christ. Oh, says faith, faithfulness is the girdle of his loins ; he is so true to his word, that heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot of his word fall to the ground ; and therefore I'll lean and rest myself here with assured confidence ; and though he may defer the accomplishment of his word, yet I'll believe, and wait, and will not make haste ; the vision is for an appointed time : tho' it tarry, I'll wait for it ; for at the end it shall speak, and it will not tarry. Thus, I say, faith goes up from the wilderness leaning on the divine attributes, as they are manifested in Christ : and thus I have minted to shew what is the object of the life of faith, or what is it in Christ that faith leans upon, as it comes up from the wilderness.

Quest. *What is the difference between the life of faith, and the life of faith or sense ?* The words of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. give ground for this enquiry, when he informs us that *while in the body, we walk by faith and not by sight ; and because the life he lived in the flesh, was a life of faith upon the Son of God :* by which he plainly intimates that a life of faith is calculated for an embodied state, and that a life of sight and sense is not suited to our present condition here in the wilderness. There are these few things I offer to clear the difference.

1st, Sense regards only what a man hath in hand, or presently enjoys ; but faith looks to what a man hath in Christ, and in the well ordered covenant.

Sense

Sense is like a child, that is better pleased with a penny, or any little trifle the parent gives it, than if he were giving it a charter to the whole estate ; but faith, altho' it will not despise any thing that comes from the hand of the Father, yet 'tis particularly taken up with the charter of the promise or covenant, and the estate lying in the hand of the great covenant-head Christ Jesus ; it views the promise as 'tis *Yea* and *Amen* in Christ ; it views the covenant as confirmed by his death and blood, and says with *David*, *This is all my salvation, that he hath made with me, in my new-covenant head, an everlasting covenant, well-ordered in all things, and sure.*

2dly, Sense is ready to judge of the love of God by the aspect of providence, or his present carriage ; and, whenever he seems to frown or hide, it raises all to the foundation, crying, The Lord hath forgotten to be gracious ; but faith reads the love of God in the face of Christ Jesus, in the acceptance that the surety has met with, and in the declarations, offers, promises of the word : in his word will I hope, says faith ; Remember the word on which thou hast caused thy servant to hope. Hence it follows,

3dly, Sense and sight is a variable and fluctuating thing ; but faith is steady and fixed, like *Abraham*, who in hope believed against hope, and staggered not at the promise through unbelief. While the believer lives by sense, and enjoys the Lord in a sensible manner, he is ready then to say, My mountain stands firm, I shall never be removed ; but anon the Lord hides his face, and the man is troubled : but faith keeps up a persuasion of his love, even when he is withdrawn, saying, *Though I walk in darkness, I'll trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God.*

4thly, Sight and sense look only to things present ; but faith, like a prophet, looks at things to come, things that are at a distance. *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, saw the day of Christ afar off ; faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. When under darkness of affliction, desertion, temptation, it will say, *Tho' I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me ; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.*

5thly, Sense and sight are superficial and overly in their views of things, and easily deceived with appearances ; but faith is a poring and diving grace, it goes deep into things. Faith will perceive poison in a cup of gold, it will see lions dens and leopards in *Lebanon*, among trees and woods of aromatick scent : and therefore will turn away from them as dangerous, while sense is easily encouraged thereby : and, on the other hand, it will see a paradise of communion with the Lord in a wilderness, where sense can perceive nothing but pricking briars and thorns, 2 Cor. iv. 10. *Our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

6thly, They differ in their consort and order. Faith is the leader, and sense the follower : faith is the duty, and sense the privilege connected with it, Eph. i. 12, 13. *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.* John vii. *Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?* Faith is the work, and sense is the encouragement. This is God's order, which the legal heart would always invert : we would be at the encouragement of faith, before we set about the duty of believing ; like *Thomas*, John xx. *Except I thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* But let

us remember what Christ says to him, Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.

7thly, Sense is hasty and precipitant in its judgment ; but faith is patient, and waits till it see the end. Sense draws rash and hasty conclusions when difficulties cast up ; *I said in my haste, all men are liars ; I said, I am cast out of thy sight* : but faith waits till the other side of the cloud casts up ; The Lord is a God of judgment, says faith, and blessed are all they that wait for him. The vision is for an appointed time ; tho' it tarry, wait for it : for at the end it will speak, and will not tarry : hence, he that believeth, shall not make haste. The Old-Testament saints waited about four thousand years for the coming of the promised seed of the woman ; and, when they died, they died with the promise in their arms, waiting for the accomplishment, believing that he would come, and would not tarry beyond the fulness of time : *Heb. vii. 3. All those died in faith, not having received the promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.*

8thly, A life of sense is dangerous, but a life of faith is sure and safe. The danger of sense appears from the advantage that Satan took to ruin *Adam* and all his posterity : had our first parents lived in the steady faith of God's promise and threatening in the covenant of works, they had never eaten of the forbidden tree ; but they walked by sight and sense. The fruit was beautiful to the eye, and pleasant to the taste ; this made them the more easily to listen to the hisses of the old serpent : saying, If ye eat, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ; and thus he prevailed. We see, that when *Paul* was filled with sensible manifestations, being wrapt up to the third heavens, he was in danger of being lifted up with pride : but now, I say, the life of faith is safe and sure ; and the reason is, because it

will

will neither believe angels nor men, if what they say does not agree with what God says in his word. It views things as they are laid in the revelation, and forms of judgment and estimate of things according to God's verdict of them ; To the law and to the testimony, says faith, if they speak not according to God's oracles, it is because there is no truth in them. Hence faith has the moon under its feet ; this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. Faith, by going this way to work, makes the soul like mount *Zion*, which cannot be removed for ever. Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established, says the prophet unto trembling *Israel*.

9thly, Sense has it's only foundation and confidence within : it trades in the shallow waters of created grace, experimental attainments and marks of grace, and the like : but faith has its foundation without the man, in Christ, in God's covenant, in the great and precious promises. While the mariner stays in the shallow waters, he is in continual fear of rocks and sand-banks ; but when he has launched out into the deep water, he is safe. Faith trades in the deep waters of the fulness of the God-head that dwells bodily in Christ, *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption* ; and so it gets above doubts and racking fears of ship-wreck. But it is (I say) otherwise with sense ; it deals with created grace, manifestations, experiences and attainments. And thus I have cleared in some measure the difference between faith and sense. I go on now to the

Second thing I proposed upon this exhortation, which was to press a life of faith upon believers by some motives or arguments ; and I shall only insist a little upon two:

(1.) Then, consider, that the life of faith is adapted and suited unto a wilderness-lot. And this will be evident, if we consider, (1.) That the wilderness is a solitary place, where there is little communion or converse about the things of God : it is too frequent with the believer, that he cannot get a friend to whom he can open his mind in the world. Well, faith is adapted for such a case as this ; for by faith believers see and converse with an invisible God, insomuch, that they are able to say, *Verily our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* God has a way of speaking with the believer, and the believer has a way of talking and conversing with God through Christ by faith, even in a wilderness, a solitary land ; *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.* And what is faith, but just the eccho of the soul, when it answers such words of grace, saying, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth : Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God ?* (2.) The wilderness is a misty and foggy land, where the traveller is in danger of losing his way ; he walks in darkness, and can see no light. Clouds of desertion, clouds of sin, clouds of error, cast up ; so that the poor believer, in his way to glory, knows not what course to take. Well, faith is adapted to such a lot and condition as this ; *for 'tis the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for :* it can look through the mists and clouds that cast up in its way, and run its race, looking to Jesus as its leader and commander : and when some are saying, Lo, Christ is here ; or lo, he is there ; faith can distinguish between the voice of the true shepherd, and the voice of a stranger ; and the voice of a stranger it will not follow. (3.) The wilderness is a place of want ; 'tis a dry, barren, and thirsty land, where there is nothing for the support of the soul. Well, faith is adapted

adapted to such a case as this also ; for like the virtuous women in the *Proverbs*, it fetcheth its food from the land of glory, *Emmanuel's* land. It has meat to eat that the world cannot afford, and which the world knows nothing of. Tho' Christ as to his human nature be in heaven, yet faith has a way of eating his flesh, and of drinking his blood, which is meat indeed, and drink indeed. Faith can bring manna out of the clouds, and water out of the flinty rock ; the hand of faith will pluck the fruit of the tree of life which grows in the midst of the paradise of God, and finds its fruit sweet unto the soul's taste. Many a sweet and heartsome banquet and enjoyment has faith, when the world are feeding on husks. *Oh, says Jeremiah, thy word was found by me and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.* (4.) The wilderness is a place of danger ; thieves and robbers, lions and leopards frequent the wilderness. Well, faith is of singular use in this condition also : when the enemy's fiery darts are cast at the believer, faith is a shield wherewith he beats them back, and turns them off without any hurt ; and when the poor soul is like to be over-powered by the might or multitude of it's enemies, faith has a way of bringing in the aid of heaven for its help, as *Jehoshaphat* did : we know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee. Faith has a way of wielding the arm of omnipotence in a time of danger ; and then it cries, Through thee we shall do valiantly, and break down our enemies ; we will be joyful in thy salvation, and in the name of the Lord we will set up our banner. And when 'tis proper to make a retreat, faith turns into its strong hold, which is the name of the Lord. (5.) The wilderness is an unsettled place, where a person undergoes a variety of dispensations, turnings and windings

windings in their lot. Well, faith is of particular use to the believer in this case, in regard that, like an anchor sure and stedfast, it enters within the vail, and keeps the soul steady and firm under all vicissitudes and temptations : hence *Paul, I have learned in every state wherein I am, therewith to be content ; I know how to be abased, and how to abound ; I am instructed how to be full, and how to be hungry ; how to abound, and to suffer need.* Faith keeps the soul stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; knowing that its labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. (6.) A wilderness is a place of manifold thorns and trials ; *in the world ye shall have tribulation.* Now, faith is of singular use here also ; for it sees and considers, that this is the lot that God has ordered ; that he will bring good out of all afflictions ; that they are but light, and for a moment, and not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed : and with the views of this future glory it ballances all the afflictions of a present life. Thus you see that a life of faith is adapted and suited unto a wilderness-lot ; and therefore let us take the example of the spouse here, Come up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved, living by faith upon him.

Motive 2d, To encourage and engage you to a leaning on Christ by faith as you come up from the wilderness ; consider, believer, that he is thy husband and bride-groom : there is a marriage relation between thee and him, and should not this encourage you to live and lean upon him ? It is under this consideration that the spouse here takes him up ; *she comes up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved.* And, to encourage faith in him under this relation, will you only consider the particulars following. 1st, Consider, that he took thee for his bride and spouse when thou wast in a wretched and miserable plight, blind, poor and naked, having the hue of hell upon thee, *Ezek. xvi. When I passed*

by thee, and saw thee in thy blood, I said unto thee, live ; and thy time was a time of love, &c. When thou wast lying amongst the pots he loved thee ; and he loved thee so dearly, that he bought thee off from the hand of justice, with the price of his precious blood. *He loved me, and he gave himself for me*, says Paul. And should not this encourage thee to live and lean on him in thy journey through the wilderness ? 2dly, He gave thee thy marriage-clothes. When thou hadst not a rag to cover thee, he clothed thee with white raiment, that the shame of thy nakedness might not appear : hence is that song of the church, *Isa. lxi. 10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God*, &c. and *Ezek. xvi. 7, 10, 12, 13*. Now should not the consideration of this kindness encourage thee to lean on him as thy beloved ? 3dly, Consider, that in the marriage-contract of the new covenant, he has made over himself, and all that he is, and all that he has, unto thee : all things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. There he says, Thy maker is thy husband ; I will betroth thee unto me for ever, in faithfulness, &c. 4thly, Consider the closeness and intimacy of the union between him and thee, and and let this encourage thee to lean and live on him by faith. 'Tis far more intimate and dear than the union between husband and wife among men ; for they, indeed, are one flesh, but he is one body and one spirit with his spouse ; he is in them, and they are in him ; and by virtue of this intimate union, thou hast a title to him and his whole purchase. As the wife, when married to a man of a liberal estate, may look to his lands and lodgings, and say, this house is mine, and this land is mine, and such and such things are mine, for they are my husband's, and he is mine, and I am his ; so may the believer, by virtue of his marriage-union
with

with the Son of God, when he looks to heaven, he may say, that this is my habitation ; when he looks to the earth, he may say, this is my inn ; when he looks to the angels, he may say, these are my guards ; when he looks round about him, he may say, all things are mine, for they belong to my blessed husband, who is heir of all things, and I am heir of God thro' him ; his righteousness is mine to justify me, his grace is mine to sanctify me, his spirit is mine to comfort me, his covenant is mine, for it was made with him, and with me through him, &c. 5thly, Consider, that thy blessed husband, believer, he calls thee to lean upon him, he counsels and encourages thee to depend on him as thou comest out of the wilderness ? he speaks to his spouse in a kindly way, saying, *Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee ; cast all your cares upon him for he careth for you ; trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him, &c.* 6thly, To encourage thy dependance on him in the wilderness, consider his tender sympathy with thee under all thy ailments and infirmities. Thou art as dear to him as the very apple of his eye, and he has thee set as a seal on his heart and his arm, and he is touched with the feeling of thy infirmities ; he gathers the lambs with his arms, he carries them in his bosom ; he gently leads them that are with young ; and he giveth power unto the faint, and increaseth strength to them that have no might. Lastly, if you do not lean on him, you will surely faint and sag, and set up in thy journey through the wilderness ; but if you lean and rest on him, *thou shalt renew thy strength, and mount up with wings as eagles, thou shalt run and not weary, and walk and not faint, till thou come to Zion with songs.* Now, let all these considerations encourage you to come up from the wilderness leaning on your beloved.

To shut up this discourse, it may be asked, what advice do you give us, in order to our living a life of faith, or our leaning on the beloved, as we come up from the wilderness? I answer in general, that there is a threefold object that must be kept in view, in order to our living by faith; and every act of saving faith terminates upon all the three in their proper order. (1.) There is the promise. (2.) There is Christ in the promise. (3.) Upon God in Christ. True faith can want none of them, and 'tis not a right faith that misses one of them. The promise is but a cypher, without Christ; and Christ is no Christ, without we take God up in him. Faith cannot fix upon Christ, without the promise; and it cannot fix upon God, but as he is in Christ. Take away the promise, and you take away Christ; and take away Christ, and you take away God; for God is no God to a sinner, but as he is in Christ. So then, of necessity these three grand objects of faith must be taken in, and taken up in order to a life of faith: and therefore I shall endeavour to shew how faith is to act upon every one of them, by answering a threefold question; 1. How faith is to act upon the promise of the word, which is the next and immediate object of faith? 2. How it is to be acted upon Christ? 3. How it is to act upon a God in Christ?

Question 1. What counsel or advice do you give us, in order to our living by faith upon the promise, which is the next or most immediate object of faith?

I answer, in order to your living by faith upon the promise, I give you these few advices following.

In your reading of the scriptures, collect the promises, and gather them, pick them up; for in all these, do men live, and in all these is the life of your souls. By the great and precious promises

we are made partakers of the divine nature, &c.

Treasure them up in your minds, for they are the fuel of faith ; and faith can as little act without the promise, as fire can burn without fuel : and therefore let your minds be like the pot in the ark, always full of the manna of the word. A promise hid in the heart, will do you service, when you have neither access to read nor hear, &c.

Be frequently meditating on them, and rolling them like a sweet morsel under your tongue. While I was musing, the fire burned, says *David*. Faith, which works by love, is set a-work by serious meditation. The promises are the sweetest lines in Christ's love-letters to his spouse : there is majesty in the command, severity in the threatening ; but love and mercy predominates in the promise, &c.

Be frequently pleading the promise in prayer. The promise is God's bond, and God's bond is to be pursued in the court of grace, at the throne of grace ; for these things will I be enquired of, &c. This was *David's* way ; *Remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope, &c.*

Study to know and be persuaded, that the promise of God is a notable and excellent security : and this appears from this consideration ; 'Tis the word of God who cannot lie, &c. 'Tis his registrate word, &c. 'Tis his sealed word, &c. He has given caution that his word shall be good, &c. He gives the earnest of his word, the holy spirit of promise, &c. He has added his oath to it, &c. He has attested it by the Three that bear record in heaven, &c.

I advise you to take up the promise as delivered and indorsed unto you ; *To you is the word of this salvation sent ; the promise is to you and to your seed, &c.* Heb. iv. 1. *Let us fear, lest a promise being left us, &c.*

Take up the promise as the genuine thought and picture of his heart, and that he really thinks as he speaks ; for unbelief is ready to suggest, that he says one thing, and thinks another. Be aware of this, 'tis an imputation upon man to do so, and the use of words is lost if men do not think as they speak : far less are we to imagine that there is any dissimilarity in a God of truth ; no, no, his words correspond to his mind, &c.

Be persuaded, that 'tis an easy thing for God to fulfil his promise. There is no such distance between God's saying and workings, as we are ready to imagine, *Psal. xxxiii. 9. He said, and it was done, &c.* Unbelief represents the promise as a thing difficult or hard to be performed, but 'tis quite otherwise : saying and working is all one with God ; he commands things that are not, as if they were.

In pleading the promise, beware of limiting the Holy One of *Israel*. To clear this, take these two cautions, (1.) Beware of being peremptory in expecting what is not absolutely promised, &c. (2.) Do not always expect a present accomplishment of the promise, but wait ; for the vision is for an appointed time. &c. He that believeth, does not make haste, &c.

When faith cannot get fixt upon the conditional promise, then let it go to the absolute, where the condition mentioned is always to be found, &c.

Take care, that in acting faith upon the promise, you always remember the relation between Christ and the promise ; for all the promises are in him yea, and in him amen. Many break their necks upon the promise, by separating between Christ and the promise ; Christ is the *alpha* and *omega* of all the promises.

Quest. *What is the relation between Christ and the promise ?*

Ans.

Ans. (1.) Christ is to be considered as the first heir of all the promises. *Adam* was the heir of the promise of life made in the first covenant while he continued in his obedience ; but he lost this heirship to himself and his whole tribe by the fall : Christ, as the second *Adam*, steps in, and fulfils the command of the first covenant, and undergoes its penalty in our room ; and so he becomes a new heir to the promise of eternal life, and of every thing pertaining to it. Now our title to the promise comes in through him, through his obedience and death, his everlasting righteousness ; so that in believing the promise, we must at the same time submit to his righteousness.

(2.) Christ is to be considered as the great blessing contained in all the promises ; hence called, in a way of eminency, the mercy promised to the fathers. What is the first promise in paradise, but Christ the seed of the woman ? What was the promise to *Abraham*, but Christ, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed ? And when he is promised, All is promised, for he is All in All. There is not a promise in the bible, but has less or more of Christ in it. In a word, Christ himself, as contained in the word of faith, draws all the blessings of heaven and a long eternity after it.

(3.) Christ is to be considered as the glorious fountain and treasury, in whom all the promised blessings are hid. He it is, in whom all the treasures of grace and glory are hid ; And it is out of his fulness, that we receive all promised grace, &c.

(4.) Christ is the foundation and ground upon which they all stand. The believer and the promise stand upon the same foundation ; *Behold I lay in Zion a foundation*. And all the promises are founded upon him, upon his blood and satisfaction without which, never a promise had been given

out by God to any of the children of men. And faith, in improving the promise, leans upon this foundation, stands upon this ground ; just as a man leaning upon his staff, he sets the staff upon the ground, and so leans upon the staff : for except the staff lean to the ground, it will not support us ; so unless the staff of the promise be set upon Christ, as its proper ground, it will do us no service. And I fear a defect here is the ruin of many gospel-hearers : they pretend to lean to God's promise, but in the mean time, they do not set the staff of the promise upon Christ, and his satisfaction and intercession ; and so they and their faith fall into hell together in the end. Thus I have given you some advices, in order to your improvement of the promises in a way of believing.

Quest. second, *How is faith to act upon Christ in the promise, or by virtue of the promise ?* For as I told you, all the promises are in him, and he is in all the promises.

For answer to this, I would have you know, that in every promise of the word, Christ is represented as clothed or vested with one or other of his mediatory offices of prophet, priest or king ; he is made of God unto us wisdom as a prophet, righteousness as a priest, and sanctification as a king ; and in one or other of these offices, he gives out all the sure mercies of *David*, all the blessings of a covenant of grace. And therefore, in order to your living by faith upon Christ in the promise, take the few following advices.

(1.) Study to be well acquainted with the person and offices of Christ : study, I say, to be well acquainted with the dignity and excellency of his person as he is *Emmanuel*, the word made flesh, God manifested in the flesh ; for upon the excellency of his person depends the validity of the whole

whole of his undertaking as our redeemer. Without this be kept in the soul's view, it cannot but wander in the dark, without knowing where to fix ; we shall be apt to mistake a shadow instead of a substance, without we have becoming views of the excellency of a redeemer's person. But then, I say, we must study to know him, not only in his person, but in his offices wherewith he is vested ; for faith or trust has respect unto a person vested with some office or other : as when you employ an advocate, you trust the person as clothed with that office ; when you employ a physician, you trust the person as clothed with that office ; and when you employ a minister, you trust his person as clothed with the ministerial office : so here, when we employ Christ, or lean upon him, we trust him as clothed with his prophetic, priestly, or kingly offices. And therefore in order to the life of faith, study to be well acquainted with the person of Christ, as vested with these offices, and what it is that we are to expect from him as clothed with these offices.

Quest. What has faith to expect from Christ as a prophet ?

Ans. As a prophet, he reveals his father's will by his word externally, and by his Spirit internally ; and therefore faith eyes him for instruction in the things of God, &c. As a prophet, he received gifts for men, and gives apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers ; and therefore faith looks to him for pastors according to his heart, and for his blessing upon the word and ordinances dispensed by them, for the edification of his body, &c. As a prophet, he received the Spirit, and all his influences ; and therefore faith looks to him in this office for the Spirit to lead unto all truth, to rend the vail, to dispel darkness, and to lead in the way we know not.

Quest.

Quest. *What has faith to expect from Christ as a priest?*

Ans. As a priest, he satisfies justice, redeems from the curse of the law, from hell and wrath. As a priest, he brings in everlasting righteousness, and makes intercession for the transgressors, opens the way to the holiest. And hence faith has ground to expect from him the benefits of his purchase, every mercy of the covenant, as the price of his blood, and the fruit of his intercession.

Quest. *What has faith to expect from Christ as a king?*

Ans. As a king, he gives forth his laws, and a heart to obey them; and therefore faith expects that he will mould heart and life in a conformity to his will, according to that promise, *I will write my laws in their hearts, &c.* As a king, he subdues his and his peoples enemies; and therefore faith expects that all shall be well, according to his promise, *Rom. viii. All things shall work, &c.* As a King he gives peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; and therefore faith expects all these things from him, as vested with a kingly office. Thus you see what excellent matter faith has to work upon, when it views the person of Christ, as clothed with his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices. Now, in order to your living by faith on him, study to have a clear uptaking of his person, God-man, clothed with these offices.

2. Another advice I give you, consequential to the former, is this; study to know and be persuaded, that these offices of Christ are purely relative, that is, they are not for his own, but for our advantage; it was for us that he took these offices upon him, and 'tis for our benefit that he exercises them; yea, in some respect, these offices depend on us as
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one relation depends upon another ; for as there cannot be a father without a child, so Christ could not be a prophet, without there were ignorant sinners to instruct ; he could not be a priest, without there were guilty transgressors for whom he might satisfy and intercede ; he could not be a king without subjects to govern, So that these offices of Christ are purely relative ; he is a prophet for us, a priest for us, and a king for us : hence, 1 Cor. i. 30. *He is made of God unto us* (not to himself, but to us) *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* Oh what strong ground has faith to lean upon, when these offices of Christ are taken up in this view and relation to us ! Oh, will faith say, I'll trust him for illumination and instruction, because he is a prophet for to instruct the ignorant ; I'll trust him for pardon, peace, and reconciliation, because he's a priest *ordained for men in things pertaining to God.* I'll trust him for sanctification and victory over death, and sin, and *Satan*, and the world, because he is given for a commander and king to the people : he will instruct me, he will justify me, he will sanctify and subdue mine iniquities, because he is my prophet, priest, and king.

3. Be persuaded, that Christ executes all these offices as a duty or a trust committed to him. When a man is clothed with any office, he is obliged to discharge the duties of that office ; and he is unfaithful to his trust, if he do it not. His Father's commandment is upon him to this purpose, and therefore called his Father's *servant* ; *this commandment, as a servant, he received from the Father.* And not only his Father's command, but his own voluntary engagement, *Psal. xl. 5. Mine ear hast thou bored.* Now, is it to be once thought or imagined that Christ will fail in the duties of his offices, which
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the Father commanded him, and which he himself has voluntarily engaged with,

4. Let faith begin first to act upon the priestly office of Christ ; for this is the basis and foundation of the other two, *Isa.* liii. at the close, *Phil.* ii. 8, 9, 10. *Psal.* cx. last. The Priest under the law, he had the *Urim* and *Thummim* in his breast-plate, and a crown upon his head, to learn us, that the kingly and prophetic offices of which these were the badges, were both founded on the sacerdotal or priestly office : so then, study to improve Christ as a priest and propitiation set forth in the glorious gospel, to be applied by faith ; and then it will be easy to believe that he is thy prophet and king. If thou canst believe that he suffered and satisfied for thy sins, it will be easy for thee to believe, that as a prophet he will wash thee, and as a king he will sanctify and subdue thine iniquities : yea, know, Sirs, for your encouragement, that the very end why Christ purchased grace and glory by his blood was, that it might be offered unto all, and actually applied unto every soul that believes in him. So then, let faith ground first upon the priestly office of Christ, and upon that foundation claim the benefit of his other offices.

5. Remember how affectionately Christ executed these offices upon earth, and this will be a strong ground to believe that he will not neglect them, now that he is ascended into heaven. He had a great desire to be sacrificed, *Luke* xii. 50. *I have a baptism to be baptized with, &c.* He longed to be dipt in the red-sea of his Father's wrath. The word signifies, that his soul was big or swelled within him with desire : he had not only desire but delight in his mediatory work : I delight to do thy will, O my God. Yea, he rejoiced in spirit, when the time of his suffering drew near. Now, may

may faith argue, did Christ execute his offices with such desire, delight and joy, in a state of humiliation ; and will he not much more do it in a state of exaltation ? Yea, surely he will ; for he is Jesus Christ, the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever.

6. Consider, that both the Father and the Holy Ghost are engaged for the execution of these offices of Christ. The Father is engaged, because he ordained him to these offices, and ordained him with the solemnity of a decree, *Psal. ii.* and with the solemnity of an oath, *Psal. cx.* and with the solemnity of a proclamation from heaven, *Math. iii.* at the close ; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him.* Now, may faith say, was Christ ordained with such solemnity to his mediatory offices by his Father ; and will not the Father see to the execution of them with respect to my soul, that puts it's trust in him ? Again, as the Father, so the Holy Ghost is concerned in the execution of these offices ; the Holy Ghost furnished him with gifts, and graces for this very end, *Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, &c.* Now, will ever the Spirit of the Lord lose his labour ? No, no : God has put his Spirit upon him, therefore he will bring forth judgment to the *Gentiles*, and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus you see that faith has all the security that heaven can afford for the execution of his offices. Thus then, *Come up from the wilderness leaning upon the beloved.*

Quest. 3. *How is faith to act upon a God in Christ, who is the ultimate object of faith ?*

Ans. In these particulars ; 1. Let faith view a God in Christ in a way of approbation as its own God. This, we find, has been the way of the saints in all ages and generations ; it still lays claim to God in Christ, with its appropriating *My, &c. Psal. xvi. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou*

Thou art my Lord. And verse 5. *The Lord is the portion of my cup, &c.* And, *Psal. lxxiii. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* And if you ask, upon what ground doth faith go, in laying claim to a God in Christ as its own God ? I answer, it goes upon the ground of his assuming our nature in the person of his eternal Son, and the covenant-grant and promise through him ; *I am the Lord thy God ; I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* Faith sets to its *amen* unto the grant, and says, *this God is my God for ever ;* and it shall be so, because he has said it : and, *has he said it, and will he not do it ? Hath he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass ?*

2. Having fixed thy claim unto a God in Christ as thy own God, then proceed to take a view of all his *attributes* and *perfections* ; for every one of them (as I shewed you before) is a pillar and strong rock, on which thy faith may lean with the greatest confidence and security, even though the earth should be removed, though the mountains should be cast into the midst of the sea. O will faith say, my God is a God of infinite power, and doth whatever pleases him in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and this power is through Christ engaged for my preservation, *he will hide me as in a pavilion in the evil day.* My God in Christ is a God of infinite wisdom ; and therefore he will lead me in the way I know not, and make me wise to salvation. He is a God of infinite justice, and therefore having accepted a satisfaction for my sins in the surety, he is faithful and just in forgiving ; he will blot out mine iniquities as a cloud, &c. He is a God of unspotted holiness ; and therefore he will sanctify me according to his covenant ; *I will sprinkle them with clean water, &c.* He is a God of infinite bowels and mercy ; and therefore he will pity and

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pardon me and *hear me when I cry, &c.* He is a God of infinite *faithfulness*, this is the *girdle of his loins and reins* ; and therefore he will not suffer his promise to fall, *his covenant he will not break, &c.* Thus faith leans and rests on the divine attributes, as they are manifested in Christ. 3. Faith leans upon a God in Christ, as one that is infinitely *bountiful and liberal* ; and argues as the apostle doth, *Rom. viii. He that spared not his own Son, but gave him to death for us all, how will he not with him freely give us all things ?* Faith sees that his treasures can never be diminished, far less can they be spent or exhausted ; and O how heartsomely doth faith lay claim to these treasures ; when it hears him saying, as *Jam. i. 5. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, &c.* 4. Faith views the *providence* of a God in Christ as calculate and designed for the advancement of his own glory, and levelled at the good of them that love him ; and this quiets the soul amidst all the reelings and shakings of this lower world. *The Lord doth reign, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.* 5. Faith, acting upon a God in Christ, will see an eternity of happiness beyond time, in the immediate fruition and enjoyment of him ; hence is that of *David, Psal. lxxiii. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

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