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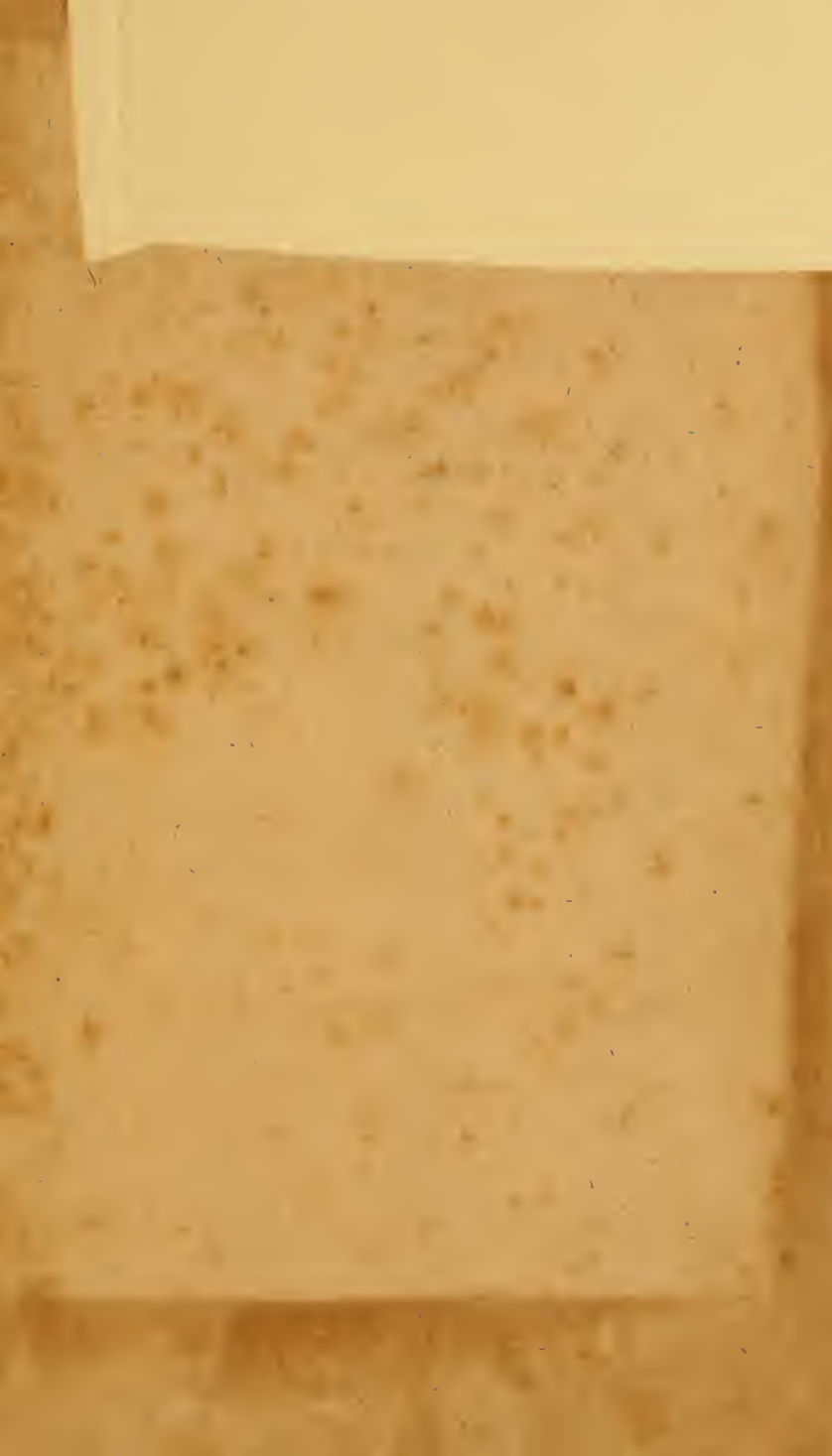
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William A Grant
COLLECTION
OF
SERMONS
ON
Several Subjects.

PREACH'D,

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

AND

Others by the Rev. RALPH ERSKINE, M. A.
Minister of the Gospel at *Dumfermlin*, and
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WITH A SHORT

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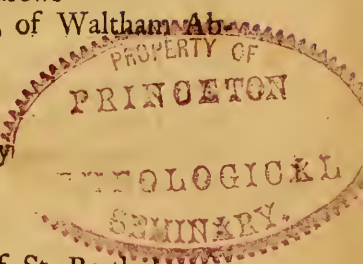
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THE
P R E F A C E.

THE general acceptance, which the other two volumes of these Reverend and worthy Brethren's sermons have met with, among serious and experienced christians, to whom they have been remarkably useful, encourages the publishing this third volume; which for the sweet variety of purposes contained in it, the judicious and grave way of treating of them, and the close pathetick manner in which they are applied to the consciences both of saints and sinners, is nothing inferior, yea, in the judgment of some, preferable to the other two.

ANY recommendation from a mean and inconsiderable hand, is altogether needless to such as know the authors or their writings: for I think it may be said, with the strictest regard to truth, that their praise in the gospel, is now spread abroad throughout the churches of Christ in *Britain, Ireland and America*; and they have obtained the best epistle of commendation, even a testimony in the consciences of not a few of the children of God, who have reason to bless his name, for the great spiritual benefit and advantage they have reaped, by the perusal of the valuable labours of these his servants; on whom he has bestowed such eminent-ministerial gifts and abilities.

P R E F A C E.

IF ever there was an age that needed such discourses as these, it is the one we live in; in which there are so many unstable professors of religion on the one hand, who are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, but fondly running after every opinion that favours of novelty; and on the other hand, many, too too many, who pretend to be fixed in the belief of the truths of the gospel, and in their talk magnify the doctrines of free grace, whose lives are yet a scandal and a reproach, to the holy profession of that worthy name by which they are called.— In which some are fond, almost to distraction, of the opinion, that they can by their own moral powers, work out a righteousness of their own, and by their own religious performances, recommend themselves to the favour and friendship of God. And others, tho' they are not wholly of this opinion, yet partly embrace it, while they imagine, that through the merits of Christ and the mercy of God, their sincere though imperfect obedience, shall be accepted as their justifying righteousness.— In which others own readily they can do nothing, are wholly unable of themselves for any thing that is good, and indeed do as little; but just make their orthodox notions of things a pillow for sloth, and so lull themselves asleep. In which many of the children of God themselves, are too slack in giving diligence to make their calling and election sure; and through careless walking and an unwatchful frame, are often oppressed with unbelieving doubts and fears: and on the other hand, many vain, conceited professors of religion, who pretend to have attained to what 'tis to be feared they know nothing

P R E F A C E.

nothing of, an evidence of which, is their proud boasting of their unshaken constant assurance, that God loved them from eternity, and Christ died for them in particular, and their rigidly judging and condemning all who have not come up to their measure of assurance, (I had almost said groundless confidence) and yet can allow themselves at the same time to be loose and careless, if not positively immoral in their walk.

THESE discourses are calculated for meeting with all these sorts of persons: for here are no new fangled opinions, fit to amuse them who have too much of the *Athenian* disposition; on the contrary, they present us with the plain substantial truths of the gospel, taught in a plain, easy, scriptural stile; suited to the edification of them; who are more delighted with words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, than with the gaudy trappings of human eloquence, and what the apostle calls the enticing words of man's wisdom.— Here the conceited *Pharisaical* legalist will see the vanity and foolishness of building up and establishing a righteousness of his own, to the slighting and despising the Righteousness of Christ.— Here serious christians will find the exercises of their heart laid open with uncommon advantage; and such as labour under doubts and fears, will find their weak hands strengthened, and their feeble knees confirmed, by having the ground and foundation of faith clearly set before them, and the warrant they have to build upon it; and proper directions, how to become established and confirmed believers.— Here vain and presumptuous hypocrites will find many of the deceits of their hearts laid open, if they are not blinded to their own destruction.— Here carnal professors will find

P R E F A C E.

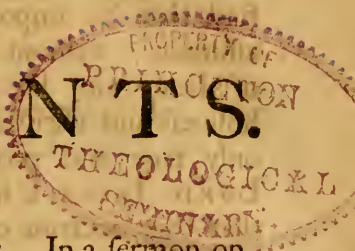
find that 'tis impossible to attain, or keep a true assurance, without the strictest regard to holiness of heart and life.— In a word, here gospel holiness and christian morality, are placed on their only true and proper basis; FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST; and here 'tis shown, that this doctrine opens no door to licentiousness; it does not make void the law, but establishes it; binding universal obedience to it on the believer, with the powerful and sweet cords of the Redeemer's love.

THE book, as it now appears, is printed from the sermons as they were published some years ago in *Scotland*; and as the Rev. Mr. *Bradbury* observes, in his preface to the first volume, 'tis to be noticed, That they are only a transcript of the authors original preparations for the pulpit, or as they were taken from their mouths in characters, so that they appear in the simple dress in which they were first studied, without any design of publishing them; which may be a sufficient apology for such places as may to some appear less accurate in point of stile.— There is no alteration in this edition of these sermons, save only a few *Scots* words and phrases, not so well understood in *England*, have been rendred more agreeable to the *English* way of speaking; though after all some few such words and phrases have been over looked; but 'tis hoped that the *English* reader will be at no loss as to these, if what goes before and after is carefully observed.

MAY the Lord abundantly bless these sweet evangelical discourses, to the conviction, conversion and edification of precious souls; so as a large revenue of glory and praise may redound to his blessed and glorious name. *Amen.*

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By Mr. E B E N E Z E R E R S K I N E.

Cant. vii. 5.

The King is held in the Galleries.

OUR blessed Lord Jesus, who is represented under the notion of a bridegroom in this book, from the 4th verse of the preceding chapter, breaks out in the commendation of his spouse and bride, venting the love of his heart toward her in many warm and pathetic expressions; and his discourse is continued to the 10th verse of this chapter, where we find him running out in the commendation of his church in several particulars. He commends her from her spiritual birth and pedigree, calling her *a prince's daughter*, ver. 1. The saints of God are royally descended; by their second birth they are sprung of the ancient of days; born, *not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.* Again, he commends her from the beauty of holiness shining in her walk and conversation; *how beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!* Holiness is the attire of

B

the

2 *The King held in the Galleries.*

the bride of Christ, *she is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.* But time will not allow me to explain the several particulars of her commendation: the words of my text are an abrupt sentence, wherein he expresseth the wonderful complacency which he took in her society, and the overpowering influence that her faith and his faithfulness, his love and her loveliness, had to make him stay and abide in her company; *The king is held in the galleries.* In which words we may notice these particulars;

1. Christ's character and office; he is a person of royal dignity, no less than a king, and *the king* by way of eminency: the church of God owns no other king but Christ, for it is he whom God the Father has set to rule *upon the holy hill of Zion*; and it is a manifest invasion of Christ's prerogative for pope, prelate or potentate to usurp a sovereignty and headship over the church of Christ, an indignity which he will not suffer to pass without suitable resentment: he here owns himself to be the king of *Zion*, and will maintain the dignity of his crown against all that dare invade it. 2. In the words, we have the place of converse between Christ and his blessed spouse and bride, it is *in the galleries*; it is the same word in the original which we have, *Cant. i. 17. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters or galleries of fir.* Where, by galleries in both places, according to the judicious *Durham*, we are to understand the ordinances of the gospel, in which Christ and his people make appointments and keep company one with another. Why gospel-ordinances are thus called, I may shew more particularly afterward. 3. We have the sweet constraint that this royal bridegroom was under to tarry in the galleries with his spouse; he

he here owns, that *he was held*, or bound, as the word signifies, in the galleries; her faith and love laid him under a voluntary arrest to tarry with her, like the disciples going to *Emmaus*, *Luke xxiv. 29.* *She constrained him to abide with her.* An expression much like this, we have, *Cant. iii. 4.* after a weary night of desertion, and much tedious enquiry, she at length meets with her beloved, and there-upon cries out, *I held him, and would not let him go.*

Observe, *That Christ, the blessed king of Zion, condescends sometimes to be held and detained by his people in the galleries of gospel-ordinances.*
The king is held in the galleries.

1. I shall give some account of this royal king.
2. Of the galleries of the king.
3. Of this holding of the king in the galleries.
4. Apply.

The *first* thing proposed is, To give some account of this royal king; but alas, *who can declare his generation?* All I shall do, is only, (1.) To prove that he is a king. (2.) That he is *the* king by way of eminency and excellency.

1st, That he is a king, appears from these particulars;

i. From the Father's designation and ordination; from all eternity the Father designed and ordained this dignity for him as our Mediator: for I do not now speak of his natural and essential, but of his dispensatory or mediatory kingdom; *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion, Psal. ii. 6. and Psal. lxxxix. 27. I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*

2. It appears from the prophecies that went of him before his actual manifestation in our nature.

4 *The King held in the Galleries.*

It was prophesied that the sceptre of *Judah* should terminate in him, *Gen. xlix. 10.* that he should succeed *David*, and sit upon his throne, *Luke i. 32.* compared with *Psal. cxxxii. 11.* *The Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end, Isa. ix. 6.* and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

3. It appears from the types and shadows that prefigured him. He was typified by *Melchisedek*, who is called *the king of righteousness*, and the king of peace; he was typified by *David*, and frequently called by the name of *David* in the psalms and prophets, *Hos. iii. 5.* *The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king.* He was typified by *Solomon*, and by his name he is commonly called in this book of the *song*.

4. It appears from the princely titles that are given him in scripture. He is called *the prince of peace, the king of righteousness, and the king of kings and lord of lords*; and it is God the Father's will, that every one should confess that *Jesus Christ is the Lord*.

5. It appears from the princely prerogatives and royalties that are assigned him by his Father. He has anointed him to be king with an incomparable oil, even *with the oil of gladness*; *I have found David my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him, Psal. lxxxix. 20.* He has installed him in the government with the solemnity of an open proclamation from heaven by *the voice which came from the excellent glory*; *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* He has put a scepter of righteousness and a rod of iron in his hand, whereby he is enabled to defend his subjects, destroy his enemies,

enemies, and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel. He has given him ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom; He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ. He has given him vast territories, even the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession; his dominion reaches from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. It extends, not only to the outward, but likewise to the inward man: he has a legislative authority, he can make and explain and abrogate laws at his pleasure; and when his laws are broken, he has the power of acquitting or condemning committed to him; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. Thus you see he is a king.

2dly, As he is a king, so he is *the* king by way of eminency and excellency; and this will be abundantly clear, if we consider,

1. That *he is the king eternal*, 1 Tim. i. 17. *The everlasting Father*, or the Father of eternity, Isa. ix. 6. Other kings are but of yesterday, mere upstarts, and, like a gourd, their glory withers in a night; but here is a king that is from everlasting to everlasting, the true *alpha and omega*, the beginning and the ending, Micah v. 1. This ruler in Israel, *his goings forth were of old from everlasting*; and his throne is so firmly established, that it shall stand through all periods of time, yea, through the endless years of eternity, Psal. xlv. 6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*

2. He is called *the king immortal*, 1 Tim. i. 17. In the last chapter of the same epistle, *He only hath immortality*. The potentates of the earth are but kings of clay, they and their thrones have their

6 *The King held in the Galleries.*

foundations in the dust, and unto dust shall they return; death, the king of terrors, has raised its trophies of victory over the most renowned potentates; they who made the world to tremble with their sword have been at last vanquished by death: but here is a king that never dies. 'Tis true, death did once by his own consent obtain a seeming victory over him; but in that victory *death itself was plagued, and the grave destroyed*, Hof. xiii. 14. Yea, it was not possible that he should be held in the bonds of death; no, he vanquished death in his own territories, and returned carrying the spoil of his enemy along with him, making open proclamation of the victory which he had gained to all his friends for their encouragement, Rev. i. 17. *I am he that was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death.*

3. He is *the king invisible*. Some eastern princes they were seldom seen of their subjects, to beget the greater reverence and estimation among their subjects; but this was only an affectation of grandeur. Christ the King of Zion, he is indeed visible to the eye of faith by the saints militant, and visible to the eye of sense by the saints triumphant; however the thousand thousandth part of his divine glory can never be seen or searched out by any created understanding, for *He dwells in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. He is an unseen and unknown Christ by the greatest part of the world, as to his worth and excellency; and, as to his corporeal presence, he is invisible by us in this state of mortality, for *the heavens must contain him until the time of the restitution of all things*; and then indeed every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him.

4. He

4. He is *the only blessed and happy king*, 1. Tim. vi. 15. *The blessed and only potentate*. The crowns of other princes have their prickles, which make them to sit uneasy upon their heads; and the toil and trouble of government is sometimes so great, that the very beggar on the dunghil is happier in some respect than the king upon the throne: but *Zion's king* is in every respect happy and blessed; he is the darling of heaven and earth, *the delight of his Father, and the desire of all nations*; his crown does not totter, his subjects do not rebel, he is happy in them, and they in him; *Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed*.

5. He is *the absolute and universal king*. His kingdom is universal in respect of all persons; the highest potentate, as well as the meanest beggar, are the subjects of his empire. This is his royal name *written on his thigh and vesture, the king of kings, and lord of lords*, Rev. xix. 16. Whenever he will, he casts the mighty out of their seats, and advances them of low degree; sets the beggar on the throne, and causeth the king to sit on the dunghil; *He cuts off the spirits of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth*. Again, his government is universal in respect of all places. We read of several potentates who have grasped at universal monarchy, but never any of them attained it, tho' indeed they extended their dominions far and wide; but here is a king whose empire reaches to heaven, earth and hell. Again, it is universal in respect of all times, *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end*.

I might tell you further, to illustrate the eminency of this king, that he is the king of glory, the almighty king, the king of saints, the king of nations: but, from what has been said, we may see

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that he is a king of incomparable excellency, and what a honour it is to be with him, and to hold him in the galleries. But I go on to

The *second* thing proposed, which was, to speak a little of the galleries wherein this royal king makes appointments and keeps company with his people. We read, *Song* i. 4. of the *chambers of the king*; and *Song* ii. 4. of the *king's banqueting-house*, or cellars of wine, into which the spouse had been brought; the same is called here *the galleries of the king*, viz. these ordinances in which the Lord Jesus reveals himself to his people in the house of their pilgrimage. Here I will only, (1.) mention a few of these galleries. (2.) Enquire why ordinances are compared to galleries. I will only mention these few.

1. There is the secret gallery of *meditation*, wherein *David* found *God's loving-kindness to be better than life*, and had his soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

2. There is the gallery of *prayer*, wherein *Jacob* wrestled with the angel of the covenant, and, like a prince, prevailed for the blessing.

3. There is the gallery of *reading of the scriptures*, wherein the *Ethiopian Eunuch* got such a discovery of the promised Messiah, as made him go on his way rejoicing.

4. There is the gallery of *Christian converse* about soul-matters, wherein the disciples going to *Emmaus* had such a meeting with Christ as made their hearts burn within them.

5. There is the gallery of *preaching*, or of *hearing* of the word preached, by the foolishness of which God saveth them that believe. Here it was that *Lydia's* heart was opened. And,

6. The

6. The *sacraments* of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper, are galleries wherein Zion's king displays his glory before his people; the last of these is by way of eminency called the *communion*, not only because therein the people of God have communion one with another, but because therein *they have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

2dly, As to the second thing here; why are these ordinances compared to galleries? I answer,

1. Galleries are magnificent apartments of royal and stately buildings; so there is a divine magnificence in the ordinances of the gospel, when countenanced with the presence of the great master of assemblies. 'Tis true, they appear mean and contemptible in the eyes of a profane world, who are strangers to the power of godliness; but *the man who has his senses spiritually exercised to discern good and evil*, sees a divine greatness and magnificence in them, suitable to the state and royalty of *the prince of the kings of the earth*: and when the man is admitted to see the power and glory of God in them, he cannot but join issue with *Jacob*, saying, *This is none other but the house of God, and gate of heaven*, Gen. xxviii. 17.

2. Galleries are lightfome and pleasant apartments. O how pleasant and lightfome are ordinances to a gracious soul! Let a child of God be where he will, he reckons it but a dry and thirsty land where no water is, if he be not admitted to the galleries of ordinances, *Psal. lxiii. 1, 2.* See how the same holy man expresses his delight in ordinances, *Psal. lxxxiv. 1.* *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!* I am sure this will be the language of every soul that has been in the galleries with the king this day.

3. Galleries are places of walk and converse, as is plain from *Ezek. xli. 15*. When a king or great man designs to be familiar with his friend, he will take a turn with him in the galleries; so it is in gospel ordinances that Christ doth walk and converse with his people. Here it is that he gives them audience, allows them to be free and familiar with him, draws by the vail, communicates the secrets of his covenant, and mysteries of his kingdom, which are hid from the wise and prudent of the world.

4. Galleries are places of publick feasting and entertainment of friends; so it is in the mount of gospel-ordinances that the Lord has provided for his people, *a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined*. Here it is that Christ says to his people, *Eat, O friends. and drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!* Thus I have given you some account of the galleries of the king.

The *third* thing proposed was, to speak to the holding of the king in the galleries, which is what I had principally in view: and here I will shew what this holding of Christ supposes and implies, both on the believer's part, and on Christ's part.

1st, What does it suppose and imply on the believer's part?

1. It necessarily supposes a meeting with Christ in the galleries; for no person can hold that which they never had: you that never knew what it was to enjoy communion with Christ in his ordinances, this doctrine is a hidden mystery to you.

2. It supposes an high esteem of Christ, a love to, and liking of his company. We are at no pains to hold these whose company we care not for; but, when

when we are pressing a friend to stay with us, it says that we value his company. Sirs, there are various opinions about Christ among the hearers of the Gospel. The profane world, they look upon him as a severe and tyrannical master, and therefore *they will not have this man to reign over them; they say to the Almighty, depart from us.* Again, carnal, lukewarm professors *see no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired;* and therefore they are ready to say with the daughters of Jerusalem, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* They cannot see any taking excellency in the king of Zion. But it is otherwise with the believer; the glory and beauty of Christ darkens all created excellency in his eye; his language is, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. He is as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, the standard-bearer among ten thousand.*

3. On the believer's part, this holding of Christ supposes a fear of losing him, or of being deprived of his company. The soul that has met with Christ is afraid of a parting. 'Tis true, the believer has no ground to fear the loss of Christ's real and gracious presence, for the union between Christ and him is indissolvable; that promise can never fail, *I will never leave nor forsake thee.* But, as for his sensible and comfortable presence, they both may, and frequently do lose it; the child of light many times walks in darkness. Now, it is the loss of this presence of Christ that the soul fears, when it is concerned to hold or bind the king in the galleries: neither is this a fear of despondency, but a fear of activity and diligence.

4. It supposes a seeming willingness in Christ to withdraw from his people after their sweetest enjoyments. Many times Christ's carriage, in his dispensa-

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penfations towards his people, feems to have a language much like that to *Jacob*, when he faid to him, *let me go* ; or like his carriage towards the two difciples going to *Emmaus*, *He made as if he would leave their company, and go on in his way*. And his carriage feems to have this language, efpecially when he challenges them for the bad entertainment they have formerly given him, when he lets loofe the tempter to buffet them after fignal manifefiations, or when he meafures out fharp troubles and afflictions to them ; in all thefe cafes he feems as it were to be turning about the face of his throne from them.

5. It implies a holy folitude, and earneft defire of foul to have his prefence continued. When Chrift is hiding, there is nothing the believer defires more than his return, *O that I knew where I might find him !* And when they have found him, there is nothing they defire more than to keep his company, or that he would not be any more to them as a ftranger or wayfaring man. O fays the foul, when it gets a meeting with the Lord Jefus, *A bundle of myrrhe is my well beloved unto me, he fhall lye all night between my breasts*, *Cant. i. 13*. As if fhe had faid, if he will ftay with me, I will deny him nothing I can afford, I will entertain him with the higheft evidences of cordial affection.

6. It implies an ardent breathing of foul after more and more nearnefs to Chrift, and further difcoveries of him. There is not fuch a high difcovery of Chrift attainable in this life, but there is ftill a ftep beyond it. The believer would always have more of Chrift, *Cant. ii. 5*. The fpoufe there is brought into the banqueting-houfe, and allowed to feaft and feed liberally upon the redeemer's love, and to fit down under his difplayed banner ;

ner ; and yet at that very instant she cries out, *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.* As if she had said, let me lye down among these comforts ; let me roll myself perpetually among the blessed apples of the tree of life. They who have got so much of Christ, as to be tyr'd of his company, they never knew what his presence was.

7. It implies a firm resolution not to part with his company ; *I held him*, says the spouse, *and I would not let him go*, Song iii. 4. The like we see in *Jacob*, *I will not let thee go until thou bless me* ; that is, I am resolved, that thou and I shall not part, cost what it will.

8. It implies a cleaving or adhering to Christ with the whole strength and vigour of the soul.

Question. How, or wherein does the soul put forth its strength in cleaving to Christ ? I answer, it does it by these three especially ;

1. By the lively exercise of faith. Hence faith is called an apprehending of Christ, and a cleaving to him, as *Barnabas* exhorts the Christians at *Antioch* to *cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart.* The poor soul says to Christ in this case, as *Ruth* did to *Naomi*, *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.* An instance of this cleaving to Christ we have in the *Canaanitish* woman ; she, as it were, clasps about him, and will by no means let go her hold, notwithstanding all repulses.

2. The soul binds or holds Christ in the galleries by sincere and ardent love. Love is a very uniting affection ; by this, one soul cleaves to another. As *Shechem's* soul did cleave to *Dinah*,
and

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and *Jonathan's* to *David*; so by love the soul cleaves to Christ, and this is a cord that cannot be easily broken, *Cant. viii. 7. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.* See for this also, *Rom. viii. 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? &c.*

3. The soul cleaves to Christ by fervent and ardent prayer. *Jacob* he held the angel of the covenant, and would not let him go, *Hos. xii. 3. 4. By his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; for he wept and made supplication.* The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man has a strange prevalence with Christ; it offers a holy kind of violence to him, and so binds him in the galleries that he cannot depart. Thus you see what it implies on the believer's part.

2dly, What does it imply on Christ's part? *The king is held in the galleries.*

1. It implies amazing grace and condescendency toward the work of his own hands; *He humbles himself, even when he beholds things which are in heaven*; much more when he bows the heavens, and walks with his people in the galleries of ordinances; and yet more when he is held by them in the galleries, this is such strange condescension, that *Solomon* the greatest of kings, and the wisest of men, he wondred at it, and wise men do not wonder at trifles; *Will God (says he) in very deed dwell with men on earth!*

2. It implies Christ's great delight in the society of his people. He loves to be among them; where two or three of them are met in his name, he will be in the midst of them: *He rejoiced from all eternity in the habitable parts of the earth, and his*

his delights were with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31.

3. It implies, that there are certain cords which have a constraining Power to stay him in his people's company; and sure they must be strong cords indeed wherewith omnipotency is bound. I mention two or three.

(1.) He is bound by the cord of his own faithfulness, which he has laid in pawn in the promise. He has promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; and he will not deny his word, his covenant he will not break: this was the prevailing argument wherewith Moses detained him in the camp of Israel, when he was threatening utterly to consume that wicked people, *Exod. xxxii. 13. Let me alone, saith the Lord to Moses, that I may consume them. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven.* He binds him with his own covenant, ratified with the solemnity of an oath.

(2.) He is bound in the galleries by the cord of his own love. As a compassionate mother cannot leave her child, when it cleaveth to her and clasps about her; so Christ's compassionate heart will not let him leave his people, his love to them surpasses the love of the most compassionate mother or tender-hearted parent; *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me,* Isa. xlix. 15, 16.

(3.) He is bound to them by the bond of marriage; *Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name: he has betrothed them to himself in righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness and mercy;*
and

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and *He rejoiceth over them, as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride*: and because of this he will not, he cannot, leave them.

The *fourth* thing was, the application of the doctrine; and the first *use* is of *information*. Is it so that *Zion's king* is sometimes held in the galleries of gospel-ordinances? Then,

1st, See hence the happiness and dignity of the saints of God beyond the rest of the world. We reckon that person highly honoured, who is admitted to the king's presence-chamber, and to walk with him in his galleries; *this honour have all the saints*, either in a greater or lesser degree. *Verily our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*: and therefore I may infer, that they are *the excellent ones of the earth, and more excellent than their neighbour*. Ever since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.

2^{dly}, See hence why the saints put such a value and estimate on gospel-ordinances. *David* every where declares his esteem of them; *I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwells*. He would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of sin. Why, what is the matter? The plain matter is this, they are the galleries where *Zion's king* doth walk and manifest his glory unto his subjects, *Psal. xxvii. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord*. I pass other uses, and go on to a

Second use of this doctrine, and that is by way of *tryal* and *examination*. My friends, you have been in the galleries of the king of *Zion*, but that is not enough; and therefore let me ask, Have you been in the galleries with the king? and have you been holding

holding the king in the galleries? There are many poor ignorant creatures, who, if they are allowed to come to a communion-table, think all is right and clear between God and them, like the whore, *Prov. vii. 14. Peace-offerings are with me, this day have I paid my vows.* But, O sirs, remember persons may get into the outer galleries of ordinances, and never get into the inner gallery of communion with the Lord Jesus. For your trial as to this matter, I shall only propose a few questions to you.

Quest. 1. What did you hear in the galleries? What said the king unto you? For, as I told you, the galleries of ordinances are the place of audience, where the king of *Zion* converses with his people; and readily, if he hath spoken with you, you will remember what he said: for he speaks as never man spake, he has the tongue of the learned, and his words are as goads and nails fastned in a sure place. The spouse, we find, she had been in the chamber of presence, and in the banqueting house: She tells that the king spake with her, and she remembers what he said, *Cant. ii. 10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.* So then, did the king speak with you in the galleries? did he speak a word of conviction, or a word of comfort, a word of peace, or a word of consolation? or whatever it be. *Quest.* How shall I know that it was his voice, and not the voice of a stranger? *Ans.* The sheep of Christ, they have a natural instinct whereby they know his voice, it has a different sound from the voice of a stranger; and, if you be the sheep of Christ, you will know it better than I can tell you it by words. When he speaks, he makes the heart to burn; and you will be ready to say with the disciples,

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Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us in the galleries? His words have kindled a flame of love, that many waters cannot quench; a flame of zeal for his glory, a flame of holy joy, so that you will be ready to say with David, God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice. When he speaks, he makes the soul to speak, whose lips were formerly closed; for his voice makes the lips of them that are asleep to speak. If he had said, Seek ye my face; your souls have echoed, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. If he had said come; thy soul has answered, Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God. If he has spoken peace to you this day in the galleries, you will be concerned not to return again unto folly; you have been made to say with Ephraim, What have I any more to do with Idols?

Quest. 2. I ask, What did you see in the galleries. Many sights are to be seen in the galleries of ordinances, and particularly in that of the Lord's supper: here *the lamb of God* is to be seen, *which taketh away the sin of the world*; and in a crucified Christ, who is evidently set forth in that ordinance, all the divine attributes and perfections shine with a greater lustre, than in the large volume of the creation. Here we might see the seemingly different claims of mercy and justice, with respect unto fallen man, sweetly reconciled. The healing overture is, that the surety shall die in the room of the sinner; and thus justice shall be satisfied, and mercy for ever magnified. Here you might see the holiness and equity of God's nature sparkling in flames of wrath against him who has made sin for you; the sword awaked, even against the man that is God's fellow, wounds and bruises him for your iniquities. There you might see the power of God spoiling principalities and powers, shaking the foundation of the Devil's

Devil's kingdom, and laying the foundation of a happy eternity for an elect world, in the death and blood of the eternal Son. In this ordinance you might have seen him writing his love in characters of blood; love which has neither brim, bottom nor boundaries. Here he was to be seen, as *the amen, the faithful and true witness*, girt with the golden girdle of faithfulness, sealing the covenant, and confirming it with many. Now, I say, Have you seen any thing of this? are you saying, *We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father?* Did any of these divine rays of Zion's king break forth upon your soul? If so, then I am sure it has had something of a transforming efficacy with it; according to what we have, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *All we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.* Jacob's cattle, you know, by the very working of fancy in the conception, by beholding the piled rods, brought forth their young speckled and spotted. Now, if fancy could work such a resemblance, what must the eye of faith do, when it beholds the glory of God in the face of Christ, *who is the express image of his person?* John i. 14. *The word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And out of his fulness we all received (grace for grace).* 'Tis remarkable, that, by beholding his glory, we receive grace for grace: as the wax receives letter for letter from the seal, or as the child receives member for member from the parent; so, by beholding Christ, we receive grace for grace from him: so as there is never a grace in Christ, when it is seen by faith, but it works something of a parallel grace on the soul. So then, try yourselves

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by this, and you may know whether you have been indeed in the galleries with the king.

Quest. 3. I ask, What have you tasted in the galleries? For, as you heard, galleries are for feasting and entertainment of friends. Now, did the king say to you, or is he yet saying it, *Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved?* Did he make you to eat of the fatness of his house, and to drink of the rivers of his pleasures? *If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, then I am sure you will, *like new born babes, desire and thirst after the sincere milk of the word*: you will be saying, *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples*, let me have more and more of this delicious fare. If you have been feasted with the king in the galleries, the world, and all the pleasures of it, will be as nothing in your eye, in comparison of Christ and the intimations of his love. O, says *David*, when his soul was satisfied as with marrow and fatness, *Thy loving-kindness is better than life*, and all the comforts of life; they are but dung and loss when laid in the balance with him. If you have been feasting in the galleries, you will be desirous that others may share of the feast you have gotten; and, with *David*, be ready to say, *O taste and see that God is good*. You will proclaim the praises of his goodness, as you have occasion, to them that fear him; *come here, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul*. And readily it will be the desire of your soul to abide in his presence, and to dwell, as it were, in the galleries of ordinances. O 'tis good for us to be here! Let us build tabernacles here, said *Peter*, on the mount of transfiguration: that will be the language of thy soul, *Psal. xxvii. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*

Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. So much for an use of trial.

Use third may be in a short word directed to two or three sorts of persons; 1. To you who know nothing of this doctrine, never met with the king in the galleries. 2. To you who have had a comfortable meeting with him. 3. To these who perhaps are complaining, *I sought him, but I found him not.*

1st, To you who never yet knew what it was to have a meeting with Zion's king in the galleries of gospel-ordinances, and perhaps, *Gallio* like, you care for none of these things; to you I shall only say,

1. Your condition is truly sad and lamentable beyond expression or imagination; you are *Aliens to Israel's common-wealth, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world: you are in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*, under the curse of God, and condemnation of the law, and absolute power of *Satan*, who rules in the children of disobedience; you are lying within the sea-mark of God's wrath; and, if you die in this condition, you will drink the dregs of the cup of his indignation through all eternity.

2. If you have in this case adventured to the galleries of a communion-table, you have run a very dreadful risk; you have adventured to the king's presence without his warrant, and without the wedding-garment of imputed righteousness, or of inherent holiness; and therefore have run the risk of being bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness: you have been eating and drinking judgment to your own souls, and are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. And therefore,

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3. For the Lord's sake, let me beseech you to repent of your wickedness. Flee out of your lost and miserable condition, flee to the horns of the altar: we declare to you, that there is yet hope in *Israel* concerning you. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon,* Isa. lv. 7.

A second sort of persons are these who have this day had a meeting with *Zion's king* in the galleries of ordinances. I shall only offer a word of Exhortation to you, and of advice;

1. A word of exhortation. Have you met with the king in the galleries? O then be exhorted to hold him, and bind him in the galleries; take him with you from the more open and solemn galleries of publick ordinances, unto the more private and secret galleries of prayer, meditation, conference and the like; follow the spouse's practice when she found him, *She held him, and would not let him go, till she brought him into her mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived her,* To engage you to hold him, take these motives;

Mot. 1. Consider his invaluable worth and excellency. The tongues of angels, setting aside men, do but falter and stammer when they speak of him. His worth is best known by the character he gives of himself in his word: view him absolutely in himself; *He his the only begotten of the Father, the mighty God, the prince of peace*: view him comparatively; *He is fairer than the children of men, as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood; the standard-bearer among ten thousand*: view him relatively; *He is thy head, thy husband, thy friend, thy father, thy elder-brother, thy surety, shepherd and redeemer*; and, in a word, he is *All and in all*; and should not this make you to hold him?

2. Consider, that thy happiness, believer, lies in the enjoyment of him. What is it, do ye think, first, that constitutes the happiness of heaven thro' eternity? It is Christ's presence, a mediator, the king of *Zion*, manifesting his heart-charming beauty unto saints and angels thro' eternity. And what is it that raises the poor soul to the very suburbs of glory while in the wilderness? it is Christ manifesting himself in a sensible way to the soul, O this, this is it that fills the soul with *joy unspeakable and full of glory!* The advantages that do attend his presence with the soul are great and glorious, a cabinet of counsel attends his presence: he brings light with him, and no wonder, for he is the *sun of righteousness*: the vail and face of the covering is rent when Christ comes, and darkness is turned into light; his presence has a mighty influence upon the believer's work in the wilderness; the believer then *rides upon the high places of Jacob*; he runs swiftly *like the chariots of Aminadab*. His presence inspires with courage and strength, it makes *the feeble soul as David, and David as the angel of God*; it gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might. The soldier fights with courage when his captain is at hand; the poor believer is not afraid to encounter the king of terrors himself, when he is holding Christ in the arms of faith, *Psal. xxiii. 4. Yea, tho' I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* So let this encourage you to hold him.

3. Consider at what a dear rate this privilege was purchased for thee. Before Christ could pay thy soul a visit in the galleries, he behaved to swim a river and ocean of blood, to tread the wine-press

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of his Father's wrath. Justice had rolled insuperable mountains in his way, and these mountains he must pass, and make as a plain, before he could shew himself in the galleries to thy soul. Does not this oblige you to entertain him, and give him welcome when come?

4. If you quit your hold of him, and suffer him to depart, it may cost you very dear before you get another meeting with him. It is true, *His kindness shall never depart from thee, the covenant of his peace shall never be removed*; his gracious presence can never be lost, but his quickning, comforting, strengthening, and upholding presence may be lost; and even this may be of very dreadful consequence. As his presence is a heaven upon earth, so sometimes a hell upon earth follows his absence. *Job*, through his hiding, is made to go mourning without the sun; yea, to such a pass is he brought, through the frowns of God's countenance, that he is made to cry, *The arrows of the almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirits: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me*. And see what a pass *Heman* is brought to, under desertion, *Psal: lxxxviii. 6, 7, 15. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. And again, While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted*. Let all these considerations, and many others I might name, quicken your diligence in holding the king in the galleries.

2. I come to offer you a few advices, in order to your holding the king in the galleries, and maintaining his presence with you.

(1.) See that you keep his lodging clean, and beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw. This was the practice of the spouse after she had

had obtained a meeting with Christ, *Cant.* iii. 5. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the kinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.* Particularly, there are two or three evils that you should carefully guard against. Beware of security. If you were paying a visit to your relation, you would think him tired of your company, if he should fall asleep beside you. Has Christ paid a visit to thy soul, and wilt thou fall asleep in his very presence and company? This is very provoking to the Lord Jesus, *Cant.* v. 3. the spouse there entertains Christ's visit with sloth; *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them;* But what comes of it? Christ withdrew, ver. 6. *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* Beware of turning proud of your attainments: pride of gifts, pride of grace, pride of attainments is what Christ cannot away with; he gives grace to the humble, but he resisteth the proud, and beholdeth them afar off. Beware of worldly-mindedness, or suffering your hearts to go out immoderately after the things of time; for this is displeasing to the Lord, and intercepts the light of his countenance, *Isa.* lvii. 17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wrath, and smote him; I hid me, and was wrath.* The friendship of this world is enmity with God. Beware of unbelief the root of all other evils, and particularly the root and source of distance and estrangement between Christ and the soul; for an evil heart of unbelief causes to depart from the living God. In a word, keep a strict watch and guard against every thing that may defile the lodging of Christ in thy soul. Under the law, God appointed porters to
keep

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keep watch at the doors of the temple, that nothing might enter in to defile that house, which was the dwelling-place of his name. Thy soul and body is the temple wherein Christ dwells by his holy spirit, and therefore guard against every thing that may defile it, and provoke him to depart ; for, *if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,* 1 Cor. iii. 17.

2. If you would hold the king in the galleries, it is necessary that grace be kept in a lively exercise ; for these are the spikenard and spices that send forth a pleasant smell in his nostrils. Let faith be kept in exercise ; let thy eye be continually on him ; he is exceedingly taken with the looks of faith, *Cant. iv. 9. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse ; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.* Keep the fire of love burning upon the altar of thy heart ; for Christ loves to dwell in a warm heart, 1 *John. iv. 16. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Maintain a holy and evangelical tenderness and melting of heart for sin ; for *the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.* And let hope be kept up in opposition to a sinking despondency. Christ does not love to see his friends drooping in his company ; no, no ; *He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in those that hope in his mercy.*

3. If you would have Christ staying with you in the galleries, you must put much work in his hand ; for Christ does not love to stay where he gets not employment. Hast thou any strong corruption to be subdued ? Tell him of it ; for this is one part of his work, to subdue the iniquities of his people. Hast thou no sin to be pardoned, the
guilt

guilt whereof has many time stared thee in the face? Tell him of it; for *his name is JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins.* Hast thou no want to be supplied? Tell him of it; for there is all fulness in him, fulness of merit and spirit, fulness of grace and truth. He has a liberal heart, and he devises liberal things. Hast thou no doubts or difficulties to be resolved? Tell him your doubts; for *he is an interpreter among a thousand.* Employ him, not only for yourselves, but for others; employ him for your mother-church; intreat him to come *unto your mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived you;* That he would break these heavy Yokes that are wreathed about her neck at this day; That he may build up the walls of his *Jerusalem*, make her a peaceable habitation, and the praise of the whole earth; That he may take the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, I mean such teachers and preachers as are troubling the peace of the church, and obstructing the progress of the gospel with their new-fangl'd opinions. But I must not insist.

3. A third sort of persons I proposed to speak to, were these who are perhaps complaining, that they have been attending in the galleries of ordinances, and particularly at a communion-table; yet they cannot say, dare not say, that they were privileged to see the king's face. Alas! may some poor soul be saying, I thought to have got a meeting with *Zion's king*, but hitherto I have mist my errand: *The comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me; and I, whither shall I go?* Ans. I shall only suggest a word of encouragement and advice unto such of the Lord's people as may be in this case.

(1.) Then, do not think thy case unprecedented. Poor soul, what thinkest thou of *David, Asaph, Heman,*

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Heman, yea, of Christ himself? (2.) Altho' Zion's king may hide himself for a little, yet he will not always hide, *lest the spirit should fail before him*, Psa. xxx. 4, 5. *Sing unto the Lord, (O ye saints of his) and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but for a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* Isa. liv. 7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer.* (3.) Perhaps the king has been in the galleries with thy soul, when yet thou wast not aware that it was he. He was with *Jacob* at *Bethel*, and he wist it not; He was with the disciples going to *Emmaus*, and yet they mistook him. *Quest.* How shall I know whether the king has been in the galleries with my soul? For answer,

1. Art thou mourning and sorrowing over thy apprehended loss? Does it grieve thee at thy very heart to think that thou shouldst be at *Jerusalem*, and not see the king's face; at the king's table, and not have the king's company? If this be real matter of exercise to thee, thou dost not want his gracious presence, tho' thou art not aware; for *he is ever nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.* Christ is at *Mary's* hand when she is drown'd in tears for the want of his company, and saying, *They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

2. Hast thou got a further discovery of thine own emptiness, poverty and nakedness; and is thy soul abased and laid in the dust on this account? This says Christ has been present; for he comes in a work of humiliation, as well as in a work of consolation.

consolation. Perhaps the devil is condemning, the law is condemning, conscience is condemning thee, and thou art condemning thyself as fast as any : be not discouraged, Christ is not far away, *Psal. cix. 31. He stands at the right-hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.*

3. Art thou justifying the Lord, and laying the blame of thy punishment upon thyself, as *David, Psal. xxii. 1, 2, 3. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry to thee in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

4. Is thy hunger and thirst after Christ increased by thy apprehended want of his gracious presence? This says that he has been really present, for his blessing is upon thee, *Mat. v. 6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.* And know for thy comfort, that *he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good things.*

5. Art thou resolved to wait on him and keep his way, although he hide his face and withdraw his sensible presence? Christ has not been altogether a stranger; no, *He is good to them that wait on him, and to the soul that seeks him, and is really nigh to all that call on him in truth.*

2dly, A word of advice, and only in so many words.

1. Give not way to despondency; argue against it, as *David, Psal. xlii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

2. See that you justify God, and beware of charging him foolishly. See what was *David's* practice,
and

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and herein he was a type of Christ himself, *Psal.* xxii. he is under hidings, v. 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? &c.* What follows? v. 3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

3. Trust in a hiding God, as *Job* did, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,* *Job.* xiii. 15. This the Lord calls his people to, under darkness, *Isa.* l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

4. Wait on him in the galleries of ordinances, hang about the posts of his door; and, when you do not find him in publick, seek him in private, and in the retired galleries of secret prayer, meditation and conference: and go a little further, like the spouse, above and beyond all duties and ordinances, to himself; *He is good to them that wait on him, and to the soul that seeks him: they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* The spouse did so, and at length she found him whom her soul loved, *Cant.* iii. 4. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go.* The Lord blefs his word.

* *The Believer Exalted in imputed
Righteousness;*

B E I N G

A S E R M O N preached at the celebration of
the Lord's Supper, at *Largo*, Sabbath-Morning,
June 4, 1721.

By Mr. E B E N E Z E R E R S K I N E.

*Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and
strength: even to him shall men come, and all that are
incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall
all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

Isa. xlv. 24, 25.

P S A L. lxxxix. 16.

*In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:
and in thy righteousness shall they be ex-
alted.*

TH E psalmist, in the beginning of this
psalm, having run out at great length in
the praise and commendation of the God of *Israel*,
he comes, from the 15th verse of the psalm, to
declare

* *The subject of the following discourse is high, noble and excellent.
But my design at that time, being only to preface a little before the Action-
sermon, by that eminent and worthy servant of Christ, Mr. William
Moncrief; I took care to abridge my thoughts upon it as much as possible.
I have*

declare the happiness of his *Israel*, or of true believers, of whom *Israel* according to the flesh were a type.

Now God's *Israel* are a happy people, upon several accounts. *First*, because they are privileged *to know the joyful sound*, in the beginning of the 15th verse: the gospel has a joyful sound, a sound of peace, a sound of life, a sound of liberty and salvation. You are all privileged to hear this sound, with your bodily ears; but the great question is, if you do know it, understand it, and give faith's entertainment to it. Alas, *Isaiah's* lamentation may but too justly be continued, with respect to the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, *Who hath believed our report?* 2dly, God's *Israel* are a happy people, because they *walk in the light of his countenance*, in the close of the 15th verse: they are privileged with the special intimations of his love, which puts more gladness in their hearts, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound. 3dly, Whatever discouragement they may meet with from the world, yet still they have ground of re-

I have since handled the same text, in my ordinary course at large: but the discourse having been quarrelled, as was hinted in the preface to that on Rev. iii. 4. I judged it fit to send it abroad, in the very same dress in which, to the best of my remembrance, it was delivered. It is not accuracy of stile or method I set up for, but the edification of the poor, to whom the gospel is preached; and therefore shall contend with none upon those heads. But as for the doctrines here delivered, if I durst not hazard my own salvation upon the truth of them, I had never adventured to preach them, as the truths of God to others. I am fully persuaded that one great reason why the gospel has so little success in our day, is, because our discourses generally are so little calculate for pulling down our own, and exalting the righteousness of Christ, as the alone foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Our Sermons lose their savour and efficacy for salvation, if this be wanting: and I humbly think the great apostle Paul was of this mind, Rom. i. 16, 17. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth. And if any ask, Whence comes the gospel to have such power to salvation? He immediately answers, for therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith.

joicing in their God. *In thy name shall they rejoice all the day*; and, *Thanks be unto God*, says the apostle, *Who always causeth us to triumph in Christ*. 4thly, Their happiness is evident from this, that they are dignified and exalted above others, by the immaculate robe of a surety's righteousness; as you see in the words of my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*.

In which words briefly we may notice, *first*, The believer's promotion, he is *exalted*. In the first *Adam* we were debased unto the lowest hell; the crown having fallen from our heads: but in Christ, the second *Adam*, we are again exalted, yea, exalted as high as heaven, for *we sit together with him in heavenly places*, says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer, who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ his glorious head and representative; and yet it is indisputably true, that *we sit together with him in heavenly places*, Eph. ii. 6. Yea, in him, *He rules the nations with a rod of iron*, and triumphs over, and treadeth upon all the powers of hell. 2dly, We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation, it is *in thy righteousness*. Is it not in any righteousness of his own: no, this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but dung and loss, filthy rags, dogs meat: but it is in *thy righteousness*, that is, the righteousness of God; as the apostles calls it, *Rom. i. 17. The righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature, *Psal. xi. 7. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness*. Sometimes for his rectoral equity or distributive justice, which he exerciseth

in the government of the world, rewarding the good, and punishing evil-doers, *Psal. xix. 2. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening, *Psal. xxxvi. 56. Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds, thy righteousness is like the great mountains.* Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ the Son of God as our surety and mediator brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners: and this, as I said, is frequently called the righteousness of God; and in this sense I understand it here in the text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

The observation is much the same with the words themselves, namely, *That in or by the righteousness of Christ, believers are exalted.* Or thus, *Whatever honour or happiness believers are exalted to, the righteousness of Christ is the ground and foundation of it:* it is all owing to the compleat obedience, and meritorious death of the ever-blessed surety.

This is the foundation, which God hath laid in Zion, upon which all our happiness in time and through eternity is built. I have not time now to adduce pallel texts of scripture for the confirmation of this doctrine, neither can I stand upon a long prosecution of it, considering what great work you have before you throughout this day: all I shall do, shall be only, in the first place, to offer a few propositions concerning this righteousness, that you may understand both the nature and necessity of it. *Secondly*, give you a few of its properties, to clear its excellency. *Thirdly*, speak a little of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness. *Fourthly*, apply.

For

For the *first*, To offer a few propositions concerning this righteousness, for clearing its nature and necessity. *1st*, then, you would know, that God having made man a rational creature, capable of moral government, he gave him a law suited to his nature, by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant, with a promise of life upon the condition of perfect obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience, *Gen. ii. 17*. Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocency.

2dly, *Adam*, and all his posterity in him, and with him, having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse and penalty of it; so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible, until justice be satisfied, and the honour of the broken law repaired; the law and justice of God are very peremptory, and stand upon a full satisfaction and reparation, otherwise heaven's gates shall be shut and eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way, to keep us from access unto the paradise that is above.

3dly, While man in these circumstances was expecting nothing but to fall an eternal sacrifice unto divine justice, the eternal Son of God, in his infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a mediator and surety; offering not only to take our nature, but to take our law-place, to stand in our room and stead; whereby the whole obligation of the law, both penal and preceptive, did fall upon him: that is, he becomes liable and obliged both to fulfil the command, and to endure the curse of the covenant of works which we had violated. And here, by the way, 'tis fit to let you

know, that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah, to admit a surety in our room; for, had he stood to the rigour and severity of the law, he would have demanded a personal satisfaction, without admitting of the satisfaction of a surety: in which case, *Adam* and all his posterity had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice, throughout eternity. But glory to God in the highest, who not only admitted of a surety, but provided one, and laid help upon one that is mighty.

4thly, Christ, the eternal Son of God, being in the fulness of time made of a woman, and made under the law; as our surety, he actually, in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the covenant of works: that is, in a word, he obey'd all the commands of the law, and endured the curse of it, and thereby brought in a compleat law-righteousness; where guilty sinners are justified before God: and this is the righteousness by which we are exalted, by his active and passive obedience he magnifies the law and makes it honourable, and the Lord declares himself to be well pleased for his righteousness sake.

5thly, Although Christ obeyed the law, and satisfied Justice, and thereby brought in an everlasting law-righteousness, for a whole elect world; yet the elect of God are never exalted by virtue of this righteousness, till in a day of power they are brought to receive it by faith, and to submit to it for justification before God. We disclaim that *Antinomian* error of an actual justification from eternity, or yet of a formal justification, bearing date from the death of Christ. We own indeed, with all protestant sound divines, that it was the purpose of God to justify his elect from eternity, and that all the elect were represented by Christ in
his

his obedience unto the death : but that they are actually justified before conversion, or before their application by faith unto the blood of Jesus, is impossible ; because the sentence of the broken law stands always in force against them, till they actually believe in the Son of God ; for he that believes not, is condemned already : and how can they be both justified and condemned at the same time ? 'Till then, they are children of wrath, even as others.

6thly, This righteousness of the surety is conveyed unto us by imputation, as is abundantly plain from many places of scripture, particularly *Rom. iv. 6, 11, 12, 23, 24.* God reckons what the surety did in our room unto us ; so that his righteousness becomes as much ours for justification before God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in our own persons. Now, this imputation of the surety's righteousness runs principally upon these two or three things. 1st, Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the surety of an elect world : then it was that he gave bond to the Father, to pay their debt, in the red gold of his blood ; saying, *Sacrifice and offering thou did not desire ; lo I come, I delight to do thy will,* 2dly, It's grounded upon the actual imputation of our sins unto him. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.* There is a blest exchange of places between Christ and his people ; he takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of his righteousness, *2 Cor. v. 21. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 3dly, This imputation goes upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the

poor soul is determined in a day of power to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of faith, Christ and he do that very moment coalesce into one body. He becomes a branch of the noble vine; a member of that body whereof Christ is the glorious head of eminence, influence and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the mediator's righteousness is spread over him, whereby he is not only freed from condemnation, but for ever sustained as righteous in the sight of God, 1 Cor. i. 30. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

The second general head was, to offer a few properties of this righteousness in which believers are exalted, from whence its excellency will appear.

1st, Then, it's an every way *perfect* and *spotless* righteousness: and how can it be otherwise, seeing it is the righteousness of God? So perfect is it, that the holy law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable thereby, *Isa. xlii. 21.* So perfect is this righteousness, that the piercing eye of infinite justice, cannot find the least flaw in it: yea, justice is so fully satisfied therewith, that God speaks of the soul who is clothed therewith, as though it was in a state of innocence and perfectly freed from sin; *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel.* Indeed, he beholds many spots in the believer, considered in himself; but not a spot is in him, considered as under the covert of this spotless righteousness.

2dly, It is a *meritorious* righteousness. *The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it would have ceased for ever, unless it had been redeemed by this righteousness: for silver, and gold, and such corruptible*

ruptible things could never do it. Lay heaven, and all the glories thereof, in the ballance with this righteousness, they would be all light as a feather compared with it. Heaven is called a purchased inheritance, and this righteousness is the price that bought it. There is such merit in it, that it expiates sins of the blackest hew, and redeems a whole elect world, from wrath and ruin: yea, such is the intrinsick value of it, that had it been so designed, it was sufficient to have redeemed the whole posterity of *Adam*, yea, ten thousand worlds of angels and men, upon a supposition of their existence, and fall. O with what confidence then may a poor soul venture it's eternal salvation upon this bottom !

3dly, It is an incomparable righteousness: there is no righteousness among the creatures that can be compared with it. Compare it with our own righteousness by the law, and the apostle *Paul* will tell us, that he reckoned his pharisaical righteousness before conversion, yea, his own obedience after conversion, but as dung, when laid in the ballance with it. *Phil.* iii. 8. Compare it with *Adam's* righteousness in a state of innocence, or yet with the righteousness of the spotless angels, they are but like glow-worms when compared with this sun: the one is but the righteousness of a creature, but here is the righteousness of God.

4thly, It is a *soul-beautifying* and *adorning* righteousness, *Isa.* lxi. 10. *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.* The poor soul that was black by lying among the pots, when clothed with

this robe, shines as *the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*

5thly, It is an *everlasting* righteousness, as the prophet *Daniel* calls it, Chap. ix. 24. Indeed, this righteousness had no being, save in the purpose and promise of God, till Christ actually appeared in our nature, and satisfied the commands of the law, and demands of justice; however, upon that very *being* that it had in the purpose and promise of God, it became effectual for the justification of all the old-testament saints. This righteousness then, I say, is an *everlasting* righteousness, both as to the contrivance and duration of it. The contrivance of it bears date from the council of peace in the ancient years of eternity: for the surety was set up from everlasting. And as it is everlasting in its root, so also in its fruit; for, upon this righteousness, the saints shall stand and be assol'd, at the day of judgment; and, upon this bottom, they shall have their standing in heaven throughout eternity. The song of the redeem'd for ever will be, *He loved us, and washed us with his blood.*

6thly, It is a *soul-dignifying* and *exalting* righteousness. *Solomon*, Prov. xxv. 5, speaking of equity in the administration of justice, says, that even that kind of *righteousness exalteth a nation*. I am sure this holds true of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as you see in my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*. But this leads to the

Third thing in the method, which was to speak of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness. And here I shall very briefly shew, *First*, what evils it exalts him above. *Secondly*, what happiness and dignity it exalts him to.

First, What evils it exalts him above.

1st, It exalts him above the law as a covenant of works; yea, above both the commanding and condemning

demning power of that covenant. Ye are not *under* the law, says the apostle, but under grace, *Rom. vi. 14.* And if they are not *under* it, it follows that they are exalted above it. Indeed, they are not, and cannot be above it as a rule of duty: no creature can be dispensed from the obligation of yielding obedience to the laws of the great creator; and the believer in a peculiar manner is bound to obey the law of a creator, in the hand of a mediator: but, considering the law as a covenant of works, demanding the debt of obedience as a condition of life, or threatening eternal wrath in case of disobedience, the believer is indeed exalted above it by the righteousness of Christ: and if the law at any time attempt to bring the believer in bondage to it, he is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. The bond-woman *Hagar*, with her offspring of legal fears and terrors, are cast out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, *Gal. iv. 30.* If a believer in Christ shall hear the thunders and curses of mount *Ebal*, or *Sinai*, he has no reason to be affrighted; for Christ by his righteousness hath redeemed from the curse of the law. *Thou art not come to the mount that burned with fire, or unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but thou art come to mount Zion, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel.* The believer is dead to the law by the body of Christ, being married unto a better husband, even him that is raised from the dead.

2dly, By this righteousness the believer is exalted above the world, *Rev. xii. 1.* The woman *cloathed with the sun*, has the *moon under her feet*; which may not only point at the believer's duty to soar heavenward in his affections, but also his privilege
in

in Christ to trample both upon the frowns and flatteries of this lower world; according to that of the apostle, *This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith.*

3dly, By this righteousness he is exalted above the power and malice of satan. Indeed, as long as the believer is on this side of *Jordan*, the Devil will be harassing of him with his fiery darts, and do his utmost to make him go halting to heaven; but, by virtue of this righteousness, namely, the doing and dying of our ever-blessed surety, the devil is both disarmed and destroyed: the head of the old serpent is bruised; for, through death, he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil. And by faith in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, the believer treads satan under his feet; they overcome him by the blood of the lamb.

4thly, By this righteousness the believer is exalted above death. Perhaps thou art in bondage through fear of death; thy heart is like to faint and fail thee, when thou lookest to the swellings of this *Jordan*: but take a view of this righteousness, and thou shalt be exalted above the fears of it; for although thou be liable to the stroke of death, yet by this righteousness thou art freed from the sting of it. What is the sting of death? It is sin. Now Christ he has *finished transgression, and made an end of sin*, by bringing in everlasting righteousness. And therefore thou mayest roll that word like a sweet morsel under thy tongue, *Hos. xiii. 14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction.*

5thly, By this righteousness the believer is exalted above all accusations, from whatever quarter they may come. *Rom. viii. 33.* there the apostle gives

a bold challenge, *Who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* The challenge is universal in respect of all accusers: as if he had said, Is there any in heaven, earth, or hell, that can accuse them? It is universal in respect of all the accused; for the whole elect of God are comprehended, among whom there have been as great sinners, as ever breath'd on God's earth. And it is universal in respect of all crimes. It is not said, Who shall lay this, or that, or the other crime to their charge? But, *any thing*, And what can be more comprehensive? Now, what is the ground of this bold challenge? 'Tis ground on the righteousness of Christ: for, says the apostle, *It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, &c.*

I come *secondly*, to shew, what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted to by virtue of this righteousness. And, in so many words, I only name these two or three particulars, *1st*, He is exalted by it unto a state of peace and reconciliation with God, *Rom, v. 1. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.* God for ever lays aside every grudge in his heart against the soul that is clothed therewith.

2dly, They are exalted by this righteousness unto a state of sonship. Christ was *made under the law, to redeem us that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*, *Gal. iv. 4.*

3dly, Unto a state of fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to him with holy confidence and boldness, *Heb. iv. 14, 16. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance*
of

of faith. Heb. x. 19. &c. *Having such a great high priest over the house of God, let us come with boldness to a throne of grace.* The believer may come under the covert of this righteousness, with as great freedom unto God, as his Father in Christ, as ever Adam could have done in a state of innocence.

4thly, At last thou shalt be exalted to a state of endless glory. For heaven (as I was hinting before) is the purchase of the obedience and death of Christ; and faith acted on this righteousness and satisfaction is the path of life, by which we enter into these rivers of pleasures, and that fulness of joy which is at God's right-hand for evermore.

The *fourth* thing was the *application* of the doctrine. And my first use shall be of *information*, in these few particulars.

1st, Is it so, that in a surety's righteousness, believers are exalted; then see hence, that whatever account the world may make of them as the dross and off-scouring of the earth, yet they are dignified persons in God's reckoning: *Ever since thou was precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.*

2dly, See hence, that the believer has no ground of boasting. Why? Because it is not in his own, but in Christ's righteousness, that he is exalted: *boasting is excluded*, says the apostle; *by what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith*, Rom. iii. 27. If it were by our own doings or obedience that we were exalted, we would have something to boast of: but since it is in his righteousness that we are exalted, we have nothing whereof to glory in our selves. There are three questions that the apostle asks, which may silence all flesh, and put all boasters to an eternal blush, 1 Cor. iv. 7. *Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Why does thou glory, as if thou had not received it,*

it. Let believers themselves pose their souls with those or the like inquiries, when pride begins to arise in their breasts.

3dly, See hence, what obligation we lye under to the Lord Jesus : who, although he was the great law-giver, yet was content to be made under the law ; though he was the Lord of life, yet humbled himself unto the death, to bring in that righteousness by which we are exalted. He was content to be numbered among the transgressors, that we might be counted among the righteous : he was content to become sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God : content to become a curse for us, that the blessing of *Abraham* might rest upon us. O admire this love, which passeth knowledge.

4thly, See hence a noble antidote against a spirit of bondage unto fear. What is it that thou art afraid of, O believer ? Indeed, if thou sin, thou mayest fear the rod of a father ; for he will visit thy transgression with the rod, and thine iniquity with stripes : but art thou afraid of vindictive wrath ? There is no ground for this, *Luke i. 74.* He has delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear ; that is, without all servile and slavish fear of wrath. Art thou afraid of the tempests of mount *Sinai*, there is no ground for that, for the storm brake upon the head of thy surety ; and therefore thou may sing and say, as *Isa. xii. 1.* *Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away.* Art thou afraid lest thou be refused access unto the presence-chamber ? Improve this righteousness by faith, and thou shalt see that the way to the holy of holies is opened, and get the banner of love displayed over thee. When ever the poor believer takes the righteousness of the surety

ty in the hand of faith, and holds it up unto God as a ransom of his own finding, he is so well pleased with it, that his frowns are turned into smiles. In a word, you shall never get rid of a spirit of bondage, till you learn by faith to improve this law-binding righteousness; and then indeed legal fears and terrors do vanish, like the darkness of the night before the rising of the sun.

Use second, Of *reproof* unto all those who are seeking to exalt themselves by a righteousness of their own, like the Jews, Rom. x. 3. *Who went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God.* There are some of the hearers of the gospel, who exalt themselves in a negative righteousness: they are not so bad as others; they are free of gross out-breakings, being no common drunkards, swearers, or sabbath-breakers, and therefore conclude that all is right with them: but first, the pharisee could make this brag, and Paul before conversion could say, that touching the law he was blameless; and yet, when God opened his eyes, he found himself lying under the arrest of justice: for, *when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.* Others are exalting themselves in a moral kind of righteousness: they not only cease to do evil, but do many things that are materially good: they are sober, temperate, just in their dealings, liberal to the poor, good peaceable neighbours; they love every body, and every body loves them; they keep the commandments as well as they can; and this is the ground they are standing upon. But I may say to you, as Christ said to the young man, who told him, *All these things have I kept from my youth up; one thing thou yet lackest.* O what is that? say you. I answer, it is to be brought off from that
rotten

rotten bottom of a covenant of works that ye are standing upon. Ye want to see that ye are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and that ye are legally dead, condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on you. Ye want to see, that *all your own righteousness is as filthy rags*, and to be made to say with the church, *surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*. Others will go further than bare morality; they will abound in the duties of religion, read, hear, pray, communicate, run from sermon to sermon, and upon these things they rest: all these things are good in their proper place; but if you build your hope of acceptance here, you are still upon a covenant of works bottom, seeking righteousness, *as it were by the works of the law*; and while you do so, you do but seek the living among the dead. All your works are but dead works, till you be in Christ; and they will but stand for cyphers in God's reckoning, till you be brought to submit to this righteousness, by which alone guilty sinners can be exalted. Others rely upon a mix'd kind of righteousness: they will freely own that their duties and performances will never exalt them into favour and acceptance with God, but, O, say they, it is Christ and our duties, Christ and our prayers, he and our tears and repentance, that must do it. But believe it, sirs, Christ and the idol of self will never cement. These old rotten rags will never piece in with the white and new robe of the righteousness of the Son of God; and if you adventure to mingle them together, *Christ shall profit you nothing*, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. Others again, they will pretend to renounce all their works and duties, and own with their mouths that it is by faith in Christ only that they hope to be accepted; but tho' they own this with
their

their mouth, yet still their hearts cleave fast unto a covenant of works; they were never *through the law dead to the law*. And when nothing else will do, they will make their own act of believing the righteousness on which they lean for acceptance; which is still a seeking righteousness in themselves: whereas, if ever we be justified before God, we must have it in the Lord Jesus, saying, *in him* will we be justified, and in him alone will we glory. Faith carries the soul quite out of itself; yea, faith renounces its own act in the point of justification. All these and many other rooms and lying refuges hath the devil and our own hearts devised, to lead us off from Christ: but O sirs, believe it, these are but imaginary sanctuaries, and the hail will sweep them away. Nothing but the doing and dying of the surety, apprehended by faith, will ever exalt you into favour and fellowship with God; or acquit you from the curse and condemnation of the broken law: and unless ye betake yourselves to the horns of this blessed altar, to this refuge of God's appointing, you are undone; and you may read your doom, *Isa. l. 11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire; that compass your selves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lye down in sorrow.*

Use third, of *trial*. Is it so, that in Christ's righteousness we are exalted? O then, sirs, try if you be really exalted by this righteousness.

There is the more need to try this now, that you are to approach the table of the Lord; this righteousness is the wedding-garment without which you cannot be welcome guests. And, if you adventure to meddle with the symbols of Christ's body and blood without it, you may expect that the
master

master of the feast will say to you, *Friend how camest thou hither, wanting the wedding-garment?* For your trial, I offer these two or three things. *First*, Hast thou seen thy self condemned by the law or covenant of works? Every man by nature is condemned already, while out of Christ. Now, the ordinary way that God takes of bringing an elect soul into Christ, and under the covering of his righteousness, is by discovering unto him the sentence of condemnation that he is under, by virtue of the broken law; and thus paves the way toward his acceptance of Christ as *the Lord our righteousness*. For thus it is that the law is our school-master to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. The Lord leads the sinner to mount *Zion* by the foot of *Sinai*: the spirit's way is first to convince of sin, and then of righteousness. *2dly*, Has the Lord discovered the surety and his righteousness to thee? And has thy soul found rest here? Perhaps the law and its curses, justice and wrath were pursuing thee; and thou could not find a hole wherein to hide thy head, all refuge failed: at length the Lord drew by the vail, and discovered his righteousness as a sufficient shelter, saying, *Turn into the strong hold, thou prisoner of hope*; and thither thou fled, as unto a city of refuge, saying, *This is my rest, here will I dwell*. Readily, when it comes to this, there is a little heaven of serenity, and joy enters into the soul; so that, if it were possible, it would make heaven and earth to ring with hallelujahs of praise unto God for this unspeakable gift. Does thou not know, O believer, something of this, to thy sweet experience? This says, that in his righteousness thou art exalted. *3dly*, When an arrow of conviction is at any time shot by the hand of God into thy conscience, whereby thy peace and quiet is disturbed,

whither does thou run for ease and relief? The man that is married to the law, he runs unto the law for relief and ease; the law is the thing, that heals him; his prayers, his tears, his reformation, is that which stops the mouth of his conscience: but as for the believer, he can never find rest on this side of the blood of sprinkling; he gets his healing only from under the wings of the sun of righteousness. No other balm will give him ease, but the balm of Gilead; and no other hand can apply it, but the physician there. *4thly*, If you be exalted by imputed righteousness, you will be the real students of gospel-holiness. It is a gross perverting of the gospel, and a turning of the grace of our God into wantonness, for folk to pretend that they are justified by the merit of Christ, while they are not at the same time concerned to be sanctified by the spirit of Christ. Sanctification, or freedom from the power and dominion of sin, is a part, and no small part, of that salvation which Christ has purchased by his obedience and death. *Tit. ii. 14.* *Who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Justification and sanctification go always hand in hand: he who is made of God unto us righteousness, is also made sanctification: we are justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. Try yourselves then by this, whether you be exalted by this righteousness. Are you delivered from the reigning power of sin? At least, is it so far broken, that it is become your burden, under which you groan, saying with the apostle, *Wretched man that I am! who will deliver me from the body of this death?*

Use fourth shall be of *consolation* and encouragement to believers, who are exalted in this righteousness.

ness. By virtue of it, O believer, thou art intitled unto every thing that possibly thou can stand in need of. Whatever grace or mercy thou wants, thou shall have it, if thou do but improve this law-biding righteousness. Wants thou pardoning grace, to take away the guilt of sin? That is one of the gifts of God, thro' the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith: for *he is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to shew forth his righteousness for the remission of sins.* Wants thou to have thy peace with God confirmed? Improve this righteousness by faith: for, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.* Wants thou access unto the holiest? By faith in the blood of Jesus *have we access with boldness.* Wants thou medicinal grace for healing of soul-plagues? Improve this righteousness by faith: for, *by his stripes we are healed.* Out of the side of our gospel-altar comes forth living water, that *healeth* the corrupt and dead sea of indwelling corruption, *Ezek. xlvii.* at the beginning. This is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Wants thou a shadow or covering, to shelter thy weary soul from the scorching heat of divine anger, or of temptation from satan, or tribulation from the world? Improve this righteousness, and sit down under the shadow of it. It is *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* Wants thou courage to look the law, or justice of God in the face? Here is a foundation for it; for under this covering thou may look out with confidence; and say, *Who can lay any thing to my charge?* Wants thou to have the new covenant confirmed to thy soul? Improve this righteousness by faith? for Christ by his obedience and death, *confirmed the covenant with many.* His blood is the blood of the new testament, and

when the soul by faith takes hold of it, the covenant of grace is that moment confirmed unto it for ever. In a word, by virtue of this righteousness, thou may come to a communion table, and to a throne of grace, and ask what thou wilt, our heavenly Father can refuse nothing to the younger brethren, who come to him in their elder brother's garment. By virtue of this righteousness thou may lay claim to every thing, to all the blessings of heaven and eternity: thou did indeed forfeit thy right in the first *Adam*; but the forfeiture is recovered, and the right restored to thee, upon a better ground, namely, upon the obedience and death of the second *Adam*; and thou comest in upon his right. May not all this then revive thy drooping spirit? And make thee take up that song in the text? *In thy name will I rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall I be exalted.*

* *The Humble Soul the peculiar
favourite of Heaven:*

B E I N G

A S E R M O N preached at *Orwell*, on a Fast-
Day before the administration of the Lord's Sup-
per, *July 27, 1721.*

By Mr. E B E N E Z E R E R S K I N E.

*When Men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is
lifting up: and he shall save the humble Person.*

Job xxii. 29.

*Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and
giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore
under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in
due time.*

1 Pet. v. 5, 6.

P S A L. cxxxviii. 6.

*Though the Lord be high, yet hath he res-
pect unto the lowly: but the proud he
knoweth afar off.*

IT is not material to enquire, when, or upon
what occasion this psalm was penn'd: in the
beginning of the psalm, the psalmist enters upon a

* *I thought to have given a short account of what pass, with relation
to this sermon, in the synod of Fife: but this being done upon the matter
by the publication of the act of synod, which pass on that occasion; I judge
it needless.*

*Whether there be any thing of a turbulent or schismatick tendency, in it,
as was represented to the commission of the assembly, May, 1725; I leave
to the impartial world to judge.*

firm resolution to praise the Lord; and he lays down several excellent grounds of praise and thanksgiving through the body of the psalm. As,

First, He resolves to praise God, for the experience he had of his love and faithfulness in the accomplishment of his gracious word of promise unto him, ver. 2. "I will praise thy name for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." God has a greater regard unto the words of his mouth, than to the works of his hand: *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of what he hath spoken, shall never fall to the ground.* Some do understand this of Christ the essential word, in whom he has set his name, and whom he has so highly exalted, that he has given him *a name above every name.*

Secondly, David resolves to praise God, for the experience he had of God's goodness, in hearing his prayers, ver. 3. *In the day when I cried unto thee, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* God granted him a speedy answer, for it was in the very day that he cried, that he was heard: and it was a spiritual answer, he was *strengthened with strength in his soul.* Would you have soul-strength for the work ye have in view: then cry unto him, who is the *strength of Israel*, for it: for, *he gives power to the faint, and increaseth strength to them that have no might.*

Thirdly, He resolves to praise God for the calling of the *Gentiles*, which he foresaw by the spirit of prophecy, ver. 4, 5. The prosperity and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, is what fills the believer's mouth with hallelujahs of praise.

Fourthly, He resolves to bless God for his different ways of dealing with the humble and the proud;

the peculiar favourite of Heaven. 55

proud: for his grace to the one, and his contempt and rejection of the other, in the words which I have read, *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he a respect to the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

'Tis the first part of the verse I design to insist upon. Where we may notice, *First*, the character of the gracious soul, he is a *lowly* person, one that is *emptied*, and *abased* in his own eyes: he sees nothing in himself, either to recommend him to God or man; on which account he is sometimes called *poor in spirit*, Matt. v. 3. he has got something of the mind and spirit of Jesus in him, and so has *learned of him who is meek and lowly*, Matt. 11. 29.

2. We have here, God's transcendent greatness; he is the *high Lord* or *Jehovah*: he is *the high and lofty one, who inhabits eternity, and who dwells in the high and holy place, to which no man can approach.* Who can think or speak of his highness in a suitable manner? It dazzles the eyes of sinful mortal worms, to behold the place *where his honour dwells.* O how infinite is the distance between him and us! *There are none of the sons of the mighty that can be compared unto him; yea, the inhabitants of the earth are before him but as the drop in the bucket, and the small dust in the balance.* He is not only *high* above men, but above angels: cherubims and seraphims are his *ministring spirits.* He is high above the heavens; for *the heaven, yea, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him:* and *he humbles himself when he beholds things that are in heaven.* O sirs, study to entertain high and admiring thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious majesty of God. For *honour and majesty are before his face, strength and beauty are in his tabernacle.*

3dly, You have the amazing grace of this *high God.* Though the distance between him and us be

infinite, yet he hath a regard to the *lowly*. The apostle *Peter* expresseth this by *giving grace to the humble*, 1 Pet. v. 5. God is *good to all*; he distributes the effects of his common bounty, to the good and bad, to the just and unjust; but he reserves his special grace and favour for the meek and *lowly* soul. What further is needful for explication, will occur in the sequel of the discourse,

Observe, *That the lowly and humble soul, is the peculiar favourite of the high God.* Though God be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.

This truth is so evidently founded on the text, that I shall not consume time in adducing other texts of scripture to confirm it: many that I might name will fall in, in the prosecution of the doctrine; which I shall attempt, through grace, in the following method.

First, I shall give some account of this *lowliness* and humility, and shew wherein it consists. *2dly*, Prove, that the humble and lowly soul is the peculiar favourite of heaven. *3dly*, Why God has such respect to the lowly. *4thly*, Lay before you some marks or characters of the lowly and humble soul. *5thly*, Offer some motives pressing you to seek after it. *6thly*, Offer a few directions or advices, how it may be attained.

The *first* thing proposed, is, to give some account of this *lowliness* and humility, that ye may know wherein it consists. Now, *lowliness* being a relative grace, we must consider it in a threefold view: either, 1. As it has a respect unto ourselves; or, 2. As it has a respect unto others; or, 3. As it has a respect unto God.

1st, I say, it may be considered with respect to ourselves. And so it implies,

1. Low and under-rating thoughts of ourselves: the humble soul has low thoughts of his own person; as *David*, *I am a worm, and no man. I am less than the least of thy mercies*, says *Jacob*. He has low thoughts of his pedigree: he is not like the princes of *Zoan*, that valued themselves on this, that they were the *offspring of antient kings*. Some folk think there are none like them, because they are of such a clan, and such a family, they have such lords and great persons for their relations. But the humble soul he makes little account of all these: *What am I?* says *David*, or *what is my father's house? that thou hast brought me hitherto*. He considered himself as the degenerate plant of a strange vine; as a rotten branch of the corrupted and fallen family of *Adam*: he views *the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged*, saying, as in *Psal. li. 5. I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity*. Again, the man has low thoughts of his own abilities for any work or service he is called to in his generation. O says the lowly soul, I see I am nothing, I can do nothing; I cannot of myself think a good thought. I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself, says *Paul*. I cannot read, hear, pray, communicate, meditate, or examine myself: I see such sin and imperfection attending every duty I set about, as may justly provoke a holy God to cast it back like dung upon my face: I am sure *my goodness extendeth not unto him*. I see I cannot subdue one corruption, or resist the least temptation, when left to myself; I fall before it, and must needs be carried down the stream like a dead fish, unless the Lord's grace be sufficient for me. Again, the man
has

has low thoughts of his attainments, whether moral or evangelical. O says *Agur*, *I am more brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of a man, I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the holy.* And *Paul*, the great apostle of the *Gentiles*, he did not reckon that he had attained, or that he was already perfect; but he forgets those things which were behind, reaching forth unto things that were before, *Phil. iii. 12, 13.*

2. This lowliness, and humility with respect to ourselves, has in it a self-abhorrence, which is yet a degree beyond the former: the man sees so much sin and guilt, so much emptiness, poverty and vileness about himself, that, with holy *Job*, he cries out, *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* Agreeable unto which is that, *Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Ye shall remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and loke yourselves in your own sight for your iniquity, and for your abominations.*

3. It has in it a singleness of heart in the discharge of duty, without vain-glory, or pharisaical ostentation: it argues a proud hypocritical spirit, to pray, or gives alms, or do any duty, to be seen of men, that we may procure a name to ourselves, or the approbation of others. I am afraid, there are many that attend sermons, and sacramental occasions, with a design to maintain their credit and reputation amongst their neighbours: verily, such have their reward, but a sorry one it is, when they have got it: the day comes, when this fig-leaf covering shall be torn, and your nakedness, emptiness and hypocrisy exposed before men and angels. The humble and lowly christian will make conscience of duty, although none in the world should see him; yea, the more retir'd he is, he loves it the better:

better: he cares not though, in things of this nature, *his left-hand did not know what his right-hand doth.*

2dly, This lowliness and humility, considered with respect unto others, has these things in it.

1. A preferring of others above or before ourselves: agreeable unto this is the apostolical command, *Phil. ii. 3. Let nothing be done out of strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* Not that a child of God should think a profane reprobate in a better state than himself; but every true child of God will see so much in himself, as will make him ready to think the worst reprobate as good, or rather better than he is by nature; and he will see that the least of saints have something wherein they do excel him. This was the disposition of the great apostle, he looked on himself as the chief of sinners, and the least of all saints.

2. A looking upon the gifts and graces of others without a grudge. He will not say, this or that man darkens me: no, he rejoices to see the gifts and graces of God's spirit abounding toward others; *Would to God (says Moses) that all the Lord's people were prophets.* And then he will shun all vain comparison of himself with others: or, with the proud pharisee, *God I thank thee, I am not as other men, or yet as this publican.* No, he rather sinks in his own esteem, when he looks on others, as *Agur* did, *Prov. xxx. 2.*

Lastly, It has in it an affable, courteous carriage toward all, 1. *Pet. iii. 8.* Religion does not countenance a fullen, morose, and haughty carriage; no, on the contrary, we are expressly commanded *to be gentle, shewing all meekness to all men.*

3dly, This lowliness and humility of soul may be considered, with reference unto God ; and so it implies these things following.

1. High and admiring thoughts of the majesty of God ; when God discovers himself, the man sinks into nothing in his own esteem. O will the humble soul say, with *Moses*, *Exod. xv. 11. Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?* 2. A holy fear and dread of God always on his spirits ; especially in his immediate approaches unto the presence of God, in the duties of his worship. Says he, the very angels cover their faces with their wings before him, crying, *holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts* : how then shall I, a man of polluted lips, take his holy name into my mouth ? This makes him, with the publican, to smite upon his breast ; to stand afar off, crying, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. That is the language of the humble soul, which you have, *Psal. xv. 1. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* And *Psal. xxiv. 3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place.*

3. It has in it an admiring of every expression of the divine bounty and goodness toward men in general, and toward himself in particular. O says he, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or, what the son of man, that thou shouldst be so kind unto him?* And, *what am I, that I am brought hitherto? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?* And *what can I say more?* As *David*. And what more can be said? For praise is silent for thee, O God, in *Zion*. A silent admiration of the grace and condescension of the great Jehovah, is the highest degree of praise we can attain in this Life, while our harps are so mistuned by sin.

4. It has in it a giving God the glory of all that we are helped to do in his service. When the man discharges duty in any measure comfortably, he will not sacrifice to his own net, nor burn incense to his own dragg; he will not, like proud *Jehu*, say, *Come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts*. No, that is not the way of the humble soul; he knows that he has all from the Lord, and therefore he will give all the glory unto him; saying, “Not unto us, not
“unto us, but unto thy name be the glory. I la-
“boured (says *Paul*) more abundantly than all the
“rest of the apostles, yet not I, but the grace of
“God which was with me; by grace I am that
“I am.

5. It has in it a silent resignation unto the will of God, and acquiescence in the disposals of his providence, let dispensations be never so cross to the Inclination of flesh and blood. *Here am I*, (will the poor soul say with *David*) *let him do unto me as seemeth good unto him*. The man sees awful sovereignty in the dispensation, which makes him to say, *Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* He sees that his furnace is not by the ten-thousandth part so hot as his sins deserve; and therefore silences his soul, with the church, saying, *Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve*. He sees that the cup put into his hand, is far from the bitterness of that cup that was put into the hand of Christ; and this makes him to say, *If those things were done in the green tree, what shall be done to such a withered stick as I am?* And therefore I will even be dumb with silence before him, not opening the mouth, because it is the Lord that doth it.

6. Although all these things I have named be the ingredients and concomitants of true humility ; yet I think the very soul and essence of gospel-humiliation, lies in the soul's renouncing of itself, going out of itself, and going into, and accepting of the Lord Jesus Christ as its everlasting all, as the all of its light, life, strength, righteousness and salvation. And I think, that a man never passes the verge of moral humility, till self-righteousness be dethroned, till the high and towering imaginations of the man's own righteousness by the law be levelled by the mighty weapons of the gospel, and he brought to submit unto the righteousness of God for justification, which is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith.

In a word, the humble and lowly believer is content to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all unto him ; content to be a fool, that Christ may be his only wisdom ; content to be, as he really is in himself, a guilty condemned criminal, that Christ may be his only righteousness ; content to be stripped of his filthy rags, that he may be clothed with a borrowed robe. O says the humble soul, *Surely in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength ; in him will I be justified, and in him alone will I glory*, Isa. xlv. at the close. “ Yea, doubtless, (says humble Paul) I count all things but loss ; for “ the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord ; and “ do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, “ and be found in him, not having mine own “ righteousness which is of the law, but that “ which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, *Phil. iii. 8,* “ 9.” And so much for the first general head, namely, the nature of this lowliness.

The *second* thing proposed, was, to shew that the lowly and humble soul is the peculiar favourite of heaven. This will be abundantly evident, if we consider,

1st, That when the Son of God was here in our nature, he had shewed a particular regard unto such : ye have a clear instance of this in the centurion, *Matt. viii. 8.* the centurion there addresses Christ in behalf of his servant who was grievously tormented of the palsy ; Christ, in the 7th verse, promises to come to his house and heal him : well, see the lowliness of the man's spirit, verse 8. *Lord,* says he, *I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof.* And what a large commendation Christ gives to the man, you see in verse 10. *I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.* And verse 13. He grants him all that he asked, *Go thy way ; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.* The same we see in the *Syrophœnician* woman, *Matt. xv. 27.* the lowliness and humility of her spirit, made her to sit with all the repulses she met with ; when Christ calls her a dog, she takes with it, saying, *Truth, Lord, I am a dog,* and shall be content if I may but have a crumb, the dog's portion : and what follows on this ? *O woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* Thus, I say, Christ, in the days of his flesh, discovered the greatest regard unto the humble ; and he is the same now in a state of exaltation, that he was in a state of humiliation.

2^{dly}, When God gives the grace of humility, 'tis a sign that he intends more grace for that soul, *1 Pet. v. 5.* *He giveth grace unto the humble.* Ye know, men use to lay up their richest wines in their lowest cellars ; so God he lays up the richest treasures of his grace in the heart of the humble
and

and lowly; and hence it comes that the humble christian is ordinarily the most thriving and growing christian: the humble valleys laugh with fatness, when the high mountains are barren; so the humble christian is made fat, with the influences of heaven, when lofty towering professors are like the mountains of *Gilboa*, withered and dry, because the dew and rain of the graces and influences of the spirit are suspended from them.

3dly, Honour, exaltation, and preferment is intended for the humble soul. *Before honour is humility*, says *Solomon*. *Psal.* cxiii. 7, 8. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." They shall be as it were his ministers of state, that shall attend his throne, and have place among them that stand by.

4thly, God's eyes are upon the humble. Indeed, the eye of his omniscience beholds all the children of men, but his *countenance* beholds the humble and upright soul, *Ilsa.* lxvi. 1, 2. "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." The humble soul is the object of his peculiar love and care. *His eyes run to and fro thro' the whole earth, to shew himself strong on their behalf.*

5thly, Not only God's eye, but his ear is toward the lowly soul, *Psal.* x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.* Would you have preparation

preparation for a communion-table? Would ye be brought unto God's seat, and have a hearing there? Then come with lowliness and humility of Soul.

6thly, The great Jehovah, the infinite God, he dwells in and with the humble, *Isa. xxxvii. 15.* "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God has a twofold palace, where he dwells; the one is in heaven, the other is in the heart of the humble christian: he says of the humble soul, as he said of Zion, *This is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.* And for what end will he dwell in the heart of the humble? 'Tis to revive and comfort them: the new wine of the consolations of God, which are not small, shall be poured into the heart of the lowly soul. He will *comfort them that mourn in Zion, he will give them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for heaviness of spirit.*

7thly, As God dwells with the humble, so the humble shall dwell with God in Glory for ever, *Matt. v. 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit* (which is the same with the lowly spirit) *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* They shall sit not only at his by-table here below, but be admitted to sit down at the high table of glory, and to eat and drink with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; yea, with the King of Glory himself. 'Tis the humble that surround the throne above, as you see, *Rev. iv.* they take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down before the lamb, saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power.* Thus you see that the

humble soul is the peculiar favourite of the high God.

The *Third* thing in the method was, To enquire, Why God has such a respect unto the lowly? *Answer*, First, God has such a respect unto the lowly, not as if this frame of soul were meritorious of any good at his hand, but because this is a disposition that best serves God's great design of lifting up and glorifying his free-grace. What think you, sirs, was God's design in election, in redemption, in the whole of a gospel-dispensation, and in all the ordinances thereof? His grand design in all was, to rear up a glorious high throne, from which he might display the riches of his free and sovereign grace; this is that which he will have magnified through eternity above all his other name: Now, this lowliness and humility of spirit suits best unto God's design of exalting of the freedom of his grace. 'Tis not the legalist, or proud pharisee, but the poor humble publican, who is smiting on his breast, and crying, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, that submits to the revelation of grace. And, truly, I never think a man truly humbled, till he be brought so far off this law-bottom, on which he stands by nature, as to lie down like a worm at the feet of sovereign grace, heartily content to be indebted to free-grace, for life, righteousness, pardon, and salvation.

2dly, God has such respect unto the humble soul, because it is a fruit of his own spirit inhabiting the soul, and an evidence of the soul's union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in whome alone we are accepted.

3dly, This is a disposition that makes the soul like Christ; and the liker that a person be to Christ, God loves him the better: We are told that Christ was meek and lowly; he did not cry, nor lift up,
nor

nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets; tho' he was the brightness of his Father's Glory, yet he was content to appear *in the form of a servant*; tho' *he was rich*, yet he was content to *become poor*, that through his poverty we might be made rich. Now, the humble soul, being the image of Christ, who is the express image of his Father, God cannot but have a regard unto him.

The *Fourth* thing in the method was, To lay before you some marks, by which you might try, whether ye be among the humble and lowly, to whom God has such a regard. You have especially need to try this now, when you are to make a solemn approach unto God at his table. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.* If you want this lowly frame of spirit, you cannot be welcome guests unto the supper of the great King.

Now, for your trial, I shall suggest these things following. 1st, The lowly soul is one that is many times ashamed to look up to heaven, under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness; as we see in the poor publican, and in *David*, *Psal. xl. 12. Innumerable evils compass me about, mine iniquities have taken hold on me, that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.* Indeed, when by faith he looks to his surety, and his everlasting righteousness, his mediation and intercession, he has boldness to enter into the holy of holies, and can come with *boldness to the throne of grace*; I say, when he looks to Christ, he is not ashamed, *Psal. xxxiv. 5.* But when he looks to himself, as he is in himself, he is even ashamed and confounded before the Lord, and ready to cry out with the prophet, *Isa. vi. 5. Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips: how shall I speak unto the king, the Lord*

of hosts ? or, How shall I appear before him ? *2dly*, He is one that is many times put to wonder that God has not destroyed him : he wonders that God has kept him out of hell so long, or that he has not let loose his hand, and made an utter end of him ; and therefore he is much in adoring mercy and long-suffering patience, with the church, *Lam. iii. 22.* 'Tis *of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not.* *3dly*, He is one that is most abased under the receipt of the greatest mercies and sweetest manifestations : we see this in the instance of *David*, when God promised to build him a sure house, and gave him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, the man he is not lifted up, but on the contrary is filled with wonder, that God should stoop so far toward the like of him, *What am I*, says he, *that I am brought hitherto ?* The nearer that the humble soul is admitted unto God, the higher that he is lifted up unto the mount of enjoyments, he falls lower and lower in his own esteem. *Abraham*, when admitted to plead with God on the behalf of *Sodom*, *Gen. xviii.* How does he sink unto nothing in his own eyes ? *Behold, now I, who am dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord.* *4thly*, He is one that renounces the law as a covenant, and disclaims all pretensions to righteousness from that quarter. *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* O says the man, when he looks upon the law of God in its spirituality and extent, What can I expect from that quarter but wrath and ruin ? Yea, I am condemned already by the law ; and if God mark iniquity according to the tenor of it, I am undone for ever, *Psal. xxx. 3.* *If thou, Lord, mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand ?* So then, try yourselves by this, Has a discovery of the law of God,

in its spirituality, made you to own and acknowledge, that all your own righteousness is but as filthy rags, dung and lofs? *5thly*, He is one that has high raised and admiring thoughts of Christ, and of his everlasting righteousness. As for the person of Christ, O the humble soul admires that : the lower that he falls in his own esteem, the higher doth Christ rise in his esteem, *Psal. lxxiii. David* there is laid so low in his own eyes, that he cries, *v. 22. So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee* : well, while it is thus with him, what are his thoughts of Christ? See it, *v. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none in all the earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* And as for the righteousness of Christ, O how does his soul admire that, and clasp about it ! O says he, I have no works, no righteousness of mine own, to commend me to God, or wherewith to stand before him : But he is the Lord my righteousness ; and I will go in his strength, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only. I might give you several other marks of this lowliness of soul. I shall only name these two or three further, as, 1. He is one that looks on sin as his greatest burden, saying, with *David, Mine iniquities have gone over my head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear.* And particularly indwelling corruption, the fountain of sin ; O how does he mourn and groan under that, saying, with *Paul, Rom. vii. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?* 2. He is one that values himself least, when others value him most : O says he, others see only my outside ; but if they saw the swarms of abominations, that I see and feel in my own heart, I would be a terror unto them. When

the multitude is crying *Hosannah* to the son of *David*, he is riding meek and lowly upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass, 3. He is one that is not puffed up with the falls of others, like some, 1 *Cor.* v. 2. but rather the falls of others contribute to humble and empty him the more of himself. He sees, from the out-breakings of others, what is in his own heart, and how much he is obliged unto God for restraining grace; for, if the bridle were but laid on my neck, will the humble soul say, I would be soon carried unto the same excess of riot with others, 4. The humble soul is one that is thankful for little; he will not despise the day of small things: like the woman of *Canaan*, he is content with the crumbs that fall from the childrens table. The humble soul is content with a bare word from the Lord. O says *David*, *God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice.* He thinks much of a single word from the Lord's mouth, and waits for it, as the servants of *Benbaddad*, that caught at every word that dropp'd from the mouth of the king of *Israel*, 5. The humble soul is content and desirous to know what is God's will, that he may do it: *Paul* is no sooner humbled, but he cries, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Give grace to obey, and command what thou wilt.

The *Fifth* thing in the method was, To offer some motives to press and recommend this lowliness and humility of spirit.

My *First* motive shall be drawn from the excellency of the grace of humility; and its excellency, especially, appears in two things, 1. It assimilates the soul to Christ. Men are inclined to imitate the example of the great ones of the earth; but here is the most noble pattern that ever was, even an incarnate Deity, saying, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.*

lowly. 2. 'Tis the distinguishing character of a christian; the people of God are ordinarily called the *humble* and *meek* of the earth. A proud christian is a contradiction; for pride is just antipodes to true religion. O what a difference did it put between the pharisee and the publican! The proud pharisee he brags God, as it were, with his good works; God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, or yet as this publican; I fast twice a week, I pay tithes of all that I possess: but the poor publican stands afar off, as if the majesty of heaven were about to strike him dead; and yet the publican goes home to his house justified, while the other is rejected.

Motive Second. Consider how reasonable this lowliness and humility of soul is. Whatever way we view ourselves, we shall find it highly reasonable. It is highly reasonable, whether we look to ourselves in particular, or the evils of the land and day wherein we live.

First, I say, take a view of thyself, man, woman, and thou shalt find ground of humiliation. For, 1. Thou art a creature sprung of earth, whose foundation is in the dust, and cannot pretend to a higher extract than the very earth under thy feet. Hence is the exhortation of the prophet *Jeremiah*, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Earth in thy original, earth as to the supports of nature, and shall return unto the earth in the end. 2. Thou art not only a creature, but a frail creature, whose breath is in thy nostrils: Thou standest continually upon the brink of an endless eternity; and as there have but a few years passed over our heads since we arose out of the dust, so, ere it be long, death will sweep us off the stage, and then all our beauty, strength, stature, and other bodily excellencies, will be covered with rottenness, *Isa.* xl. 6, 7, 8. there you see 'tis the cry both of heaven and earth, that *all*

flesh is grass. Solomon, giving a description of the life of man, he sums it all up in two short words, *There is a time to be born, and a time to die.* He leaps over the intermediate distance between man's birth and his burial, as a thing that was not worthy of his notice. He is born, and then he dies. The moment of time between the womb and the tomb is so short, might he say, that it does not deserve to be named. 3. Thou art not only a frail, but a sinful creature, wholly over-run with that loathsome leprosy from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. O sirs, what reason have we to be humble! who have defaced the image of God, cast dirt on all the divine attributes, trampled his law and authority under our feet: the sinner has swallowed a cup of deadly poison, which will infallibly destroy him, if infinite mercy and free grace prevent not. What ground has he then to be proud? O says the prodigal, I have sinned against heaven, and therefore am no more worthy to be called thy son, or to have room of a hired servant in the family. 4. Thou art not only a sinful creature, but an impotent creature, that can do nothing in order to thy own help and relief. If God had not laid help upon one that is mighty, we had been all of us this day sinking under the fiery mountains of eternal vengeance and wrath. Such an impotent creature is sinful man, that as to natural things, he cannot make *one hair of his head white or black:* or *add one cubit to his stature.* And so helpless is he, as to spiritual and eternal concerns, that he can no more change the wicked habits of his heart, or the wicked ways of his life, than the *Ethiopian can change his colour, or the leopard his spots.* 7. Thou art a variable, changeable, and unconstant creature; liable to many alterations, both as to thy outward lot, and thy inward frame. The man that

is in greatest esteem to day, may have his reputation ruined by the invenomed tongue of calumny to morrow. In a word, thy health may soon be changed into sickness, thy riches unto poverty, thy strength unto weakness, thy beauty unto ugly deformity. And as for thee, believer, tho' thy state be firm like the mountains, yet thy frame is but a changeable thing. Perhaps, thou may be saying with *David*, one day, by thy favour my mountain stands strong; and the next day crying out, I am troubled with the hiding of his countenance: altho' perhaps the candle of the Lord may be shining on thy tabernacle, yet in a little time thou may be going mourning without the sun.

Secondly, This lowly frame of spirit is highly reasonable, if we look abroad unto the world, and particularly, the land wherein we live. O what great cause of deep humiliation have we this day before the Lord! when we take a view of the abounding prophanity of our day: all ranks have corrupted their ways; a flood of atheism and wickedness, *Jordan* like, has broke down all its banks. Have we not reason to be humbled for the universal barrenness that is to be found amongst us, under the drop of the glorious gospel? May not the Lord say to us, as he said of his vineyard? *Isa. v.* I planted thee in a fruitful soil; I took all imaginable pains upon thee, by ordinances, by the rod, by mercies and crosses; yet, after all, when I looked that they should bring forth grapes, behold they brought forth wild grapes. Again, have we not reason to be humbled for the lamentable divisions that are to be found among us? *Ephraim* against *Manasseh*, *Manasseh* against *Ephraim*, and both they together against *Israel*. Because of the divisions of *Reuben*, there are great thoughts of heart: church and state are divided. And, among

mong other divisions that have been of late, we are like to have a new division in point of doctrine.

There is a handful of ministers, who have lately put in a petition to our national assembly, in favours of some of the pure and precious truths of the gospel, which they conceive to be injured by an act of assembly. There is a mighty cry raised against them, both in pulpits and in common conversation, as if they were the *Troublers of Israel*, *New-Schemers*, *Antinomians*, and what not? Many strange errors are fathered upon them, which they never once thought of. I shall be far from bringing a railing accusation against them who study to wound their reputation, and to mar the success of their ministry; for I look on many of them as great and good men: but if they be helped to bear reproach for the name of Christ, and for the cause of his truths, with humility and lowliness of mind, the Lord, in his own time, will find out a way to bring them forth to the light, so as they shall behold his righteousness: and altho' their reputation should sink for ever in the world, under the load of calumny that is cast upon them; I hope they think it but a small sacrifice for the least truth of God, which is of more worth than heaven and earth. However, I say, this, among other things, is ground and cause of humiliation in our day, that any of the precious truths of Christ should be under a cloud, and that we should be divided in our sentiments concerning them. Have we not reason to be deeply humbled for our woful defections and backslidings, which are the ground of our divisions? We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in a great measure departed from us. What a woful withering wind has blown upon God's vineyard in this land! We are fallen from our first love, our former zeal for God and his precious

cious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer's crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away unto an empty form with the most. To conclude, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers, or people in *Scotland*, as once in a day it has been; and the worst of it is, that tho' it be so, tho' grey hairs are here and there upon us, yet do we not perceive it: we make our faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return to the Lord. But I hasten to a close.

Motive *Third*, Take a view of the noble patterns of humility that are set before us for our imitation. The saints militant are patterns of it; *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, in the forecited xviii. of *Gen.* with what humility does he address himself unto God? Behold, *I who am dust and ashes have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord.* And his grandson *Jacob* follows his footsteps herein, *I am less*, says he, *than the least of thy mercies.* In a word, *Job*, *David*, *Isaiah*, *Paul*, and all the cloud of witnesses, have cast us a copy of humility. Again, the saints triumphant cast us a copy of this grace; they take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down at the mediator's feet; ascribing the glory of all unto him, saying, *Thou hast loved us, and washed us with thy blood, and thou hast made us kings and priests unto God.* Again, angels are patterns of it; they do not look on it as a disparagement to be ministring spirits unto the heirs of glory: with what humility do they cover their faces with their wings in the presence of God, *Isa.* vi. Again, Christ is a bless'd pattern of this grace; *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*: he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps therein. *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,*

cross. Tho' he was the high God, yet *he took upon himself the form of a servant* : and therefore, let the same mind be in us, that was also in Jesus Christ, *Phil. ii.* In a word, the infinite Jehovah, the eternal God, casts us a copy of humility: for he humbles himself to behold things that are in heaven and that are in earth; and, as you see in my text, tho' he be high, yet he has respect unto the lowly. And are not all those patterns worthy of our highest imitation? And if all this will not prevail, I offer

A *Fourth* motive. Consider the evil and danger of the sin of pride, that lies directly opposite unto it. 1. 'Tis lothsome in the sight of God, he cannot endure to look on it: *He beholds it afar off.* *Prov. vi. 16.* It is set in the very front of those things that the Lord hates: *These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him* : and the first of them is a *proud look*. God hates every sin, but he proclaims open war and hostility against the proud. 2dly, The evil of it appears, in that it is a sign of a rotten heart within, *Heb. ii. 4.* *Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright within him* : as humility and sincerity, so pride and hypocrisy go hand in hand. 3dly, It is the fertile womb of many other evils. 'Tis the spring of division, *Prov. xiii. 10.* *Only by pride cometh contention.* As I was saying just now, there are a great many divisions amongst us at this day: church and state is divided, congregations and families are divided, ministers and people are divided; What is the matter? Pride lies at the bottom: if our proud hearts were but so far humbled, as to confess our faults one to another, our divisions would soon come to an end. Again, pride is the mother of error and heresy, a root of bitterness that is troubling our *Israel* at this day: when men, especially clergymen, who have all a
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tang of infallibility with them, have asserted any thing that is amiss in point of doctrine, their pride will not allow them to retract. Truth itself must rather fall a sacrifice than their reputation sink. *Pride of reason* is the very soul of the *Socinian*, and *pride of will* the soul of *Arminian* errors, and *pride of self-righteousness* is the source of that *legal spirit* that so much prevails in our day. Again, pride is the spring and root of apostacy ; for, says *Solomon*, *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty countenance before a fall.* *Peter's* pride was the immediate fore-runner of his denying his Lord and master. But again, consider, that God has a particular quarrel with the sin of pride: he has threatened to “ scatter the proud in the imagination of their own heart.” You may read a lecture of God’s controversy with the proud, *Isa.* ii. 11, 12, 13, &c. “ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and “ the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down : “ the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every “ one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one “ that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.” And verse 17. “ The loftiness of man shall be bow- “ ed down, the haughtiness of men shall be made “ low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that “ day.” O what ruin has the sin of pride brought along with it !

1st, It turned angels unto devils, and threw them from heaven into hell ; being lifted up with pride, they fell into condemnation, as the apostle insinuates. God could not endure pride to dwell so near him ; and therefore he tumbled them down from heaven, and laid them under chains of eternal darkness. 2^{dly}, It was pride that has wrecked all mankind, when it crept out of the higher into the lower paradise. *Ye shall be as Gods*, said the serpent ;

serpent; and immediately the bait was caught at, tho', in the event, it made them liker the devil than God. 3dly, We might trace the story of what ruins it hath brought with it upon the ungodly world. *Pharoah* refuses to bow so far to the command of God, as to let *Israel* go; saying, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him?* And therefore he and his host shall sink like lead in the mighty waters. *Haman's* pride brought him to an ignominious end: tho' he was his prince's greatest favourite to day, yet he was hanged to morrow on the gallows which he had set up for poor *Mordecai*. *Nebuchadnezzar*, who proudly vaunts himself of his royal palace, *Is not this great Babel which I have built, for the house of my kingdom, and for the honour of my majesty?* And immediately he is turned out from the society of men, and made to eat grass with the oxen. *Herod*, after his fine oration, he receives that applause from the people without any check, *It is the voice of God, and not of man*; and immediately the angel of the Lord smites him, *and he is eaten up of worms*. 4thly, As God has punished it in the wicked, so he has shewed his resentment against it to his own children. And, pass who will, they shall not miss a stroke, if their hearts be lifted up within them: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities*. *David's* pride prompted him to number *Israel*, that he might make his brag that he was king over so many thousands; and thereupon a raging pestilence, in three days time, sweeps away seventy thousand of *Israel*. *Hezekiah's* pride made him to shew his treasure of precious things to the king of *Babylon's* ambassadors; and therefore his posterity and his treasures must be carried away to *Babylon* out of their native land. In a word, tho' you were as the
signet

signet on God's right-hand, ye shall not escape a stroke of fatherly wrath and anger, if you allow pride to lodge in your hearts. That threatening shall surely take place both among friends and enemies, *Prov. xxix. 3. A man's pride shall surely bring him low* : and if it miss his person, it shall fall heavy on his family, *Prov. xv. 25. The house of the proud shall be destroyed.*

The *Sixth* and last thing I proposed was, To offer a few advices, in order to your attaining this lowly frame and temper of soul, which the high God doth so much regard. *First*, Go to the law as a schoolmaster ; read the ten commandments, and Christ's spiritual commentary upon them, *Matt. v.* View the law of God in its utmost extent and spirituality ; for it is exceeding broad. This would make the proudest heart to lie in the dust, *Rom. vii. 9. I was alive without the law ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* The feathers of his pride and legal righteousness soon fell, when the law in its spirituality was set before his eyes. *2dly*, Get Christ to dwell in your heart by faith ; for the reigning power of this evil is never broken, till Christ come by the power of his spirit, bringing down the towering imaginations of the heart, and erect his throne there : the more of Christ, the more humility ; and the less of Christ, the more pride. When the spirit of Christ enters into the heart, he stamps the likeness and image of Christ there. O then, if ye would have this humility and lowliness of spirit, lift up the everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in : He brings a glorious retinue of grace with him, whereof this is one of the first. *3dly*, Be much in viewing the glorious perfections of the majesty of heaven, as they are displayed in the works of creation

creation and providence ; but especially, as they shine in the face of Jesus Christ, and the glorious work of redemption through him. When the prophet *Isaiah* saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, he cries out, *Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of polluted lips.* See *Job*, xlii. 5, 6. *I have heard of thee, says he, by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eyes see thee : wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* 4thly, Be much in viewing the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged ; I mean, your original corruption, and depravation ; how you are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. And O how much of this cleaves, even to believers themselves, while they are on this side of eternity ! There is a law in the members continually warring with the law in the mind. This laid the great apostle *Paul* in the dust, notwithstanding of his high attainments. 5thly, Be much in viewing the vanity of the creature, and all things below : vanity and vexation of spirit is written in legible characters upon all things under the sun. *The fashion of this world is passing away.* Be much in viewing the bed of the grave, where you must lie down shortly, and where rottenness and corruption shall cover you ; let this make you say, with *Job*, *Unto corruption, Thou art my father ; and to the worms, Thou art my brother and my sister.* View an awful tribunal, and an endless eternity, that is to follow on the back of death, where you and I shortly shall stand to be judged, and receive a sentence from the righteous judge, which shall determine our state for ever. 6thly, Be much in eying these patterns of lowliness and humility, which I have already mentioned ; God, angels, and saints,

have

the peculiar favourite of Heaven. 81

have cast you a copy of it. But especially, be much in viewing the humility and humiliation of the Son of God, which is proposed as the great pattern, *Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. Let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*



Militant's

Militant's Song : or, the Believer's Exercise, while here below.

A SERMON preached at *Carnock*, Monday July, 1723, being a Thanksgiving-Day immediately after the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

By Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

P S A L. ci. I.

I will sing of Mercy and Judgment : Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.

I Hope, the subject I am here in providence directed to, will natively lead us, if the Lord bless it, to a suitable exercise upon a thanksgiving-day after a communion, even with gratitude of soul to sing the praises of a God in Christ, and that whether we have met with a smile or a frown from heaven, or both at this occasion. If any here have got a smile, or found him to be a smiling and a present God, they may sing of *mercy*. If any here have got a frown, or found him to be a hiding God, they may sing of *judgment* ; or, if any here have got both a smile and a frown, they may sing of both, and say, *I will sing of mercy and judgment, &c.*

The words contain the psalmist's holy resolution to praise and glorify God for all his dispensations towards him, now that he was advanced to the kingdom of *Israel* ; and in them shortly you may notice, 1. The sweet work that is resolved upon, namely, to *sing*. 2. The sweet singer that thus resolves,

solves,

solves, namely, *David, I will sing.* 3. The sweet subject of the song, namely, *mercy and judgment.* 4. The sweet object of this praise, and the manner in which he would sing it, *Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.*

First, The sweet work that is resolved upon, namely, to *sing*: it is the work of heaven, and a very fit work after a communion, to sing a song of praise to God, in the manner which we may afterwards explain. *2dly*, The sweet *singer, I will sing*: the title of the psalm shews it was *David's*, the man after God's own heart, the man anointed by the God of *Jacob*, and the sweet psalmist of *Israel*, for so he is called, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 1. *3dly*, The sweet *subject* of the song, or the matter of it, namely, *mercy and judgment.* God's work towards his people is chequered work, a mixture of mercy and judgment; and when he exercises us with both, it is our duty to sing of both, and to be suitably affected with both; whether our circumstances be joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and in every thing give thanks; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition must put us out of tune for the sacred songs of praise. *4thly*, The sweet *object* of this praise, and the manner in which he resolves to sing it, *Unto thee, O Lord; will I sing.* It is in the most solemn manner that he addresses the Lord *Jehovah*, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and dedicates his song to the praise of a God in Christ, *Unto thee, O Lord will I sing*: but I refer the further explication to the prosecution of a doctrine from the words.

Obf. *That as the people of God have both mercy and judgment in their lot in this world, so from both they may have matter of a song of praise unto God.* They have occasion in this world to sing both of mercy and judgment. We find the psalmist frequently

singing both of mercy and judgment, as *Psal.* xxx. 6, 7, 8, 9. *Psal.* xiii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. You have an elegant description of the lot of God's people while here, as consisting both of mercy and judgement, and so affording occasion to sing of both, 2 *Cor.* vi. 8, 9, 10. where you will see the blink and the shower, the mercies and judgments that are in their lot, how God hath set the one over against the other, *by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, &c.* Thus they have occasion to sing both of mercies and crosses, while they find the Lord supporting them under trials, and remembering mercy in the midst of wrath, and making all things work together for good to them. *I will sing of mercy and judgment ; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.* The *Chaldee paraphrase* of the text is remarkable, and suitable to the doctrine I have raised from it, namely, it is as if the psalmist had said, if thou bestowest mercies upon me, or if thou bringest any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymn for all.

The method I propose is, 1. I would speak a little of the *mercies* that the people of God meet with, and what it is in these that affords them matter for a song of praise. 2. I would speak a little of the *judgments* with which they are visited, and what it is in judgment that may be matter of a song of praise to God. 3. What this singing imports, and *how* we are to sing of mercy and judgment ; where we may notice what is imported in the psalmist's resolution, and the manner of expressing it, *I will sing of mercy and judgment ; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.* 4. Why it is so ordered of the Lord, that his people are made to sing, both of mercy and of judgment. 5. Draw some inferences for the application.

First Head. 1. I am to speak a little of mercy, of which they ought to sing; and here I would shew. 1. What this *mercy* is, and, 2. What it is in mercy that may be matter of a song, or afford ground of singing. 1st, What this mercy is? Mercy in God signifies a propensity or readiness of mind to help and succour such as are in misery; and it carries in it an inward commotion and yearning of bowels, as God says of *Ephraim*, *My bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him*, Jer. xxxi. 20. God, to accommodate himself to our capacity, speaks after the manner of man, ascribing human affections to himself. I might here speak of the general mercy of God towards all both just and unjust; for *he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*, Psal. cxlix. 5. he makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon good and bad, and all should sing of his mercy, if it were no more but for life, and health, and strength from him. There are some common gifts that all men have from him, and some common graces that some have more than others; but I speak especially of special mercies; and indeed there are of these, that the visible church hath, besides the rest of the world, even the wicked among them; and if they could, they should find of these mercies, such as their hearing the gospel, and the joyful sound, their getting the offer of Christ and salvation thro' him; but I speak mainly of the special mercies, that bear the stamp of his everlasting love towards his chosen and hidden ones; mercy bred in God's breast from all eternity, whereby he made choice of some of the fallen race of mankind in Christ, who is the channel wherein this mercy does flow in various streams; and I shall mention a few of these, for there would be no end of speaking, to mention all

that might be said, or yet to enlarge upon all that may be mentioned. 1. There is the mercy of God in sending Christ to be the saviour; we find the angels singing of his mercy, *Luke, ii, 11. saying, To you is born, in the city of David, a saviour; glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will towards men; good will and mercy towards man, because there is peace on earth, and reconciliation thro' Christ, who brings in glory to God in the highest; God so loved the world, &c.* It is indeed a *so* without a *such*, a love without a parallel; here mercy shines. 2. There is mercy in the death of Christ; see how the four and twenty elders sing of this mercy, *Rev. v, 9. Thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and the angels join issue with them, to the number of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* 3. There is mercy that he shows, in raising of Christ from death, and in raising and quickning us together with him. We find the apostle singing of this mercy, *Eph. ii. 4, 5. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* If Christ must die, he must conquer death, that his people may be more than conquerors in him over death, both spiritual death, whereby we were under the power of sin, and legal death, whereby we are under the guilt of sin, and sentence of the law. In opposition to both these, the life of regeneration, and the life of justification is connected

connected with this merciful quickning together with Christ, as ye see *Col. ii. 13. You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickned together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.* O! how does the psalmist sing of this mercy, *Psal. ciii. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thy diseases.* 4. There is mercy that he shews in cleansing the soul from the filth of sin, as well as the guilt thereof, till it be washen altogether clean at last. See how the saints do sweetly sing of this mercy, *Rev. i. 1.* where I think they sing both of pardoning and purifying mercy; *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* 5. There is mercy that he shews in adopting such heirs of hell by nature, to be the children of God by grace; and you may see how believers sing of this mercy, *1 John iii. 1. Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* He makes them his children, and gives them the spirit of adoption; *Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father:* he gives them the mark and seal of his children, even the spirit as a spirit of prayer, and as a spirit of love, working the love of God in our hearts, who are by nature enemies; and O what mercy is here! 6. There is mercy that he shews, in conferring the high dignity of priesthood and royalty upon them. See how they sing of this mercy, *Rev. i. 8. To him that loved us, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,* (or to God even his Father) *to him be glory.* Kings unto God, how? Even to fight for him against sin, Satan and the world, and to conquer all our enemies in his name. Priests unto God, how? Even to

offer spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; to offer our prayers and praises, souls and bodies to him on our altar Jesus Christ. Thus they are made kings and priests, and therefore called a royal priesthood, a priesthood of kings, or a kingdom of priests. 7. There is mercy that he shews his people, in abiding and standing by them in all difficulties, so as nothing shall ever be able to separate them from the favour of their God. See how sweetly the apostle *Paul* sings of this mercy, *Rom. viii. last. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, &c.* But tho' neither death, nor life, nor angels do it, yet may not sin separate me from the mercy and love of God? Indeed it may separate, so as to make a fearful desertion, but never so as to make a final separation? for his mercy endures for ever; and he hath said, *I'll never leave thee nor forsake thee, &c.* He will visit their iniquity with a rod, but his loving kindness will he not take away; my mercy will I keep with him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him, *Psal. lxxxix. 28, 8.* There is mercy that he shews, in giving many merciful experiences of his goodness and mercy following them all the days of their life, such as the psalmist sings of, *Psal. xxiii.* It is true, the leading mercy of all, is God himself, Christ himself, the spirit himself, one God in three persons is their God, made over to them in a word, *I will be your God.* Here is the fountain-mercy of all mercies, of which they may sing, saying, *This God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide, even unto death:* and indeed to sing of mercy, is to sing of a merciful God; but as we know the nature of the fountain

fountain by the sweetness of the streams, so we may take a view of some more of these streams under the notion of merciful experiences; and I name these following, by which a song of mercy may be excited.

1. There are merciful intimations and communications, that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy. Sometimes he intimates his love, saying, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love*; sometimes he intimates a pardon, *I, even I am he*, &c. Sometimes he intimates acceptances saying, *O man greatly beloved*; and the intimation sets them a wondring and praising; sometimes he communicates his mind and his secrets to them. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, &c. Sometimes the secrets of his providence; he will tell them what he hath a mind to do with themselves, and what he hath a mind to do with such a friend, and such a child, and such a land or church. *Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?* Sometimes he communicates himself to them, saying, *I am thy God, I am thy shield; fear not, for I am with thee*. Sometimes such intimations and communications are given, as make all their bones to say, *Who is like unto thee?*

2. There are merciful visits after desertion, and after backsliding, that they sometimes get to make them sing of mercy, when they have been heaping up mountains of sin and provocation betwixt him and them; yet, after all, he hath come and given them occasion to say, *The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh skipping upon the mountains*, &c. The voice of my beloved! O an exceeding sweet and powerful voice! It had a sound of heaven; I thought the mountains would have kept him away, but I heard the sound of his feet upon the mountains,

tains, that made my heart warm toward him again? I had departed from him by an evil heart of unbelief, and I thought he would never return; but O he restored my soul, and helped me anew to wrestle with him; *We found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us.*

3. There are merciful accomplishments of promises that they sometimes get to make them sing of mercy. The Lord sometimes lets in a promise with life and power, and gives them a word on which he causes them to hope. It may be he will give them a promise for themselves, and it may be a promise for their children, such as that, *I'll be thy God, and the God of thy seed*; and sometimes a promise for the church, such as that, *Upon all the glory there shall be a defence*; and sometimes he gives a wonderful accomplishment of promises, like that of *Hezekiah*. *What shall I say? he hath both spoken, and himself hath done it*: he hath come to my soul, and made me see that he is as good as his word, and that faithfulness is the girdle of his loins.

4. There is a merciful grant of all their desires, that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy. As the desire of their soul is towards him, and the remembrance of his name; so he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things, and gives them sometimes a Christ in their arms, who is all their salvation, and all their desire. *Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart.* Some have got their desires satisfied abundantly, now and then; they have got all that they could desire with respect to temporal mercies, all that they could desire with respect to spiritual mercies, yea, all that they could desire within time, till they get an armful of him before the throne.

5. There

5. There is merciful instruction and illumination, that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy ; *The path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more to the perfect day* : and therefore he gives them to learn some lesson more and more ; some gospel-lesson and gospel-mystery, that they were in the dark about : and one great lesson that he teaches them is, even the difference betwixt the law and the gospel. He teaches them that the law is holy, just and good, and how the gospel crowns the law in all these respects ; he teaches them that the law is holy in its commands, commanding perfect holiness, perfect obedience : and now the gospel shews where this perfect obedience is to be had, even in Christ, in whom they have not only strength to answer it as a rule of duty in part, but perfect righteousness to answer it as a covenant of works compleatly : he teaches them, that the law is just in its threatening, the threatening of eternal death ; and how the gospel shews where this threatening hath vented itself, even in demanding and getting compleat satisfaction from Christ the surety ; and therefore may the soul say, Well is it for me, that the shower of wrath is over my head, and hath lighted upon the head of my surety. He teaches them that the law is good in its promises, namely its promise of eternal life to perfect personal obedience ; but withal he teaches them by the gospel, how they hold their title to life, only in Christ, to whose perfect obedience now all the promises are made, and in whom all the promises are *yea and amen*. O what a mercy is it to learn these lessons in a saving way ; *To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God : he hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes : even so Father, &c.*

6. There

6. There are merciful sensible enjoyments, which they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy ; sometimes they get sensible sights of his glory, and that in a way of believing, *Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?* O, says the man, I found faith to be the hardest thing in the world, and yet he made me find it to be the easiest thing in the world, when he carried me on the wings of the spirit of faith ; and by faith I saw his glory, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus. When I speak of sensible sight, do not mistake me ; for I know that faith and sight, or faith and sense, differ in several respects, which I am not now to open ; and yet faith brings in a kind of sense, it being the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for ; and therefore, by a sensible sight, I mean the spiritual sense of seeing by faith, and seeing clearly : for sometimes the man gets a sight of Christ, as clearly as if he saw him with his bodily eyes ; O, says the man, I have seen his fulness and sufficiency, I see his fitness and suitableness for me ; I see his worthiness and excellency in himself. O none but Christ, none but Christ, as once a martyr standing at a stake, and having matches kindled upon him, and the flames about his finger ends, he clapp'd his hands together, and cried, *None but Christ, none but Christ.*

Some men get sensible tastes of his goodness, *I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.* O how sweetly did I feed upon the apple-tree, and plucked off the apples that grew upon this tree, the apple of imputed righteousness, the apple of imparted grace, the apple of peace, the apple of pardon, the apple of assurance, the apple of joy, the apple of contentment,

ment, the apple of love, the apple of liberty. O the sweet fruit, the sweet apples that grow upon this tree of life. *I sat down under his shadow, &c.*

Sometimes they get a sensible hearing of his voice, like that in the Song, *It is the voice of my beloved that knocked*, Song v. 2. He knocked by his voice, saying, *Open to me, my sister, my spouse*. O sweet was his voice when he said to me, *I'll never leave thee nor forsake thee !* How sweet was his voice when he said, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee !* when he said a word like that of the angel, *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God !* Did not my heart burn within me, when he talked with me by the way in such a word, and at such a sacramental occasion, and such an ordinance, and such a duty ; never man spake like this man : it was the voice of a God that I heard ; for it came with such a glance of glory, as set my heart all in a flame of fire.

Sometimes they get a sensible smell of his ointments. His name had a smell of heaven ; for, because of the favour of his good ointment, his name was as ointment poured forth. O his garments had a smell of heaven ; all his garments smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. The garment of his righteousness had a smell, it is a sacrifice of a sweet smelling favour, and the perfume thereof puts away the stinking smell of sin ; the garment of his graces had a smell, when the spirit breathed upon them, and the north and south wind awakened, the spices sent forth a pleasant smell ; when the spirit warmed my cold heart in duties, and fire from heaven kindled the sacrifice, then it mounted up to heaven like a pillar of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant,

Some-

Sometimes they get a sensible feeling of his power ; they have felt a sweet power coming along with the word, the sacrament, the prayer, the duty, that hath set the lawful captive at liberty, and loosed their bands, *Psal. cxvi. 16. Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bands.* O, says the man, at such a time I am quit of the bands of fear, I am quit of the band of unbelief, I am quit of the bands of doubts, I am quit of the band of corruption ; a power hath come and knocked off my fetters : I felt his hands passing thro' the hole of the door of my heart, and my bowels were moved for him ; he said to me as it were to unbelieving *Thomas*, reach hither thy hand, and put it into the hole of my side, and let my wounds silence all your faithless fears, discouragements and jealousies ; and I was obliged to cry out, *My Lord and my God.* I thought he took me, as it were, by the hand, as he did *Peter* upon the water, ready to sink, saying, O why didst thou doubt ? He shed abroad his love upon my heart so sweetly, that I could doubt no more, I could have been content that the valley of vision had been my burial-place, and that I had never gone back to the world again ? For his love ravished my heart, and struck the bottom out of all my doubts and fears : I got all my backslidings healed ; I got all my prayers answered ; I got all my burdens eased ; I got grace to pour out my soul into his bosom ; I got grace to bring all my corruptions to him to be dashed to pieces ; I got grace to creep into his heart, and hide myself in his wounds ; I got grace to cast all my burdens over upon him, and my heart was lightened, and my soul was more eased and pleased, than if I had been crowned emperor of all the kingdoms of the world. These are some of the merciful experiences
that

that sometimes they will get, to make them sing of mercy. I might have mentioned many more to this purpose, both of ordinary and extraordinary mercies ; but I go on to

The *second* question here proposed, *What it is in mercy that affords ground of singing ?* 1. The *freeness* and undeservedness of the mercy, makes them sing of mercy ; when the man deserves hell, and the just sentence of the law to be past against him, mercy comes and takes hold of him : What is the cause of mercy ? There is nothing in man to merit it but misery, which is indeed the occasion that God takes, to manifest his mercy through Christ : but yet misery cannot be the cause of mercy ; for neither merit nor misery can be considered here to have any casual influence, it is just absolute sovereignty, *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* Sovereign mercy is a thing that can neither be obtained by any good, or hindered by any evil about us ; he gives no Account of his dealings, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* He loves, and we shall be loved ; let all our high imaginations and proud reasonings strike fail to the sovereignty of free grace : O shall I not sing of mercy, that when I deserved a hell, I got a heaven ! I deserved eternal death, and I got a sweet view of eternal life ! This accents the praises, 'O what am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto ?

2. The *unexpectedness* of the mercy makes them sing of mercy : O when I was expecting a frown, I got a smile ; when I was expecting nothing but wrath, I got a blink of love ; instead of a stroke of vengeance, I got a discovery of glory : *Hezekiah* got a message of death, and was looking for it, when he got the news of life, and it made him sing of
mercy,

mercy, *Isa.* xxxviii. 15. The mercy of God is surprizing mercy ; some have gone drooping to an ordinance, and ere ever they were aware, their souls have got something, which hath caused them to cry, *O, is this the manner of man, O Lord?* Some have gone to a closet, or a field, or a barn, with little or no expectation ; but behold they have been surprized with an armful of heaven ; may be at such a sermon they have been surprized with a word of love on the back of deep humiliation or desertion ; a word, like a live-coal, hath been cast in, and set their breast on fire, and their heart in a flame.

3. The *seasonableness* of the mercy makes them sing of mercy ; for he comes with grace to help in time of need, *I was brought low and he helped me ; I was brought to the brink of ruin, and the border of despair, when mercy stepped in for my relief and comfort ; when I was at the lowest extremity, he stepped in and made it the sweetest time that ever I saw ; he brought me out of the horrible pit, and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, even praises unto our God, he pitied us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.*

4. The *greatness* and *riches* of the mercy, makes them sing, saying, *O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men !* *Psal.* xxxi. 19. We read of the riches of his mercy, the exceeding riches of his grace ; his people sometimes meet with exceeding rich favour, such as not only exceeds their worth infinitely, but even exceeds their sense, exceeds their thought, exceeds their words, exceeds their desires, exceeds their prayers, exceeds their praises, exceeds

exceeds all that they can ask or think ; and this makes them sing. We read of his abundant mercy ; it is abundant in respect of its fountain, for his mercy is his nature, and must be infinite ; it is abundant in respect of its streams, as it is let out abundantly toward the objects thereof. It is abundantly great in respect of its various kinds, temporal mercy, spiritual mercy ; eternal mercy ; temporal mercy makes them sing and say, *I am less than the least of all thy mercies* ; spiritual mercy makes them sing, and say, *He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* ; eternal mercy makes them sing and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. O how abundant are they in their kinds, outward and inward mercies ! Outward mercies are abundant. O the mercy that attended my birth, my education, the place of my situation in the world, so as to be brought under the drop of the gospel ; my preservation from innumerable dangers ; my protection, my provision, he hath fed me all my life long. Inward mercies are abundant, the mercy that appeared in my being awakened, convinced, humbled, converted, confirmed, comforted, called, justified, adopted, sanctified. O what ground of singing of mercy ! It is great and abundant in respect of the qualities of it ; O what matter of singing might be gathered out of the views of mercy, as it is preventing mercy, sparing mercy, condescending mercy, covering mercy, tender mercy, waiting mercy, constraining mercy, restraining mercy, restoring mercy, following mercy ! Even when I fled away from Mercy, Mercy and Goodness followed me. But the bare mentioning of all would be impracticable ; O the greatness of the mercy of which they may sing ! O the greatness of the author of it, a great God ! If we be

saved, what does he win? If we be damned, what does he lose? yet he shews mercy. O the greatness of the object of it! It is extended toward the chief of sinners; O the greatness of the effects of it! Hereby great sins are pardoned, great blessings are conferred, great wrath is averted, and great salvation is obtained; O how can they but sing of mercy? O the greatness of the attendants and companions of it! It makes them sing not only when they take notice of the mercy, but the contents and concomitants of it, and what comes along with it; how sweetly will the soul sing, when it can say, I not only got such a mercy, but I saw God in it, and Christ in it, and the Spirit in it, and heaven in it, and glory in it! O how sweet when they consider this favour hath a necessary connection with heaven! It is a fore-taste of what I shall enjoy for ever, it is connected with God's everlasting love. And hence,

5. Not only the *greatness*, but the *sweetness* of the mercy makes them sing: And there are two things, among many others, that make it sweet to them, namely, the excellency of the mercy itself, and then their relation to it; on the one hand the excellency of the mercy. *How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord. Thy favour is better than life; his mouth is most sweet,* says the church; *The words of his mouth are sweeter than honey, or the honey comb;* on the other hand, their relation to the mercy, contributes to the sweetness of it; the more of faith's application, the more sweet. O, says faith, there is a promise, and it is mine; there is a pardon, and it is mine; there is a robe of righteousness, and it is mine; there is a crown of glory, and it is mine; there is a God, and he is mine; all is mine, because Christ is mine. O then he sings of mercy.

But,

But, 6. to name no more, The *sureness* and *firmness* of the mercy makes them sing, *Isa.* lv. 3. they are called the *sure mercies of David*. The *Septuagint* render it as the apostle does, *Acts* xiii.

34. τὰ ἁγία Δαβὶδ *, the holy, just and τὰ πιστὰ faithful things of *David*. The mercies of God in Christ, our mystical *David*, are his holy, just and faithful things; his holiness, justice and faithfulness are concerned to make good and secure his mercy to them that believe. Hence it is said of believing penitents, 1 *John* i. 9. that God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins: faithfulness hath a respect to God's promise, and justice a respect to the price and ransom paid by Christ: And God hath bound himself, he is bound by his own faithfulness on the one hand, he will be faithful to his word of promise, and he is bound by his own justice on the other hand, which is fully satisfied in Christ: he is thus obliged to give out mercy, and secure it for the believer; this makes it indeed the sure mercies of *David*, and so they are eternally secured, and therefore everlasting mercies. In a word, the thing that makes them sing of mercy is, when they see the mercy to bear in it the tokens of God's love; when they find such a mercy is not only the answer of prayer, but the fruit of God's electing grace; when they see God's everlasting love to be the fountain from whence it flows, Christ's everlasting righteousness the channel in which it runs, and the powerful operation of the spirit making the effectual conveyance and application of all. Now these are some of the mercies, and the things in these mercies, both more ordinary and extraordinary, that are grounds of singing: *I will sing of mercy*. But to the other part of the Song.

Second Head. The *second* thing was to speak of the *judgments* that the Lord's people are visited with, and what it is in judgment that may be matter of a song of praise unto God. To sing of mercy is what I understand, may you say ; but how to sing of judgment, I want to know. Here then I would follow the same method as in the former head, namely,

1. To speak of some of these judgments they may be visited with.
2. What it is in judgment that may be matter of a song of praise to God.

Now, as to the first of these, *viz.* the judgments of which they are to sing. In order to clear this, you would know, that the word *judgment* hath various significations in scripture ; I shall name some of these.

1. *Judgment* sometimes signifies (when spoken with relation to man) understanding and equity ; sometimes it signifies understanding, and a faculty of discerning, in opposition to ignorance, *Phil. i. 9. I pray that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge, and in all judgment ;* sometimes it signifies equity, in opposition to injustice, *Gen. xviii. 19. I know Abraham that he will command his children and household after him, that they keep the ways of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.* Now, tho' the doing judgment thus, and that with an understanding heart, be one of the ways by which we are to sing the praises of God and glorify him, of which more afterward ; yet other things are here intended : Therefore,
2. *Judgment* (when spoken of with relation to God) signifies several other things, as, (1.) It sometimes signifies God's just and righteous government of the world, particularly by Christ Jesus, *John v. 22. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the son ;* righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and that both in the

iron

iron road by which he takes vengeance on his enemies, and in the golden sceptre by which he rules his own people : And indeed, whatever be intended in the text, this government of Christ is matter of a song of praise ; *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice, the Lord reigns, let the earth be glad.* But, (2.) Judgment sometimes signifies the rectitude of Christ's administration, in his reforming the world, and bringing things into order, which sin and Satan had put into confusion ; so may that word be understood, *John ix. 34. For judgment am I come into this world ;* and again, *Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* Of this judgment also will the believer sing, when the spirit is come to convince, as of sin and righteousness, so also of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. But, (3.) Judgment sometimes signifies the precepts of the law, as ye know they are frequently called God's testimonies and judgments, especially *Psal. cxix.* and when a man learns these in a gospel way, they are matter of a song of praise also, *Psal. cxix. 7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I have learned thy righteous judgments.* Yea, they delight therein, and sing of his judgments, *Psal. cxix. 54. Thy statutes have been my Song in the house of my pilgrimage.* (4.) Judgment sometimes signifies the doctrine of the gospel, *Matt. xii. 18. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* It is cited out of *Isa. xlii. 1. He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles,* that is, He will publish the gospel, the way and method of salvation, which he came as a prophet to teach and proclaim, as a priest to work out, and as a king to apply : and if we should take judgment in this sense, surely all believers sing of judgment, whenever faith is in exercise ; for the

gospel is the song of the saints, it is the joyful sound, while with joy they draw water out of this well of salvation. (5.) It sometimes signifies the punishment inflicted upon Christ, when he substituted himself in our room, *Isa. liii. 8. He was taken from prison and from judgment* ; or, as it may be rendered, and as you will see in the margin of some of your bibles, *He was taken away by distress and judgment, while it pleased the Lord to bruise him.* O but this infinitely severe act of justice and judgment against Christ was an infinite act of mercy towards us ! And, as we had perished eternally, if we had not been thus judged and condemned in a surety ; so this judgment executed upon him is matter of a song. To sing of judgment in this sense, is one of the sweetest hymns to the praise of God. Judgment sometimes signifies the solemnity of the last day, *Jude, ver. 14, 15. Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all.* And tho' it will be a day of terrible vengeance to the wicked Christless world, yet the saints may sing of judgment in this sense, and lift up their heads with joy, for the day of their redemption draws near ; *When Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.* (7.) It sometimes signifies the punishment of the wicked in a wrathful manner, and the heavy plagues which he pours out upon any person or people, whether it be sword, famine, pestilence, or any other stroke, *Exod. vi. 6. I will redeem you from Egypt* (says the God of Israel) *with a stretched out hand, and with great judgments* ; that is, with great plagues and punishments upon the Egyptians. *The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.* And sometimes the Lord gives his church and people occasion to sing of judgment

ment in this sense, as *Israel* did at the *Red-Sea*, after God had poured out all his plagues upon *Pharaoh* and upon his proud host ; on which occasion you have the song of *Moses*, *Exod.* xv. In this sense it is said, *The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance* ; not that he will love to feed his eyes upon the blood and ruin of his fellow-creatures, but rejoice in that God is glorified in the destruction of his enemies, and the salvation of his church and people. (8.) Judgment sometimes signifies the chastisement of the godly : for as there is a wrathful judgment, which God exercises towards his enemies ; so there is a fatherly judgment which he exercises towards his friends. In this sense we may understand that word in the institution of the sacrament, even as it concerns the godly themselves, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself*, as the word may be rendered, *1 Cor.* xi. 29. And, indeed, as a believer may communicate unworthily, so his unworthy communicating may bring on him heavy judgments or chastisements from the Lord ; *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*, ver. 30. Judgment, I say, signifies sometimes fatherly judgments or chastisements : and thus it is to be understood, *1 Pet.* iv. 1. *The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God* ; and in this sense, especially, I conceive judgment to be meant in the text, *I will sing of mercy and judgment* ; so that by judgment here we are to understand all the hardships and sorrows of a believer's lot, whether punitive or probative, that is, whether for the punishment of his sins, or the probation of his graces ; all penal dispensations for his correction, or whatever dispensations make for his trial ; all adversity, sufferings and distresses of whatsoever kind.

Now, if you ask more particularly what these judgments are ? I think they may all be reduced to these four ordinary words ; 1. The judgment of affliction. 2. The judgment of temptation. 3. The judgment of desertion. 4. The judgment of sin itself, which may be so called, when a man is left to fall into it for the punishment of other sins. I am not yet come to shew how these, or any of these, may afford matter of a song : I am as yet telling you what are the judgments they may meet withal. And,

1st, The judgment of affliction. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, even their outward afflictions ; sometimes they are afflicted in their bodies with sickness, sometimes in their estate with poverty, sometimes in their name with reproach, sometimes in their relations, either by the gracelessness of their relations, or by their death ; if they were gracious, then they are afflicted with grief that they have lost them ; if they were graceless, then they are afflicted with fear lest they be gone to hell ; if they know not whether they died in Christ or not, they are afflicted with perplexity, because they know not what is become of them. Sometimes they are afflicted in their families, with this and the other cross, and disorder and confusion ; sometimes in their neighbours and brethren, whether wicked or godly, from whom they may have trials of many sorts ; sometimes in their cause they maintain, and for conscience sake, they may be persecuted and harassed ; *If any man will live godly in this world, he must suffer persecution ; through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God :* there is a necessity for it ; for the believer here is like the tribe of *Manasseh*, half on this side *Jordan* in the land of the *Amorites*, and half on the other side

side in the holy land : I mean, he hath both corruption and grace, and hence a necessity of affliction and suffering ; for, if he hath any good in him, the devil will surely gnash at him, and endeavour, if he can, to devour him ; and if he hath evil in him, he must look that God will afflict him.

But, 2dly, There is the judgment of *temptation*, that the children of God are sometimes tried with, even the fiery darts of the devil ; for the Lord sees fit sometimes to let Satan loose on his people, who will not be wanting to improve any liberty granted to him, with his uttermost power and policy, as we see in the case of *Job*. It is strange to read how Christ was tempted of the devil, *Matt. iv.* and after that, let none think strange, that the followers of Christ may be tempted to deny their sonship, tempted to doubt of God's care, tempted to destroy themselves ; yea, tempted to worship the devil ; for in all these things he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin ; and in that he himself, tho' he sinned not, yet suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. The children of grace may be tempted to atheism, and to doubt of the being of a God, tempted to blasphemy, and horrible things that they dare not tell for a world. It is said by the spouse, *Song ii. 4. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.* Why ? What is the meaning of a banner in a banqueting-house ? A banner is rather for a battle : but indeed, first, here the banquet and the battle go together, for the battle many times follows the banquet. It may be, Satan and corruption are sleeping, as it were now ; but I assure you they are not dead : so long as ye have sin, ye shall have temptations to sin ; so long as there is a finger of the believer out of heaven, the devil will be striking at it.

If

If temptations have not assaulted you already since the sacrament, as I fear they have, yet be sure the *Philistines* will be upon you.

3dly, There is the judgment of *desertion*, which is yet forer than any of the former, *Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled*. Sometimes the believer comes under the sad loss of the light of God's countenance, and the sense of his love, and may lose his gracious comfortable presence very suddenly, even when he is just opening the door of his heart, as it were, to let him in. *Song*, v. 6. *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone*. Sometimes he loses that comfortable presence very unworthily, even in a fit of drowsiness and spiritual security, as in that same ver. of the *song*, v. 3. Sometimes he loses it very long. *I sought him, but I found him not ; I called on him, but he gave me no answer*. I went from duty to duty, from ordinance to ordinance, and yet not so much as a word or a look from him. In this case, it cannot but be a very melancholly time with the believer, when he goes mourning without the sun, saying, O that I knew where I might find him. O that it were with me as in months past ; especially if he knows that he hath not lost that presence by sovereignty on the Lord's part, but sinfully on his part, and that he hath sinned him away. How ill went it with *Asaph*, when he was forced to say, *I remembered God and was troubled*, *Psal.* lxxviii. 3. Why he remembered his own unkindness and ingratitude, that provoked the Lord to be gone. O ! it is not easy to comfort the soul in this case. This soul desertion is ordinarily attended with the want of life and spirit for the performance of duty, *Psal.* xl. 12. *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up*. His spiritual strength was so worn away,

away, that he was neither able to pray nor praise, or do any duty with liveliness or activity. In this case, the soul cannot pray with life or power, it cannot hear with joy or profit, it cannot meditate with any delight or spirituality, it cannot act with any freedom or liberty, it cannot suffer for God with any zeal, patience, boldness, or resolution; O what a judgment is desertion! In this case, the soul is filled sometimes with fearful apprehensions of the wrath of God, and everlasting vengeance; tho' believers be secured against this, by the oath of God, the blood of Christ, and the seal of the spirit, yet under unbelief, temptation and desertion, they may have fearful apprehensions of it, and that for their correction for their sins; for tho' he pardon their iniquity, he will take vengeance on their inventions: here the believer may be afraid of terrible judgments, *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*, Psal. cxix. 120. He may sometimes be afraid, lest God lay open the filthiness and wickedness of his heart to the world, and make him a reproach and a scandal to the godly and the wicked; this made the psalmist pray, *O make me not the reproach of the foolish, let none that fear thy name be ashamed for my sake*. Sometimes he may be afraid lest God strike him suddenly with a visible and signal judgment, and take him off the stage in a terrible way; hence, says *David*, *Take me not away in thy wrath*. Sometimes he may be afraid, lest he be the *Jonas* that hath raised or may raise the storm of God's wrath against the family, the congregation, the church, the land where he lives; and apprehensions of this nature may be grievous and perplexing, and create a multitude of thoughts within him; yea, in this deserted case, he may be filled with the terrors of God, and the ar-

rows of the almighty drinking up his spirit, *Job*, vi. 4. They may be brought to that pass, that the sorrows of hell compass them about, so as they choose strangling and death rather than life; and yet all this may be in a way of fatherly judgment for the punishment of their sins, as *David's* bones were broken for his murder and adultery; though sometimes he hath done it in sovereignty, yet the terrors of the Lord may bring them the length of distraction, *Psal.* lxxviii. 15. *While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.* O what a storm is this! Desertion may come to a great height, and bring along with it dreadful storms of fear, terror and distraction. It may be your mountain is standing strong, believers; but look to yourself, and beware of God provoking sins, for he may hide his face, and then be sure you shall be troubled. Many, under sensible enjoyments, are like a man in a meadow, the sun shining upon him, and ere ever he is aware a mist comes about him, and he knows not where he is. There may come a mist about your soul, that you will hardly know where you are, or where you had been, or whether your former experiences have been any thing but a dream; however, this is one of the judgments that the people of God may meet with.

4thly, There is the judgment of *sin*, which is worst of all, and hath the nature of a judgment; when God lets the man fall into one sin for the punishment of another, as he may do even with his own, when his fatherly anger burns hotly against them; this is the saddest judgment and chastisement that I think a child of God can meet with; and it would seem that *David's* adultery was thus in part chastised, by letting him fall into murder; and *Peter's* pride and self-confidence, by
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letting him fall into a threefold denial of his Lord and master; and thus he may do till the time of restoring their souls; which he hath determined, shall come. O how ill, how dreadfully ill does it go with the children of God, when they are brought to that pitiful complaint, *Isa. lxiii. 17. O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?* And when led captive by sin, &c. Thus I have told you some of these judgments that the people of God may meet with. Now the

Second question upon this head was, What it is in or about judgment, that may afford matter of singing, or of a song of praise? And now, some may be thinking, O sir, these judgments you have been speaking of, are just the things that mar all my singing, and it will be strange, if there be any matter of singing, notwithstanding of these; for if these be the judgments, what can be the song or the ground of singing, when they afford such ground of sighing and lamentation? I shall endeavour to shew you, upon what grounds the sovereign Lord may even make these things matter of a song of praise.

And, *1st*, say you, what ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when affliction is the judgment? Indeed no affliction of itself is joyous, but grievous; but the Lord can bring meat out of the eater, and sweet out of the strong, and a sweet song out of a sad stroke and affliction; hence *David* sings of affliction, and says, *It was good for me that I was afflicted that I might learn thy statutes*, *Psal. cxix. 71*. Now, there is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction is not in wrath, but in love; when it comes not from a wrathful, but a fatherly judge; when it is not satisfactory, but casti-

castigatory ; when it is not to satisfy divine justice, but to correct vicious habits ; when it is not expiatory, but exprobatory ; when it is not to expiate sin, but to prove grace, *That the trial of faith being much more precious, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 7. That Christ drank out all the wrath out of the cup of affliction, and left nothing behind but love for his people to drink : O what matter of a song is here ! For, *being justified by his blood, we are saved from wrath thro' him*, Rom. v. 9. There is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction is attended with instruction, even saving instruction : to this purpose the psalmist sings, *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law.* When, by affliction, a man comes to learn the sinfulness of sin, and the evil of it ; the emptiness of the creature, and the vanity of it, and the fulness of Christ, and his all-sufficiency. O, when the God of heaven does famish all our gods on earth, and starve us as to creature-comforts, to make us hunger after the fulness and sweetness of Christ, what matter of singing is this ! There is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction makes us conform to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as he suffered for us, so he left us an example that we should follow his steps ; surely, to be herein conform to the Son of God, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, is ground of singing. Again, there is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction tends to the destruction of sin, *For by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin* : when it tends to win the heart more to God, and wean the heart from the world, and all the things of the world, and lusts of the world, and is a fire to remove the dross, and a file to remove the rust. Again, there is ground to sing of

of judgment, when afflictions are badges of honour, when they are signs of love, *For whom the Lord loves he chastens*; when they are marks of sonship, *for he scourges every son whom he receives, and if you be without chastisement, then are ye bastards and not sons*, Heb. xii. 8. Yea, what a badge of honour is it, when a man is helped to a patience submission to his heavenly Father? What an honour did God put upon *Job*, in that signal sentence, *Ye have heard of the patience of Job*? *Alexander* the conqueror is not so renowned as *Job* the sufferer. Again, there is ground to sing of judgment, in that affliction tends to make you happy and holy; *We are afflicted for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness*; for tho' the affliction be grievous for the time, yet afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby, Heb. xii. 10, 11. When the deluge of affliction makes us flee as a dove to the window of the ark, and when by faith we make use of the water of affliction to make us swim the faster to Christ. In a word, there is ground here to sing of judgments, in that they make preparation for glory; *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; and so the worst that God does with his children by affliction, is but to whip them home to heaven. Thus you see what ground there is to sing of judgment, when affliction is the judgment.

2dly, What ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when temptation is the judgment? Indeed under temptation he is ready to say, all these things are against me, and yet they may all be working together for his good; and therefore, if a child of God be tempted in the manner that I spoke of before, there is here ground to sing
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of judgment, in that temptation drives him to his knees; the more furiously satan tempts, the more seriously the believer cries and prays, *2 Cor. xii. 8. A messenger of satan was sent to buffet me, but for this I besought the Lord thrice.* There is here ground to sing of judgment, in that temptation abates the man's pride, *v. 7. Lest I should be exalted above measure,* this messenger of satan was sent; the temptation that humbles the soul, and makes it lye low in the dust, is matter of praise: there is here ground to sing of judgment, in that temptation is sometimes the opportunity of the communication of grace, *v. 9. I besought the Lord, and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in thy weakness;* hereupon the man falls a singing, *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then I am strong.* There is ground to sing of judgment here, in that many times temptation to sin keeps from committing a sin, the more satan tempts to blasphemy, the more the believer trembles at it, and is feared at himself, while he does not see the tempter: there is ground to sing of judgment, in that the temptation hath mercy in it; mercy to others, while we are the more fitted to comfort them when they are under temptation, *2 Cor i. 4. Mercy to ourselves, in that we become the objects of the mediator's sympathy; For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin;* therefore will succour them that are tempted: there is here ground to sing of judgment, in that as it is no sin to be tempted, so the temptation can do no harm where there is not yielding: I said that it is no sin to be tempted, and I say it again;

gain; tho' to yield to the least temptation is a sin, yet it is no sin to be tempted to the greatest sin; for Christ, who could not sin, was tempted to sin; there is no sin in it, where there is no yielding to it; in that case it is the sin of the tempter, but not the sin of the tempted. But, say you, O the temptation conquers me, and therefore how can I sing of judgment in this respect? Why, the prevailing of a temptation is a sad thing indeed; but yet there may be ground to sing of judgment, if the prevailing of the temptation tends to the increase of grace and godly sorrow, as *Peter's* fall cost many a salt tear; and if the prevailing of the temptation tend to the increase of watchfulness, and make him more afraid to commit sin, and more afraid to neglect duty, and more careful to improve Christ, in this case there is ground to sing of judgment. Why, say you, if the prevailing of a temptation will issue in a song of praise, may not that make us careless whether we yield or not?

Answer, The prevailing of a temptation is one thing, and the yielding to a temptation is another; the prevailing of it may issue in joy, as I have told you, but the yielding to it must issue in sorrow: and if that sorrow be turned into joy, it will be a wonder of grace: O shall we thus sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. The wind of temptation is cross to the wind of the spirit; and if we fly before the wind of temptation, we fly away from God and heaven: and therefore, if we sing of judgment sweetly and safely, it will be by reason of the wisdom of God making use of cross winds to blow us to heaven, and not of our flying before these. Thus you see what ground there is to sing of judgment, when and tho' the temptation is the judgment.

3dly, What ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when *desertion* is the judgment? Desertion and divine withdrawing is a very heavy case, whether it be a withdrawing in respect of grace, the withholding the influences of the spirit, the quickening grace-exciting influences thereof; or in respect of comfort, the withholding the light of his countenance, and leaving the soul in the dark: when light is away, there is nothing but darkness in the air; when the Lord is away, nothing but darkness, disorder, and confusion in the soul. Now, how can I sing one of the songs of *Zion* in such a dark land? Nay, rather mine eye, mine eye weeps, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far removed; instead of singing, I must hang my harp upon the willows: Is there any ground to sing of judgment, when desertion is the judgment, unless it be a heavy song, while I cannot but mourn as a dove, and chatter as a crane? Why even in desertion, the child of God (and indeed none but a child is capable of desertion) he may sing of judgment, in regard that, as the seed of grace may be where there is not the flower of joy, so, tho' weeping may endure for a night, yet joy comes in the morning; and they that sow in tears shall reap in joy, and the reaping time is hastening on, for desertion is but for a short time, *Isa.* liv. 8. There the Lord gives this to be the ground of singing, even in such a case; *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercy will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.* There is ground to sing of judgment, when desertion tends to awaken the soul out of its drowsy distemper: *I sleep*, says the spouse, *Song* v. 2. and presently Christ withdraws;

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My beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone. Why, then she fell a seeking him whom her soul loved. 'Tis true, it is one of the sad effects of desertion many times, that the soul grows careless, and cannot seek with any life; but yet if a godly soul becomes sensible of the Lord's departing for some time, the Lord may be away, and they do not know or consider, as it is said of *Sampson*. He wist not that the Lord was departed from him; but I say, when a godly soul becomes sensible of it, and sees him going off, or hears him saying farewell, O then, like friends at parting, he follows him, and cannot part with him. There is ground to sing of judgment here, when desertion tends to alienate the heart from the world, when the soul refuses to take comfort from any thing in time, because the absence of Christ darkens all, or makes all things bitter to you, because his sweet presence is away, it is matter of praise. There is ground here to sing of judgment, if that desertion makes you prize the light of his countenance the more, saying, O to see thy power and glory, as I have seen it in the sanctuary! When the night of desertion makes you welcome the rising of the sun of righteousness, it is a happy parting that contributes to make a joyful meeting. There is here ground to sing of judgment, if that desertion makes you hate sin that caused the same, as a stone in the pipe hinders the current of the water; that desertion is matter of praise, that makes sin odious to you, as that which robs you of your best jewels, and that makes you lament his absence, and the cause of it. It is indeed matter of sighing, to want his presence; but it is matter of singing to lament his absence. It is ground of sorrow, to be without him at any time; but it is ground of praise that

you cannot live contentedly without him ; I mean not a sinful discontent, that frets at his absence ; but a holy discontent that longs for his presence, and laments his absence ; this I call matter of praise. There is ground to sing of judgment, in that Christ drank out all the wrath of God out of the cup of desertion, when he suffered that heavy desertion himself, that made him cry, *Eli, Eli ; &c. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* Further, there is ground to sing of judgment here, if that his desertion makes the expectation of heaven sweet here, and the possession of it pleasant hereafter : when the believer longs for heaven the more now, and loves it the better, then is it no matter of praise ? O there is no hiding, no desertion, no cloud there, but a constant vision of his glory ; *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* In a word, there is ground to sing of judgment, if that desertion makes room for faith and hope, till vision and fruition come. It is matter of sorrow indeed, when there is occasion to say, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thy self, O God of Israel the saviour :* but it is matter of praise when the soul is brought to say, *I will wait on the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him,* Isa. viii. 17. It may be, ye get a breathing now and then in the air of sensible manifestations, but ye must look up to faith and hope again, and through the cloud you must look for him, and bless him when he helps you to do so ; for though it were a killing desertion, or a slaying like dispensation, yet there is reason to sing, when he helps you to say, *Tho' he slay me, yet I will trust in him.* Thus ye see what ground there is to sing of judgment, even when desertion is the judgment.

4thly, What ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when *sin* is a part of the judgment when either the sins of others are the affliction or his own sins are the affliction? When the sins of others are the affliction, can there be any ground to sing of judgment? When I see the generation loaden with sins and abominations, grievously departing from the Lord, surely it is ground of sighing and lamentation, and it is duty to sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of *Jerusalem*, Ezek. ix. 4. It is true. And yet the song of praise must not go down among the children of God; for there is ground to sing in this case, when ye can say, *I beheld transgressors, and was grieved*: for as it is child-like to be grieved for the injuries done to your father; so it is Christ-like, for he was grieved for the hardness of their hearts; yet it is matter of singing, as it is a mark of love to God; for one may weep for his own sins from fear of hell, but he weeps for the sins of others from love to God. It is matter of singing, when the more sin you see in others, it make you hate sin the more, and swim against the stream; when the faster they run to hell, it makes you run the faster to heaven, and sets you a praying; that when they are hastning to the prison, ye may hasten to a palace. It is matter of singing, when the sins of others are the glass wherèin ye see your own hearts, and see the roots of all that wickedness to be within you; and therefore are made the more thankful, that God restrains you by his power from doing the same, and constrains you by his grace to do otherways. When ye are helped to say thankfully, what the *Pharisee* said boasting, *The Lord be thanked that I am not as other men*, and that I have not so learned Christ,

It is matter of singing also, when their sins make you more holy ; and when their unfavouriness makes your graces to send forth a fragrant smell, and when thereby the Lord gives you an occasion to convince and convert them, and to be the instruments of doing good to their souls. Well, say ye, but the great question is, When my own sins are the affliction, can there be any ground to sing of judgment? Indeed sinning can be no ground of singing, for sin is in itself a damnable thing, worse than hell? and in God's name, I'll say, whatever tends to discourage holiness, and encourage sin, let it be *Anathema*, and cursed be the preaching that tends to the encouragement of sin? yea, cursed be the thought in the preacher or hearer, that makes the doctrine of grace an encouragement thereto. Many such thoughts may enter into us all ; but may vengeance from heaven come down upon them, and destroy them in us, that we may not blaspheme a holy sinless Jesus, to make him a minister of sin. However, sin being the worst of all affliction and judgment, it would be an everlasting damp to the song of mercy and judgment, if a sovereign God could not in his infinite wisdom, bring a song of praise out of the evil of sin. Why then, is there not ground to sing, notwithstanding of sin, when God makes your sin a burden to you, and you to look upon yourselves as wretched because of it, saying, *O wretched man that I am*, &c. when the burden of sin makes you weary of this life, saying with *Rebecca*, *I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth*. There is ground to sing, notwithstanding of sin, when God makes the prevalency of sin the mean of drawing you to a Saviour, and to the blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin ; when daily sin makes daily applica-
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tion to the *fountain open*, &c: when the bitterness of sin makes Christ sweet and precious to you, and the sting of sin draws out your eye to look to the brazen serpent, and so the man sees God get more glory, and Christ more honour, and his righteousness more renown, then he sings and glories in his infirmities, &c. There is ground to sing notwithstanding of sin, when the sense of sin makes a man to judge himself, and condemn himself that he may not be judged and condemned of the Lord; when it makes him examine himself more strictly, saying, *Search me O God*, &c. and observe himself more closely, so as to watch over his heart and way, so as to find out sin, and drive it out thro' grace, and live more circumspectly for the future. There is ground to sing, notwithstanding of sin, when sin makes a man to abhor himself, and to repent in dust and in ashes; when it makes him, with *David*, to water his couch with his tears: and with *Peter*, to go out and weep bitterly, and lays him low in the dust before the Lord: therefore, as one says, better is the sin that makes us humble, than the duty that makes us proud; the hypocrite's rising is the mean of his fall; but the believer's fall, is the mean of his rising: while the sense of his sin makes him holy, and sense of his pride makes him humble, his hypocrisy sincere, his hardness makes him soft, his carnality makes him spiritual; happy that victory of sin over a man, that issues in a bloody war against it: yet no thanks to sin, but to a sovereign wise God, that turns the malady into a medicine. If any should hereupon take encouragement to sin, let them consider, if they do so, whether their spot can be the spot of God's children; for to sin, that grace may abound, is a presumptuous sin of

the highest degree, and true grace dare not draw such a bitter conclusion from such sweet premises ; or, if a child of God should do so, and make bold with sin, let him know and consider, if this be all his kindness to his friend ; tho' God do not damn you, he may send you to a hell in this life, and fill you with horrors, terrors, and agonies of soul, such as I spake of before ; let this therefore be a rail to keep you back from the burning mountain. To sing of judgment in respect of sin, is not to sing of our folly in committing it, but to sing of God's wisdom in destroying it : you have no cause to sing of sin, which of itself brings death, ruin and damnation ; but still cause to sing of judgment concerning sin, or of the Lord's executing judgment upon it. But what if hell be the judgment at last, would you have me to sing in that case ? I fear I go to hell when all is done ; I fear I never win heaven, and how should I sing ? I *answer*, Have you not cause to sing, that ye are out of hell, and that it is not as yet your lot ? But I'll tell you, if you were beginning to sing, it would be the beginning of heaven ; *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.* Will you say, as an honest exercised christian once said, when tempted to fear hell, and thereupon to give over the duties of religion, *Why*, says he, *if I shall never praise him in heaven, I shall endeavour to praise him all that I can on earth.* This would be a sweet token that you shall sing in heaven for ever, among the redeemed. And thus you see, whether we view judgment with respect to affliction, temptation, desertion or sin, in what respect it is that we are to sing of judgment ; it is even to sing of the mercy that God exercises in these judgments ; and so I'll sing of mercy and judgment. It comes all to this,

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as if the *Psalmist* should say, I'll sing of merciful judgments; for judgment is mercy, as it is the matter of the song; or, to take them separately, I'll sing of mercy in mercies, and I'll sing of mercy in judgment; and so I'll sing both of my blinks and of my showers, I'll sing both of my cloudy and my clear day, both of my *ups* and my *downs*, both of smiles and frowns, I'll sing both of frowning and favourable-like dispensations, I'll sing of mercy and judgment; *Unto thee O Lord, will I sing.* So much for second head.

The *Third* general Head proposed was, What this singing imports, and how we are to sing of mercy and judgment, to the praise of God. I shall speak a little to the quality and import of this song.

First, The import of this singing: *I will sing to the Lord*, that is, I will praise the Lord; and it does not lie in the simple sound of a voice, but imports the glorifying of God with our hearts and lips, in our lives, and in our death or suffering.

1. To sing to the Lord, is to glorify him with our hearts and lips, to give him the love and adoration of our hearts. In this singing there is the inward act of the Soul, *Psal. ciii. Bless the Lord, O my soul*, &c. It imports a deep impression of God upon the soul, and a lively sense of his mercy in Christ, and of our own unworthiness of it: and here the soul, and all that is within it, is acting and moving, the judgment moves with admiration and wonder at God for his glorious grace; the memory moves with a thankful recording of his favours, *Forget not all his benefits*; the affections move with joy and delight in God, and love to him for the riches of his grace in Christ; O shall I not love the greatest and best of Beings, for the greatest and best

best of benefits ! The heart is here employed ; neither prayer nor praises without the heart are of any worth ; many sing with their voice, when their hearts are a hundred miles off, gadding here and there ; but a fixed heart is a singing heart, *My heart is fixed, O Lord, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.* We are called to sing with grace in our hearts, *Col. iii. 16.* we are to sing with faith in our hearts, *He that is strong in the faith glorifies God ;* we are to sing with love in our hearts, with fear in our hearts, and with joy in our hearts.

2. To sing to the Lord, is with our lips to glorify him ; we are to give him the calves of our lips. When the heart is full of love, the tongue will be full of praise. Our tongues should be as well-tuned organs, to sound forth the high praises of God, pleading his cause, defending his truths, avouching his name, and confessing him before the world : *Thy loving kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee,* *Psal. lxiii.* 3. When our hearts are inditing a good matter, our tongues will be as the pen of a ready writer, to speak of the things that concern the king ; when our hearts are glad, then our glory will rejoice, *Psal. xvi. 9.* O the little heavenly discourse argues a very sad degeneracy !

3. To sing to the Lord, is with our life to glorify him ; when the love of our hearts, the calves of our lips, and the service of our lives, are presented unto God together, they make a harmonious song : the praise of the life is the life of praise, *Psal. 1.* last verse, *Whoso offereth praise, &c.* When we devote all the actions of our life to his commanding will, and all the enjoyments of life to his disposing will, then we sing a song of praise unto God. When we live by faith on the Son of God ;
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for no less is worth the name of life, but what is derived from him, and devoted to him. It is a practical way of singing the praise of God, that is here intended by the psalmist, as appears from the rest of the psalm.

4. To sing to the Lord, is with our death and sufferings to glorify him, as well as with our life and actions : thus we are called to glorify the Lord in the fires, *Isa.* xxiv. 15. Does God call you to suffer affliction in person, name, state, family, or concerns, to suffer want of husband, wife, brother, sister, children, or other outward comforts ? Why then, you sing of mercy and judgment, by suffering patiently and submissively ; and God is as much glorified by your passive obedience, as by your active. Whenever you are afflicted any way, believer, know then that God hath some employment for your graces, and expects praise thereby ; yea, if he should call you to suffer death and martyrdom for his name, you are to sing his praise, by dying in and for the faith, as well as living by faith. O man, woman, could you die for him that died for you ? That is a great matter. *O 'tis a small matter to die once for Christ*, said a martyr ; *If it might possibly be, I could wish that I might die a thousand deaths for him.* Thus you see the import of singing to the Lord.

Secondly, As to the qualities of this song, or how we are to sing of mercy and judgment. And, 1. We are to sing of mercy and judgment cheerfully. Singing is a cheerful work, we are to *sing with melody in our hearts to the Lord*, and to *make a joyful noise unto God*. It is an antedating of the joy of heaven, tho' you be in a hell of troubles and trials, yet you have reason to praise him, that you are not in the midst of hell among devils. 2. We are to
sing

sing of mercy and judgment highly, saying with the angels, *Glory to God in the highest* : we are to praise him with the highest estimation, with the highest adoration, with the highest admiration, with the highest delight, the highest ravishment, the highest wonder ; for as he is highly exalted above all things and beings ; and above all blessings and praises, so his mercies are the highest mercies, and his judgments the greatest deep ; and therefore, as we ought to sing loud and high, so we ought to sing low. Therefore, 3. We are to sing of mercy and judgment humbly and lowly. Pride and praise are inconsistent ; and therefore we should join trembling with our praise and singing, having awful impressions of God upon our souls, and knowing the infinite distance betwixt him and us. When the twenty-four elders sing, they come down from their thrones, and cast down their crowns and their palms, *Rev. iv. 10.* as if they would say, We are not worthy to sit upon a throne, or to wear a crown in his presence ; they make their crowns and their thrones a footstool unto him. When we sing of mercy and judgment, we are to mind his judgments are a great deep, and we ought to be deeply humbled before him, saying, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, &c. Rom. xi. 33.* 4. We are to sing of mercy and of judgment constantly and unweariedly. Every new mercy and judgment should be the matter of a new song ; and O, his mercies are new every morning, new every moment ; and therefore we should still be singing and saying, *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be continually in my mouth, Psal. xxxiv. 1.* *Let such as love thy salvation, say continually, The Lord be magnified, Psal. xl. 16.* It is true, the saints will never sing without intermission, till they

they get above these clouds. It is true also, when they see mercy, they are ready to sing; but when they cannot see the sun of mercy through the cloud of judgment, they are ready to sigh, and hang their harps upon the willows: yet nevertheless, as the obligation to sing does always take place, so they have always matter of praise, and ground to sing of mercy and judgment. 5. We are to sing of mercy and judgment, both conjunctly and severally: when you meet with a mercy, sing of mercy; when you meet with a judgment, sing of judgment; when you meet with mercy and judgment both, then sing of mercy and judgment both, and improve both for matter of a song of praise, so as God may be glorified both in his mercy and judgment. 6. We are to sing of mercy and judgment devoutly and obedientially, as knowing it to be a commanded duty. It would take an hour to tell over all the scriptures, whereby we are called to praise the Lord. It is a comely, good and pleasant duty, *Psal. cxlvii. 1. Praise ye the Lord for it is good, &c.* There you see three epithets given to this duty, to move us thereto. 1. It is a soul enriching duty, it is a good way to make a sad case grow better. The spouse, under desertion, fell a singing and saying, *My beloved is white and ruddy, &c.* and never was she in a better case than when in this praising tune. It is good to cry down our complaints with praises; it is good, that it is all the tribute that the king of heaven can have from us; and to deny him this, is the height of treason, for it is a rent due to him. *Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.* It is good by way of eminency, for it is a greater mark of love than other duties; self-love may drive a man to prayer, but love to God makes him praise. If you can draw out a long libel of complaints before God,

God, and yet have never a word of praise for the mercies you enjoy, it is to be feared that self-love hath got the penning of your prayers : for as it is a token of enmity with your neighbour, when you receive many favours from him, and yet never so much as give him thanks ; so it is a token of enmity against God, when, notwithstanding of his mercies, yet you do not sing his praise. It is every way good. (2.) It is a *pleasant duty* : no musick does God so much delight in, as singing his praises ; it is the pleasant work of heaven, where new scenes of glory will open, and open to all eternity, and new songs of praise will still be sung for long evermore. It may be you think, when once you come to heaven, you'll praise your fill ; but now when so many dead weights are upon you, you cannot, and you should not sing and praise : well, no thanks to you to praise when you are once in heaven ; but if you glorify him now in the fires, and praise him now, in spite of devils and all opposition in your way, you do more honour to him than to praise him in heaven, where there is no trouble, no temptation, no sin nor sorrow to interrupt your song. To sing like *Paul* and *Silas* in the stocks, is more than to sing in heaven, tho' not more pleasant, yet, in some respect, it is more honourable, noble and glorious. And so, (3.) It is a *comely duty*, the garment of praise is a very graceful ornament. An ungrateful and unthankful man is an ugly ill favoured man, nothing more uncomely in the eyes of God and man. We are to praise him then devoutly, under a sense of duty.

In the last place, We are to sing *resolutely*, or with holy purpose and resolution, saying with the psalmist here, *Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing*. And, because this is a part of the text, I shall show what

is imported in the psalmist's resolution, and the manner of expressing it; *I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.* And, 1. I think it imports a *grounded* resolution that he had got a discovery of the glory of God's mercy and justice in the face of Jesus Christ, and a discovery of the glory of God in all his merciful and afflictive dispensations. He had a sense and impression of the goodness of God, in all the favours that he met with; and he had a sense and impression of the wisdom of God, in ordering all afflictive providences to his soul's advantage. *I will sing of mercy and judgment.* 2. It imports a grateful resolution, that the spirit of gratitude filled his soul: so much does his resolution to sing import; for it says, that his spirit was sweetened with a sense he had of the kindness of God; his meditation of him was sweet, and that makes him resolve upon such a sweet exercise; he saw what strong and manifest obligations he was under to praise and magnify the name of the Lord. 3. I think the manner of expression imports a *cordial* resolution, heart and will are engaged in it; there's twice *I will* in the text, *I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, I will*: he had a good will to the work; where the understanding is enlightened in the knowledge of God, in his mercy and judgment, there the will is subdued and made willing, willing to praise, willing to glorify God by the obedience of faith and love through grace. 4. The manner of expression imports a *fervent* resolution; so much I think lies in that word, *O Lord, I will do it, to thee, O Lord, I will sing.* To be fervent in prayer, is a notable exercise, but to be fervent in praise, is yet more notable: fervency in seeking is good, but fervency in singing is yet better, *To thee, O Lord, will I sing.* Perhaps this O imports

imports also a wonder ; O I'll sing, for thy mercies and judgments are so wonderfully great ? O I'll sing with wonder and admiration ! 5. The manner of the expression imports a *humble* resolution : I cannot sing of merit, but I'll sing of mercy, and through mercy I'll sing of mercy. To sing of mercy must be a humble song, for mercy towards a miserable sinner is a melting word ; and to sing of judgment must be a humble song, for judgment in every sense is an awful word ; and the psalmist breathes out his resolution in a most humble manner, *O Lord, I will sing of mercy and judgment.* 6. The manner of expression imports a *solemn* resolution, made in the presence of the great Jehovah, *To thee, O Lord, will I sing.* It is not only resolved in his own mind, that he will sing to the Lord, but by way of a solemn address to the God of heaven, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *To thee, O Lord, will I sing :* to thee will I give the glory of thy mercy and judgment ; behold, I resolve upon it before thee, O Lord. 7. The manner of the expression imports a *skilful* resolution. *David* was a sweet and skilful harper, a dextrous musician, even in a spiritual sense ; he had learned the holy art of praise, and how to sing with wisdom and understanding : he knew what should be the subject of the song, and therefore says, *I will sing of mercy and judgment ;* and he knew what should be the object of the song, or to whom it should be sung, and therefore says, *To thee, O Lord, will I sing ;* he knew who should be the singer, and therefore says, *I will do it ;* he knew what should be the manner, and therefore says, *I will sing of mercy and judgment ; to thee, O Lord, will I sing ;* it is before the Lord he resolves to sing, as he did before the ark, which was a type of Christ, and so it is a song to the praise of God in Christ. 8. The manner of
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the expression imports a *firm, fixed and constant* resolution ; so the redoubling of it seems to import, *I will sing, I will sing*. He had a mind this exercise of singing should not go down, but be his continual trade ; I will sing, I will sing, I'll sing on earth, and I'll sing in heaven ; I'll sing in time, and I'll sing through eternity : and indeed, all on whom the spirit of praise and gratitude is poured out, they resolve never to give over singing ; and however their song be marr'd and interrupted here, yet when they are in a singing frame, they would wish never to give over singing ; and because they know it will not last always in time, nor their harp be still in tune, therefore they resolve, as it were, to make it their great errand to heaven, to sing praise there for ever, I will sing, I will sing. *David* had heard once, yea twice, that mercy, as well as power, belongs to the Lord ; and therefore, not only once, but twice in a breath, he resolves to sing unto the Lord. The word hath a great deal of elegance and emphasis in it, *I will sing of mercy, I will sing of judgment, O I will sing, O Lord I will sing, and I will sing unto thee*. In a word, it imports, that a God in Christ was the ALL of the song, even the *Alpha* and *Omega* of it, the beginning and end of it ; it was of him as the *Alpha*, for the discovery of the mercy of God in Christ brought him to it, *I will sing of mercy and judgment* ; and it was to him as the *Omega*, for the song is dedicated to the Lord, *To thee, O Lord, will I sing*. These things, I think, are imported in the manner of the expression, and they may help to regulate our resolutions in *singing*.

The *Fourth* Head proposed was, Why is it so ordered of the Lord, that his people should have ground to sing of mercy and judgment both ? Why is there both mercy and judgment in their lot,

to be the matter of their song, while in this world?

First reason is, to put a difference betwixt heaven and earth; for in heaven there will be no judgment, no affliction, no desertion, no sin, no song of judgment present, but of judgment past: the song of heaven will be of mercy present, and judgment past, among the triumphant company; but the song of the militant church, is of mercy and judgment both present. Now we see through a glass darkly, and therefore sing confusedly; but then shall we see face to face, and therefore shall sing distinctly: Now we know in part, and sing in part; but then the perfect knowledge will make a perfect song: Now, we are very unlike to Christ, because we see but little of him, and so the song is but heavy, dull and flat; but then shall we be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and so the song will be chearful and ravishing. Now when a mercy raises the song, a judgment bears it down, some cloud or other interrupts the singing; but then there shall be no present judgment, no cloud, no night, no complaint to mar the song, for there the mercy is not mix'd with any judgment, nor the joy mix'd with any sorrow.

Second reason is, That they may put honour upon the divine wisdom, that does so wonderfully reconcile these opposites, such as mercy and judgment are. O the infinite wisdom of God, that makes antipodes meet in a song of praise, and contraries conspire in a hymn of glory to him! O the wisdom that makes mercy and judgment meet together, and kifs one another! O the wisdom that brings the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and the best of blessings out of the worst of evils, as out of the first *Adam's* sin and fall, brings the second

Adam's

Adam's glory and honour, and the greater happiness of his seed: O the wisdom that brings life out of death, light out of darkness, liberty out of bondage, love out of enmity, happiness out of misery, holiness out of sin, joy out of sorrow, mercy out of judgment! O, can we look down to this great depth, without crying with the apostle, *Rom. xi. 33.* Ω βαθυ πλετυ, *O the depth of the riches, &c.*

Third reason is, That they may be trained up gradually for singing hallelujahs in heaven. They are not yet fit and qualified for singing of mercy without judgment; and tho' judgment is turned into mercy to the people of God, and so is matter of a song; yet the present sense and feeling that they have of judgment, makes the manner of their singing suitable to their imperfect condition, wherein they are not capable to sing of mercy without a mixture of judgment. They are but learning to sing, and by judgment they are disciplined to sing gradually better and better; when mercy does not prevail to make them sing aright, he sends a judgment to make them sing better. They are learning the language of heaven before they go there; but at their first learning they are but scholars, and need the correction of judgment. If they abuse mercy, and do not sing aright of it, there comes a heavy judgment to make them take heed how they sing, and then they learn to sing the 71 *verse* of the *cxix. Psal.* saying,

*It hath been very good for me
that I afflicted was,
That I might well instructed be
and learn thy holy laws.*

And then they learn to sing the 75 *verse*.

*That very right thy judgments are,
I know, and do confess,
And that thou hast afflicted me,
in truth and faithfulness.*

Fourth reason is, That the burden of the song may be proportioned to their back. They cannot bear to have all mercy and no judgment; for then they would swell in pride, and be exalted above measure: they cannot bear to have all judgment and no mercy; for then would they sink into despair, and be pressed above measure. On the one hand, to sing of nothing but mercy, would be a burden too great and heavy? they find, when their hearts at sometimes are lifted up to a high note, they cannot get praised, they are ready to invite angels, saints, sun, moon, and stars, to help them to praise, for it is too great a work for them alone; they cannot get their notes raised high enough: but when the praising frame is over, if nothing but a sense of mercy remain, then having a body of sin that abuses all mercies, some proud thought and self exalting imagination, rises in their breasts, and would rise above measure, if it were not kept down with judgment. On the other hand, to sing of nothing but judgment, would be a damp instead of a song, a melancholy sighing instead of singing, and therefore they are well mixt together in infinite wisdom.

Fifth reason is, That their song may be the more melodious. As in natural or artificial music there is no melody where there is but one note; there must be different sounds to make the music melodious. I think the apostle speaks after this manner,

1 Cor. xiv. 7. *Even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?* So it is here in the spiritual music, whether you look to the consummate song of the redeemed above, or the initial song of the redeemed below, the song of mercy present and judgment past, makes the sweetest melody in heaven; and the song of mercy and judgment both present, makes the sweetest melody that can be attained on earth. Mercy and judgment, like bass and treble, make holy melody in the spiritual song: here are the different notes of music, mercy makes a high and lofty note, and judgment makes a humble and low note, and both make the song melodious. When a man not only sees mercy, but mercy and judgment, mercy before judgment, and mercy after judgment, and mercy in judgment, and mercy with judgment, and mercy out of judgment, and mercy backing judgment, and mercy blessing judgment, and mercy ordering and disposing judgment, mercy qualifying judgment, and mercy moderating judgment, and mercy sweetning judgment, and mercy rejoicing over judgment, and mercy running through judgment, and mercy at the root of judgment, and mercy at the top of judgment, mercy on this side of judgment, and mercy on that side of judgment, mercy round about judgment, and mercy turning judgment into mercy; O then, how does he sing with melody in his heart to the Lord. It is to make the song melodious.

Sixth reason is, That they may prize both their mercies and their judgments, both their crosses and their comforts, both their rods and reliefs, as both affording matter of a song; and that they may neither on the one hand sport at his mercy, nor on the

other hand spurn at his judgments, that they may neither abuse enlargements, nor despise chastisements: but that they may give both their proper place and room in their hearts and esteem, that they may sing of both, and love the Lord their God in both, and so may love a frowning as well as a smiling God, an absent as well as a present God, a hiding as well as a shining God, a correcting as well as a comforting God; and that both out of their clear and cloudy days they may pen a song to the praise of his name. In a word, the Lord orders it so, that their song should be both of mercy and judgment, and puts both in their lot, that in the view of mercy they may not despair; and in the view of judgment they may not presume; that they may sing hopefully because of mercy, and humbly because of judgment; and that their song may be full and take in all his dispensations, like the song of *Moses* and the *Lamb*, *Rev. xv. 3. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.* So much for this head.

The *fifth* head was the application, in the following inferences. Hence see,

First, That there is an over-ruling and wise providence, making all things, whether comforts or crosses, sweet things or sad things, contribute and co-operate for the good and advantage of the hidden remnant, *Rom. viii. 28. We know that all things work together for good, &c.* Mercy and judgment, and all work together to be the matter of a song: surely there is a wheel within a wheel; there is a secret hand that draws up and turns all the strings of the harp of providence, to make a sweet song of praise unto God; there is an infinitely wise hand, like that of a cunning player upon
this

this harp, that makes all the most seemingly jarring notes to contribute to the melody, even as he made the malice of the *Jews*, the treason of *Judas*, and the rage of devils, to work for the salvation of an elect world.

2. See the sweetness of true religion, and that wisdom's ways are pleasantness; a religious life is a singing life, whether providence smile or frown. If a believer sigh and moan at any time, and be not singing at the same time, it is when religion is at a low ebb with him; you think religion is a melancholly life, man, because many are the afflictions of the righteous, and judgment may begin at the house of God; but you do not consider, that true religion makes a man to sing of judgment, as well as of mercy. Out of all the *ups* and *downs* of the believer's lot, the Lord brings a song of praise. Truly God is good to *Israel*, whether *Israel* think it or not; for even judgment will be matter of a song. It is the language of unbelief, when they say of Judgment, as *Jacob* did of his afflictions, *All these things are against me*; for, when once the gallant grace of faith takes the field again, it will say, *All these things are for me, and I'll sing of all.*

3. See hence the difference betwixt carnal and spiritual mirth, carnal and spiritual singing, betwixt the joy of the world, and the joy of saints. The world may rejoice, if they have, and while they have some outward mercy; but to sing of judgment, when these mercies are withdrawn, is what they know nothing of; nay, take away the world, and then they will say with *Micah*, *They have taken away my God's, and what have I more?* But spiritual joy can sing in the midst of sorrow, and say, *Tho' the fig-tree should not blossom, &c.* O

firs, down, down, down with all carnal mirth and worldly joy, in comparison of this ; down with singing, and piping, and dancing ; these things are but folly and madness.

4. Hence see, that the godly need not take any sinful shift to shun suffering, or any sinful course to shun the cross ; for come the cross when it will, they may even sing with the cross on their back, as *Paul and Silas* in the stocks, *Acts* xvi. 24, 25. Is the godly man tempted to make any sinful compliance with the courses of the time ? What need he be annoyed, as if his life of outward comforts in a world would be at an end, and as if bonds and imprisonments, the loss of worldly goods and enjoyments, were abiding him, if he makes not this and the other compliance ? Why, what need any annoyance ? For his suffering time may be his singing time ; *I will sing of mercy and of judgment*. Besides, all his light afflictions here for a moment work for him a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

5. Hence see what a sweet place heaven must be, and what singing must be there. If a song of mercy mixt with judgment here is sweet, and sometimes even ravishing, O what a sweet song is that of the redeemed about the throne, where there is no more judgment, no more sorrow or sin. And little wonder that the believer longs for heaven, seeing his sweetest songs are mixt with sighs, and his mercies with judgment ; his sweetest songs here have still this heavy sigh in them. Ah and woe is me, that wherever I go in this world, I am a drawing a body of death along with me. O what a happy time is the day of death to a believer, when he shall take an everlasting farewell of all his lusts and idols ! O believer, what would you think

think to be saying, farewell darkness, and welcome everlasting light; farewell enmity, and welcome everlasting love; farewell sorrow, and welcome everlasting joy; farewell all my sins and heart-plagues, and strong corruptions! O would you not say, farewell, farewell, with a thousand good-wills, and glory to God that we shall never meet again? Hence see then, I say, what a sweet place heaven must be: If even judgments, sufferings, and temptations to sin here be made matter of joy and singing sometimes to the believer, what shall glory be? If the worst things on earth may contribute to a song, what will the best things in heaven do? If the cross be sometimes so sweet, what will the crown be? If the waters of *Marah* be made so sweet, what will the wine of paradise be? If God's rod hath honey at the end of it, what will his golden sceptre have? O how happy are they that have got the start of us, and are up yonder above these visible heavens already, and past all their fears and doubts, and are singing praises without wearying?

6. Hence see what a black and white garment the believer wears. The garment of praise is a garment of divers colours, died white and black with mercy and judgment, *Song i. 5. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, and yet as the curtains of Solomon*; not only black in themselves, and comely in Christ; black as sinners, and comely as saints; black with sin, and comely with grace; but sometimes black with persecution, and comely with consolation; black with affliction, distress and judgment, but comely with the mixture of mercy in their cup of adversity, while they get the *oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

Hence

Hence, with what heaviness have you gone to prayer, sometime under the sense of inward trouble from your lusts, or some outward trouble from the world ; some particular about your husband, your wife, your children, your family that hath been distressing to you ? You have in heaviness gone away to God in prayer, and come away with your soul leaping as a hart within you. O believer, you need not loath the cup of affliction, which your father gives you to drink ; for tho' it be bitter at the top, yet the sugar is at the bottom of the cup. *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

7. Hence we may see the happiness of the saints, and of all believers in Christ. They may in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ concerning them ; be it prosperity or adversity, mercy or judgment, in life or in death, he may sing, that nothing in the world can make him miserable, no losses, crosses, bonds, persecutions, famine, or pestilence. If he may sing of judgments, surely the judgments are not vindictive judgments, but fatherly chastisements, for God deals not with him according to the tenor of the law, as a covenant of works, nay he is not under the law, nor liable to the penal sanction of it : They are judgments of a fatherly judge, not of a wrathful judge, otherwise he could not sing of judgment. How little cause hath the believer to be discontent at outward trials ? What, are you discontent at that, out of which God is bringing a song of praise in time, and a weight of glory thro' eternity ?

8. Hence see the misery of the wicked. Whatever matter of singing the children of God have, yet ye have matter of sighing, howling and lamentation ;

tation ; for ye are under the curse of God, under the curse of his law, and so continue in a dreadful damnable state. While ye are out of Christ, all the mercies that ye meet with are curses to you, and all the judgments you meet with are drops of divine indignation, and pieces of hell : your temporal mercies are curses ; *the prosperity of fools destroys them*, and so your table is your snare ; spiritual mercies are curses to you, from all the flowers of heavenly blessings ye suck poison ; the word is the favour of death to you ; the gospel is a stumbling-block to you, over which ye fall into perdition : and as the same wind that blows one ship to an haven, blows another on the rock ; so the same breath of the minister, that blows some to heaven, blows you to hell : the sacrament is a curse to you, for ye eat and drink your own damnation ; the bible is a curse to you, for the word of the Lord is against you, and you are against it. What shall I say to you graceless, christless, desperate sinner ? O will you tremble and quake, lest Christ himself, the blessing of all blessings, and mercy of all mercies, be a curse to you, and a stone of stumbling, over which you'll break your neck ; for he is set up for the falling, as well as the rising of many in *Israel*. O that this thunder would awaken souls that are sleeping securely in a course of sin ! As all mercies are curses to a wicked reprobate world, so judgments are judgments indeed, to you that live all your days without Christ, for judgment without mercy is the portion of your cup : every affliction is a judgment of a wrathful and vindictive nature unto you. You'll say, O for patience under such a trouble and sickness ! Poor graceless soul, speaking of patience under trouble ; you're thus contending with God, and struggling like a fly

fly under a mountain, and striving to be quiet under that which God hath sent to disturb you. God does not afflict men that are out of Christ to exercise their patience, but to disturb their false peace and security. O that God would awaken you ! If God call for famine on the Island, and make you feel the effects of this terrible drought, it is a judgment indeed, and a pledge of hell unto you ; if God lay you on a sick bed, and afflict you in your name, estate, person, friends, all is a piece of hell to you, judgments to you are drops of vengeance. Again,

9. See how reprovable they are from this doctrine, that never sing of mercy and judgment. Some never sing at all the praises of God ; there is a genteel fashion among some in our day, in publick ordinances, they do not open their mouth to sing with the congregation. O ! will they ever sing in heaven, that scorn to sing on earth ! Many indeed sing with their mouth, that know not what it is to sing with their heart, nor sing with their life to glorify God. Many never sing of mercy, notwithstanding of their receiving many mercies ; they pray for what they want, but never praise for what they have : and there is much of this ingratitude among believers themselves. Many again, instead of singing of mercy, they slight their own mercies, and fight against God with his own favours, they abuse their peace to security, their drink to drunkenness, their meat to gluttony, and their mercies to presumption, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise ?* Many, if they sing of mercy, they know not what it is to sing of judgment ; *When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness.* What are ye learning out of this great drought, whereby

whereby God is threatning to send a famine on the land, and break the staff of bread? To sing of *judgment* is to *bear the rod, and who hath appointed it*; to sing of *judgment*, is to see the hand of God in the affliction, to kiss the hand that smites, and to glorify God in the fires, and to bless him that *remembers mercy in the midst of wrath*, and to answer the call of God by such and such a dispensation. Many, instead of singing of mercy and judgment, they slight both mercy and judgment. Mercy does not melt them, and judgment does not move them. O take with the reproof.

10. See how comfortable this doctrine may be to all believers and lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ye have ground to sing, not only of mercy, but of judgment; I know no case you can be in, believer, but there is room for *singing*; the saint may *sing of mercy*, in the midst of *judgment*. O how can I sing, when I missed my mark at this occasion! says one; let them give the praise that have got the profit: but for me, I am left under the heavy judgments, under affliction, temptation, desertion, yea, and the prevalency and power of sin and corruption; and therefore there is no room for my singing, but rather for sighing, mourning and lamenting before the Lord, and to be humbled to the dust. Why, man, indeed it is not humility, but pride, that makes you refuse to praise: you undervalue the *day of small things*, and any little measure of grace and mercy you enjoy, because, forsooth, you have not all you would be at; and it may be, God is saying, I'll send trouble upon trouble upon you, till you be so humbled as to be thankful for the least mercy, till you be thankful that you're out of hell, and thankful that you was not born in *America*, where people are worshipping the devil.

O how many millions of mercies have you to bless God for ! and will you be peevish and quarrel with your God, and deny him his due, because you get not all your will? You have ground of singing, believer, notwithstanding all that you have said. O but how can I sing, when I find sin, by which God is dishonoured, raging in my heart, and corruptions like so many devils roaring and domineering? If corruptions were slain, I think I would sing, but no otherwise. Why, poor soul, I tell you that you must even in that case *sing of mercy and judgment*, and sing because he hath said, *Slay them not lest my people forget*, Psal. lix. 11. If your corruptions were slain, as you would have them, you would, perhaps, forget your own weakness, and forget your deliverer, and forget your dependance on him, and forget prayer, and forget pity towards these that are afflicted and tossed as you are. It may be you would forget the fountain open, and forget to make daily use of Christ, and forget to sympathise and bear with others, when they fall or are overtaken in a fault, and forget to walk humbly, and forget the sweet experience of his *pardoning and purging grace*, forget to call yourself *a dog* when you go before him, saying, *Truth, Lord, I am a dog, I am a devil, I am a lump of hell*. And therefore tho' you may think it strange to hear of blessing the Lord that corruptions are not slain outright, yet, since infinite wisdom sees that nothing less will cure your forgetfulness while here, even bless him who hath said, *Slay them not, lest my people forget*. Bless him, that he hath not only said of affliction, temptation, desertion, *let not my people want them, lest they forget*; but even of sins, corruption, and spiritual enemies, *Slay them not, lest my people forget*: better they be not slain,

flain, than that you forget to give Christ the glory of his saving offices, by employing him daily to heal all your diseases, and fight all your battles.

11. Hence see the mark of a true believer, and try yourselves by this doctrine: do you sing of mercy and judgment? I might tell you for marks, that if you have learned this song of mercy and judgment, as the song hath been introduced with sorrowing, I mean with legal conviction and humiliation; so will you find it interrupted with sighing, because all the powers of hell and corruption will oppose this sweet exercise; you will find your harp must always be tuned by the hand of the spirit, and that you are incapable to sing, till he pen the song; for 'tis with the believer as with the marygold, it opens and shuts, as the sun rises and sets; and yet even when the sun is set, as it were, that you cannot open and praise, you will find praise waiting for the Lord in *Zion*, *Psal.* lxxv. 1. or as it may be rendred, praise is silent for thee in *Zion*; Why? the spirit of praise is sometimes silent, but yet it is a waiting silence; you will be waiting for the spirit of praise to be poured out; and in the mean time acknowledging your debt of praise; and so, while it is not sensibly running out, it is gathering a dam, as it were, till the spirit be poured out from on high, and then it will flow a-main. But instead of all other marks that might be mentioned, I offer this, if you be one that hath learned to sing of mercy and judgment, then you have got a discovery of the glory of God's mercy and judgment, as reconciled together, and mutually embracing one another in Christ Jesus. There are two letters of God's name, *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7. the one is mercy and grace; the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious; the other is justice and judgment,

judgment, the Lord that will by no means clear the guilty; and these are the two strings of the harp, on which the believer sings. Now have you been taught of God to reconcile these two letters of God's name, and so to play upon these two strings, by admiring the infinite wisdom that hath made them meet together, and kiss one another in Christ, *Psal.* lxxxv. 10. Have you seen salvation springing out of both these, and glory arising to both these attributes of God, from Christ's obedience to the death, whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation, &c. Have you seen mercy running in the channel of a compleat satisfaction to justice, and so God by no means clearing the guilty, without a sacrifice and attonement? Many pretend to sing of mercy, and say, I hope in God's mercy, but they know not what it is to sing of mercy, to the highest praise of mercy, in finding out a ransom, whereby mercy is magnified, not to the disparagement, but to the highest praise of infinite justice; because judgment was execute upon the surety to the uttermost, that the curse of the law, and the vengeance of heaven against sin, could demand. If ever you sang to purpose of mercy and judgment, you have seen and admired the glory that shines in this mutual embracing betwixt mercy and judgment.

12. The last inference I offer, is this; hence we may see the duty of all the people of God, namely, to sing of mercy and judgment; it is the duty of all hearing me, as to seek and pray while they are out of heaven, so to sing and praise while they are out of hell; but whatever others do, believer, you in particular are to sing of mercy and judgment; he hath done much for others; but he hath done more for you; he hath given you him-
self

self to be your God, his son to be your shield, his spirit to be your guide, his covenant to be your charter, and his heaven to be your inheritance; he hath given you his word and oath, that tho' he will visit your iniquities with a rod, and your transgressions with stripes, and execute judgment on your lusts, and take vengeance on your inventions, yet his loving kindness will he not take away, nor alter the word that hath gone out of his mouth. Once hath he sworn by his holiness, that he will not lie unto *David*; and therefore you may sing of mercy and judgment: and even at your lowest, when you are crying out, *Behold I am vile*. O I am black, I am black, I am black; yet even then he is looking upon you in Christ, and saying, Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair, not only by imputed righteousness, but even by implanted grace, which makes you look upon sin as the greatest evil, and groan under it as the greatest burthen; even at your lowest, there is something about your heart-roots, that says, O I would be content to live in a coal pit with Christ, rather than in a palace without him; a day in his courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door keeper, &c. O to see his name glorified in the world, and his kingdom coming in me, and in thousands about me! O sing, sing, sing of mercy and judgment, you have both to sing of. *Quest.* How shall I sing one of the songs of Zion in a strange land? I offer some general directions, and then I close.

First, See that your song be sung upon a new harp, I mean with a new heart and a new spirit. Ye that are graceless will never sing, till you get a new heart; O go to God, and cry for it; ye that are gracious will never sing aright, unless the new

harp get a new set ; and the strings be drawn up, and the heart tuned by the hand of the spirit ; and therefore seek the new influence for every new song, and the spirit to dictate the song, and raise the notes : as the dial in the day-light will not shew the hour without the sun, so your harp of grace will not afford melody without the spirit ; therefore seek the spirit to help you, when you cannot utter his praise ; and when you find your hearts in a praying frame, O hold at it, saying, as *David*, *My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.*

2. If you would sing aright of mercy and judgment, then you must sing in your best robes, I mean, putting on Christ Jesus and his righteousness for your garment ; this is the garment of praise ; and this garment smells of aloes, myrrhe and cassia, and is the only thing that can perfume the praises of the saints : If you have *Esau's* garments, what tho' you have *Jacob's* voice, so as you want a tongue, and a heart, and a voice, to praise him as you ought, yet, with your elder brother's garment, you may get the blessing. Come to God, under a sense of your own unworthiness, and want of righteousness, and yet saying, *Worthy is the lamb that was slain.* O pray and praise both under the covert of blood.

3. Put a mark upon mercy, if you would sing of mercy ; tho' it were never so little, it is no more than you deserve. I have heard of a *Jewish* doctor, that was called *Rabbi THIS TOO*, because he used to say, whatever befel him, *This is good too, and this too, and this too* : you may well say, how little soever you have, this is more than I am worthy of, and this too, and this too. He that sees that nothing is his but sin, cannot but wonder that any thing

thing is his but hell; put a mark upon mercy, saying, *O my soul forget not all his Benefits*, &c. Mind the visit he gave you at such and such a place, in such and such an ordinance; mind his words of grace and blinks of love; put up some of the manna in the golden pot.

4. Put a mark upon judgments. If you would sing of judgment as well as mercy, and lay your account with judgment, let not national judgments pass without a remark, that God may get the glory of his holy and just administration; many judgments are come upon us, and many sad tokens of judgment a coming, because of our national apostacy from the work of reformation, our covenant breaking, our perjury, and all the other rampant abominations of our day. Learn the language of judgment, *hear the rod*, see *Is.* xxiv. 14. It is matter of singing, that Christ hath a greater concern for his church than you can have, for the government is upon his shoulders; God will take care of his own church, and Christ hath more care of it than you can have, and upon all the glory there shall be a defence; but no thanks to a corrupt party, that would set doctrine, discipline, worship and government, and all before the wind: God usually brings about church reformation with a judgment, and then will the remnant sing of judgment, when God scums the pot, and casts the scum into the fire, as you have it, *Ezek.* xxiv. 12. *She hath wearied herself with lies.* O but Scotland hath wearied herself with the lies of carnal policy, with the lies of court-flattery; and there is a great scum that covers and darkens the doctrine of the gospel, and a great scum that covers and clouds all our reformation light, a great scum of self-justifying pride, that will rather sacrifice truth than take

with a fault, and rather let truth suffer than her credit? And yet her credit is cracked, ever since her covenant with God was broken, and burnt, and never a hand put forth to take it out of the fire, and renew it since that time; but yet the covenant shall be on the field, when the scum shall be in the fire. But what shall we say; there seems to be nothing but scum among us, nothing but filth and baggage; must all go to the fire together? Yea, tho' it be so, yet a remnant shall sing in the fires, when the scum will be consumed therein, as you see, *Isa.* xxiv. 13, 14, 15. If this shall be done in the isles of the sea, surely the isles of *Britain* and *Ireland* are not excluded. Let not personal judgments and strokes pass without a remark, but let God get the glory of his frowning, as well as of his smiling dispensations; and lay your account with judgments, that you may sing of judgment when it comes: be not surprised, tho' affliction, temptation, and desertion come upon you, on the back of a communion; God uses to feast his people to fit them for a trial: days of sweet enlargement are usually blinks before a shower, as *Peter* and *John* were witnesses of Christ's transfiguration on the mount, that they might next be witnesses of his agony in the garden. Lay your account with trials from heaven, earth, and hell, that having laid your account with them before hand, you may not forget to sing; yea, lay your account that the *Philistines* will be upon you, *Samson*; all your lusts and corruptions will be upon you; therefore watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation, and that your iniquity get not such hold upon you, that you shall not be able to sing. And therefore,

5. If you would sing aright of mercy and judgment, let your song be a practical song. Here I must tell you, that some take the words for *David's* mercy and judgment that he was resolved to exercise in his government, namely, to be merciful and just; the mercy of God shall teach me to be merciful, and his justice and judgment shall teach me to be just; I'll praise thee, by exercising mercy and justice in my station, as a king and a magistrate: his resolution here is, that the mercy and justice of God should be extolled in his thoughts, expressed in his words, and exemplified in his actions, according to that command, *Hof. xii. 6. Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.* If you would sing of mercy and judgment, then keep mercy and judgment; have you shared of the mercy of God, and will you not be merciful, as your heavenly father is? Do you know the judgment of God, and will you not be just and righteous, and equal in all our dealings with men, and conversation in the world? *David's* song here is a practical song, and you may see at your leisure the several notes of this practical song in the following part of the psalm; and do you the same according to your station. One note of this song is, *verse 2. I will behave myself wisely, &c.* that thro' grace he will act conscientiously and considerately, and in the mean time praying that the Lord would come and dwell with him in his house, *O when wilt thou come to me?* Another note of this song is, *verse 3.* where he resolves to practice no evil himself, but shuts his eyes from seeing evil. Another note of his song, *verses 4, 5.* he will not keep bad servants, nor employ these about him that were vicious; that he would have nothing to do with malicious people, these that were slanderers of their

neighbours, nor these that were proud and haughty, nor these that were deceitful, and made no conscience of lying and deceit. Another note of his song, *verse* 6. that he would keep company with them that feared God, that he would keep good company and honest servants : you do not practically sing to the praise of God, if you do otherwise. Another note of his song is, *verse* 8. that he will extend his zeal to the reforming of city and country : we are to study the reformation of manners, and the suppression of vice, in our several stations ; being filled with a zeal for the glory of God ; the interest of Christ and his truths. The gospel-church is the city of the Lord ; we are to seek the honour of God in the purity of his church.

6. And *lastly*, In order to your singing aright this practical song, lay the burden of the song upon the back of the chief musician, who is the chief singer, even *Jesus Christ*, in whose obedience to the death was raised a song of praise and glory to God in the highest, and by the breathing of whose spirit alone you can sing and serve the Lord acceptably. He hath said, *Without me ye can do nothing*, and surely without him you cannot sing ; therefore depend upon him, who only can make the tongue of the dumb to sing. If there were more dependence on him, the tongue as well as the life of professors would be more employed in singing his praises, and talking of his name, and speaking of his glory. What a sad matter is it, that a dumb devil hath possessed the generality of professors as to spiritual converse ? O the idle world talk upon sabbath days, yea, on communion-days ! Some will go away even from this communion, talking more of the corn and weather, or any thing else, than

than upon the word they have heard, or any soul-edifying discourse suitable to the occasion. What said Christ of the possessed man in the gospel? *Thou dumb and deaf spirit; I charge thee to come out of him.* O look to him, that he would charge the dumb devil to come out of you, that your tongues may sing his praises, and speak of his glory. How hardning is it to a wicked world to see the professors as carnal and worldly as themselves? O then employ the chief singer to help you to sing, and plead his promise for this end, *Psal. cxxxviii. 5. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord:* yea, he hath promised to give songs in the night of adversity, that is, a song of mercy in the midst of judgment and affliction, *Hos. ii. 15. I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there.* O believer, whatever be your discouragement and complaint, while surrounded with judgment and trials, let not the world see you damped and discouraged, lest they say you serve a bad master that does not allow you to sing. Whatever dead weights you have upon your spirit, which God and you know, ye may tell him of it, and tell some godly person that will sympathize with you in it; but let not the world hear of your complaints and discouragements, let them know you serve a good master; and remember how he encourages you to this, saying, *How great is the loving kindness thou hast laid up for them that trust in thee before the sons of men?* Or, as it may be explained, who carry boldly and courageously, under whatever difficulties and dangers, before the sons of men, and so glorify God before the world: and therefore, tho' you may weep in secret places before the Lord, and win to little more than a sigh or a sob, yet endeavour to

sing before the world at least, that ye may bring up a good report of religion, and that the world may know you believe what you profess; that yet a little while and you shall *return to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your heads, &c.* and that though your body shall be laid in the dust within a little time, yet a little while, and the happy joyful morning of a glorious resurrection is hastning on, when the voice will be heard, *Isa. xxvi. 19. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust.* O sing, sing amidst all your sorrows and sighing; sing of mercy and judgment, in hope of singing there, where *sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* O go away singing, in spite of the devil and corruption; and take Christ the chief singer along with you, to tune your harp, whensoever the devil puts it out of tune; go up from the wilderness leaning upon him, who hath engaged to work in you both to will and to do.

And now, when we are parting, alas! Is it not a fore matter, that there are many here that will never learn to sing on earth, nor never win to sing in heaven? They never win to the very first note of the spiritual song, which is, *To believe on the Son of God; for without faith it is impossible to please God,* or praise him; and as they never win to this, so it never costs them an hour's care, or made them lose an hour's sleep, that they could not believe in Christ. O wretched man, are you careless and indifferent, whether you sing in heaven among angels, or roar in hell among devils, to all eternity, and for long evermore? Yea, there are some here, that do not believe there is such a person as Christ in heaven; they have had a fancy about him, by their hearing of him in the gospel; but never had the faith of the Son of God,

by

by the spirit's revealing him in the heart. And yet you're living careless and secure, in the pursuit of your sins and idols: you're going straight to hell, with a cart-load of sermons on your back, and making poor ministers spend their breath and labour in vain, and preach you to the devil, when they would fain preach you to Christ. O, shall we part, and not a soul of you be touched and turned to the Lord, or brought to learn any other song, but to sing yourselves asleep in the arms of the devil and your lusts? Some are sleeping in the arms of a black devil, in the pursuit of gross and abominable lusts of drunkenness, whoredom, sabbath-breaking, &c. Others are sleeping in the arms of a white devil, going about to establish a righteousness of their own, resting on their legal duties and prayers; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; expecting God will have mercy on them, because they observe several duties of the law, which others neglect; and so singing a false song of mercy, or hope of mercy, while they never knew the judgment of God, nor saw the wonders of God's executing all the judgments threatned in the law upon the glorious surety Christ Jesus, nor ever crept under that cover to escape the judgment of God; but while you are strangers to Christ, all your worship is but hypocrisy, your zeal but madness, your faith but fancy, and your work abominable to God. O, will none of you be prevailed with to cry with your hearts to the Lord, saying, Lord pluck me out of the arms of the devil; and as a brand out of the burning? As you would not despise the riches of his mercy, and incur the fury of his judgment, go to a corner, and cry to him,

that

that he would teach you how to sing of mercy and judgment. It may be the Lord will pity you for his name's sake. O may the Lord himself shew his glory to you, and make you see mercy and judgment meeting and kissing each other, and with joint harmony carrying on your salvation-work, in spite of all the opposing legions of hell, and bring you to put in practice the psalmist's sweet resolution here, *I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.*

Unbe-

*Unbelief arraigned and condemned
at the bar of God.*

B E I N G

A SERMON preached in the *Tolbooth-Church*
of *Edinburgh*, March 2, 1727.

By Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

*And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin,
and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, be-
cause they believe not on me.*

John xvi. 7, 8.

JOHN iii. 18.

—*He that believeth not, is condemned
already.*—

CHRIST, having in the preceeding verse,
declared the great end and design of his mis-
sion by the Father, or of his manifestation in our
nature; namely, *Not that he should condemn the
world; but that the world through him might be sa-
ved*; in the verse where my text lies, deduces a
twofold inference therefrom: the first is very sweet
and comfortable, in the former part of the verse,
He that believeth on him, is not condemned; that is,
he who falls in with the great end of my mani-
festation in the nature of man, he who gives me
my

my errand, by intrusting his lost and ruined soul into my hand; altho' he be a sinner, and a great sinner; tho' the law and justice of God be pursuing him, for the many millions of talents he is owing; yet the process shall be stopped, the judgment arrested, the sentence of the broken law cancelled, insomuch that he cannot come into condemnation; and if he be not condemned, he must be absolved and acquitted. I, as his surety, have paid the debt, and obtained the discharge under the hand of justice; I was *made sin*, for him, that *he might be made the righteousness of God* in me; and therefore, who can lay any thing to his charge?

The second inference, drawn from the design of the incarnation of the Son of God, is very terrible and awful; and **you have it in the words** I design to insist a little upon, *He that believeth not, is condemned already*. For which there is a very relevant reason given, in the close of the verse, *Because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God*.

It is the middle clause of the verse I am to speak to, *He that believeth not, is condemned already*; where we may notice, (1.) A capital crime chargeable upon most of gospel-hearers, not-believing, (2.) An awful sentence past against the criminal; he is condemned. (3) The quality of the sentence, implied in that expression, *condemned already*; which may point either at the certainty of the unbeliever's condemnation: it is not simply a thing future, or to be done; but it is done already. The sentence is pronounced and gone forth against him, from the mouth of the righteous judge: yea, not only is sentence past, but is partly execute, the law having delivered him over, in a way of righteous judgment, into the power and dominion of
sin,

sin, which is spiritual death. Or, the word *already*, may point at the severity of the unbeliever's sentence; his sin is of such a deep dye, of such a criminal nature, that the judge cannot put up with it as he doth with other sins, *Psal. 1. 21.* it offers such indignity to his beloved Son, the darling of his soul, that he cannot shun to adjudge the criminal to immediate death. Or the word may intimate this much to us, that the sentence of the broken law stands in full force and vigour against the unbelieving sinner, for all his other sins: he despises the only remedy, the only sacrifice for sin; and therefore every sinful thought, word and action, exposes him to the just vengeance of a righteous God, in time, and through endless eternity.

My doctrine is, *That every unbeliever is a sentenced and condemned criminal before God.* Or take it, if you will, in the very words of the text, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.*

Here, through divine assistance, I shall speak, *1st*, Of the crime, *2dly*, Of the sentence. *3dly*, Of the grounds on which the sentence is founded. *4thly*, Deduce some inferences from the whole.

First, I would speak a little of the crime, which is unbelief; by giving some account of it, 1. In its nature, 2. In its causes.

As for the first, *viz.* The nature of *unbelief*. Before I proceed to shew wherein it consists, to prevent mistakes, I shall name a few things, which will not amount unto this heavy charge in God's reckoning, whatever they may sometimes do in the court of an erring or misinformed conscience.

1. Unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark, as to his actual union with Christ or interest in him. A real believer may want the sensible

sible assurance of God's love, and yet at the same time be acting faith with an assurance of appropriation upon the promise of a reconciled God in Christ. Sense may be saying, as in the Case of *Heman*, *Psal. lxxxviii. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, I am ready to die from my youth up, I am distracted with thy terrors*: and yet faith breathing out its appropriating act, and saying, *O Lord God of my salvation*; it will look in the face of a hiding and smiting God, and say, *Though he should kill me, yet will I trust in him*. And seeing it is so, it must needs follow, that unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark as to his actual interest in Christ; to say so, were to offend against the generation of the righteous, who may be *Trusting in the name of the Lord, and slaying themselves upon their God, while they walk in darkness, and see no light*.

2. *Unbelief* does not lie in the interruption of the actings and exercise of faith. We find the faith of the most eminent saints, many times, interrupted in its exercise, through the prevalency of temptation and indwelling corruption, *Psal. lxxvii, 7. the holy man there, in a fit of unbelief, cries, Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Doth his promise fail for evermore? David, in the like case, gives the lye to a God of truth, through the fides of all his prophets, Psalm cxvi. 10, 11. I said in my haste, all men are liars*. This was indeed a pang of unbelief; but did not argue unbelief in its reign. Many times faith is laid asleep in its habit, while yet the life of it remains; like *Samson* in the hands of the *Philistines*, though his life was continued, yet the locks, wherein his strength lay, were cut.

3. This *unbelief*, whereof I speak, does not consist in a disbelief of some particular truths of the word,

word, through ignorance, providing they be not fundamental. Every error in the head, through ignorance, does not destroy the being of faith in the heart; no more than every miscarriage in the life, through weakness, destroys the being and reality of the grace of God in the soul. The apostles, we find, all the time of Christ's life, yea, after his resurrection also, were in an error as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, imagining that it was to be modelled after the fashion of the kingdoms of this world; neither did they believe the universal call and offer of the gospel unto the *Gentile* nations, as well as to the *Jews*, until they were convinced of their error by *Peter's* vision. But, notwithstanding of this error of theirs, they believed in Christ as the promised Messiah, and rested on him as the Saviour of the world.

4. I do not here speak of the negative *unbelief* of the heathen world, who never had the benefit of gospel-revelation. *How shall they believe* (says the Apostle, *Rom. x. 14.*) *in him of whom they have not heard?* Their unbelief or infidelity, is more properly their punishment than their sin. They can no more be punished for not believing in Christ, than a man can be condemned for not seeing the sun at midnight, when it is in the other horizon; or than a man can be blamed for not receiving a gift that was never in his offer; so that it is not the negative unbelief of the heathens I now speak of, but the positive unbelief of these who sit under the light of the glorious gospel.

But, say you, seeing none of these will amount to the charge of unbelief, wherein then doth it consist? *Ans.* There are three things, any one of which will amount to this capital crime; (1) a denying of the truth of the gospel; a looking upon the word
of

of God, contained in the scriptures, as a fiction, or *cunningly devised fable*. I am very jealous, there are unbelievers of this stamp, among these who are called by the name of christians; men pretending to be great masters of reason, who, because their weak and depraved minds cannot grasp the unsearchable mysteries of our holy religion, do therefore turn infidel, and reject the whole as an incredible paradox. This very thing, upon which they stumble, proves it to be of a divine original. The unsearchable wisdom, that appears in every one of the works of God, prove them to be indeed his works, and not the works of any created being. And shall it be imagined, that there is less wisdom in his words than in his works, when they are the more immediate product and picture of his infinite understanding, which can never be searched out? Here, if any where, we may expect the *deep things of God; the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew*.

(2.) A doubting, or wavering uncertainty of mind about the truths of the gospel, will amount to this crime of unbelief, pointed at in my text. There are some, who, though they do not go the length of denying flatly that the bible is the word of God, or that the gospel is of a divine original; yet they are in a hover and suspense about it; like the worshippers of *Baal*, they halt between two opinions, they neither believe nor disbelieve it; but are like the scales of an even ballance, ready to turn either to this or the other side. Such are unbelievers, in Christ's reckoning; for *He that is not with me, says he, is against me*. (3.) When though a person may be convinced in his mind, by rational arguments, that the bible is the word of God, that the gospel is of a divine extract; yet does not fall in with the great design of the scriptures, by *receiving Christ, and resting*

resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is there presented and discovered. We have the design of the whole word of God expressed in one verse, *John xx. 31. These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.* And therefore, when Christ is not received as the promised *Messiah*, the Saviour of the world, and actually improved for these ends and uses for which he is revealed and exhibited in the word; particularly for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*; in this case, I say, a person falls under the heavy charge of unbelief, and is condemned already. This last is the unbelief which I take to be principally pointed at in my text, and is most frequent and prevalent among the hearers of the gospel. So much for the nature of unbelief.

I come, *secondly*, to enquire a little into some of its causes: And, among many that might be named, I shall only mention these few.

1st, The devil has a great hand in it. Faith is the great engine whereby his kingdom and interest is overthrown in the world; and therefore he studies by all possible means to keep the sinner under the power of unbelief. For which end, he uses a great many wiles and stratagems. His first and principal care is to hush the house, and keep it in peace and quiet. In order to this, he perswades the man that his state is good enough; that though he be a sinner, yet his sins are but small and venial; and that it cannot consist with the justice of God to pursue such small sins with eternal punishment. If, notwithstanding of these surmises, the man's conscience cannot be satisfied; but it begins to awaken, challenge and smite him: he studies to lay him asleep again with the prospect of gene-

ral and absolute mercy. If again, this lying refuge be beat down by the hail of divine terrors, he betakes himself to another artifice ; he conceals and hides the attribute of mercy, presenting God to the soul as an implacable and inexorable judge, who will by no means acquit the guilty ; and thus, by hiding the remedy, he studies to drive the sinner to despair. And indeed the devil is much more skilled in representing the justice than the mercy of God to a sinner's view, being an utter stranger to the last, but well acquainted with the first from his sad experience. But whatever views he gives of God to the sinner, whether in his justice or mercy, his design is still to carry the soul off from Christ, and the mercy of God running in the channel of his atoning blood. By presenting absolute mercy, he encourages the sinner to go on in sin, hoping to be saved, though he never be sanctified by the spirit of Christ. When he presents the justice of God, he studies to drive the sinner to a hopeless despair of salvation by his atoning blood ; and thereupon the sinner, either with *Judas* runs to a halter for ease, or puts on a desperate resolution, that if he be damned, he shall be damned for something : and so takes a full swing in gratifying his lusts, crying, with these *Jerem. ii. There is no hope, we have loved strangers, and after them we will go.* If, notwithstanding of the utmost arts and efforts of hell, the remedy be discovered to the sinner, *viz.* Christ, as the alone foundation God hath laid in *Zion* ; then the enemy has another strata-gem at hand to discourage the poor sinner from making use of Christ ; he perswades the man, that he is not fit enough for Christ ; he must be so humble, so holy, so penitent, and have this and the other qualification, before he adventure to come to Christ.

Christ. O if I were sanctified, mortified, self-denied, washed, then Christ would make me welcome. This is nothing but an artifice of hell, for the ruin of souls; perswading sinners that they must bring money and price with them to Christ; that they must have such and such things before they come to Christ, which are only to be got by an actual union with him by faith. Thus, I say, the devil has a great hand in unbelief, it being the very strength of his kingdom; and so long as he keeps this hold in safety, he is very easy what shapes of morality, civility, or profession, a man may cast himself into; for he knows well, that he who believes not shall be damned, let him do else whatever he pleases.

2dly, Ignorance is another great cause of unbelief. *My people*, says the Lord, *are destroyed for lack of knowledge*. Ignorance of God, in his holiness, justice, and other adorable excellencies; ignorance of the law of God in its purity, extent and spirituality; ignorance of sin in its exceeding sinfulness; ignorance of the great mystery of godliness, the union of the two natures in the person of our wonderful *Immanuel*; ignorance of his substitution in the room of sinners, and of that everlasting and law-magnifying righteousness he has brought in by his obedience unto the death; ignorance of the free access sinners have unto Christ, and his whole salvation, in and by a confirmed testament or promise, which is put in their hands, and left to them, *Heb. iv. 1.* that they may use and claim the benefit of it in a way of believing. I say, the God of this world *he blinds the minds of these who believe not*, that they may not know these things which belong to their eternal peace: he is afraid, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ,

who is the image of God, should shine into their hearts. I am perswaded, did sinners but know how near Christ and his purchased salvation are brought to them by the gospel, there would not be so many unbelievers among us. People generally look on Christ, and eternal life in him, as things that are far out of their reach; and thereupon they turn careless and easy about them, having no hope of ever attaining them, being things too high and great for them: But, O sirs, this is only a veil or mist cast before your eyes, by the great enemy of your salvation, that you may not see your *own mercy*: For, were your eyes opened, you would see Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase, brought, as it were, within the very reach of your hand. The manna is lying round your tent doors, and you have no more ado but to gather and use it. *Isaiah* xl. last verse. *Rom.* x. 7, 8. *John* vi. 32.

3dly, Pride is another great cause of unbelief; this is just the poison of the old serpent, who, being lifted up with pride, fell into condemnation: by pride he ruined all mankind, *Ye shall be as Gods*; and by pride he still keeps us under his power: hence we read of high and towering imaginations in the heart of man, which exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ. There is a pride in the heart of man, by nature, which stands directly opposite to the way of salvation by grace: God is willing to give life, but we will needs merit and deserve it. God will have all to be of grace, that boasting may be excluded; but we will have all in a way of debt, that we may have whereof to glory. What, says the proud heart, will ever God give, or shall I take eternal life for nothing? No, I will not have it, unless God will accept some equivalent, some service or work for it. *Will not God be pleased with*

with thousands of rams? &c. The pride of the heart will set a man a work, to do or suffer any thing for life and salvation, rather than believe in Christ, and be saved in a way of grace: As we see in the case of the poor deluded papists; they'll rather quit their kingdoms and thrones, put themselves into monasteries, lie on hair, live on alms, tire themselves, by saying the book of *Psalms* over once every twenty-four hours; and for that end break their sleep by rising twice or thrice a night, saying so many prayers to the Virgin *Mary*, and to this and the other saint; they'll whip themselves tear their bodies, go into penances and long pilgrimages: all this, and much more, they'll do, for pardon and salvation, rather than take God's method, which is to receive eternal life, as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Whence comes all this stir, but only from the pride of our hearts, which will stoop to any thing of our own devising, though never so base and mean, rather than stoop to be saved in a way of grace? That is a strange instance of the pride of the heart, which we have, *Rom. x. 3.* where it is said of the proud self-righteous Jews, *They went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God.* O strange! Shall a poor naked beggar, that has not a rag to cover him, reckon it submission or humility in him to accept of a robe? Shall a condemned malefactor reckon it submission to receive the king's pardon, the captive to accept of liberty, or a man mortally wounded to accept of a healing balm? Yet this is the very case with us, through the pride of our hearts, we will not submit to the righteousness of God, but will needs establish a righteousness of our own. Nature though assisted by external revelation, can never think of

another way of salvation than that of the first *Adam*, viz. by doing and working. To be saved and justified by the doing and dying of another, is a mystery which flesh and blood cannot receive, till the strength of natural pride be broken by the almighty power of God. Men naturally will wear no other garment than that which, like the spider, they spin out of their own bowels. But what says God, *Isaiah* lix. 6. *Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works.* Man will needs enter into life and glory, by the door of the law, which God has condemned and barred against all mankind, since the fall; *for by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.* Sirs, allow me to tell you, that God never designed to bring man to life by the law, or the works thereof: no, the laws of works was only intended as a scaffold, by which he meant to rear up a house of mercy, in which he designed to harbour a company of bankrupts, that they might live upon his charity and grace for ever: and immediately upon the entry of sin, the scaffold of the law as a covenant, was taken down and broken in pieces. Oh! what devilish pride is it in us, to attempt the rebuilding of the scaffold, that we may climb up to heaven by it, rather than enter the threshold of the house of mercy, which God has resolved *shall be built up for ever*, *Psalms* lxxxix. 2. Sirs, allow me to tell you, however high you may climb heavenward, upon the scaffold of the law, in your own conceit, and in the esteem of others; yet you shall be *cast down into hell*, like *Capernaum*. Your house being *built upon the sand*, it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. *The day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud, and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be*

be made low ; and the Lord alone shall be exalted,
 Isaiah ii.

4thly, A pretended humility and self-denial, is another great bar, in the way of believing to many ; they thrust away Christ and the mercy of God from them, under a pretence that they are not fit for it. O ! says the man, I am such a hell-deserving sinner, my sins are so great, that I dare not think of coming to Christ ; he was never intended for the like of me. This carries a fair shew of humility and self-denial, while it is only a devil of pride, transforming himself into an angel of light. You say you are not worthy of the mercy of God. I answer, it is very true ; but then you would consider, that mercy could not be mercy, if you were worthy of it ; it would be merit, and not mercy : grace would not be grace, but debt, if you could deserve it. This way of thinking or speaking is quite subversive of a covenant of grace, where Christ and all the blessings of his purchase are made over to us, in the form of a testamentary deed, or free gift and legacy. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people ; I will take away the stony heart ; I will sprinkle them with clean water, &c.* In these and the like absolute and unlimited promises, the grace and favour of God in a redeemer, comes to every man's door, be who or what he will, and by these great and precious promises, we must receive Christ, and apply him in a suitableness to our souls need, or perish for ever. And to refuse Christ and his salvation, tendered in the word of grace, under this pretext, that we are great sinners, is all one, as if a traitor should refuse his prince's pardon, because he has been in arms against him ; or as if one should refuse to accept of a free discharge, because he is a bankrupt, drowned in debt.

5thly, A secret jealousy, as if God were not in good earnest with us, when he offers Christ and his salvation to us, in the gospel. I am afraid that this lies at bottom with many; they do not really believe that God is willing to bestow his Christ, and salvation through him, upon them, though he be every day calling, commanding, beseeching and intreating them to embrace him. But first, what else is this, but to charge God with treachery and dissingenuity; as if he said one thing in his word, and intended another in his heart? God says, *He is not willing that you should perish*: yea, he swears by his life, that he has no pleasure in your death; but rather, that you turn unto him, through a redeemer, and live: and yet, to think or say, that he is not in good earnest; what else is this but to make *God a liar*? Yea, to charge him with perjury: and what an insufferable affront is this unto a God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lye? We cannot offer a greater indignity unto a man than to call him a liar; yea, if we but insinuate a jealousy of his veracity and ingenuity, it is enough to exasperate and enrage his spirits; for *jealousy, says Solomon, is the rage of a man*: and how then shall we imagine that God will sit with it? O Sirs be perswaded that God speaks the truth in his heart; his words of grace and truth in the scripture, are the sweet picture of his thoughts: and therefore, beware of harbouring the least jealousy in your hearts, as if he were not in good earnest, when he offers his Christ to you, and commands you to receive him and his whole salvation.

6thly, People, their finding peace and ease in some one thing or other on this side Christ, is another great cause of unbelief. Perhaps the man
has

has had some challenges and wakenings; thereupon he falls to his prayers, vows, promises and resolutions, to be a better man in time coming, and better servant to God; upon this he finds quiet and ease, and there he rests, without ever coming to the blood of the lamb. But, sirs, as sure as God lives, this is but a refuge of lyes, a hiding-place which the *bail shall sweep away*. Do not mistake me, I am not dissuading you from duties; but only perswading you, not to rest in your duties; let duties be as waggons to carry your souls to Christ, who is the *end of the law*, and of all the duties it enjoins; for when you rest in them as a righteousness or ground of acceptance before God, they become a bar in the way of your coming to Christ, and they prove soul damning and ruining things, instead of being the causes or means of salvation, and therefore go a little further than these; do not make a plaister of them to heal the wound of conscience; for if your healing do not come from under the wings of the fork of righteousness, the wound will fester, and prove deadly in the issue. Let him only be the well-spring of your comfort, who is the *consolation of Israel*, and in whom all our well-springs are. We read of the brook *Cherith*, which supplied the prophet *Elijah* with water for a time; but at length the brook dried up, and he had perished, unless God had sustained him another way, 1 *Kings* xvii. 9. Just so is it with many, they lye for a long time by the brooks of their own duties; and finding some sort of ease and comfort their conscience is pacified, and they rejoyce, because they think God will pity and save them while they have done as well as they can: but depend on it, these brooks will dry up, and your souls will starve and perish
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for ever, if you do not, by faith, come to the fountain opened in the house of *David*, and draw water out of *this* well of salvation. O come, sirs, to this open and overflowing fountain; *whosoever will, let him come, and drink of the waters of life freely*; here you shall find water in the time of the greatest drought, *Isa. xli. 14. When the poor and needy seek water, in duties, ordinances and created comforts, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will bear, I the God of Jacob will not reject them, Jer. xvii. 7, 8. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and shall not see when drought cometh; his leaf shall be green, and he shall not be careful in the year of drought.* So then beware of resting on this side of Christ. Many other causes of unbelief might be condescended upon, but I wave them at present.

The *second* general head proposed, was, to give some account of the condemnatory sentence passed against this crime of unbelief. The unbeliever is *condemned already*. Here I shall, (1.) Prove, that sentence is past. (2.) Shew in what courts it is past. (3.) Give some qualities of the sentence.

1st, I would prove that sentence is past against the unbeliever. I need not stand to prove this, when it lies so plain and clear in the text; *He that believeth not is condemned already*. The word rendered to *condemn*, is forensick, borrowed from courts of judgment, where the malefactor or guilty person is arraigned and indicted before the judge, his crime made legally evident, and then sentence past against him, according to the nature and demerit of his crime: so here the unbeliever is, as it were arraigned before the bar of divine justice;

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process is laid against him, and he found guilty of the violation of the royal law of heaven, and of contemning the glorious remedy provided and offered in the gospel; and thereupon sentence goes forth against him, from the mouth of the great judge, who hath justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne. This man believes not in my Son, and therefore I condemn him to death everlasting: he rejects the Saviour of sinners, and therefore let him die in his sins; he would needs seek life by the law as a covenant, and therefore let the curse of that covenant lie on him for ever. See to the same purpose, the last verse of this chapter, *He that believes not in the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

2dly, I come to tell you in what courts the unbeliever is condemned, 1. Then, he is *already* condemned in the court of the law, as a covenant, by which he is seeking to be justified and saved, *Rom. iii. 19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* Every unbeliever is upon a law-bottom, he is seeking salvation and righteousness by the works of the law, by some good thing or other, which he apprehends to be in him, or done by him, or which he hopes to do: but I may say to you, who are of this law-spirit, as Christ said to the self-righteous pharisees, *Jo. v. 4. There is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust;* where, by *Moses* we must understand the law of *Moses*. The same say I to you, the law accuseth and condemneth, it is denouncing its heavy anathemas against you, while you cleave to it as a covenant; *As many as are of the law, are under the curse; as it is written,*
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curfed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. While you are out of Christ, cleaving to the law as a husband, it lays you under the curse for every and the least failure in obedience. O' firs, the vengeance of heaven lies upon you, while you are under the power of unbelief; you are curfed in your basket and store, in foul and body, and all that belongs to you; and the curse not being causeless, it shall come; yea it cleaves to you, and will cleave to you for ever, unless by faith, you flee to him who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

2. The Unbeliever is already condemned in the gospel-court. Now don't mistake this way of speaking, as if when I speak of the gospel-court, I meant, as if the gospel, strictly considered, condemned any man; the gospel, like its glorious author, comes not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through it may be saved: neither do I mean, as if there were new precepts and penalties in the gospel, considered in a strict sense, which were never found in the book or court of the law. This is an assertion which has laid the foundation for a train of damnable and foul-ruining errors; as of the *Antinomian* error, in discarding the whole moral law as a rule of obedience under the gospel; the *Baxterian* error, of an evangelical righteousness different from the imputed righteousness of Christ; the *Pelagian* and *Arminian* error, of a sufficient grace given to every man that hears the gospel, to believe and repent by his own power. But when I speak of the unbeliever's being condemned in the court of the gospel, my meaning is, that the sentence passed against him in the court of the law, is aggravated
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and heightened by his contempt of gospel-grace. All I intend by it, is comprised in that awful word, *Heb. ii. 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?* Or that, *Heb. x. 28, 29. He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and accounted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing.*

3. The unbeliever is condemned already in the court of his own conscience. Conscience is God's deputy and vicegerent; and in the name and authority of the God of heaven, it keeps a court in every man's breast, and either approves or condemns, accuseth or excuseth, according to the views and uptakings that it hath of the holy law of God. When the law is only known by conscience in the letter of it, it condemns only for sins which lie against the letter of the law: but when conscience comes to be irradiated and instructed by the spirit of God, in the spirituality and extent of the law; then it condemns even for these spiritual wickednesses, that are of a more refined nature, and which lodge in the high places of the soul; of which kind is the sin of unbelief. A natural conscience, even though assisted by external revelation, will smite a man for a thousand sins, before it give him one single check for his unbelief; this seems to be the peculiar province of the spirit of God, to *Convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ*, John xvi. 8, 9. And O! When once conscience by the direction of the spirit begins to smite for this sin of unbelief, there is no sin in the world that appears in such a formidable hew; and there is no sin that the worm
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of conscience will gnaw a man so much for in hell through eternity, than that he had a Saviour in his offer, and yet refused him. In a word, let a man be never so moral and sober, let him have never so much seeming peace and quiet, yet he still carries an evil conscience in his breast, till by faith he come to get his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of sprinkling, *Heb. x. 23.*

4. The unbeliever is already condemned in the court of the church ; or, may I call it, in the ministerial court. Ministers by virtue of the commission they have received from their great lord and master, must *go and preach the gospel to every creature*. And having acted according to their commission, they must in the same authority, declare, that he who believes this gospel, shall be saved ; he who believeth not, shall be damned. Indeed this ministerial sentence is but little regarded by a profane and secure world, who are ready to say or think, that our words are but wind : but whether sinners hear or forbear, we must by our commission, declare to the righteous or believer, it shall be well with him ; *But wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him ; the reward of his hands shall be given him*. And when this ministerial sentence, whether doctrinal or judicial, is faithfully pronounced, whatever men may think of it, it is ratified in heaven, *Matt. xvi. 19. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*.

5. The unbeliever is condemned in the court of the great God. It is true, every one of these courts I have mentioned is his ; he sits as supreme judge in each of them, but they are only his inferior courts ; and while the sinner's sentence is in dependence

dependence before them, there is still access for an appeal by faith unto a throne of grace or mercy-seat. But when once a man comes to be personally sifted before the bar of God at death or judgment, no further appeal can be admitted; the man then goes out of mercy's reach; *he that made him will have no mercy upon him; the things that belonged to his peace, are then for ever hid from his eyes.* O that an unbelieving world may lay this to heart in time, before their case become absolutely hopeless and helpless! *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver.*

3dly, I come to give you a few qualities of this sentence of condemnation past against the unbelieving sinner. (1.) It is a most mature and deliberate sentence; the sentence is well advised and ripened, before it be pronounced or executed. *The Lord is a God of judgment, and can do nothing that is rash or precipitant. The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed;* he ponders the crime, before he sentence the criminal. It was resolved among the councils of heaven, from all eternity, that every unbelieving sinner should be condemned to *the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death*, Rev. xxi. 8. (2.) It is a most righteous sentence; as will appear when we come to speak of the grounds upon which it proceeds. O Sirs, God will be clear when he judges; yea; so clear, that the guilty criminal before all be done, will be made to subscribe unto the equity of the sentence, and own that his blood is upon his own head. As justice satisfied and judgment executed upon the surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace, where the believing sinner is acquitted and absolved; so vindictive justice and judgment, terminating on the person of
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the sinner, is the habitation of the throne of justice, where the unbeliever is condemned. (3.) It is a most awful and terrible sentence, and it cannot be otherwise, for it is pronounced by a terrible judge. *With God is terrible majesty.* He cutteth off the spirits of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. The sentence goes forth from a terrible tribunal, a bench clothed with red vengeance. The nature of the sentence itself is terrible, for it is a sentence of condemnation. To be condemned to a natural or bodily death, is terrible: but to be condemned to eternal death; to be *punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, from, or by the glory of his power*; has a terror in it, that surpasses expression and imagination. (4.) When the sentence comes to be uttered by God against the unbeliever, personally compearing before his tribunal, upon the back of death; it becomes an irrevocable sentence, which shall never be repealed, through eternity: it stands ratified for ever; as the tree falls, so will it lye; for God's loving-kindness is not declared in the grave, nor his faithfulness in the land of darkness.

The *third* thing in the method was, to enquire into the grounds of this condemnatory sentence; and, among many others, I shall instance in the few following,

1st, The unbeliever is condemned already, because, by his unbelief he has offered the highest indignity to a trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead, that a creature is capable of. He despises the love of the father, who, out of his good-will and kindness to a lost world, *gave* his only begotten Son; he gives him to be incarnate; he gives him unto death, and gives him and his whole purchase in the revelation of the gospel; *That whosoever believes in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life.*

life. But now the unbeliever he despises all the riches of this grace and love, and practically says, that the unspeakable gift of God is not worthy to be taken up at his foot. And, as he despises the love of the Father, so he tramples upon the blood of the Son, as if it were an unholy thing. He says upon the matter, that Christ shed his blood in vain; hence unbelievers are said to crucify the Son of God afresh; they re-act the bloody tragedy that was once acted upon mount *Calvary*: and, upon the same account, the unbelieving communicant is said to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Again, the unbelieving sinner, he sins against the Holy Ghost. I do not mean that every unbeliever is guilty of the unpardonable sin, for then we needed not preach the gospel to them. But I mean, that every unbeliever, in rejecting Christ, he runs directly cross to the work and office of the spirit in the œconomy of redemption. It is the office of the spirit to convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ: but the man is so far from owning this, that he practically denies unbelief to be any sin at all. It is the office of the spirit to *convince of righteousness*, (*i. e.*) of the necessity and excellency of the righteousness of Christ for justification: but the unbeliever he goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, and will not submit to this righteousness of God. It is the office of the spirit to *glorify Christ*, to take the things of Christ, and shew them unto us: but the unbeliever upon the matter says, *There is no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired*. Thus, I say, the unbeliever affronts a whole trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and therefore he is condemned already.

2dly, The unbeliever is condemned already, because he has injured all the glorious attributes and perfections of the divine nature: he rebels against awful and adorable majesty and sovereignty. The authority of God, is in a peculiar manner interposed in the command of believing: God speaks of this command, as if he had never given another to the sons of men, 1 *John* iii. 23. Now the unbeliever he flies in the face of all this authority, saying, with proud *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* Let the Almighty depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of his ways. Again the man makes a mock of the master piece of infinite wisdom, as tho' it were nothing but arrant folly. The device of salvation through a redeemer, is, *The wisdom of God in a mystery, it is hidden wisdom*: but the unbeliever, with the *Greeks*, calls it foolishness: and, with the *Athenians*, look on it as meer babling, when it is brought out in a gospel-revelation. The unbeliever he also spurns against the bowels of infinite and amazing love; yea, as it were, runs a spear into the bowels of a compassionate God, which are sending out a sound after him, *O turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death.* He dares and challenges omnipotency to do its worst, while he refuses to take sanctuary in Christ, and to turn into the strong hold, where he may be sheltered from the storm, wind and tempest of divine vengeance. He laughs at the shaking of God's spear, and the whetting of his glittering sword. He gives the lye also to the veracity of God, 1 *John* v. 10. *He that believes not, hath made God a liar*: not as if he could do so indeed; for God will be true, and every man a liar; but the unbeliever does what he can to make God a liar: this is the language of

of his sin, God is a liar, he is not to be trusted, there is no truth in his words. Which is blasphemy in the highest degree. Thus, I say, the unbelieving sinner, he injures God in all his glorious excellencies: and, is it any wonder then tho' he be condemned already?

3dly, Another ground of this awful sentence, is, because the man counteracts, and runs directly cross to the most glorious designs that ever God had in view; I mean, his designs in the work of redemption thro' Christ. I shall only clear this, in two or three instances, (1.) God's design in redemption, was the illustration and manifestation of his own glorious excellencies, which were sullied or obscured by the sin of man: but the unbeliever, as was shewed just now, does his uttermost to darken and affront every one of them. (2.) God's design is, that in all things Christ should have the prehemineny; that he should have a name above every name, *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*. But now the unbeliever, like the devil, being lifted up with pride, refuses to bow or submit to the name, *Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. Rom. x. 3. He refuses to own or bow unto that royal name written upon his thigh and vesture, *Rev. xix. 16. The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. He joins in a confederacy with those who refuse to stoop unto his royal sceptre; saying, *Let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us*, Psal. ii. 2. (3.) God's design in redemption is, that grace only should reign, and that all ground of boasting and gloriation should be cut off from man for ever, so as he that glorieth may glory only in the Lord. But now the unbeliever's language is, not grace, but self shall reign. He chooses rather to be damn'd

for ever, than submit to grace's government, reigning *through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*. What, says the man, will not God be pleased with thousands of rams, &c? If God will give him life for some equivalent, some good thing wrought in him or by him, he is content: but to take it for nothing, as the gift of free grace thro' Jesus Christ our Lord; this is too low a bargain for his proud heart to stoop to. And for this pride of his heart which makes him to run cross unto God's glorious design in redemption, he is condemned already.

4thly, He is condemned already, because his sin (I mean, his unbelief) is of a more criminal nature, in God's reckoning, than any other sin that can be named or thought upon. The sin of *Adam*, in eating the forbidden fruit, was a most aggravated crime: for a creature newly dropped out of his creator's fingers, a creature dignified with the lively image of God upon him, exalted unto sovereignty over this lower world, having all things put under his feet; I say, for such a creature, upon a slender temptation, to turn his back on God, and cast himself into the devil's arms, to ruin himself and the whole tribe of mankind at one blow; this no doubt was a most crying sin: but yet the sin of unbelief far surpasses it; for, our first parents they sinned only against God as a creator, but the unbeliever sins against him as a redeemer, consequently he sins against more love than they could sin against, before the revelation of Christ. Again, unbelief is more criminal than the sin of the *Jews* in crucifying of the Lord of glory: they crucified him, when veiled and disguised under the form of a servant; but the unbeliever crucifies him upon his throne, when the evidences of his being

being the true *Messiah* are compleated by his resurrection from the dead, *Rom. i. 4.* It would be a crime of a far more capital nature, to maltreat a king sitting on the throne, with all his nobles about him, than to maltreat him when under a disguise, sitting upon the dunghill with a company of beggars about him; yet the former is the case with the unbeliever. Again, unbelief is worse than the sin of *Sodom*, which provoked God to rain hell out of heaven upon its inhabitants. Christ tells us, 'That *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* will have a cold hell in comparison of these who have had the offers of a Saviour in the gospel, and yet have rejected him, *Matt. xi. 24.* *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah, in the day of judgment, than for Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other cities, where Christ had preached.* Again, all the sins of the blinded nations are not comparable to the sin of unbelief: we have a black roll of their sins, *Rom. i.* towards the close: but yet Christ speaks of them as no sins, in comparison of the sin of those who remain in unbelief, under the drop of the gospel; *If I had not come and spoken unto them they had had NO SIN, but now they have no cloke for their sin.* Witchcraft is a very monstrous sin; for a man or woman to enter into compact with the devil, and give themselves soul and body to be his for ever: and yet the unbeliever he does the same upon the matter; for he is in league with hell, and with death is he at an agreement. I remember, the rebellion of *Saul* against the express command of God, ordering him utterly to destroy the *Amalekites*, is compared to the sin of witchcraft, *1 Sam. xv. 23.* Now the unbeliever (as was said) he rebels against the greatest command that was ever issued out from the throne of

the Majesty on high. I shall only add, that unbelief is a sin attended with aggravations which are not to be found in the sin of devils. The devil never rejected a Saviour, as the unbeliever does; for, *He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*. Some think, that the devil, and his angels who joined him, were cast out of heaven for refusing to be subject to God in man's nature: when intimation of this design was made in heaven, no doubt he would have been well enough pleased to subject himself to God, manifesting himself in the nature of angels; but, to be subject to God manifested in the flesh, he looked upon it as a disparagement. But the unbeliever he rejects God appearing in his own nature, saying, *We will not have this man to rule over us*. Is it any wonder then, tho' the unbeliever be condemned already?

5thly, He is condemned already, because unbelief is the spring and ringleader of all other sin. Every sin is a turning away from the living God; and whence comes this, but from an evil heart of unbelief? *Heb. iii. 12*. The name of the sin of unbelief may be *Gad*, for a troop doth follow it. Why are men proud? Why are their hearts lifted up within them, as if they were rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing? Why, the reason is, they do not believe the verdict of the spirit of God concerning them; that they are indeed wretched, miserable, blind, and poor and naked. Why are men covetous? Why have they the world set in their hearts? but because they do not believe, that Christ is a better good than this world, and the things of it. Why are men uncharitable to the poor? but because they do not believe that what is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, and that he will pay it again.

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Why are men secure in a way of sin, crying, peace, peace? but because they do not believe that wrath and destruction from the Lord is pursuing them. Why is the blessed bible so much slighted and neglected by many, like an almanack out of date? but because they do not believe it to be the word of God, or that eternal life is to be found therein. Why do people generally hear us, who are ministers, preaching the everlasting gospel, with such wandering hearts and careless ears? but because they do not believe that we are ambassadors for Christ, and that God doth beseech them by us to be reconciled unto him. Why do many live in the neglect of prayer? Why are they so formal, heartless and careless in prayer? but because they do not believe God to be the hearer of prayers. Why are there so many hypocrites contenting themselves with a shew of religion? but because they do not believe there is a reality in religion, and that God searches the heart, and tries the reins. Why do men remain under the power of natural enmity? but because they do not believe that God is love, 1 *John* iv. 16. and that, through the ransom he hath found, he bears a hearty good-will towards them, *Ezek.* xxxiii. 11. Whence comes that flood of prophanity, which, like *Jordan*, has over-run all banks and bounds in our day, such as cursing, swearing, cheating, lying, sabbath-breaking, theft, robberies, forgeries, and the like abominations? Why, the plain reason is, they do not believe there is a God, or that ever they shall stand before his tribunal, to answer for the deeds done in the body. The plain language of the heart of unbelief is, *The Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard*; and therefore they give themselves loose reins in a way of sin.

To conclude this head, unbelief is the principal pillar of the devil's kingdom in the world, and in the soul of man. Let this pillar be but broken, and all his strong holds go to ruin. Faith is the radical grace, which gives life and spirit to all the other graces ; it is the spring of all true gospel-obedience, therefore called the obedience of faith : so, in like manner, unbelief is the radical sin, which gives life and spirit unto all vicious habits and acts of disobedience in the life and conversation. Faith is a shield that beats back the fiery darts of satan : so unbelief is a shield that beats back all the good motions of the spirit of God. Faith is the victory whereby we overcome the world : unbelief is the victory whereby the world overcomes us. After all, is it any wonder though such a severe sentence pass against the unbelieving sinner, as that in my text? *He that believes not, is condemned already.*

The *fourth* and *last* thing proposed, was the application, which I shall endeavour to discuss in a few inferences.

Inference first. See hence a very sufficient reason, why ministers of the gospel do harp so much upon the subject of faith or believing. Why, it is for unbelief that sinners are condemned already ; and there is no way to free them from this sentence, but by bringing them to believe in the Son of God. Unbelief is the main pillar of the devil's kingdom ; and therefore the main batteries of the gospel must be raised against it. It is but at best a foolish ignorant cavil of some against ministers. Why so much insisting upon faith ! are not other things as necessary to be preached ? I answer, Other things are necessary in their own place ; but faith or believing in the first place ; and, till we bring you to believe,

believe, we do nothing at all, this being the laying the foundation of all religion : and, you know, it is foolish to think or speak of rearing up a superstructure till the foundation be once laid. Can we ever make you accepted of God, without faith in his Son? No sure, *Without faith it is impossible to please him.* And seeing we are justified by faith, without the works of the law, can we ever make you the members of Christ, without faith? No, this is the very bond of the soul's union with him; Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Can we ever make you the children of God, who are by nature the children of wrath without faith? No, *We are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* It is to them who receive him, that he gives power or privilege to become the sons of God, John i. 12. Let us press and inculcate the duties of holiness, with never such flourishing harangues of rhetorick : we shall never make you holy, till we once land you in Christ by faith, he being the fountain and root of holiness; therefore said to be *made of God unto us sanctification.* In one word, whatever duties we inculcate upon you, we only call you to build castles in the air, to build a tower without a bottom, unless we first bring you to Christ by that faith which is of God's operation.

Inference second. See hence the miserable and mournful condition of the generality of gospel-hearers : they are a company of condemned men, under sentence of death. O that God may dart home an arrow of conviction on the hearts of unbelieving sinners, and persuade them of the truth of my doctrine, That every unbeliever is condemned already ! I am sure it is true, whether you believe it or not ; and you shall find it to be so, sooner or later. O sirs ! here is a hand-writing against

gainst you, that may make the joints of your loins to loose, and your knees to smite one against another; *He that believes not, is condemned already.* And that I may, if possible, awaken you to some serious thoughts and concern about this matter; will you consider whose sentence it is? It is none other than God's sentence of condemnation. It is somewhat awful and terrible, to be arraigned and condemned at the bar of man; what then must it be to be condemned at Jehovah's bar: The judge is omniscient; his eyes are as a flame of fire; he setteth our secret sins in the light of his countenance, so that the crime cannot be concealed from him; his justice is unbyassed; his eye cannot be blinded with bribes; the arm of his power cannot be stayed from the execution of the sentence. What a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of this living God? He is indeed a consuming fire. The solemnity of the bench adds terror to the criminal; and you may see with what solemnity the bench is to be reared, before which you and I must stand ere long, *Matt. xxv. 31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. O! whither will the unbeliever fly for help? or where will he leave his glory at that day? If hills and mountains could cover him, he would choose far rather to be buried under them, than appear before the face of the lamb, when he comes to ride his circuit, as the universal judge of all the earth. You may read your doom, Matt. xxv. 41. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. The sentence being past, there can be no stop in the execution; the judge will have his officers at hand, an innumerable host of angels, all ready for this service:*
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these reapers shall gather the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them. The judge will stand and see the sentence execute before his face, saying, *Bring forth these mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me*, Luke xix. 27. Among all the innumerable multitudes of angels, men and devils, who shall be spectators of the righteous execution, there shall be no eye to pity; and the reason is, because the sinner wilfully, through unbelief, slighted Christ the only Saviour, and refused to accept of pardon and redemption through his blood. Who will pity the traitor, who dies for his treason, rejecting his prince's pardon presented to him to the last? Christ would have gathered you, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not; and therefore ye must die without pity, and without remedy.

Inference third. See hence how fitly the gospel is called a joyful sound, *Psal. lxxxix. 15. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.* Among other reasons why it gets that denomination, this is none of the least; it brings a proclamation of life to the sons of death, a sound of liberty to the captive, and of pardon to the poor sinner, condemned already. One would think, that the very hint of a pardon to a condemned criminal, would make his heart to leap within him for joy: but alas! Sad experience tells us, that the gospel, which brings such glad tidings of great joy to condemned sinners, meets with a very cool reception from the generality, *Isa. liii. 1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*

Inference fourth. See hence how ill-grounded the joy and triumph of a christless unbelieving world is. We would think that man beside himself, who
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being under sentence of death, and to be brought forth in a little space unto the place of execution, would spend any little time he has, in eating, drinking, dancing and revelling : yet this is the very case with the generality ; they take up the timbrel and harp, rejoice at the sound of the organ ; they spend their days in wealth and ease, without ever thinking, that they are condemned already by the great God. All I shall say, to stop your career at present, is this ; the triumphing of the unbelieving sinner is short, and his joy is for a moment. You may indeed *kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks : but this shall ye have of the Lord's hand, ye shall lye down in sorrow*, Isa. l. 10.

Inference fifth. See hence, how much we are obliged to Christ, who came to save us from this heavy sentence of death we were under ; *he came not into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*. He himself was condemned, that we might be acquitted. Judgment passed upon him, that it might not pass against us. He was made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law. When *Adam* had entailed death and condemnation upon us, and all his posterity ; Christ comes, and by his obedience unto death, cuts of that intail, procuring our justification. *As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, to condemnation ; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all, to the justification of life*, Rom. vi. 18. O believer, acknowledge thy obligations to the Son of God ; for, if he, as thy surety had not paid thy debt, thou hadst been condemned to the prison of hell for it, for ever.

Inference sixth. See hence, that it is every man's duty and interest to examine and try, whether he be under this heavy sentence, yea or not.

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It is a miserable thing to be under sentence of death, and to know nothing of it. Neither will a man ever seek to be freed from it, till he be convinced that he is indeed under it. I shall give you the few following characters of such as are under sentence of condemnation, (1.) you who never yet saw yourselves to be condemned in the court of the law and conscience for sin, and particularly for the sin of unbelief, you are surely under sentence of death to this day; for, the first work of the spirit, when he comes to liberate a poor soul from condemnation, is to *convince the world of sin*; of sin, because they believe not in him, *John xvi. 8, 9.* (2.) You whose minds are so blinded with ignorance and prejudice against Christ, that you can see no form or comeliness in him, notwithstanding of the bright displays of his glory that are made to us in the word, *If our gospel be hid it is hid to them who are lost, whom the god of this world hath blinded; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 5.* (3.) You who are yet wedded to the law as a covenant, and are seeking life and righteousness, by that first husband; you are to this moment under the sentence of death; for, *As many as are of the law, are under the curse*: if you never knew what it is to be dead to the law by the body of Christ, to have as little hope of life and salvation by the law, and its works, as though you had never done any one duty commanded by the law in your whole life, you are yet married to the law as a husband, consequently under the law's sentence. Yea, I will adventure to say, that the legalist, or self-righteous person, is a step farther off from heaven and eternal life, than the grossest of sinners; for *publicans*
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and harlots, says Christ, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you.* (4.) You who cast off the obligation of the law as a rule of obedience, under a pretended hope of being saved by grace, without the works of the law. All practical *Antinomians*, who are following the swing of their own lusts, are under the power of unbelief, and consequently condemned already. Away with lying, swearing, drinking, whoring believers. Will you pretend to be the people of a holy God, the members of a holy Jesus, the federates of a holy covenant, the heirs of an *undefiled inheritance*, and yet wallow in your sins, or yet retain any known iniquity in your hearts? No, no. To such, not I, but God himself saith, *What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and casts my counsel behind thy back?* O sirs, they that are dead to the law as a covenant, they are so far from casting off its obligations as a rule of duty, that they bind it about them as an ornament, choosing it for a light to their feet, and a lamp to their paths. We are not without law to God, when under the law to Christ. The law is so dear and sweet to a true believer, that it is his meditation day and night. *O how love I thy law!* says *David*; as if he had said, I love it so well, that I cannot tell how well I love it; my soul breaketh for the longing that it hath to thy righteous judgment at all times, *Psalms* cxix. 20.

Inference seventh. It is so, that every unbeliever is a condemned criminal before God? O then; sirs, be concerned at your hearts to get rid of that dismal sentence you are under. What can be matter of concern, if this be not? I come in the name of God to tell you, that this is not impossible

fible; yea, I dare go further, and tell you, that, if you will but *Hear, your souls shall live*, and not die under that condemnatory sentence which is gone forth against you. I dare promise you, not only a reprieve, but a remission; for, thus saith the great judge, as a reconciled God in Christ to the poor trembling pannel; standing condemned before the bar of his holy law, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine Iniquities for mine own sake, and will remember thy sins no more*, Isa. xliii. 25. Here is an act of grace past at a throne of grace, sealed with the blood of the lamb, published and proclaimed in the tops of the high places, that none may pretend ignorance, and that every condemned sinner may take the benefit thereof, and come in upon the king's royal indemnity, granted upon the satisfaction made to justice by his eternal son. O then, sirs, *Hear; and your souls shall live*, and he will *make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David*, Isa. lv. 3. O earth, earth, earth, hear this word of the Lord.

I come not to tell you how you may be rich, great and honourable in the world; these things are but trifles to people in your circumstances. Should you come to a condemned man, and talk to him of riches, honours, crowns, robes, scepters, kingdoms; Alas! would he be ready to say, what are all these to me? I am a poor man, going into another world within a few hours; if you can tell me, how I may save my life, or how I may get rid of my sentence, chains, prison, you will say something to the purpose. This is the very case with thee O sinner; for *By the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation*; And therefore, O poor criminal, listen, lend me
a be-

a believing ear for a few moments, and I will tell thee how infallibly, thou shalt make thy escape.

Quest. O may the poor criminal say, how is that? I answer I have no advice to give thee but one; it is an old advice, a new advice, and the only advice that can be given while the world stands; it is the very same which *Paul* and *Silas* gave to a poor sinner trembling at God's bar, crying, *What shall I do to be saved?* The plain advice they gave him, I give this day to you, *Acts* xvi. 30. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;* agreeable to which are the words of Christ himself in the first part of the verse where my text lies, *He that believes in the Son of God is not condemned.* And v. 16. *Who-so-ever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Quest. You advise us to believe in Christ; but pray tell us, what it is to believe in him? You have the answer in your catechism: to believe is to *receive Christ and to rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel;* or in other words, it is to trust and credit him, as the saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy lost soul, upon the warrant of his own call and command in the word. Christ's business and occupation is, to save that which was lost: now, you all know what it is to trust a man in his trade and occupation; you who have business at law, know what it is to trust your advocates with your most valuable concerns, and the whole management of your cause depending before the judges: well, in like manner, to believe, is, upon the credit of God's testimony, concerning Christ in the word, to trust him as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy own soul in particular. This, I say,

say, is the business, the office and occupation of Christ, to save sinners; and he is so fond of employment in his trade of saving, that he says, *come to me who will, I will in no wise cast out*: and therefore trust him, in his occupation; put thy condemned soul in the hand of the sinner's Saviour; for that is to believe in him and on him. O what a happy suitable meeting is it, when the sinner and the Saviour of sinners thus meet together! Some have a notion, when we bid them believe, we bid them do some great thing as the condition of salvation: but this is a mistake; believing is a resting from works in point of salvation, and a resting on Christ alone for salvation from sin, and all the effects of it: it is to receive a salvation already compleated and prepared to your hand, and brought near to you in the word of grace. But I must not stand further in describing faith at present.

Quest. What influence (may you say) will our believing have upon our being delivered from this condemnatory sentence, we are under? *Ans.* much every way: for, (1.) That moment thou believest, thou becomest a member of Christ, as a new-covenant head. While under the power of unbelief, thou art a member of the first *Adam*, and consequently under *Adam's* covenant, which is a cursing and condemning covenant to all who are under it, *Judgment being come upon all men to condemnation* through *Adam's* breach of it: but in believing, thou becomes a member of Christ the second *Adam*, the head of the new covenant, the covenant of grace and promise, which contains nothing but blessings to the soul that takes hold of it, *Rom. viii. 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* It is not said,
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there is nothing culpable or condemnable in the believer, but there is no condemnation to him: he is no more liable to the penalties of *Adam's* covenant; Christ, his glorious surety, having endured these in his room and stead; and it were inconsistent with justice to demand payment of the same debt, both from the surety and principal debtor. (2.) To clear this yet further, the poor soul, in believing, is married unto a new husband—even Christ; and being under his roof, the covert of his blood and righteousness, the condemning law can have no action against it; this new and better husband, having made his spouse *free indeed*, by the imputation of his law-magnifying righteousness, *Rom. vii. 4. Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ*, (or by the offering of his body on the cross) *that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead*. He does that for us, which the law could not do, through the corruption of nature: particularly, *condemns sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. And if the law have its end, and be fulfilled in the believer by virtue of his union and marriage with the Son of God, how can he be liable to condemnation, or any law-penalties? (3.) That moment the condemned sinner believes in Christ, he is entered heir of a new family, a member of a new corporation: he is come, not to mount *Sinai*, but to mount *Zion*; not to the earthly *Jerusalem* which is in bondage, but to the heavenly *Jerusalem* which is free. He is no more a *stranger or foreigner*, but a *fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God*. He comes in among the *general assembly and church of the first-born*. He becomes

an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ; and the inheritance is settled upon him by a charter, which contains no irritant clauses. No, no: having taken hold of God's covenant by faith, *he hath a name and a place within the walls of God's house, even an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.* And therefore must needs be free from the condemnatory sentence he lay under, before he believed. (4.) That moment you believe, your cause is carried into a new court; I mean, from a tribunal of justice, to a mercy-seat: where all the acts and sentences that pass, are acts of grace and mercy, acts of pardon and *acceptance in the beloved.* No sentences of condemnation pass in the court of grace; no, this is inconsistent with the nature of the court. O let every guilty sinner, who finds himself condemned in the court of the law, and of conscience, carry his cause by a solemn appeal unto this court; for the court is open to all comers, and the Lord merciful and gracious, who sits upon this throne of grace, receives all appeals that are made to him, and *will in no wise cast out the sinner, nor cast his appeal over bar.* O therefore *let us come with boldness unto a throne of grace,* that we may obtain grace, and find mercy to help us in time of need.

Quest. But may you say, if matters stands thus with a believer, that he cannot fall under the sentence of the law, cannot come into condemnation; then he may live as he lists. Does not this doctrine open a wide door for licentiousness and prophanity? For, if once a man be a believer, according to this doctrine, he has nothing to fear, and so may do what he will. Were it not better for such ministers to forbear doctrines, that are liable to such abuse? I answer. (1.) The whole

council of God must be revealed, and not one jot of divine truth must be suppressed, tho' a whole reprobate world should break their necks on it, by wresting it to their own destruction. The gospel will be the favour of death unto some; Christ crucified will be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. But shall we, because of this, forbear to preach Christ, and his gospel? God forbid; we must not starve God's children out of fear lest dogs snatch at it to their own perdition. (2.) I own, that a carnal gospeller, who has some swimming notions of the grace of God in his head, may abuse the doctrine of the believer's freedom from condemnation, by virtue of his union with Christ: But the grace of God in the heart, teaches the very reverse of this, namely, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to walk soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. (3.) Tho' the believer be delivered from the law as a covenant, and its condemnatory sentence, through Christ; yet it does not in the least pave the way to licentiousness: Because, at the same time that he is acquitted from this obligation to the law as a covenant, he comes under stronger and more powerful ties than ever to yield obedience to it as a rule of duty.

I shall conclude this discourse by naming a few of these bonds of obedience, the believer remains under, even when delivered from condemnation. (1.) He is still under the bond of the royal authority of the great God, both as a creator and redeemer. The authority and obligation of the divine law, can never be dissolved, while God is God; and the Creature a Creature. (2.) He is under the bond of interest, to obey the divine law. It

It is true, his obedience does not give him the title to the reward of glory ; it is only the union with Christ, the heir of all things, that gives him this ; but yet, his own personal obedience, is evidential and declarative of his title through Christ. And is it not much for the believer's interest, to have his claim to glory and everlasting life cleared up and made evident to his own soul? In this sense I understand that word, *Rev. xxii. 14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* (3.) He is still under the bond of fear, *Jer. xxxii. 40. I will put my fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from me.* This is not a slavish fear of hell and vindictive wrath, for that is inconsistent with his freedom from condemnation : but it is a filial fear of God as a father, flowing from an affectionate regard unto his authority, interposed in the commands of the law. Tho' they be not afraid of being cast into hell ; yet they *fear him, who is able to cast soul and body into hell.* Tho' they have no reason to fear him, as a revenging and condemning judge ; yet they have much reason to fear him, as a fatherly judge, lest he *visit their iniquity with the rod, and their transgression with stripes ;* for, pass who will unpunished, they shall not pass : *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, and therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.* (4.) He is under the bond of love. He studies to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind ; and his love of God in Christ, like a strong cord, draws him on in the way of obedience, *I drew them with the cords of love : the love of Christ constraineth me,* says Paul. This love laid in the believer's heart has

such a force and power with it, that *many Waters cannot quench it, neither are all floods able to drown it*, Cant. viii. 7. Rom. viii. 35, 36. (5.) He is under the bond of gratitude; being bought with a price, he studies to glorify God in soul and body, which are his. Christ having *delivered him from the hand of his enemies, he serves the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life*. The believer when delivered from the hand of the condemning law, he says to Christ, as the men of Israel did to Gideon, *Judges viii. 22. Thou hast delivered us from the hand of our enemies, therefore rule thou over us*. Suppose a King should not only pardon a rebel, but restore him his forfeited inheritance, advance him to the highest places of honour about the throne; yea, make him his son, his heir, and set him upon the throne with himself; would not that man be under a far greater obligation to serve and obey the king, than if he had never received such singular favours at his hand? There is no bond of obedience like the bond of gratitude to an ingenuous spirit. (6.) He is under the bond of renewed nature; the man is made a partaker of the divine nature, whereby the life of God, the love of God, and the law of God, is laid in his very heart; and this is a mighty bond to obedience: *Heb. viii. 10. I will put my law in their minds, and write it in their hearts*. It is engraven there with the finger of the Holy Ghost, his heart is cast into a divine mould, moulded into the will of God, his will of grace, his will of precept, and his will of providence: so that he *delights in the law of God, after the inward man. The law of his God is in his heart, and therefore none of his steps shall slide*, (7.) The inhabitation of the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, is another efficacious bond of obedience; Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them.* This law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death. And being led by the spirit, they do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. To conclude, that every grace of God, which frees them from the law as a covenant, binds them to it as a rule, Tit. ii. 11, 12.

These are some gospel-bonds of obedience; and you who never knew what it is to have your souls under the sweet influence of these, but only obey the law with a view to purchase a title to heaven, or to redeem your souls from hell and wrath: I, in the name of God, pronounce the heavy doom of my text against you, *He that believes not, is condemned already.*

The Assurance of Faith, opened and applied.

B E I N G

The Substance of several SERMONS on
HEBREWS X. 22.

By Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

HEB. X. 22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: and having an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, &c.*

DISCOURSE I.

*Containing an introduction to the main purpose,
with the method of the following discourse.*

THESE verses contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ, in the foregoing part of the epistle; he sums up, in a few Words, the scope and substance of all he had been saying, *verse 19, 20, and 21.* and then deduces a very natural inference from the whole, *verse 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* Like a wise builder, he first digs till he
come

come to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with *Confidence*.

That we may have the more distinct view of the words, it is expedient that we observe in general, the apostle here very elegantly expresses *new testament privileges*, in an *old testament stile and dialect*. The highest privilege of fallen man, is to have access into the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign; the only way of access is *Christ*, of whom the temple of *Solomon* was an illustrious type; and with allusion unto the typical temple, *Christ* is presented to our faith under a *threefold view*, verse 19, 20, 21. (1.) As a *gate* or *door*, by which we may enter into the *holiest*, and that with *boldness*, by virtue of his *atoning blood*, verse 19. Under the *mosaick* dispensation, *Aaron alone*, and not the *Israelites*, could enter into the *holy of holies*, and that but *once a year*, with the blood of beasts sacrificed for himself and them: but now, under the new testament, through the death and satisfaction of the Son of God, the way of access to friendship and fellowship with a holy God, both here and hereafter, is made open and patent to every sinner, who by faith comes in under the *covert* of the *blood of Jesus*. No sooner had *Adam* sinned, but the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him, and all his posterity; the *cherubim* with the *flaming sword* stood in his way: but now the flaming sword of justice being quenched in the blood of the surety, the door of access is again wide opened. I remember, the *woman of Tekoah*, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. in her parabolical address unto *David*, on *Absalom's* behalf, makes use of this argument with *David*, to persuade him to bring home his exile son, *God* (says she) *doth devise means that his banished be not expelled*

expelled from him. This is remarkably true in the case in hand; God, in his infinite wisdom, has devised a way how his *banished* may be brought home again to his presence, and that is, through the blood and satisfaction of *Christ*, *John* x. 9. *John* xiv. 6.

(2.) To encourage us in our approaches to God through *Christ*, he is presented to us under the notion of *a new and living way, consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*, verse 20. The *inner veil*, that separated between the holy place, and the holiest of all, in the temple of *Jerusalem*, was a *type* of that *body of flesh*, assumed by the *son of God*, whereby his *deity* was *veiled*; and through the breaking or rending of this by his death on the cross, the way to God and Glory becomes open and patent: and this is called a *new way*, either in opposition to *Adam's* way by a covenant of works, which is shut up ever since the fall of man; or because it never waxes old, but is ever *fresh, green and fragrant* unto the believing soul. And is called a *living way*, because, tho' *Christ* was once dead, yet now he is *alive*, and lives for ever more, to give *life* to every soul that comes to God through him. And then, he is a way *consecrated for us*, he is dedicated for the *use* of sinners in their dealings with God; *for their sakes* (says he) *do I sanctify myself*. And O! what can be more encouraging to a lost sinner, to make use of *Christ* by faith, than to know that he is just devoted for this work of saving that which was lost?

(3.) Whereas the sinner might object, That tho' the door be opened, and the new and living way consecrated, yet he is either so *ignorant*, that he knows not this way; or so *impotent*, that he cannot

cannot walk in it; or so guilty, that he dares not venture to go in to the holiest: therefore, to obviate all these, *Christ* is presented to us as *a great high priest over the house of God*, verse 21. O what noble encouragement is here for *believing! Christ, as a high priest, is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God*, Heb. v. 1. And seeing he is ordained for *men*, may not men make use of his mediation, with *confidence and boldness?* Heb. iv. 14, 16. And then by his office, he is obliged to execute the duties of his office toward every soul that employs him therein: he is obliged as a *high priest* to instruct the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to confirm the feeble, and to *make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. And therefore let us take courage to employ and improve him, especially considering that he is both a *merciful and faithful high priest*, Heb. ii. 17. And also a *high priest*, who is *over the house of God*, (i. e.) he has full power and authority from his eternal father, to negotiate our affairs, and to render both our persons and performances acceptable unto him. In a word, the whole management of the *offspring and issue*, and of all the *vessels of cups and flagons*, is committed to him: *Yea, all the glory of his father's house hangs upon him, as upon a nail fastned in a sure place*, Isa. xxii. 24. And therefore, seeing we have a *high priest* of such *authority and interest*, let us come with *boldness to a throne of grace*, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. Whenever we have any business with God, whenever we would enter into the secret of his presence, or enjoy fellowship with him, let us go in at the back of our *great high priest*, who has led the way

way before us, and is appearing in the presence of God for us.

Now, I say, the apostle having thus presented *Christ* under the most encouraging views as the *object* of our *faith, trust* and *confidence* in our dealings with the majesty of God, he proceeds to recommend and inculcate a correspondent duty in the words of my text, *verse 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, having our hearts sprinkled, &c.*

Before we proceed to the more particular consideration of the *words*, it is very much worthy our notice, to observe the apostle's order and method of doctrine, and how he knits the believer's *privilege* and *duty* together ; he would have the privilege first believed, and then the duty performed ; he would have us first believe, *that the door of the holiest is opened by the blood of Jesus, that there is a new and living way consecrated for us, that we have a high priest over the house of God*, ready to introduce us into his presence : And, upon these grounds of faith, he presses and inculcates the duty, *Let us draw near, &c.* It is pleasant hence to observe, how the method and order of the covenant of works is just inverted in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works, *duty was the foundation of our privilege* ; man was first to perform duty, and upon his doing that, might expect the privilege in a way of *passional debt* : But now, I say, the very reverse of this, is God's order and method in the covenant of grace ; for here, we are *first to believe the privilege, or to receive it as a grant of sovereign grace, and upon that ground we are to go on to duty*. This is a thing that needs to be adverted with the utmost attention ;

attention; in regard, the bent of nature runs in the way of the covenant of works, namely, to expect the privilege on the score of duty, and to fancy that God is a debtor to us, when we have done this and the other duty required in the law: Whereas, the stream of nature runs quite cross to the order and method laid in the covenant of grace, namely, first to receive the privilege in a way of grace, like *beggars receiving God's alms*; and then to perform duty, as a *testimony of gratitude* for the privilege received, without expecting any thing from the Lord upon the account of duty done by us; this is what proud nature spurns against, with the utmost reluctance: What? *to take all freely without money or price*, and to reckon ourselves *unprofitable servants* when we have done all, is what depraved nature cannot yield to, till the heart is new-moulded by sovereign and efficacious grace. *Will not God be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil? &c. wherefore have we fasted and prayed, and thou takest no knowledge?* is expressly our natural way of thinking. But tho' this way lye cross unto nature, yet this is the way in which God will have sinners saved, or else they shall never share of his salvation: he will have them to receive eternal life, begun here, and consummate hereafter, as the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, without regard to any of our doings as a *foundation* of our claim or title thereunto. *Boasting* must be for ever excluded, that the glory of our salvation may redound wholly alone unto *grace*, which reigns through imputed righteousness, unto eternal life by *Jesus Christ our Lord*. And therefore, I say, study to rivet upon your minds, the *order and method* laid by God in the covenant of grace, where
privilege

privilege received by faith is made the foundation of duty, and not duty the foundation of our claim to the privilege. This is the scheme or order laid in our lesser catechism, by the Westminster Assembly; where, in answer to the third question, we are told, that the scriptures principally teach, first what man is to believe concerning God; and then, the duty which God requires of man. And, according to this order, we have, first, the objects of faith, and privileges of believers explained; and then, the duties of the moral law inculcated upon that ground. And if this order of doctrine be inverted, we destroy the covenant of grace, and return to a covenant of works. So much for the connection.

I proceed to the words themselves: where we may notice, (1.) The grand *duty* the apostle urges upon the foregoing grounds, *Let us draw near.* (2.) He gives particular *directions*, how we are to manage in our approaches unto God, through the new and living way, *viz. with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. &c.*

As to the first, *viz. the general duty* that is pressed, *Let us draw near.* The apostle does not tell us expressly, whither, or to whom, we are to draw near; but it is plain from the whole drift of the text and context, that he invites us to draw near *to God*; not to God *absolutely* considered, for thus he is inaccessible by guilty sinners; but to God *in Christ reconciling the world to himself*: this is that *throne of grace*, to which he had invited us to come with *boldness*, that we may obtain grace, and find mercy to help us in time of need, chap. iv. 16. The Greek word is the very same both there and here.

It is considerable in the manner of the apostle's exhortation, that, when he is calling others to *draw near*, he comprehends *himself*; it is not, *do you draw near*, but *let us*, draw near. Ministers of the gospel, when dispensing the truths of God, must preach *home* to their *own* souls, as well as unto others. Sirs, we do not deliver truths or doctrines to you, wherein we ourselves have no manner of concern; no, our own souls are at the stake, and shall either perish, or be saved eternally, as we receive or reject these precious truths, which we deliver unto you. And truly, it can never be expected, that we will apply the truths of God with any warmth or liveliness unto others, unless we first make a warm application thereof to our own souls; and, if we do not feed upon these doctrines, and practise these duties, which we deliver to, and inculcate upon you, tho' we preach unto others, we ourselves are but *cast-aways*.

The exhortation, *draw near* supposes our natural distance and estrangement from God; *All we like sheep have gone astray*, says the prophet *Isaiah*, chap. liii. 6. When Christ would describe our apostate and lapsed state, he doth it under the notion of a *Prodigal going into a far country*, Luke xv. There are *three* things we all lost and forfeited in the first *Adam*, viz. the *image of God*, the *favour of God*, and *fellowship with God*: yea, so much have we lost them, that the apostle plainly tells us, that we are *alienated from the very life of God* in our natural state. This God intimated unto *Adam* immediately after the fall, in that question he propounded to him, when hiding himself from his presence among the thickets of paradise, *Adam, where art thou?* Gen. iii. 9. *Non es ubi prius eras*; as *Austin*, one of the ancient fathers, glosseth it; *Thou*

Thou art not where thou wast before. What is become of the late friendship and fellowship that was betwixt me and thee? Of a Son of God, thou art become a child of the devil; Of an ally of heaven, turned a confederate of hell. Thus the breach and rupture is wide like the sea. Can ever parties betwixt whom there is such a natural and moral distance be brought together again? Yes, the apostle's exhortation to *draw near*, plainly bears, that the offended and affronted Majesty of heaven is accessible by the *blood of Jesus*, by the *new and living way*. It was the great plot of heaven from eternity, to bring fallen man back again into fellowship with his maker. Infinite wisdom, animated by infinite bowels of mercy, has found the way, and the way is *CHRIST*, John xiv. 6. The main intent of his incarnation, and of the whole of his mediatory work was to *bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. To bring strangers and enemies to amity and unity, is a great and mighty work; yet this work he accomplishes and brings about by the *ransom* he has paid for us, and by the operation of his spirit in us.

This *drawing near to God*, it does not consist in any approach unto the essence of God; for essentially considered, he is not *far* from every one of us; *In him we live, move, and have our being*. Neither does it lye in an external or bodily attendance upon him in the duties of his worship, *Bodily exercise profiteth little*: many *draw near to God with their mouths and lips, while their hearts are far removed from him*. Neither does it consist in a *moral seriousness*, tho', alas, it is much to bring some people even that length: people may be morally serious about eternal concerns, in a legal way, like the *Pharisee*, who came to *Christ* saying, *Good master,*

ster, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Yea, Heathens, and Mahometans, and Jews, may be morally serious in their own way, but they cannot be said to draw nigh to God. What is it then, say you, to draw near to God? I answer, *It is an act of the heart or mind, whereby the soul, under the influence of the spirit, sweetly and irresistably returns to a God in Christ, as its only centre of rest.* The poor soul having tried Adam's way of access, and finding that door bolted by the law, justice and holiness of God, despairs of ever entring thereby: at length, the man, when he has wearied himself in the greatness of his way, finding the door of the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way being discovered to him in the light of the word and spirit, he cries out at the sight of it, O! this is the *gate of God*, by this door will I enter into his presence: yea, *this is my rest, here will I dwell, for I desire and like it well.* O what a sweet acquiescence of soul is there in God's device of salvation through Christ! The man cannot but applaud and approve of it, as a device every way worthy of infinite wisdom, crying out with the apostle, O! *it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.* This ordinarily is the soul's exercise, both in its first and after approaches unto God in any duty of worship. There is a constant improvement of the merit and mediation of Christ in every address the man makes to the Majesty of heaven; he, as it were, fixes himself in the *clifts* of the rock of ages; he gets into the *secret places* of that blessed stair, by which we ascend unto heaven; and then he shows his countenance, and lifts up his voice, in *drawing near to God by the new and living way.* We, as it were take up the propitia-

tion which God has set forth, in the hand of faith, hold it up to God, saying, *Behold the blood of the covenant; Behold, O God, our shield, look upon the face of thine anointed.* We go quite out of ourselves, when we draw near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus; we overlook our own duties, graces, frames, attainments, grounding our hope of access and success only upon the merit and moyn of our *great high priest*, God having made us accepted in the *beloved*. And, in this view of things, the soul will readily express itself, as *David* did in the like case, saying, *I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.* And, if God hide his face, the soul will wait, and expect good at his hand, saying, *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him; he will command his loving-kindness in the day, and his song shall be with me in the night.* And, if the Lord smile, and grant an answer of peace, he will not ascribe his success to his own faith. Frame, fervency, but unto *Christ alone*, saying, *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory.* Thus much for the main duty of *drawing near*.

The apostle next proceeds to direct as to the *manner* of our approach. And, 1st, he directs us to draw near *with a true heart*. This is a word fitly spoken; if he had required us to draw near with a *heart* perfectly *clean* and *pure*, he might as well have bidden us fly without wings; but he bids us draw near with a *true heart*, i. e. with a *heart truly concerned about acceptance with God*, a heart truly approving of, and acquiescing in the new and living way. In short, a *true heart* here, is opposed to a *double, doubting, distrusting and hypocritical heart*; all dissimulation is to be avoided in our dealings with him, *who tries the heart and*
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the reins, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searching Jerusalem as with candles. Psal. li. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts. Whereas the hypocrite, who draws near with his mouth, and honours God with his lips, while his heart is far removed from him, shall not stand in his presence. Take care then that your hearts be honestly minded towards God when you draw nigh to him. But I pass this also, and go on to that which I have principally in view, viz.

The second *direction* or *advice* the apostle gives in order to our successful approach unto God by the new and living way, and that is to draw near *In full assurance of faith*.

The *original* word signifies to be fully *persuaded*, or *assured* of a thing; and is opposed to *wavering*, *doubting* and *uncertainty*. The apostle having laid a firm foundation of access in the preceeding verses, he bids us trust to it, and rest upon it, with an unshaken confidence, and certain persuasion of success. What further is necessary by way of explication, will occur in the prosecution of the following

DOCTRINE, viz. *It is the will of God, that they who approach to him in Christ, should draw near in full assurance of faith, or with a certain persuasion, and confident expectation of success and acceptance.*

The foundation of this *doctrine* is obvious. It is plain the apostle here is not speaking of that *assurance* of grace and *salvation* which follows upon believing, and is the *result* of the soul's reflection upon the operations of the holy spirit within; but of an *assurance* lying in the very *direct act* of faith: for the apostle's scope here is, not to give the *marks* and *evidences*, but to present the *object* of faith, viz.

Christ as the *door* and *way* to the *beliest*, and as a *high priest* ready to introduce us; and thereupon exhorts to a correspondent act of believing, in drawing near to God, namely, *with full assurance of faith*.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, endeavour to speak, (1.) Of *faith* in general. (2.) Of the *assurance* of faith. (3.) Of the *full assurance* of faith. (4.) Of the *grounds* that faith builds its assurance upon, in drawing near to God. (5.) *Apply* the whole.

DISCOURSE II.

Of FAITH in general.

BEFORE I go on to discourse these heads, I shall only *premise*, That the practical and experimental understanding of this subject, is a matter of the highest importance and concern, in regard, as the apostle tells us expressly, *Heb. vii. 6. Without faith it is impossible to please God*: without some degree of faith, we can never make a successful approach unto a throne of grace. What was said of the *Israelites* with relation to the earthly *Canaan*, *That they could not enter in because of unbelief*, the same may be said of the greatest part of professors under the gospel, *they cannot enter into the holiest of fellowship with God here, or of immediate enjoyment hereafter, because of unbelief*: and therefore, I say, the right understanding and uptaking of this subject must be of the greatest concern to them who have any concern anent their acceptance with God. This premised, I proceed to
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The *first thing* proposed in the *method*, which was to discourse a little of *faith* in general. I shall not stand upon the *different kinds* of faith, that are commonly mentioned, such as, a *historical, miraculous* and *temporary* faith, which may be found in reprobates and temporary believers; our inquiry at present is particularly anent the faith of *God's elect*, which is well described in our shorter catechism, thus,

Faith in JESUS CHRIST is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone, for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

For clearing of which description, I offer the few following considerations,

(1.) That faith is *a saving grace*. And it is so designed, because it is the *free gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. It is not the product of *free-will*, such a flower never sprung out of the soil of depraved nature; no, it is one of the prime operations of the spirit, in effectual calling, upon the souls of God's elect. It is not bestowed upon any, upon the account of good dispositions or qualifications antecedent to itself; faith is the *first grace* or the *first act of spiritual life*, and, as it were, the *parent* of the other graces, because it roots and grafts the soul in Christ, of whom alone our fruit is found. Before the implantation of faith, nothing but atheism, enmity, ignorance, and unbelief overspreads the face of the soul, being *alienated from the very life of God*, through the ignorance that is in us; and therefore *faith* must needs be a *grace, or free gift of God*, bestowed without any antecedent *merit, good disposition, or qualification* in us. Faith is *a saving grace*, because, wherever true faith is there *salvation* is already begun, and shall certainly be consummate in due time. There is an inseparable connection

stated by the ordination of heaven, between faith and salvation, *John* iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* *Mark* xvi 16. *He that believeth shall be saved.* When we preach the everlasting gospel, making offer of *Christ* and his salvation unto every creature, we are at the same time to declare, that *whosoever* he be, that gives faith's entertainment unto this gospel of the grace of God, shall be saved: so that this *promise*, establishing the connection between faith and salvation, is as *extensive* as the *offer of the gospel*, and is not made to believers *exclusively* of others. It is certainly true of every son of *Adam*, lying within the joyful sound of a Saviour, that if he believe he shall be saved; and this we are allowed to declare in the name of God, as an encouragement to every sinner to receive and entertain our message.

(2.) I remark from this description of faith, that it hath *Christ* for its main and principal object; for it is a *faith IN JESUS CHRIST*. There is such a near relation betwixt *Christ* and faith, that they cannot be separate: take away *Christ* from faith, then faith is but a *cypher*, and stands for nothing; nothing can fill the eye or hand of faith, but *Christ* only: *CHRIST* is the *bread of life*, *faith* is the *mouth* of the soul, that eats and feeds upon him; *CHRIST* is the mystical *brazen serpent*, *faith* the *eye* of the soul that looks to him for healing; *CHRIST* is the *strong hold* cast open to the *prisoners of hope*, *faith* the *foot* of the soul that runs into him for shelter; *CHRIST* is our living *altar*, his satisfaction and intercession like the two horns of the altar, and *faith* flees in thither for

for *safety* from the law and justice of God, which pursue the sinner for his life; *CHRIST* is the *bride-groom*, and *faith*, like the *bride*, takes him by the hand, saying, *Even so I take him*. In a word, faith flights and overlooks every thing else, to be at Christ, saying with *David*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* &c. And with *Paul*, *I desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified*; yea, doubtless *I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*.

(3.) I remark, that faith is here described to be a *receiving of Christ* according to what we have, *John i. 12. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*, &c. For understanding this, you would know, that *Christ*, the ever-blessed *object* of faith, is presented to us in the gospel, under a great many different *views* and *aspects*, in a correspondence unto which faith receives its *denomination*: for instance, is Christ presented under the notion of *meat* to the hungry soul? then faith is expressed by *eating*: is Christ held out under the notion of *living waters*? then faith is called a *drinking*: is he held out as a *refuge*? then faith is called a *fleeing* to him, *Heb. vi. 17*. Is he held out as a *garment* to the naked? then faith is a *putting him on*, for clothing. Thus I say, according to the aspect in which Christ is presented, faith receives its name, as the sea receives its names according to the different countries or shoars it washes: just so here, when *Christ* is presented, under the notion of a *gift*, then faith is called a *receiving* him; for giving and receiving are *correlates* as you see, *John iii. 27. A man can receive* (or, as in the margin, *take unto himself*) *nothing, except it be given him from heaven*.

* Receiving, or taking of a thing, is but *stealth or robbery*, where it is not warranted by an antecedent *giving or granting*: so our receiving Christ would be but presumption, and a vicious intromission, if he were not given of God to be received; and this *giving* of Christ in the revelation and offer of the gospel, is *common to all*, and warrants all to receive him. *John* vi. 32. says Christ unto a *promiscuous* multitude, the far greater part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from Christ's character of them, *My Father* (says he) *giveth you the true bread which is from heaven*, meaning himself. We read, *Psal.* cxix. 16. that *God hath given the earth to the sons of men*, i. e. he made a grant of it unto them, to be used and possessed by them; and by virtue of this deed of *gift or grant*, before the earth came to be fully peopled, or stock'd with inhabitants, it was lawful for a man to take possession of it, and use it as his own: just so here, God hath *so loved* the world of lost mankind, *that he hath given his only begotten Son*, *that whosoever of mankind* lost believeth in him, or receiveth him, *may not perish*, &c. *John* iii. 16. This will not infer an *universal redemption*: for I do not now speak of the *purchase* or *application* of redemption, which without all doubt is peculiar to the *elect*; but of that *giving* of Christ in the *word*, which warrants our *receiving* of him: and this, past all peradventure, is *common to the whole visible church*, yea, to all, to whom the revelation of Christ comes: for if there were not such a *giving* of Christ, as warrants *all* to receive him, the *unbelieving* world could not in justice

* When Christ is received by us, he must be tendered, given, granted, or communicated unto us.

justice be condemned for rejecting him. O then let mount *Zion* rejoice, and let the daughters of *Judah* (I mean, the visible church) be glad and receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that *to us a Son is given, and to us a child is born, whose name is called the wonderful counsellor, the everlasting father, the mighty God, and the prince of peace*; for these are glad tidings of great joy to all people, *Isa. ix. 6. Luke ii. 10.* Receive this Saviour who is given to you, and receive him with gratitude and praise, warbling out that doxology with heart and lip, *thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.* And if you do not remember I tell you, you will follow after lying vanities, and slight your own mercy.

(4.) Upon this description of faith, I remark, that faith is called not only a receiving, but a *resting* upon Christ, *Psalms xxxvii. 7. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently on him.* We are not in my opinion to think, that *receiving* is one act of faith, and *resting* another act of it; they are only different expressions of the same applicatory, justifying faith, or (as some will have it) *the rest of faith is a continuation of the reception.* There are a great many denominations of faith of the same divine authority, with these two mentioned in the answer of the *catechism*, such as, *eating, drinking, fleeing, entering, coming, trusting, &c.* But these are not different acts, but only different expressions of the saving act of faith, making use of, or applying Christ in a suitableness unto the view wherein he is presented in the word of God. Now, as to this expression of *resting*, it leads us to conceive of Christ as a *rock*, or a strong *foundation*, upon which we may, and still ought to lay the weight of our everlasting concerns, with the greatest confidence.

fidence. When we lay our weight upon a rock, we are not afraid that the rock sink or fail underneath us; so in believing, the poor, weary, burdened soul, finding itself unable to stand upon its own legs, leans and rests upon this *rock of ages*, being confident that this rock will not fail. Or, the expression of *resting* may allude unto a man's resting, upon a *charter* for an *estate*, a bond or bill for a sum of money, he rests upon it as good and sufficient security; so the soul, in believing, rests upon the *fidelity* and *veracity* of a God in Christ, *pawned* in the *covenant of grace*, and promises thereof. He looks upon the fulness of grace and truth, of merit and spirit treasured up in Christ, as they are laid out in the word of faith; saying with *David*, *this is all my salvation*: on which account, *faith*, Heb. xi. 1. is called *the substance of things hoped for*; because it rejoices in the promise, as though it had the thing promised. This *resting* is equivalent unto *trusting*, as is evident from all these scriptures cited in the catechism upon this head. I shall notice further, before I leave this point, that both these expressions of *receiving*, and *resting*, whereby faith is here described, do, in the very nature of the thing intended, carry an *application* and *appropriation* in them: for, when I receive a gift, I take it as *my own* property; and when I rest upon a charter or bond, I rest on it as *my security*: and if this be not allowed, the *relieving* and *supporting* nature of faith is in a great measure lost; without it we could never be filled with *joy and peace in believing*. I shall only add, that both these expressions, pointing out the nature of faith, do so describe it, as to put it out of the rank or category of *works*: for, when a poor man receives his *alms*, or when a weary man *rests* him,

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he cannot in any propriety of speech be said to *work*. God will have men saved, under the new covenant, by such a mean and instrument, that so works and boasting may be for ever excluded, and grace alone for ever exalted.

(5.) I remark, That *Faith* receives *Christ*, and rests *upon him alone*. The poor soul, before the saving revelation of Christ, was grasping at empty shadows, trusting in lying refuges; and like the men of the old world, when the waters of the deluge were upon the increase, was running to this and the other mountain, where he might be safe from the swelling deluge of God's wrath; but finding the waters to overflow his hiding places, he quits them, and flees to the *rock of ages*, saying, *in vain is salvation expected from the hills, or multitude of mountains: in the Lord only is the salvation of his people*. There is *no name given under heaven among men, whereby to be saved, but by the name of Jesus*. Every man by nature being married to the law in *Adam*, is attempting to climb up to heaven upon the broken ladder of the covenant of works, and to pass the deluge of God's wrath by the fallen bridge of the law: but, as sure as the Lord lives, your attempts this way will fail you; *for by the works of the law no flesh living shall be justified*. God has established a *bridge* of communication between heaven and earth, by the obedience, death, and intercession of his eternal son; and every other passage to heaven but this, is stopped by the justice and holiness of God. *John* xiv. 6. says Christ there, *I am the WAY, the truth and the life; and there is no man cometh unto the father but by me*.

(6.) *Faith* receives *Christ*, and rests upon him alone *for salvation*. This points at the end the
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finer has before him, in his first closing with Christ; he flees unto him for *salvation*, Acts xv. 7. *We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.* By *salvation* here, we are not simply to understand an *eternity of happiness* in the enjoyment of God after time, but a *salvation begun in this present life*; *salvation* from the beginning of it in regeneration, till it be consummate in glory. The soul, in believing, rests upon Christ for *pardon*, which is *salvation* from the guilt of sin, and condemnatory sentence of the law: it rests on him for *sanctification*, which is a *salvation* from the filth and power of sin; for *glorification*, which is a *salvation* from the very in-being of sin. Alas! the greatest part of the visible church have no other notion of *Christ*, but only as a *saviour* to keep them out of hell, and to deliver them from vindictive wrath. It is true indeed, *our Jesus* saveth from the wrath that is to come; but how does he that? He does it by saving from *sin* in the first place. *His name* (saith the Angel) *shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sin.* His first and great business was to *condemn sin*, that arch-traitor, and first-born of the devil, Rom. viii. 3. *To finish transgression, and make an end of sin.* And therefore it is a *salvation from sin*, in the guilt, and filth, and power of it, for which faith receives Christ, and rests upon him.

(7.) Remark, that faith receives and rests upon *Christ*, as he is offered to us in the gospel. This offer of *Christ*, though it be last named in this description of faith, yet it is the first thing in the *order of nature*, that faith believes; for, unless one believe that *Christ* is offered to him in particular, as the gift of God, and as a foundation of hope and help,

help, he will never receive him or rest on him for salvation. This is a *believing* in order to *believing*, a believing that Christ and salvation in him is really offered, in order to his being accepted and received : and therefore, *be verily persuaded* that that Christ is *yours* in the *offer*, and that God has *given to you* eternal life in his son ; for this is the *record of God*, 1 John v. 11. and unless you believe this, you make *God a liar*, because you believe not the *record that God hath given of his Son*, v. 10. O sirs, ! believe it, that *to YOU a Son is given, to YOU a child is born, whose name is the wonderful* ; and that God has given to a lost world, in the gospel-offer and revelation, that *whosoever believes in him may not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. Next you may observe, that it is in the *gospel* that this *offer* is made, and this *gift* of God is presented unto you. What is the *gospel*? but a word of *grace*, a word of *promise*, a word of *faith*, a word of *life and salvation*, and *to you is the word of this salvation sent* : and in this *word*, Christ and his everlasting righteousness, and all-sufficient fulness is brought near to you, in order to your receiving and applying him to your own souls by faith. You need not climb up to heaven, or dig into hell, in quest of a Saviour ; for *the word is nigh thee*, (and *Christ in the word*) *even the word of faith which we preach*, Rom x. 6, 7, 8, 9. As a sum of money is brought nigh to a man in a bond that is offered him, so is Christ brought nigh in the word of promise to us, *Acts* ii. 39. *The promise is to you*, &c. And without this word of grace and promise, believing were a thing impossible, in regard faith could never fasten on Christ, or God in him, without this word of faith. If I should bid you believe that
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such a man will give you a sum of money, you would think me ridiculous, unless he had given his word that he would do it; your faith or trust could not fasten upon him without his word or writ as the immediate ground thereof: so here our faith, trust, or confidence, could never find a foundation without God's word of grace and promise; and in receiving his word you receive himself, and all the treasures of his grace laid up in Christ, and laid out to your hand in the word.

Next, It is considerable in this branch of the description, that faith's reception, and application of Christ, must be regulated by, and bear a proportion unto the *offer* that is made him in the gospel. For here we are told that faith is a receiving and resting upon him *as* he is offered, &c. This *qualifies* our reception of Christ, and distinguishes the faith of true believers, from that of hypocrites and formalists. And therefore notice this as a thing of the last moment and consequence, whether your faith comes up to the offer, and corresponds thereunto. I shall illustrate this in the *four* following particulars.

1. Christ is *freely* offered in the gospel, *Isa.* lv. 1. *Rev.* xxii. 17. So faith receives and embraces him as the *free* gift of God. Beware of thinking to buy the pearl with the money and price of your works, duties, and good qualifications, as if by these you were fitted for receiving Christ, or as if God made you the more welcome on the account of these, to receive his unspeakable gift; no, no, remember that, in the matter of believing, you are to shake your hands from holding of such bribes; for the *pearl of great price* cannot be *bought* in such a way. It is true, *believing* is called a *buying*, *Isa.* lv. 1. *Rev.* iii. 19. But then let it
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be remembred what sort of a *buying* it is ; it is a *buying without money and without price*. God's price in the market of the gospel is just *nothing* : and yet this is so great a matter with man, that the pride of his heart will not allow him to tell it down. We cannot think of *coming up*, I should rather say, we cannot think of *coming down* to God's price ; I mean, of taking Christ and salvation in him and through him for *nothing*. Many say to God, as *Abraham* said to the king of *Sodom*, Gen. xiv. 23. *I will not take any thing that is thine, from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest thou should say, 'I have made Abraham rich.* Just so does the proud self-righteous sinner upon the matter say unto God. God comes in a gospel-dispensation, saying, *Come, sinners*, I see you are wretched, miserable, blind, poor and naked : you have nothing to give me as an equivalent for life, righteousness and salvation ; and therefore I seek no money or price from you, but make a free gift of my son, and his whole fulness, for nothing ; only take him as my free gift, and he and all that comes along with him, is your own for ever. *No*, says the *pride* of the heart, I am rich, and increased with goods, I stand in need of nothing at God's hand : if God will give me life upon the terms of the first covenant, as it was granted to *Adam* ; or if (because I am already a sinner, and incapable of yielding a perfect and sinless obedience) God will lower the terms of the covenant of works, and grant me an interest in Christ and salvation for my act of believing, or on the score of my honest aims and good meanings, or sincere endeavours, I am well content : but to take Christ and eternal life for *nothing*, is what the proud *legal* heart cannot stoop to. O what a cursed aversion is there in the heart
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of man, against his being a *debtor* unto grace, and grace only! To buy without money and price, is a mystery which the selfish heart of man cannot comprehend. But, first, faith is a grace that comes to *get*, and not to *give*: or, if it *give* any thing, it is the *ills* of the soul, but nothing of good does it pretend to give. The sinner, in believing, upon the matter says, Lord, I give thee my *folly*, and take thee for my only *wisdom*; I give thee my *guilt*, that thou may be *the Lord my righteousness*; I give thee my *defilements*, and take thee for *sanctification*; I give thee my *chains* and *fetters*, that I may be indebted to thee for *redemption* and *liberty*; I give thee my *poverty*, and take thee for my only *riches*; I give thee my *wicked, wandering, hard and deceitful heart*, that thou may give me the *new heart* and *new spirit* promised in thy covenant. Thus, I say, Christ is *freely offered*, and must be *freely received*.

2. Christ is offered *wholly*, an *undivided Christ* is offered, and thus also he must be received. There are some, who in their professed and pretended way of believing, do as it were *halve* and *divide* Christ: some do so far receive him as a *prophet*, that they submit to the teaching of his word, and thereby come to acquire a great deal of speculative knowledge in the things of God; but, being unacquainted with the teaching of his spirit, they never come to the *knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus*; and hence it comes that they never flee to him as a propitiation, or submit unto his authority as a king and a lawgiver: for the execution of the prophetic office, paves the way for his reception both as a priest and king. Some again professedly receive Christ as a *priest*, to save them from hell and the curse; but, by continuing in
their

their ignorance under a gospel-revelation, and walking according to the course of this world, and not according to the laws of Christ, they do evidently reject him, both as a prophet and king. Others again, and I fear too many in our day, do professedly receive Christ as a *king* and *lawgiver*, to the prejudice of his priestly office, while they imagine, by their obedience to his law, particularly the *new gospel-law* of faith and repentance (as some call it) to purchase a title to salvation; by which means they either totally exclude the righteousness of Christ, or mingle their own acts of faith and repentance with the righteousness of Christ in the affair of acceptance and justification before God: in both which cases, *Christ can profit them nothing; they are fallen from grace*, as the apostle expressly declares, *Gal. v. 2, 4*. Thus, I say, many pretended believers *halve* and *divide* the offices of Christ. But is Christ divided? No, a *whole*, an *intire*, and *undivided Christ* must be received, or *no Christ* at all; there is nothing of Christ that a believing soul can want. It is true indeed, the first flight of a poor awakned soul, fleeing from the face of the law and justice of God, is to *Christ* as a *priest*; because here, and here only, it finds relief and shelter under the covert of everlasting righteousness: But at the same moment in which it receives him as a priest for justification, it submits unto his kingly authority, saying, as the *men of Israel* did unto *Gideon*, *Thou hast delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, therefore rule thou over us: O Lord, other lords have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we now make mention of thy name.*

(3.) Christ is offered particularly unto every one of the hearers of the gospel, and accordingly

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faith

faith receives him with particular application. The general call and offer reaches every individual person, and God speaks to every sinner as *particularly*, as tho' he named him by his name and surname. Remission of sin is preached unto *you*; we beseech *you* to be reconciled: the promise is to *you*; and, for my part, I do not know what sort of a gospel men make, who do not admit this. Now, I say, faith, which is the *eccho* of the gospel-offer and call, must needs receive an offered Christ and salvation, with *particular application* to the soul itself. For a person to rest in a *general* persuasion that Christ is offered to the church, or offered to the elect, or a persuasion of God's ability and readiness to save all that come to Christ, is still but a *general* faith, and what devils, reprobates and hypocrites may have. Man, woman, Christ stands at *thy* door, *thou in particular*, even *thou* art called and commanded to believe in the name of the Son of God. Here lies the great pinch and strait of believing; the convinced and awakened soul, through the policy of satan, and the workings of a deceitful heart, thrusts away the word of grace and faith, as not pertaining unto it; till God, by the power of his spirit, irradiate the word, and irradiate the mind of the sinner, letting the man see, that to *him* the word of this salvation is sent: and then he believes with *particular application*, not only good-will to *man* upon earth, but good-will to *me*; Christ is offered to *me*, and therefore I take him for *my own* saviour; the promise and covenant is directed unto *me*, and therefore I embrace it as *my* security. But, perhaps, more of this under the second general head.

(4.) God is *bearty*, and *in good earnest*, in his offers of Christ, and his salvation. O sirs! do not
think

think that a God of truth dissembles with you, when he makes offer of his unspeakable gift, or that he offers a thing to you, which he has no mind to give. He says, yea, he *swears*, with the greatest solemnity, by his very *life*, that he is in *good earnest*, and has no pleasure in your death. And after this, to think that he is not in *earnest*, what else is it, but to charge a God of truth with lying and perjury? There cannot be a greater affront offered to a man of common veracity. How criminal then must it be, to impute such a thing to him, for whom it is impossible to lie, and who hates all fraud and dissimulation in others with a perfect hatred? Thus, I say, God is in *good earnest* in his offers of Christ; so faith is *heartty*, and in *good earnest* in receiving and applying him. *With the heart man believes unto righteousness.* God's whole heart, and his whole soul is in the offer and promise of the gospel, *Jer.* xxxii. 41. and is it not reasonable that we should give him a meeting, by believing with the whole heart and soul? It is not one faculty, but all the powers of the soul do jointly concur in this business of believing; tho' indeed, to speak accurately, with the learned and judicious Dr. *Owen*, "Faith is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence; in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual operation." This much shall serve for the first thing proposed, namely, some account of the nature of *faith in general*.

DISCOURSE III.

Of the ASSURANCE of Faith.

THE *second* thing in the *method*, was to speak a little of the *Assurance of faith*. And, what I have to offer upon this head, I shall endeavour to reduce under these five *propositions* following.

Proposition 1st, is this, *That in this faith* (which I have been describing) *there is a twofold certainty or assurance*, viz. of *assent*, and *application*; the former necessarily supposes an assurance of understanding, or of knowledge, Col. ii. 2. The apostle there speaks of the *full assurance of understanding*, which every christian ought to breathe after, and every believer hath in a greater or lesser measure; for it is only they that *know his name, that will put their trust in him*, Psal. ix. 10. This assurance of understanding, as I take it, lies in an uptaking of the reality and excellency of things divine and supernatural: there is a beam of the glorious sun of righteousness darted in upon the man's soul, who before was sitting in darkness, and in the regions of the shadow of death; whereby he, that was *darkness* in the abstract, becomes *light in the Lord*. He comes now to see things spiritual in another light than formerly; he enters, as it were, into a new world of wonders; upon which account we are said to be *called out of darkness unto God's marvellous light*. Perhaps the man had, before this, some dreaming, floating, superficial notions of these things; he heard of them by the hearing

hearing of the ear, but now *his eyes see them*, and he sees as great a reality in things invisible and eternal, as tho' he saw them with his bodily eyes. This is called by the apostle, *Heb. xi. 1. The evidence of things not seen.* There is such a certainty here, as amounts to a demonstration; so that you may as soon persuade a man that it is mid-night, when the mid-day sun is shining upon him in full splendor, as persuade a man in the lively exercise of faith, that there is not a reality and excellency in things supernaturally revealed. This is so essential to faith, that very commonly under the *old testament*, and frequently also under the *new*, faith receives its denomination therefrom, *Isa. liii. 11. Jer. xxxi. 34. John xvii. 3.*

But, to come a little more close to the purpose in hand, there is, I say, in faith an *assurance of assent*, whereby *the man assuredly believes whatever God has said in his word to be true*; and that not upon the testimony of men, of ministers or angels, but upon the testimony and authority of the God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lie, speaking in his own word, and saying, *Thus saith the Lord.* But in a particular manner, the soul gives its assent unto the truth of the promises of the gospel, and the revelation of the word, concerning the person, natures, offices, undertakings and performances of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the redeemer, surety and saviour of lost sinners. The man's understanding being enlightened with the knowledge of Christ, and having got a view of him by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, he finds it to be *all true*, that God has said of Christ in the word; so that he cannot shun, in this case, to join issue with the apostle, *It is indeed a faithful saying, that Christ came into the world to save sinners,*

sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. He sees the truth and veracity of God so much engaged in the covenant and promises thereof, that they are more firm than the everlasting mountains, and perpetual hills, *Isa. liv. 10.* Now, this certainty of assent is in scripture-dialect, called a *believing the report of the gospel*, *Isa. liii. 1.* *A receiving the record of God; a setting to the seal that God is true*, 1 John v. 10, 11.

(2.) There is in faith an *assurance of application*, or *appropriation*, expressed frequently in scripture, by a *resting*, a *trusting*, or *confiding* in the Lord, and the veracity of his word of grace and promise. By this act of faith, the soul takes home the promise, and embraces it as a good and sufficient security to itself: It is said of the old testament *worthies*, *Heb. xi. 13.* that they were *persuaded of the promises, and embraced them*: their faith in the promise was a *persuasion*, or assent with appropriation thereof to their own souls, inso-much that they look'd upon the promise as their substance. And hence is that, which we have in the first verse of that chapter, *faith is the substance of things hoped for*. This *applicatory* act of faith, wherein the very life, soul and sweetness of faith lies, is pleasantly-expressed and illustrated in *David*: God had made a promise to him of the crown and kingdom of *Israel*, which bore up his spirits, when, through the rage and fury of *Saul*, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; and viewing the promise, and the fidelity of the promiser, he cries out, *Psal. lx. 6.* *God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice*: and, because I have the security of his promise, I dare say it with confidence and assurance, *Gilead is mine, and Manassah is mine*. In like manner, true faith *appropriates*
the

the *mercy* of God in Christ to the soul itself in particular, upon the ground of the free and faithful promise of God. I might here demonstrate, that the stream of our best protestant divines concur in their sentiments as to this matter : I shall only at present quote the *definition* of faith given by the great and judicious Dr. Owen, in his *catechism*, or *principles of the doctrine of Christ*; where, having moved the question, *What is justifying faith?* his answer is, “ A gracious resting on the free promises of God “ in Christ Jesus for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart, that God is a reconciled father to us in the Son of his love. For proof “ of which, he cites, 1 *Tim.* i. 16. *John* xiii. 15. “ *John* xix. 25. *Rom.* iv. 5. *Heb.* iv. 16. *Rom.* viii. “ 38, 39. *Gal.* ii. 20. 2 *Cor.* v. 20, 21.” And on the margin he hath these words, “ Of this faith “ the holy spirit is the efficient cause, the word “ the instrumental, the law indirectly by discovering our misery, the gospel immediately by holding forth a Saviour. Faith (adds he) is “ in the understanding in respect of its being and “ subsistence, in the will and heart in respect of “ its effectual working.” According to this account of faith, this *assurance* I speak of, *viz. a persuasion of the promise with appropriation* (as the judicious *Calvine* speaks) *can no more be separate from faith, than light can be from the sun.* It takes home the grace and mercy of God to the soul in particular, which before lay in *common* in the offer of the gospel. And without this particular application, the offer and promise of the gospel can stand us in no stead ; but is like a price put in the hand of a fool, who has no heart to it. Our meat set before us, will never feed us, unless it be applied by eating it ; so, except we eat the

flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man by an applying faith, we have no life in us. Whatever excellency there be in *Gilead's balm*, it will never recover the *hurt* of the daughter of *Zion*, unless it be used by faith. Faith answers and corresponds unto the word of faith, as the seal and the wax answer to one another, *Zach. xiii. 9. I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.* Faith will not quit its *MY's*, tho' all the world should say against it. The *marrow* of the *gospel* (as *Luther* observes) is in these pronouns, *MEUM, NOSTRUM, My and Our.* He bids us read these with great *emphasis*. *Tolle meum, & tolle Deum*, says another, *Take away property, and you take away God, take away Christ.* It is the common dialect of faith in scripture, to vent itself in words of *appropriation*; it has a peculiar pleasure and satisfaction in these words, *my* and *our*, and rolls them in its mouth like a sweet morsel. See how sweetly *David* harps upon this string, *Psal. xviii. 1, 2.* no less than *eight* times in a breath, does he repeat his *appropriating My, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Yea, so tenacious is faith in this matter, that it will maintain its *My's* in the face of a hiding and frowning God, *Psal. xxii. 1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? My* is a *word of faith*, says *Flavel* on the text; so *Isa. xlix. 19. Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten.* But I need not stand to offer more instances of this kind, seeing, as one observes, faith in scripture expresses itself by these two words; *my* and *our*, no less than above 300 times. Thus you see what kind of assurance there is in faith, namely, an assurance or certainty of *assent* and

and application. The first may be found in a great measure, and in some sort in devils and reprobates: the last is of a distinguishing nature, and peculiar only to the faith of God's elect, and of his operation; tho' indeed some shadow of it also may be found in the presumptuous faith of hypocrites, of which we may speak afterward. Knowledge and assent are preparatory toward that application, wherein the very soul of saving and justifying faith doth lye. And when we speak of them one after another, it is not as if they were really separate in the soul's exercise: for I take them up as one complex undivided act of the soul; in the very first view and revelation of Christ by the word and spirit, the soul cannot shun to cry out with *Thomas, My Lord, my God*. I do not mean, that the soul always in the first moment of believing runs that length, as to express itself so with the mouth: But I mean, this is what *faith* would say, could it get up its head from under the load of unbelief and indwelling corruption, wherewith it is overpowered.

Proposition 2. I offer, is this, *That there is a great difference betwixt the assurance of faith* (which I have now described) *and the assurance of sense*, which follows upon faith. The *assurance* of faith is a direct, but the *assurance* of sense is a reflex act of the soul. The *assurance* of faith hath its object and foundation from *without*, but that of sense has them *within*. The *object* of the assurance of faith is a *Christ revealed, promised, and offered in the word*; the *object* of the assurance of sense is a *Christ formed within us by the holy spirit*. The assurance of faith is the cause, that of sense is the effect; the first is the *root*, and the other is the *fruit*. The assurance of faith eyes the promise in its stability,

stability, flowing from the *veracity* of the promiser; the assurance of sense eyes the promise in its *actual accomplishment*. By the assurance of faith, *Abraham* believed, that *he should have a son in his old age*, because God who cannot lie had promised; but by the assurance of sense, he believed it when he *got Isaac in his arms*. By the first, *Noah* was sure, that he and his family should not perish in the waters of the deluge; but by the last, he was assured of it, when the ark rested upon the *mountains of Ararat*, and the waters were withdrawn again into their proper chanel. By the former the believing *Israelites* were assured, that *Canaan* should be their possession, because God had made a grant and a deed of gift of it to them in his promise; by the latter they were assured of it, when they passed *Jordan*, overthrew the old inhabitants, and divided the good land by lot, as the inheritance of the tribes of *Israel*. Time would fail me, to illustrate this matter by instances that stand upon record in the sacred oracles. *Faith* asserts its interest in a *future* good, because *promised*; *Sense* asserts its interest in a *present* good, because *possessed*: *Faith* says, My God will hear me; *Sense* says, My God hath heard me. *Faith* says, He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness; *Sense* says, He hath brought me forth to the light, and I do behold his righteousness. Again, *faith* is conversant about things that are *not seen*, and hoped for; *sense* is conversant about things *seen*, and *actually enjoyed*. *Faith* says, He is *my God*, because he has said in the covenant, *I will be their God*: *Sense* again says, He is *my God*, because *I knew* my soul has said unto the Lord, he is my Lord. *Faith* assures the
soul

soul of the remission of sins in the blood of the lamb, because God has said, *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*: Sense again assures the soul of remission, because of the intimations of pardon in some sensible smiles of the Lord's countenance, and some saving operations of his grace. By faith I believe my salvation, because it is *purchased, promised, and possess'd* by my glorious head *Christ Jesus*: but by sense I believe my salvation, because *I find* this salvation already *begun* in a work of regeneration, and advancing in a work of sanctification, *Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun the good work, will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus.*

Proposition 3. The assurance of faith will stand its ground, when the assurance of sense is quite lost and gone. A clear instance of this we have in Christ, when there was a total eclipse of sensible manifestations, yea nothing but a louring cloud of vindictive wrath surrounding and breaking upon him as our surety; yet, at that same time, the *assurance of faith* maintains the *claim*, and repeats it, saying, *My God, my God*; upon the ground not only of his eternal sonship, but of the promise the Father had made to him, *Psal. lxxxix. 26. He shall cry unto me, my God, my Father, and the rock of my salvation.* And lest you should think, this was a thing peculiar unto the head, see an instance of it also in the church, which is his body, *Isa. xlix. 14. Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten.* Upon which the holy *Rutherford* sweetly glosses to this purpose, "He may be a forgetting and with-
drawing God to my feeling; and yet to my
" faith

“ faith, *my God, and my Lord* ; even as the
 “ wife may believe the angry and forsaking hus-
 “ band is still her husband.” *Heman*, Psalm
 lxxxviii. is so far deserted as to sensible presence,
 that he is, as to his own feeling, laid in the low-
 est pit, in darkness, in the deeps, verse 6. Yea,
 verse 7. he adds, *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,*
thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. And,
 verses 15, 16, 17. *While I suffer thy terrors I am*
distracted, thy fierce wrath goeth over me: thy ter-
rors have cut me off; they come round about me like
waters, they compass me about together. What low-
 er could a child of God be brought on this side
 hell? and yet faith, amidst all these clouds, steps
 in with its appropriating *my*, verse 1. *O Lord God*
of my salvation. And truly, if there was not
 some exhilarating certainty in faith, acting upon
 the unalterable covenant, in such cloudy and dis-
 mal dispensations, I know not what could keep
 the believer from running into utter despair; but
 the grace of faith will venture the soul’s safety up-
 on the strong plank of the promise, even when
 sensible consolations are quite dashed to pieces by
 the angry billows of outward and inward trouble,
 like two seas meeting upon the believer. *David*
 had the experience of this, *Psalms xxvii. 13. I*
had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness
of the Lord in the land of the living. Hence also it
 is, that the Lord directs his people to the exercise
 of faith in such a case, *Isa. l. 10. Who is among*
you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of
his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no
light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and
stay himself upon his God.

Proposition 4th. When we speak of the assu-
 rance of faith, it is not to be so understood, as if
 every

every one that has faith were perfectly free of doubting. This, I apprehend, is what scares many at this doctrine of the assurance of faith, they think that, if there be an assurance in the essence of faith, then it would follow, that every true believer behaved always to have such assurance as to be free of doubting; which lies cross to the experience of the generation of the righteous. But this objection goes upon a palpable mistake, as if faith and a believer were one and the same thing. We do indeed assert, that there is no doubting in faith, for faith and doubting are commonly in scripture directly opposed one to another; but though there be no doubting in faith, yet there is much doubting in the believer, by reason of prevailing unbelief and indwelling sin. If it were true, that assurance is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always assured, by the same way of reasoning it would follow, that resting is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always actually staying and resting himself on the Lord: or that trusting is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always trusting. It may be as well argued, that seeing is not of the nature of the eye, because sometimes the eye-lids are closed: or that heat is not of the nature of fire, because its heat is not perceptible by reason of the ashes wherewith it is covered: or that light is not of the nature of the sun, because sometimes it is eclipsed by the interposing moon. Remove the ashes, and the heat of fire will appear; remove interposing bodies, and the sun will have light; open the eye-lids, and the eye will see: so, do but remove ignorance, unbelief, and other incumbrances of corruption from faith, and see what the nature of it is then. For it is of the nature of
faith

faith in the *abstract*, that the present question is; and not what lodges in the *believer* who hath faith. In the believer there is as it were the *company of two armies*, grace and corruption, love and enmity, repentance and impenitence, faith and unbelief; but these are not to be confounded together, because they are in the same subject. We must not exclude complacency and delight in the Lord, out of the nature of love, because, through remaining enmity and corruption, his love is so overpowered, that he cannot perceive any such thing in him, but rather the reverse of love: the same may be said of other graces. So here we must not conclude, that there is nothing of this *applicatory assurance* in faith, because of prevailing unbelief, and doubts flowing therefrom.

The *5th Proposition* is this, that as there is a great difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of Sense; so there is yet a far greater difference between the *my* of faith (or of true sense flowing from it) and the *my* of presumption. *Presumptuous confidence* has its *my's*, as well as faith and well-grounded experience; as we see plain in the case of *Balaam*, Numb. xxii. 18. If *Balaac* would give me his house full of gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord *my God*. Now, say you, since a presumptuous confidence may speak in the dialect of true faith and experience, wherein lies the *difference*? This is a very material and momentous question; and, with a dependence on the Father of lights, I shall attempt a re-solution of it in the few following particulars.

1. The *assurance of faith* receives and applies Christ to the soul in *particular*, as he lies in the revelation and *grant* that is made of him to sinners in the *word*, which is the immediate ground of faith;

faith ; whereas presumptuous *confidence*, though it claims an interest in him, yet does it not upon this bottom, or in God's method and way of conveyance. The Apostle tells us, *Rom. x. 8.* that Christ and his righteousness and salvation are *brought nigh unto us in the word of faith*. What is the design of a covenant of grace, and of these declarations, offers and promises of grace, that are made to us in the glorious gospel ? but just to bring Christ so near to us, as we by believing may come to apply him and his whole fulness to our own souls, *John xx. 31.* *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.* If we would find Christ and eternal life in him, we need not *ascend to heaven*, or *descend into hell* in search of him, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. x. 6, 7.* But we are to search for him in the *scriptures*, *for these are they that testify of him.* Christ is brought near to us in the *testimony* or *record* of God in the word, where *he gives us eternal life in his Son Christ Jesus*, *1 John v. 7.* Now faith in its direct act, I say, takes Christ, and claims him upon this grant and gift that is made of him in the word of grace, and upon no other foundation will it venture to assert its interest in him, like an honest man, who will not intermeddle with goods, money, or the estate of another, unless he have a charter, bond, testament, promise, or some such security, upon which he may do it warrantably, without vicious intromission : whereas the thief and robber puts to his hand, without looking after any such warrant ; if he get what he has, a mind for, any how, he is easy. * Here lies a fatal flaw in

* See *Durham* on *Isaiah 53d*, Sermon V. last Paragraph.

in the faith of many hearers of the gospel; they grasp at Christ and his salvation, but they overleap the *gift* and *grant* of him in the word, as the immediate foundation of their faith. If we consult the experience of the saints in scripture, we shall find their faith terminating immediately upon the word: *In his word do I hope*, says David. *Remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope. I rejoice in thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.* Their faith did come by hearing or reading the word. This is the *chariot* in which the Lord rides, when he presents himself to us as the object of our faith and trust; and therefore that faith which overlooks the promise and offer of the gospel, is but a *presumptuous* faith. *Gilead is mine, Manassah is mine*, says David, in that forecited lxth Psalm, *Because God hath spoken in his holiness*: so says an *applying* faith, pardon is mine, peace is mine, grace is mine, glory is mine in Christ; yea, *God himself is my God*, because God hath made over himself, and all these things in Christ to me, in the covenant of promise, or testament of my elder brother, sealed and confirmed by his blood. But, say you, may not a presumptuous hypocrite pretend to bottom his faith upon the promise, and claim an interest in him, even upon that ground? An answer to this leads me to a

2d Difference between the *my* of *faith*, and the *my* of *presumptuous confidence*, namely this, that though the *presumptuous person* may run away with the promise, yet he does not embrace the promise *as it is in Jesus*, or *as Jesus is in it*. This is a mystery which only can be explained to purpose by him who *openeth the book, and looses the seven seals thereof*. The view I have of it, you may take up as follows; the *covenant*, and all the promises of it,

it, are made to Christ as the first heir, both by birth and purchase; he is God's *first born*, and therefore the *heir* of the inheritance of eternal life. But besides, as the *second Adam*, by his obedience and death, having fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice; the promise of life, which was forfeited by the sin and disobedience of the *first Adam*, comes to be *settled* upon him, and his seed in him. Now matters standing thus, the soul in applying of the promise, takes its title thereto, not upon the ground of any thing in itself, but comes in only upon *Christ's right and title*; *his righteousness is the only proper, intitling, meritorious condition of the covenant*, and of all the promises thereof. Here lies the failure in presumptuous confidence, that the man being never cleanly beat off from *Adam's covenant*, he is always seeking to found his title to the promise in *himself*, some good *condition or qualification* wrought in him, or *done* by him. Thus many attempt to enter themselves heirs to the promises, and to eternal life, but shall never be able; Why? Because they do not by faith enter themselves heirs in Christ, or upon his right and title: *And another foundation can no man lay; for the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Thus, I say, *presumptuous faith* does not embrace the promise *as it is in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea, and in him Amen.* And then, I say, he does not embrace the promise *as Jesus is in it*; for as all the promises are *in Christ*, so *Christ is in* all the promises. What is it that is bequeathed in his testament, but himself and all his fulness? He was the great mercy promised to the fathers. When the covenant was promulgated unto *Adam*, and afterward unto *Abraham*, what else was it, but just a promise of Christ? And when, in pro-

cesses of time, the covenant of grace came to be further opened in a variety of promises, what were they all, but Christ, and the grace that is *in* him, *parcelled* out to us, that we by faith might apply him, and the grace that is in him, according to our need? And hence it is, that the believer in applying the promise, finding Christ in it, he eats it, and it is to him the *joy and rejoicing of his heart*; he finds the Lord in his own word of grace, and this makes it relieving and comforting to his soul; he drinks in the *sincere milk of the word*, because therein he *tastes* that the Lord is gracious. But now *presumptuous faith* is more taken up with the *naked* promises, than with *feeding* the soul with *Christ*, *in and by* the promise. A man, that is possessed of Christ by faith, has not Christ and his promise *by him*, as a man has money lying by him in his coffer; he has not the covenant and promises, as a man has his bonds and charters in his cabinet, which perhaps he will not look to once in a year: no, but he has *Christ* in the *word* of grace, as a man has his *bread* by him, which he is *daily* feeding and living upon: hence this *applicatory faith* is called an *eating the flesh, and a drinking the blood of Christ*; which expression implies such an application of Christ to ourselves, as carries *soul-nourishment* along with it. True faith roots the soul in Christ, just as a tree is rooted in the ground; the prolifick virtue of the earth enters into the tree, and the tree at the same time strikes and spreads its fibres into the earth, and draws sap and moisture therefrom, sending a digested nourishment through the whole, whereby it is made to grow and bring forth fruit: so here, in *believing*, the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus enters into the soul; and at the same time,

time, there is as it were a sprigg and fibre passing from every faculty of the soul, *striking into Christ*, and drawing a digested sap from him, whereby the soul is made to grow and flourish in grace and holiness. Hence we are said to be *his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*. And, *They that be planted in the house of the Lord, do flourish in the courts of our God*.

(3.) True faith receives and applies Christ according to the order that God has laid in his offices, but *presumptuous faith* inverts that order. The order that God has laid in the execution and application of the offices of Christ, is this. Christ comes by his word and spirit, as a *prophet*, enlightning the sinner's mind with the knowledge of his lost estate by nature, and the way of his recovery thro' his atoning blood and satisfaction; upon which, the soul, by faith, turns into him as a *priest*, taking sanctuary under the *covert* of his everlasting righteousness; and so submits unto him as a *king*, receiving the law from his mouth, and yielding itself unto his government, from a principle of gratitude to him who has bought it with a price. But now, the *presumptuous* faith of the *legalist* inverts and disturbs this comely *order* laid by infinite wisdom among the offices of Christ: for, in his way of applying Christ, he begins with the *kingly office*, pretending to obey him as a *law-giver*; and, upon this ground, expects that Christ will save him as a *priest*, by his righteousness; and thus makes his own obedience the ground of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. And, what else is this, but to bring *money and price*? contrary to the express command of God, *Isa. lv. 1*. Nothing can be of a more pernicious tendency toward the overthrow of the freedom of God's grace, in the great

affair of justification and salvation. Hence it is the apostle so much enveighs against this method of seeking justification, in the *Galatians*; insomuch that he tells them expressly, that by this way they made themselves debtors *to do the whole law*; yea, says he, *Christ is become of no effect to you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace*, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. This method of inverting the order of Christ's offices, and making the first act of faith to terminate upon him as a *king*, as it is a way of thinking most agreeable to nature, which runs with a mighty bias towards *Adam's* covenant; so, I judge, nature is much fortified in this way of taking up the method of salvation by Christ, by the strain of some mens doctrine in our day, who inculcate *faith* and *repentance* as *new precepts* given out by Christ in the gospel, which were never required in the *moral law* of the ten commandments. For, if this be so, then inevitably we must first obey Christ as a *king*, by repenting and believing, in order to our being justified by him as a *priest*: besides many other dangerous consequences which are unavoidable upon this new *law-scheme*; all which are avoided by teaching, with the strain of *orthodox divines*, that *there are no precepts in the gospel*, strictly taken; and, that Christ in the gospel giveth no *new laws*, but enforceth the *old law*, viz. the *moral*, which being adopted unto the gospel-dispensation, obligeth us to believe in Christ upon his being revealed to us in the gospel, and consequently to repent also in an evangelical manner. For that these duties of faith and repentance, as to their essence, are required in the very first *commandment* of the moral law, is indisputably evident; and I do think it strange to find it controverted by any who embrace and own the doctrine of the

church of Scotland, particularly the *Larger Catechism*, where that point is plainly determined, in the explication of the aforesaid first commandment. But it is not proper to insist on this controversy in a discourse of this nature ; if needs be, it may be discoursed apart.

(4.) Another difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, is this, That the *Assurance of faith* will maintain its *claim*, and humble confidence, even under sad *challenges*, and a deep and abasing sense of much prevailing iniquity ; whereas *presumptuous confidence* succumbs and fails upon the prevalency of sin. The reason of this is, because the ground of presumptuous confidence is *within* the man ; some good disposition and qualification which he finds within him, as he apprehends, which being dashed by the eruption of his reigning lusts, he has no more to look to, the foundation of his confidence is gone. But now, faith builds and bottoms its confidence, not within, but on something *without*, namely, the *everlasting righteousness* of the *Lord Jesus* ; and the mercy of God running in this channel, exhibited in the word of grace : here it is, that faith sets down its foot, and upon this foundation it stands, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail : and thus, having the ground of its confidence from *without*, it is not shaken with every insurrection from *within*. An instance whereof we see in *David*, Psal. lxxv. 2. the holy man, in the first part of the verse, cries out, under a sense of the strength, power and guilt of sin, *iniquities prevail against me*. Well, but what says faith in such a case ? *As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away*. Another instance of the like nature, we see in the same *holy man*, Psal. cxxx. We find him verse 3. under such a sense of

sin and guilt, that, viewing himself as he stood in the eye of the law and justice, he cannot shun to own, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?* Well, But where does *David's* faith find a standing in such a case? only in the mercy and grace of a reconciled God in Christ; and therefore he adds, *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou may be feared; and plenteous redemption, that thou may be sought unto.* I do own, that a real believer may be sadly shaken, as to the confidence of his interest in Christ, under prevailing iniquity; but this certainly is his infirmity, and not his faith. Many real believers live more by sense than by faith; and hence it comes, that they are soon shaken, whenever sensible experience is overclouded, under the sense of prevailing iniquity, tho' the pain of it is a just correction of his folly. Whenever faith recovers from under the fit of unbelief, and views what the soul is, and has, in Christ, and in the covenant, it recovers its stability and confidence, and withal brings into the soul strength against corruption, so that it goes out against it like a giant refreshed with wine. But, say you, may not presumptuous faith recover its confidence also? I answer, no doubt it may: but then, the difference lies here. True faith goes to work in a quite different way, in order to the soul's recovery from that which the presumptuous *Legalist* takes. When the terrors of the law, or challenges of conscience have, at any time, battered down presumptuous confidence, the man goes to work, and fills up the *kole*, that the law has made in his soul, with the *new earth* of his own obedience, reformation, duties and the like, and with this untempered mortar he daubs and makes up the breachmade in his conscience; but, on the other hand, though
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the believer be as diligent in the way of duty as the other, yet nothing in heaven or earth can satisfy him under challenges, or afford him ease and quiet, but Christ himself, and his righteousness apprehended and applied by faith: no *balm* but that of *Gilead* can cure his wound; he fetches his healing, only from under the wings of the sun of righteousness, *Phil.* iii. 8, 9. All is but *loss* and *dung* in comparison of this.

There are several other *differences* might be given, between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, if I were not afraid of being tedious. Only, in short, the more of the assurance of faith, or yet of well-grounded experience, the more lowliness, humility, and self-abasement. The higher that the soul is exalted in and by Christ, the lower does it sink in its own eyes, saying with *David*, when God promised to build him a sure house, and that the *Messiah* should spring of his loins, *What am I, or my father's house that I am brought hitherto?* The poor believer, in this case, sees himself to be such a miracle of rich and sovereign grace, that he is even wrapped up in a silent wonder, and put to an everlasting stand, that he knows not what to say, *And, what can David say more? And, is this the manner of man, O Lord God?* But now, the more of a *presumptuous confidence*, the more pride and self-conceit, like *Laodicea*, *I am rich and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing*; accompanied with an undervaluing of others in comparison of themselves, like the proud *Pharisee*, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, or yet as this Publican.*

Again, *presumptuous assurance* cherishes some *secret and beloved idol*; The man spares some *right-hand* or *right-eye sin*, and commonly his deceitful

heart argues for its being spared, because grace doth abound : but now true faith and experience purify the heart, and engage the man to an impartial and universal opposition to all sin, as *dishonourable* to God, and *grieving* to his spirit ; and readily he bends his principal force against these sins, which receives the greatest advantages against him, by interest, custom, constitution, or education : and the consideration of abounding grace is so far from encouraging him in sin, that it teaches him to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to walk soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.*

Lastly, The my of *faith*, or solid experience, is always accompanied with much *love* to the *person of Christ*, and resignation of soul to him ; *for faith worketh by love* : and therefore, at the same time that the soul is enabled to say, *My beloved is mine*, it cannot shun to add, *And I am his.* One shall say, *I am the Lord's.* The man presents himself a *living sacrifice unto God, holy and acceptable, which is his reasonable service.* But now, as one well observes, *presumption* is lame of one hand ; it has a hand to take pardon, to take heaven, and the benefits of Christ ; but as it has no true love to his person, so it has not a hand to give or resign the *whole* man to the Lord, to be for him, and not for another ; and the plain reason of this is, that the power of natural enmity was never broken, and the man is *married* to the *law*, and to the *lusts* also, But passing this, I proceed to

DISCOURSE IV.

Of the FULL Assurance of Faith.

THE *third* general head proposed in the method, was to speak a little of the *full assurance of faith*; for there is a plain *gradation* in the apostle's way of speaking; there is *faith*, then the *assurance* of faith; and then the *full assurance* of faith. Having spoken of the two first degrees, I proceed now to the last and highest degree of faith.

Before I go on directly to shew, what this *full assurance* of faith is, I premise these two or three things, which I conceive to be imported in this expression of the spirit of God. (1.) I premise, that the faith of every believer is not of the same *size* and *strength*. Some have a *strong* and others have a *weak* faith: yea, the faith of the strongest believer, like the moon, has its waxings and waning; or like the sea, its ebbings and flowings. Altho' every believer be *in Christ*, yet every believer has not the same measure of faith; every star is in the heavens, tho' every star be not of the same magnitude. The rounds of *Jacob's* ladder were not all at the top, tho' every round was a step towards heaven; so, tho' every faith be not triumphing in a full assurance, yet every true faith is bending towards it. You may see one believer under a full gale of the spirit of faith, crying, with *Job* xix. 25. *I know that my redeemer liveth*: while another labours under such discouragements, that, like the *Publican*, he stands afar off, with the tear in his eye, crying, *God have mercy upon me a sinner*. You may see one saying with *Paul*, He
loved

loved me, and gave himself for me, another, thro' the prevalence of unbelief, saying, *Is his mercy clean gone? Hath he forgotten to be gracious?* Perhaps you shall find one believer surmounting all fears, saying with the apostle, *Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?* &c. while another is combating with many doubts, ready to raze foundations, saying, *I am cast out of thy sight*; and all men are liars that will say otherwise, the prophets of God not excepted. It is with believers, as it is with children in a family, one perhaps is lying in the cradle, another led by the mother or nurse, another can walk alone, a fourth come to such full strength that he is able for work and business; thus in the household of God there are babes, young men and fathers. (2.) I premise, that it is the duty of every believer, yea of the weakest, *to press after faith in the highest degree of it.* Hence it is that Christ frequently checks his disciples for the weakness of their faith, *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?* True faith is a progressive thing, it goes on from one degree to another: hence is that expression of the apostle, *Rom. i. 17. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.* Faith in its first and weaker, and faith in its repeated and stronger actings, feeds and centers upon the righteousness of God's operation and imputation, for acceptance, pardon, and salvation. It is of the nature of all true grace, particularly of the grace of faith, to breathe after its own increase and perfection: hence is that prayer of the disciples, *Lord, increase our faith.* And that of the poor man in the gospel, *I believe, Lord, help my unbelief.* We must forget things that are behind, and reach forth unto things that

that are before: *The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.*

(3.) I premise, that the certainty or assurance of application, as explained above, ebbs or flows according to the strength or weakness of the assent of faith. That there are degrees of assurance, will be controverted by none, who have any knowledge either of divinity or philosophy. The very words of the apostle, in the text, import, that we are not to rest in a lower, but ought to press after the highest degree of the assurance of faith: and the apostle accounts it a great blessing to the *Thessalonians*, that they had much assurance, 1 *Thess.* i. 5. plainly intimating that some true assurance might be in a less degree. Now, I say, this assurance of application bears a proportion unto faith's assent, and waxes or weans, as it is strong or feeble; so that a strong assent has a strong application, and a weak assent a weak application.

These things premised, I proceed to enquire, what this *full assurance of faith* is? Or, wherein it consists? And in one word, I conceive, it lies in such a *firm and fixed persuasion, confidence or trust in the faithfulness of a God in Christ, pledged in his covenant or promise, as overcomes and tramples upon all difficulties, and improbabilities; all doubts and fears, as to the actual performance of what is promised in God's time and way; and all this with particular application to the soul itself.* This description I would illustrate and explain in its several branches, were it not done upon the matter on the former two heads, this being nothing but a higher degree of the self-same faith formerly described. Such an act of faith we find put forth by *Abraham*, Rom. iv. 20, 21. where we are told that *he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong*
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in the faith, giving glory to God; being FULLY persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform. This *full* assurance of faith, tho' mountains of impediments were in its way, would make no more of them, than if they were a plain; it overleaps and overlooks them all, fixing its eye only upon the power and faithfulness of the blessed *promiser*, as we see clearly exemplified in the case of *Abraham*. His own body was dead and incapable of procreation; *Sarah's* womb was barren, and incapable of conception; sense and reason in this case would have been ready to conclude, that it was impossible ever *Abraham* should have a son; but we are told, *verse 19.* that he entirely abstracted from all considerations of that kind, *Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.* He would not so much as listen unto the surmises of carnal reason; flesh and blood are put out of doors, and he rests with an assured confidence, without any doubting or hesitation, upon the fidelity of the promiser; being certain, that God would do to him in particular, as he had said, when the time of the vision should come. In like manner we find, that after *Abraham* had gotten his beloved *Isaac* the son of the promise, what a terrible shock, may one think, would it be to his faith in the promise, when God commanded him to take *Isaac*, of whom the promised seed, *Christ*, was to come, and offer him upon one of the mountains of *Moriab*! Gen. 22. Reason here might be ready to object, and that not without great colour of religion, Can God, who has so severely forbidden murder, require me to imbrew my hands in the blood of my own son? Will not such a thing be an eternal reproach to
Abraham

Abraham and his religion? What will the *Egyptians* say, and the *Canaanites*, and *Perizzites*, which dwell in the land? What will *Sarah* say, and how shall I ever look her in the face? But especially, what shall become of the *promise*, and the veracity of him that made it, saying, in *Isaac shall thy seed be called*? Surely might unbelief and sense say, either this command is a delusion, or else the promise is a lye. But *Abraham* had a full assurance of faith as to the stability of the promise, and therefore he would upon all hazards obey the command of a promising God: he was fully persuaded, that though *Isaac* should be sacrificed and burnt into ashes, yet out of the very ashes of his sacrificed son, God could, and actually would raise up *Isaac* again, and so accomplish his own word of promise. *Abraham*, on the account of this his noble and gallant faith is fitly called the *father of the faithful*, his faith being proposed as a pattern to all others for their imitation; and every true believer is, on this score, a *child of Abraham*. And let none imagine, that they are not obliged to believe with such a faith as *Abraham* had; for the apostle expressly tells us, that the history of his faith stands upon record in scripture, *not for his sake alone, but for us also*, that we, after his example, may be encouraged to believe on him that raised up *Jesus our Lord from the dead*, Rom. iv. 23, 24.

Object. O say you, if I had as good a ground for my faith as *Abraham* had; if I were as sure that the promise were to me, as *Abraham* was, I think I could believe with a full assurance of faith, as he did: but there lies the strait. I answer, you and I have as good a ground of faith as ever *Abraham* had: *Abraham* had a promising God in Christ to trust, and so have we; you have the
same

same God, the same Christ, the same covenant, the same promise, as *Abraham* had. But say you, God spake to *Abraham* in particular, by name, when he gave him the promise, saying, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* I answer, although you be not designed by name and surname, as *Abraham* was, yet a promising God in Christ, addresses himself as particularly to you in the word of grace, and dispensation of the covenant and promise, as though he called to you out of heaven by name and surname, saying, *To you, (i. e. to you sinners of Adam's race) is the word of this salvation sent. The promise is to you who are afar off, &c.* And not only is the promise presented, but an express command of believing superadded, requiring and binding every particular person, to take hold of it, and embrace it: so that whatever shifts and evasions the unbelieving and deceitful heart may make, the promise of God comes as close and home to every individual hearer of the Gospel, as that promise did to *Abraham*, when God bespoke him with an audible voice out of heaven; yea we have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we would do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. Further, let it be considered, that that promise was first presented unto *Abraham* as the object and foundation of his faith, before he could believe it, and by believing it, became *his* in possession; or in believing it he was possessed of it as *his own*; for, upon a supposition that he had not believed, he had never been possessed of the promised blessing. In like manner the promise is presented to you as the immediate ground of believing, and in believing, you come to be possessed of the great things contained in the promise? but if you do not believe, you shall not see

see the salvation of God. Thus you see that you have the same ground of faith, and the same warrant for believing, that *Abraham* had: and there is nothing to keep you from a full assurance of faith, or a believing without staggering at the promise, like *Abraham*, unless it be your own ignorance and unbelief.

I do own, as was hinted already, that every true believer does not come the length of *Abraham*, to believe without *staggering*; but that is not the question: the *present question* is, if we have not now as good and firm a *ground*, and as good a *right* to believe the promise, as *Abraham* had? if Christ, and his salvation and righteousness, be not brought as near to us in the word of faith, as it was unto him? This is what none who understand the privilege of a new testament dispensation, will adventure to deny; yea, I will adventure to say, that the ground of faith is laid before us under the new testament, with a far greater advantage, than ever *Abraham* had; inasmuch as the gospel revelation is much more clear, and brings Christ and his salvation much nearer to us, than ever he was, under any period of the old testament dispensation. *Abraham* saw his day only *afar off*, whereas we live in that very day, which he saw at such a prodigious distance; and therefore we have much more ground to believe without staggering, than he had. And therefore, seeing we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of *Jesus*; and seeing we have a new and living way consecrated for us, through the vail of his flesh, and seeing we have a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in FULL ASSURANCE of faith.

DISCOURSE V.

Of the GROUNDS of Faith's assurance.

THE *fourth* thing proposed in the method, was to enquire into the *GROUNDS* of this doctrine, or, what it is, that faith has to *build* its confidence upon, in drawing near to God, with full assurance of acceptance. In answer to this question, I shall not at present enter upon the particular grounds, specified by the apostle in the preceding verses, having discoursed on them apart in several sermons, where he shews that every bar and impediment on the part of law and justice are fully removed, through the compleat satisfaction and prevalent mediation of the Son of God, as our *great high priest*; upon which a promise of *welcome* and hearty *acceptance* comes forth from a reconciled God, to every one who will come to him in this *new and living way*, for grace and mercy to help in a time of need. Thus you will see the apostle's argument runs, by comparing this, and the preceding verses, with the verse immediately following, particularly the last clause of it, for *faithful is he that hath promised*; which clause, included in a *parenthesis*, I conceive stands connected, not only with the words immediately preceding in the same verse, but with the words of my *text* also: and the scope of the apostle is, as if he had said, *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, &c.* Why? For *faithful is he that hath promised us welcome into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus*: faithful is he that hath promised acceptance in the *new and living way which he hath consecrated for us*: faithful is he that hath promised to pity, pardon, hear and help, through the mediation

ation of the great high priest over the house of God. And therefore, seeing his faithfulness is pawned to receive us in this way of his own devising, let us answer his faithfulness, by *drawing near in full assurance of faith*, or with a full and certain persuasion, that, according to his promise, we shall be accepted in the beloved, who is the *door* to the holiest, the *new and living way*, and the *high priest over the house of God*.

So that you see the next, or immediate ground of faith, or full assurance thereof, in drawing near to God, is, *God's own promise* of acceptance through Jesus Christ, with which promises the word every where abounds, *Isa. lx. 7. Isa. lvi. 7. Mark xi. 24. Matt. vii. 7. John xiv. 13, 14.* Now Faith, eying and pleading the promise of God in Christ, has many things to bear it up unto a full assurance; I shall instance a few of many.

1st, *The grace, mercy, and goodness of a promising God, revealed and proclaimed in the word*, is a noble ground for sinners, and yet more for saints to trust him, and draw near to him through Christ, with a full assurance of faith, *Psalms xxxvi. 7. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* It is cross to the very dictates of nature, for a man to trust one whom he apprehends to be an *enemy*; yea, if we have but a jealousy, that one bears us an ill-will, or designs our hurt, we will not trust or confide in him: but persuade a man once that such a man is his friend, that he hath an entire love and kindness for him, and wants only an opportunity to do him the greatest services he is capable: in that case he will trust him without hesitation. Just so is it in the case in hand, so long as we conceive God to be an

implacable enemy, our prejudice and enmity against him will remain ; and while enmity against God stands in its full strength, it is absolutely impossible we can have any trust or confidence in him ; instead of drawing near to him with full assurance of faith, we flee from him, like our first parents, under the awful apprehensions of his wrath and vengeance : but let us once be persuaded, that he is a *God of love, grace, pity, and good-will in Christ*, then, and never till then, will we put our trust under the shadow of his wings. And therefore, to break the strength of our enmity and prejudice, and so to conciliate our trust in him, he is at the greatest pains imaginable to persuade us that he bears a hearty *liking and good-will* towards us in Christ. And there are more especially these three ways God takes to convince us of his *good-will toward man upon earth* ;

(1.) By solemn *proclamations and declarations* of his mercy and grace, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* there the Lord passed by *Moses*, and *proclaimed his name* to him ; and what is it ? *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ;* or, as some read it, *in clearing he will clear*, i. e. in clearing the sinner of guilt by pardoning grace, he will clear himself of injustice ; he will make it appear, that he is just, when he is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Every where in scripture is the pardoning mercy of God proclaimed and presented as an encouragement to sinners to trust in him, *Psalms cxxx. 7. Let Israel hope in the Lord ; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption.*

(2.) By

(2.) By *solemn oath*. Lest we should disbelieve his word, he superadds his *oath*, to convince us that he has no *ill-will*, but a hearty *good-will* towards our salvation and happiness, through the new and living way, *Ezek. xxxiii. 7. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!* An oath among men is for *confirmation* of a controverted truth, and is to them *an end of all strife* (says the apostle) *Heb. vi. 16.* Well, sirs, shall the *oath* of a *man* be so much regarded, as to determine controversies among men? How much more is the *oath* of the *great God* to be regarded, pawning his very life upon it, that he is not willing that any should perish, that he bears a hearty good-will toward our salvation through Christ? Shall this be any more a controversy with us? To entertain a doubt or jealousy of what he *says*, is to make him a *liar*; and to doubt and disbelieve what he *swears*, is to charge a God of truth with *perjury*: and beware of looking upon it as a matter of indifference, whether you believe this declared good-will, mercy, and grace of God, or not; for it must needs be a matter of vast importance, wherein God interposes the solemnity of an oath; and to think otherwise, is to charge the eternal God with a profanation of his own name, which he will not suffer in others without the highest resentment.

(3.) As if his word and his oath were not enough to convince us of his mercy, love and good-will toward us, he has given the most *convincing* and *practical demonstration* of it that it was possible for God to give; and that is,

by giving himself, in the person of his eternal son, to be incarnate or manifested in our nature; yea, to be made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. O how great is this mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh! without controversy, great and unsearchable is the mystery of love and good-will, that shines with a meridian lustre in an incarnate deity. If God had not loved us, and born such a hearty desire after our happiness and salvation; would he ever made such a near approach to us, as to dwell in our nature, when he passed by the nature of angels? Yea, he was not content to become *one* with us in nature; but he goes further, and becomes *one* in law with us; he puts his name into our debt-bond, and becomes *sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; he becomes a curse for us, that we might inherit the blessing. It was a view of this design of love to man, shining in the incarnation of the Son of God, which made the angels at his birth to break forth with that celestial anthem, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will toward men*, Luke ii. 14. Now, this love and good-will of God toward man, in the incarnation of his eternal son, is proposed in the gospel-revelation, as the greatest encouragement imaginable for guilty rebellious sinners to lay aside their enmity and prejudice against God, and so to put their trust and confidence in him; as is plain, like a sun-beam, from that great text, *John* iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son: why, what was God's design in all this good-will? That whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.* Because of the excellency of this love, the sons of men do put their trust under the shadow of his wings. Now, I say, faith,

faith, in drawing near to God, takes a view of this mercy and love of God in Christ, and, upon this ground, raises itself up sometimes so high, as to draw near in *full assurance of acceptance*. For still it should be remembered, that faith, under the conduct of the spirit, takes up this revealed love and mercy of God to sinners, with a *particular application* thereof to the soul itself, as was before hinted : and what can be more encouraging than a trust without doubting of acceptance? O then, *let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy*. O! do not entertain jealousies of a God of love, as though he were displeased or dissatisfied with you for your trusting in his mercy ; for the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that *hope in his mercy*.

2dly, Faith grounds its assurance upon the *infinite power of a promising God*. Being once persuaded of his love, mercy, and good-will in Christ, it proceeds to fasten its foot upon everlasting *strength*, as fully able to fulfil what he has promised, saying, *I know that thou canst do every thing, and there is nothing too hard for thee*. Indeed infinite power, armed with wrath and fury, is the terror of a guilty sinner ; but infinite power animated with infinite love, proclaiming, *Fury is not in me*, thro' the ransom that I have found, is a noble ground of trust, and may embolden a guilty sinner to take hold of his strength, that he may make peace with him. Hence it is, that the power of God in Christ is frequently presented in scripture as a ground of trust, *Isa. 26. Trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength*. The faith of *Abraham* founded itself upon this rock of the power of God, in that forecited instance, *Rom. iv.* when he believed without stag-

gering at the promise: being first persuaded of Gods good-will towards him, in giving him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, *In whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed*; he next fixes the eye of his faith upon the power of this promising God, and *was fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform*. So, *Matt. ix. 27*, we read of two *blind men* following Christ, sending their cries after him, *Thou son of David, have mercy on us*: they first believed that Christ was the promised Messiah, the son of *David*; and in this they saw mercy and good-will to man upon earth, he being the seed of the woman, that should bruise the head of the serpent: well, Christ leads them on next, to take a view of the power of God in him, as a further ground of trust and confidence, *v. 28*. Jesus saith unto them, *believe ye that I am able to do this?* They answer *v. 29*. *Yea, Lord*; and thereupon Christ says unto them, *be it unto you according to your faith*. Thus, I say, faith grounds its trust, confidence or assurance, in drawing near to God thro' the new and living way, upon the *power* of a promising God.

O sirs, there is no such distance betwixt God's *saying* and his *doing*, as there is among men; for his *saying* is *doing*, Psalm xxxiii. 9. *He said, and it was done*; *he commanded and it stood fast*. There is an omnipotence or almightiness both in his word of command, and in his word of promise, therefore it is called *the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3. and by this powerful word, he upholds the great fabrick of heaven and earth, that they do not return to their original nothing: and may not our faith venture to stand upon that bottom, on which heaven and earth stands? We are not afraid that this ponderous globe of earth which hangs in the liquid

liquid air, slide away from under our feet with its own weight; why? Because we believe that the word of God's power has fixed it in its proper place, that it shall not be removed for ever. Why should we not rest with as much assured confidence, as to everlasting concerns, upon God's covenant and promise, seeing the same power of God is in the word of promise, as in that word which upholds the earth? Yea, the fashion of this world passeth away; but the word of the Lord, his word of grace and promise, the foundation of faith and trust endureth for ever. This is a consideration, which at once removes the principal discouragements that faith labours under. What is it that weakens our faith, and keeps it from arriving at a full assurance, as to the performance of the promise, but one of these two? Either we look upon the performance of the promise as *difficult*, or *uncertain*. Now, faith eying the power of a promising, reconciled God in Christ, can easily surmount both, and conclude that the performance of the promise is both *easy* and *certain*. 1st, It is *certain*, for it depends upon the will of an unchangeable God, the promise being a declaration of God's purpose or will of grace; he was willing to promise, for he has actually done it, the word is actually gone out of his mouth, and he is willing to perform, for he is a *God of truth*, always *yea*, and *amen*. 2^{dly}, Faith viewing the power of God, sees the performance to be *easy*. What more easy than a *word speaking*? And yet one word from the mouth of God, can give being and accomplishment to all the promises, without any pain, cost, trouble or hazard. The *covenant of grace* may be resembled unto a *tree*, the *promises* to the *branches* of the tree, loaden with all manner of precious fruit; now, the least word, the least breath from the mouth of

God, shakes the tree, and makes all the fruit of it to drop down, as it were, into the believers bosom; and O, may the believer argue, Will not he, who so loved a lost world, as to give his only begotten Son, and who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*, will not he ware a word, or the breath of his mouth on *me*? Believe it, there is nothing but a *word* between you and all the *sure mercies* of David: yea, the word is already past out of his mouth, I mean the word of grace and promise, and there remains nothing but for you to believe, trust and confide in it, and him that made it; and, in your so doing, all the sure mercies of the promise are your own in Christ. I suppose you don't doubt but that *God who cannot lye has promised*: now, there is as much reason to believe that he will *perform*, as to believe that he has *past his promise*; for, as was hinted above, to promise and perform, to say and to do, are all one thing with him. Indeed, when men promise, there is much ground to doubt the performance, because frequently things cast up afterward, which render it impracticable for them to do as they have said: but no such thing can happen unto him, who perfectly foresees all future events, and who commands things that are not, as if they were. Now, I say, faith sees all this, and thereby raises itself up unto a full assurance, at least there is ground here for a full assurance of faith, and no ground at all for doubting and wavering. And, were not our faith pinion'd with ignorance and unbelief, it could not miss to believe without staggering upon this ground, as did the faith of *Abraham*.

(3.) The *veracity and faithfulness of a God in Christ, pawned in the promise*, is another ground upon which faith builds, when it draws near with a full assurance. Faithfulness in God, and faith in man,

man, are *correlates*; and there is such a near relation betwixt these two, that our faith cannot subsist without the faithfulness in God. And, on the other hand, a revelation of God's faithfulness would have been needless, if there were not some to believe him: the light would be useless, if there were not an eye to see it; and the eye would be useless, if there were no light. To an unbelieving sinner, the revelation of the divine faithfulness is as unprofitable as light is to a blind man; and our faith would be like an eye without light, if there were not faithfulness in God. Yea, *faithfulness* in God is the very *parent of faith* in man. Faith is, at first, begot and wrought in the soul by some discovery of the divine faithfulness in the word of grace, and it is maintained and increased in the same way and manner. Whence is it that some do believe, and others not, who equally enjoy the same revealed warrants and grounds of faith? The matter is this, the faithfulness of God in the covenant and promise is revealed by the spirit to the one, and veiled and hid from the other, *The god of this world blinding the eyes of them that believe not*. And, whence it is, that at one time a believer is *strong in faith, giving glory to God*; and at another time *staggers* through unbelief? The reason is this, the faithfulness of God at one time is so visible to him, that he sees it to be like a *mountain of brass* under him, at another time his light is so dark and dim, that he imagines the promise and the faithfulness of the promiser to be but like a broken reed, not able to bear his weight. But, O sirs, what can be ground of assurance, yea of the highest and fullest assurance of faith, if not the veracity of that God, *who hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins and reins*?

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Let us but take a view of the high *securities* by which the divine *faithfulness* is engaged, as to the out-making of his *promise*, and see if there be not *ground* for a full assurance of faith. The most jealous and suspicious heart in the world, could not desire greater *security* from the most treacherous person on earth, than a God of truth has granted unto us, for our encouragement to believe. (1.) Then let it be considered, that the *bare promise*, tho' there were no more, is abundance of security, especially if we consider whose promise it is; *It is God; who cannot lie, that promises.* A graceless Balaam gives him this testimony, *He is not man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and will he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass?* We will adventure to trust the word of a man like ourselves; especially, if he be a man of integrity and honesty, who, we think, will not falsify his word: and, shall we have trust and credit to give to a man that may lie and repent, and yet no credit or trust to give to him *for whom it is impossible to lie?* God has so great a regard to his word of promise, that it is of more worth in his reckoning than heaven and earth, and all the visible creation; yea, *heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what he hath spoken, shall never fall to the ground.* Yea, I will adventure to say further, that the divine faithfulness is so much engaged in the promise, that his very *being* is concerned therein: man may break his word, and continue to be man still; but God could not be God, if he were not *faithful* and true, because faithfulness is essential to his very nature and being. Now, is not that word a sufficient ground of faith, and of full assurance, as to the performance of which, the very *being* of

a God of truth is so much concerned? But this is not all; for, (2.) Not only is the *word* of *promise* past out of his lips, but it is *entred* and *registered* in the *volume of this book*. You know, the *bare* word of an honest man is good, but his *written* and *registered* word or promise is better; when we put a man's bond in the register of human courts, it is in order to our better security, and that we may the more speedily obtain payment of the sum contained in it. Now, God has consented to the *registration* of his word of promise, yea, it is actually inrolled and registered in the scriptures of truth; and is not this a high engagement of the faithfulness of God? Perhaps you may think, if you had *voices*, *visions* and *revelations* from heaven immediately, you could believe; but, I can assure you in the name of God, that the *bible*, the book of God, which you have among your hands, is a far better, a much more solid ground of faith and trust, than any thing of that kind. The apostle *Peter* tells us, *2 Pet. i. 17.* that he was taken up into mount *Tabor*, at Christ's transfiguration, and there he heard a voice coming forth from the excellent glory, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This was a rare priviledge, and a notable encouragement to believe: but yet, says he, *We have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well to take heed, &c.* O sirs, think on this, and prize and improve your bibles. (3.) The faithfulness of God is so much engaged in the promise, that it is a *sealed deed*. The great and infinite Jehovah, in the person of his eternal Son, has *sealed* the promise, yea sealed it with his blood. *Dan. ix. 27.* we are told concerning the *Messiah*, that he should *confirm the covenant with many*. And, how doth he confirm it? but by his death. Hence
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the blood of Christ, is called the *blood of the covenant*; so, *Heb. ix. 16, 17. Where the testament is, there must needs be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no force while the testator liveth.* Thus I say, the promise is *sealed* and confirmed by the *blood of the lamb*, the most valuable seal that ever was appended to any deed in the world. And, in token and testimony of its being sealed by a redeemer's blood, God has appended two other *visible seals* unto his covenant of promise, *viz. baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, which are seals of the righteousness of faith; that is, as I take it, seals of that covenant where God promises peace and pardon, grace and glory, on the score of the imputed righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith. And whenever these sacraments are dispensed to us, according to God's appointment, we have a sealed and confirmed promise and testament put into our hands, for our faith to feed and feast upon.

(4.) The faithfulness of God is so far engaged in the promise, that his *oath* is interposed, *Heb. vi. 13.---*18. there we read of *two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lye.* His word is immutable, for it is always *yea*. But, that we might have strong consolation by having a strong ground of faith and confidence, he superadds his immutable *oath*: he not only *speaks*, but *swears*. Now, observe how the apostle speaks of the oath of God, verse 13. *Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself*, q. d. if God could have gone higher in his oath, he would have done it. The form of God's oath is peculiar to himself, *as I live*; he swears by his *life*, he swears by his *holiness*, he swears by his *Being* and *Godhead*. As true as *I am God*, *I will bless thee*, says the Lord
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to *Abraham*, verse 14. But may a poor soul say, What is that to me? What interest or concern have I in God's oath to *Abraham*? O yes, says the apostle, this concerns you and me, *who have fled for refuge unto the hope set before us*, verse 18. *q. d.* This concerns every poor soul, that has a mind for salvation in the *new and living way consecrated for us*. He may say, and should say in himself, As sure as God said and swore to *Abraham*, so surely hath God said and sworn that I shall be saved in fleeing for refuge to Christ, who is our hope: as if the Lord should say, O sinner, I set my own Son before thee in the gospel, as thy only refuge and sanctuary; I set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood; O flee, flee to him for thy life, *Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope*; for, as sure as I am God, thou shalt be saved in him: *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation*. O what a great matter is this! the *oath of God*: What will we ever believe, or whom will we believe, if we do not believe a God of truth *swearing* by his life? Do not say you are not concerned with his oath; for as by believing you *set to your seal, that he is true* in what he says and swears, so by your unbelief you *call him a liar*, and, upon the matter, charge him with perjury, as was already hinted. And for you who have actually fled by faith unto his Son, you shall be as sure of God's blessing thro' eternity, as ever *Abraham* was, when he heard God swearing to him, *Surely in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee*.

(5.) The faithfulness of God is yet further engaged to believers in the promise, by giving a *pledge* or *earnest* of the full performance; and the *pledge* he gives is of more worth than heaven and earth.

earth. O say you, What is that? I answer, It is the *Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance*, Eph. i. 13, 14. If ever thou felt the Holy Spirit breathing on thee, by his saving influence and operations, thou hast the earnest of the inheritance, a pledge that all the promises shall be fully accomplished in God's time. You know, if a man gives a pledge, it is a security for the full bargain; and if a man do not fulfil his bargain, he loses his pledge; so here, God will as soon forfeit his spirit, as break his word. And is not this notable security to the believer? Is not this a high engagement of the faithfulness of God?

(6.) The faithfulness of God is yet further engaged in the promise, by the *concurring declaration* of the most famous *witnesses* that ever bore testimony in any cause, jointly attesting the truth of the promise, and veracity of the promiser, 1 *John* v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* The eternal *Father* attests the truth of the promise with a *Thus saith the Lord*. The *Son* attests it, who is the essential and substantial word; for he is the *truth*, the *amen*, the *faithful and true witness*, who *speaks in righteousness*. The *Holy Ghost* attests it; for he is the *Spirit of truth*, *leading into all truth*: he is the Holy Spirit of promise, not only because he himself is promised, but because he testifies of the truth of the promise, and faithfulness of the promiser; and, by his power and efficacy, seals and stamps these upon the soul, whereby he works faith or believing. Now all these three witnesses are *one*, not only one in essence, but one in their testimony: And what is the testimony and record of a trinity? It is this, verse 7. *That God hath given* (i. e. granted in his covenant

covenant of grace and promise) *to us eternal life in his Son.* And when this record or testimony of a trinity is not believed, we make God a liar. From the whole, you see what high and deep engagements the divine faithfulness is come under, for the out-making and accomplishment of the promise: O then, *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; for faithful is he who hath promised acceptance in the beloved.* But now, after all that has been said, some may be ready to object, it is true, the good-will, power and veracity of the promiser, are excellent encouragements to these who have a *right* to the promise, to draw near to God in Christ, with full assurance of faith: but that is my strait and difficulty, I doubt and fear lest I have no claim or title to the promise of welcome into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way. An answer to this, leads me to a

4th Ground (taken in connection with the former) upon which faith may build its assurance, in drawing near to God by the new and living way, and that is, the *indorsement* or *direction* of the promise of welcome through Christ. To whom, say you, is the promise *indorsed*? I answer, it is directed to *every man*, to whom the joyful sound of this everlasting gospel reacheth, *John iii. 16.* There you see, that the promise of acceptance, and of eternal life through Christ, reaches forth its arms to a lost world; *whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* So here, whosoever draweth near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way, through the mediation of the *great high priest*, shall obtain grace and mercy to help them in time of need. The covenant of grace, and promises thereof, are so framed by

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infinite wisdom, in the external dispensation of the gospel, that they look to every man and woman, and, as it were, invite them to believe, and encourage them to enter into the holiest. He that sits on a throne of grace, calls *every one* within his hearing, to come for grace and mercy, assuring them, that come to him who will, *he will in no wise cast out*. And we that are the *heralds* and *ministers* of the *Great King*, whose name is the *Lord, gracious and merciful*, have warrant and commission to proclaim, that to *you men*, and the *sons of men*, is the *word of this salvation sent*; the promise is directed to you, as a ground of faith, even to you, and to your seed, *and to all that are afar off, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call*. There is not the least peradventure, but the call or command of believing is to *every one*, otherwise unbelief could not be their sin. Now, the promise, in the indorsement and direction thereof, must be as extensive as the command; these two are inseparably linked together, both in the external dispensation, and in the inward application of the spirit, insomuch that whosoever is commanded to believe, *has right to the promise, as the immediate ground of his faith*; and whosoever actually believes, and builds upon this ground, has the promise in his possession. Take away the *promise* from the *command* of believing, you separate what God has joined together, and, in effect, command men to build without a foundation. 'Tis true, *Christ* is the *object* of faith; but it is as true, that he can only be the object of faith to us, *as he is brought near in the word of faith or promise*, Rom. x. 8. and therefore, seeing the promise is to you and me, and every one who hears this gospel, I may warrantably say with the apostle, *Heb. 4. 1. Let us fear: least a Promise being*
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left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. From which text, it is plain, that the promise of an everlasting rest, in and through Christ, *is left* even to these, who, like the *Israelites*, may *come short* of it through Unbelief: And how is it left us, but to be applied by faith? Christ our elder Brother has *left his confirmed testament* in our hands, to be improved and used in a way of believing, in order to our being actually intitled to, and in due time fully possessed of that rest, which is the purchase of his death and blood. O then, let us fear, lest, when the promise is thus left us, we should seem to come short of the possession; for the promise can never be ours in possession, tho' *left us*, unless we believe; as is plain from the words immediately following, ver. 2. where it is added, concerning the unbelieving *Jews*, *The word preached* (*viz.* the promise of *entering into his rest*, as is plain from the connection) *did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* A king's proclamation, and promise of pardon to a company of rebels, cannot profit any of them but such as accept of it. A legacy left by the latter-will of a rich and wealthy friend, to a certain family, without specifying one individual person of the family, can only profit that person, or these branches of the family who claim right to the legacy, upon their friend's testament; but to the rest it is unprofitable, because through pride, or ignorance, or sloth, they forsake their own mercy. Or suppose a letter should come indorsed to me, containing a bank note of 50, 100 or 1000 pounds sterling, or more if you will; the indorsement of the letter to me, gives me a right to carry the bill to the bank, and ask payment; but if, through pride and conceit that I am rich and increased with goods, I

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will not receive the letter, nor ask payment of the sum ; in that case I come short of my own privilege, and it becomes unprofitable to me. I own that in every one of these similitudes there is a dissimilitude ; the only use I make of them is, to shew how near Christ and his salvation are brought unto us in the *word* of faith or promise, that thereby we may be encouraged to draw near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith, seeing he is faithful, that hath promised acceptance in this new and living way. To all that is said, I shall only add,

(5.) Let it encourage us to draw near in full assurance of faith, that there is no *lawful impediment* to hinder our access and success, in entering with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Every *bar* and *hindrance*, that stood in our way, is mercifully removed by our *great High-Priest*, who is *over the house* God. All the *impediments* that can be pleaded on *God's part*, are the *law*, *justice* and *holiness* of God ; and all the *impediment* that can be pleaded on *our part* is *sin* : Now, none of these ought to hinder our drawing near in this new and living way, with full assurance of faith. As for the *law*, that cannot be a just impediment to hinder our access ; for that moment the soul enters by Christ, as the *way* to the Father, the *law gets its end*, Christ being the *end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes*. Now, can the *law* be against its own *end*, or that which gives it its *due* ? All that the law demands is a perfect and sinless righteousness, give it that, and it has no more to seek ; now this the law gets, that moment that a sinner believes, or draws near by the blood of Jesus. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending
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his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin condemned sin in the flesh, *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit*, Rom. viii. 3, 4. From whence it is plain, that every soul that believes in Christ, is that moment vested, by imputation, with the righteousness of the Son of God, whereby *the law is magnified, and made honourable*: and therefore, in drawing near by the blood of Jesus, instead of having the law against us, we have the law for us, and on our side; we have a *perfect law-righteousness* to plead upon.

Again, as for the *justice* of God, this is ready to scare us, who are guilty sinners, from so much as looking toward the holiest, or the place where God's honour dwells: but neither can this be any *impediment* to our drawing near by the blood of Jesus with full assurance of faith; Why? that which *justice* demands, is a *complete satisfaction* for the injury done to the honour and authority of God, by the breach and violation of the holy and righteous law, which was a transcript of the purity and equity of his nature: now, when a sinner draws near, or enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, he gives justice that which it wants also, namely, a *ransom* of infinite value, even the *ransom* that God has *found*, the *propitiation that God has set forth* in the gospel, to be received by faith. The man in believing, as it were, presents this ransom unto justice for the sin of his soul; and whenever justice sees this ransom of the blood of Jesus in the hand of faith, it assails and acquits the soul from all law-penalties, declaring that *Now there is no condemnation* to that man, Rom. viii. 1. Let none from henceforth lay any thing to his charge, for *it is God that justifieth, who then shall*

condemn? It is Christ that hath died, yea rather who is risen again, who also maketh intercession. Thus justice, instead of barring our way to the holiest, becomes our friend, and casts open the door of access to us; for God is just, when he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.

As for the *holiness* of God, that seems to stand as an insuperable *bar* in our way of entring into the holiest by reason of the blot, defilement, and pollution of sin, which renders us utterly lothsome in the sight of the Holy One of *Israel*: but, glory to God in the highest, this *bar* is also removed by the blood of Jesus; for that moment a sinner comes under the covert of this blood, and draws near to God under this covering, he hath his *heart* thereby *sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water.* That same moment that the righteousness of the *second Adam* is extended to us for justification, his spirit enters into us for sanctification, *renewing us in the whole man after the image of God.* And the blood of Jesus not only cancels the *guilt* of sin, which made us obnoxious to the law and justice of God; but it hides and covers the *filth* of sin, from the eyes of immaculate holiness: yea, holiness is so much the sinner's friend, in drawing near through the blood of Jesus, that this attribute of the divine nature is pawned in the promise of acceptance made to Christ and his seed, *Psal. lxxxix. 2, 35.* On which account I may exhort all true believers, in the words of the psalmist, *Psal. xxx. 4. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* Thus then, I say, all *impediments* and bars on *God's part*, that might hinder our access into the holiest, are removed by the blood of Jesus;

Jesus; and therefore, *let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.*

As for impediments on *our part*, they may be more particularly spoken to in the *Application*. I shall only say at the time, that the sum total of them all amounts to this, *that we are sinners*, and so wretched, miserable, blind, poor and naked, that we cannot think that ever God will receive or welcome us: but at once to roll away this *impediment*, let it be considered, that this new and living way of access into the holiest is only calculated for *sinners*; *Christ calls not the righteous* (or innocent) *but sinners*, to enter, by him, as the way to the Father: if you were not *sinners*, but *righteous*, as *Adam* was before the fall, you would not need to enter by the *blood of Jesus*. But seeing the way and door to the holiest, is just shaped and calculated for the *sinner*, let not the *sinner* fear to enter by it into the presence of God; especially when he calls us, who are *sinners*, to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Faithful is he that hath promised acceptance in the beloved.

DISCOURSE VI.

Containing the APPLICATION of the preceeding Doctrine.

I Proceed now to wind up the whole of this discourse in some practical IMPROVEMENT thereof, which I shall endeavour to manage, as briefly as I can, in the few following *Inferences*.

Inference 1st. From what has been said, we may see, *That there is a mystery in believing*, which the world does not understand, yea, which none

can know, without *that spirit which is of God, whereby we know the things that are freely given us of God.* The apostle, 1 *Tim.* iii. 9. speaks of the *mystery of faith.* And indeed every thing about it is a *mystery*: the way of its *production*, or how it is wrought in the soul, by the power of the eternal spirit, is a *mystery*; *Who can tell how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?* Far less are we capable to account for the way and manner of the spirit's operation in forming and creating us in Christ Jesus by faith. Hence is that of *Christ to Nicodemus*, John iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. So is every one that is born of the spirit.* How the spirit of God drops into the heart, the incorruptible seed of his own word, and impregnates it there, so as to turn it, though in itself but a dead letter, into a living principle, purifying the heart, debasing self, and carrying the soul directly into Christ for all; is a *mystery* which we cannot comprehend or account for. And then the *object* of faith is a great *mystery*: God, the *ultimate object* of it, is an awful *mystery*; *Who can by searching find him out*, either in his essence, operations, or manner of his existence, One in three, and three in one? *Christ*, the more *immediate object* of faith, is a great *mystery*, an incarnate deity; *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh.* The *gospel-covenant*, by which we believe in Christ, is a *mystery* which was hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest unto the saints. And lastly, the *actings* of faith upon its objects is a great *mystery*, how the poor believer on *earth* can receive Christ in *heaven*, at the right-hand of God: how he applies him as his *own* Saviour, his *own* Prophet,

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Priest and King, upon the *indefinite grant* that is made of him in the new covenant, where the man is neither designed by name or fir-name: how faith makes use of Christ and his fulness, with as great freedom as a man makes use of meat and drink that is set before him; on which account it is said *to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the son of man*: how it puts on the righteousness of Christ, and glories in the obedience of *another*, as though the man had fulfilled the law in his *own person*: how it draws forth the fulness of the God-head, *dwelling bodily in Christ*, and thus fills the soul with the *fulness of God*: how it will take a *bare word*, dropping from God's mouth, and rejoice in it as one that findeth great spoils: how it will take this word, and draw near to him in the new and living way, with full assurance of acceptance: these things are *mysteries* which *flesh and blood cannot reveal*; and yet to every true believer it is given, in less or more, to know these mysteries of the kingdom.

Inference 2d, From this doctrine, we may see the *excellency of the grace of faith*. When it takes a view of the *blood of Jesus*, of the *new and living way*, and of the *high priest over the house of God*, it can *draw near* to the *holiest* with *full assurance* of welcome; and it is not without warrant that faith promises itself welcome from the Lord in its approaches to him through Christ; God has made the same, yea, much greater *grant* to the grace of faith, than *Abasuerus* made unto *Esther*, ch. ix. 12. *What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or, what is thy request? and it shall be done.* Compare this with *John* xiv. 13, 14. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing*

in my name, I will do it. So, Mark vii. 24. What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye have them. As Abasuerus put a peculiar honour upon Esther, and preferred her above all the maids in his kingdom; so God, the King of kings, stamps a peculiar honour and excellency upon the grace of faith, preferring it above all the other graces; on which account it may say with Mary, Luke i. 48. He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid. Though God be high, yet hath he a respect unto the lowly. Tho' he be the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, yet he dwells with the humble: he delights to chuse, and put honour upon the foolish, weak, base and despised things of this world; yea, he chuses things that are not, to bring to nought things that are. Faith is the meanest and lowest, the poorest and most beggarly of all the other graces; for all the other graces give something unto God, whereas faith like a meer beggar, comes not to give any thing, but to get and receive all: and yet God takes this beggar, and sets it among princes, to allude unto that expression, Psalm cxiii. 7, 8. Such honour and preferment does God put upon this grace, that though he has said, He will not give his glory to another; yet, so little jealousy has he of the grace of faith, that he, as it were, sets it upon the throne with himself, ascribing things to it, which are proper and peculiar unto himself only; he sets the jewels of his crown upon the head of faith. The salvation of a lost sinner is God's prerogative, he alone is the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death; and yet we find this attributed unto the grace of faith, Go in peace, says Christ, thy faith hath saved thee. Justification is peculiar unto God only, It is God that

that *justifieth*, says the apostle, and yet the same apostle ascribes the justification of a sinner unto faith, *A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*. God alone is the *Lord of life*, who kills and makes alive; and yet life is ascribed unto faith, *The just shall live by his faith*. Omnipotency is God's peculiar prerogative, he is the *Almighty*; and yet there is almightiness attributed unto faith, *All things are possible unto him that believeth: if we have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, we may say to this and the other mountain, be thou removed, and it shall be done*. If we read the xith of the Hebrews, we shall find things ascribed to faith, which nothing but omnipotency itself could effect, such as the *stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, raising the dead*, and the like. Now, would you know why God doth thus attribute works and perfections to faith, which are proper to himself alone? The plain reason is, because faith is such a low, mean, self-denied grace, that it is just the genius and nature of it to exclude *self*, yea to exclude *itself*, to glory in the Lord alone; and to give him the glory due unto his name, saying, *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory*. Does faith *save* us? Yes it does; but then it turns the glory of salvation over upon the Author thereof, saying, *Our God is the God of salvation*. Does the just man live by faith? Yes: but then faith steps in with [*It is not I*] Gal. ii. 20. *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*. Does faith *justify*? Yea, it doth: but then, its language is, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness*, in him will I be justified, and in him alone will I glory. Can faith do every thing? Yea, but it is by leaning on the arm of omnipotency, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me*. Thus, I say, faith, arrogates

rogates and claims nothing to itself, but gives unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. And so zealous is faith to have God alone exalted, particularly the freedom of his grace in the justification and salvation of a sinner, that though believing be the highest and greatest act of obedience that a person can yield unto the moral law, yet, that boasting may be for ever excluded, it excludes and shuts out itself from the rank and category of works, or acts of obedience, *Rom. iv. 6. To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (objectively considered) is counted unto him for righteousness.* It is the peculiar excellency of faith, that it sinks its own act, that its blessed object, CHRIST, *may be all in all*: It *rejoices* in Christ Jesus, and *triumphs* always in him. And though, as I was saying, it be the poorest, lowest, and most beggarly of all the other graces, yet it is a grace that prides itself in the *Lord Jesus*, and by his blood enters with boldness into the holiest.

Infer. 3d. If it be the will of God, that we should draw near with full assurance of faith; hence I infer, that *unbelief*, whether *reigning* in the wicked, or *remaining* in the *saints*, cannot shun to be most displeasing and offensive unto him.

First, I say, *reigning unbelief in the wicked*, is a flat contradiction to the will of God; the man under the power of unbelief, instead of drawing near with the assurance of faith, departs from him, through a distrust and jealousy of his grace, power, and veracity. *Solomon* tells us, *Prov. vi. 34. Jealousy is the rage of a man.* If we shall entertain and express a jealousy or distrust of a man's veracity, it is enough to exasperate and enrage him against us: why? when we express a jealousy of

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of him, we in effect call him a liar. And if man who is vanity, and the son of man who is a lye, reckon it such an indignity to have their veracity or kindness called in question; how much more is it an indignity done to him, for whom it is impossible to lye? O Sirs! unbelief offers the most signal affront to a God of truth, that it is possible for a creature to do. God, as you were hearing, to encourage our faith and confidence towards him, has given all the securities which he could possibly grant; yea, the most jealous heart in the world could not ask better security from the most treacherous person on earth, than God has granted in his word: for though his bare word of promise be enough to command faith from all mankind, yet, beside his *word*, he has given his *writ*; beside his *writ*, he has given his sacred *oath*; beside his *oath*, he has given a *surety*; beside a *surety*, he has appended solemn *seals*, and ratified all by the joint *testimony* of the *Three that bear record in heaven, Father, Word, and Spirit*. Now, after all these securities, to entertain a jealousy of him, as if he were not faithful to his promise of welcome and acceptance in the beloved; what else is this but to make him a liar? Faithfulness and truth are the *girdle of his loins and reigns*; but unbelief does its utmost to strip him of his girdle, charging him with treachery and unfaithfulness. You would reckon it an imputation of a very high and horrid nature, for any man to charge you with *blasphemy* against God; and yet I will be bold to say, every *unbeliever* is a *blasphemer* of God; for can there be greater blasphemy under heaven, than to make God a liar? It is indeed most certain, that God will be found true, and every man a liar: but yet the unbeliever does his uttermost to make

make him a liar, by refusing credit to his word. And, after all, is it any wonder though a holy and jealous God be so enraged against the sin of unbelief, as to declare, that *he who believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him?* Believe it, sirs, if you continue to blaspheme God by your unbelief here, you shall have time to blaspheme him in *hell* with devils and damned spirits, through the endless ages of eternity, *John* viii. 24. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* *John* xv. 22. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had had no sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin.*

Secondly, This doctrine not only condemns the reigning unbelief of the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, but also the *remaining unbelief of believers* themselves. God knows how many unbelieving believers there are among us: there are very few believers, but are guilty of ten, if not twenty acts of unbelief for one act of faith. O that I could shame even believers out of their unbelief! I shall only say, that your unbelief is much more unaccountable and inexcusable than the unbelief of other men: why? God has not only given you a *ground* of faith, as he has given others, but he has given you the *grace* of faith; and not to believe in that case, is a crime of a most black and aggravated nature. If a child who is sprung out of his parent's bowels, and who is the object of his most indared affection, should call his father that begat him liar, would not this give a more sensible wound to the parent's heart, than if he had been so treated by any other person? This is the very case with you, believers; God has taken you into his family, given you the name of sons and daughters, and he says to you in effect,

as,

as, *Jer. iii. 4.* Wilt thou not from henceforth call me, *My Father*? Wilt thou not from henceforth draw near to me as a father, and as your father in Christ, with full assurance of faith? And yet, after all, to call him a lyar by your unbelief, and to say, that his promise fails for evermore, or that he has forgotten to be gracious; O what a deep wound may you think doth this give unto the heart of your heavenly father! The provocations of sons and daughters, particularly this provocation of unbelief, touches him in the tenderest part.

You may readily ask, Wherein doth the unbelief of believers *discover* itself? I answer, (1.) It discovers itself in their frequent *pleading the cause of unbelief*, and that under the specious pretext of *humility*. O will the man say, it would be too great a thing for the like of me to venture into the holiest; it would be *presumption* in me, to draw near with full assurance of faith, asking peace and pardon, grace and glory; I dare not meddle with the gift of God, or take hold of his covenant; my fingers are too foul to touch such holy things. Here indeed is a fair mask and shew of humility: but, sirs, it is nothing else than the *devil* of unbelief wrapt up in *Samuel's* mantle; it is a pleading the cause of unbelief, and a refusing to obey the expresse command of God, under a pretence that you are not fit enough for believing, that you want this and that and the other *qualification*; and what is this but a tang of the old *Adam*, a tincture of the covenant of works? Whatever carnal reason may imagine, true faith, though it be the boldest, yet it is the most humble and self-emptying thing in the world; and, the more of the boldness and assurance of faith, always the more humility; and the reason of this is plain, because faith in its deal-
ings.

ings with God despises so much as to cast an eye upon any grace or qualification in the soul itself, excepting it be its emptiness, misery, poverty, &c. and builds its whole confidence upon a ground without itself, namely, the noble *qualifications* of the *great High-Priest over the house of God*. (2.) The unbelief of believers discovers itself in a *faint, languid and timorous* way of believing, as if the ground they stand upon, were not able to bear them: much like a man walking upon weak ice, though he ventures his weight upon it, yet every moment he is afraid, lest the ice break underneath him, and leave him in the deep; just so it is with many believers, they venture upon Christ, upon his righteousness, and upon the faithfulness of God pawned in the promise, with a kind of trembling fear, as though they would fall underneath them, and leave them to perish for ever; and what else is this, but unbelief, or a secret distrusting of the sufficiency of God's faithfulness, or of Christ's righteousness to bear up the soul in its eternal concerns? (3.) The unbelief of believers appears in their being too much addicted to a way of *living by sense*: sense, unless it have the stock in its own hand, does not reckon the promise of God worth a farthing; but faith, rejoices in the promise as its *subsistence*, even when sense is out of doors. The believer, who lives by sense, will not believe the promise, or credit the veracity of the promiser, unless he be *hired and bribed with sensible consolations and manifestations*; much like Thomas, John xx. 25. *Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*. It is with many believers, as it is with some unskilful swimmers, they will venture into the

the deep waters, if you will undertake to bear their heads above, but not otherwise; but this is not true swimming, true swimming is for a man to venture the weight of his body into the water, and by the strength of the water, and the waving of his hands and limbs, to bear himself up from sinking. So true believing is not for a man to trust God and his promise, only, when he is born up with sensible consolations; but for a man to rest, stay and bear up his soul upon the bare promise of God; even when these props are withdrawn: *It is to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay ourselves upon him as our God, when we walk in darkness and see no light.*

Inference 4th. This doctrine serves to discover what is the *strength* or *stature* of our faith: for the expression of the apostle in the text, as was already hinted, plainly imports, that there are believers of different sizes in God's family. Now, in enlarging this inference, there are two or three practical *cases* which I shall endeavour briefly to resolve, (1.) What are the usual *symptoms* of a *strong* faith? (2.) What are the usual *attendants* of a *weak* faith? (3.) How may the *reality* of faith be known, tho' it were in the lowest or weakest degree?

Quest. 1st. What are the *signs* or *evidences* of a *strong* faith? *Ans. 1.* The more that the *legality* of the heart is overcome, the stronger is a man's faith. Every man is naturally *married to the law* as a covenant; and while there is any thing of nature in the believer, he will find a strong bias in his heart, turning him into the works of the law, as a ground of acceptance before God. And O how easily and unfeelingly do our spirits glide into this old covenant-channel, imagining that God accepts of us the better, on the score of our inhe-

rent holiness, or external acts of obedience ! Now, I say, the more that this bias of the heart is conquered, the stronger is our faith. A vigorous and lively faith overlooks all graces, duties, attainments, and experiences, as grounds of acceptance ; and founds its confidence wholly and alone upon the blood of Jesus, the merit and mediation of the great High-Priest over the house of God, by vertue of the covenant of grace and free promise of acceptance in him. The strong believer casts out the *bond-woman* and her seed of legal works and doings, owning himself only a son of the *free-woman*, an heir of the promise of grace and glory, through Christ and his imputed righteousness : upon this rock he drops his anchor, upon this foundation he builds his hope, disclaiming his goodness as a thing that extendeth not to the Lord, accounting his own righteousness, whether legal or evangelical, before or after conversion, as *dung and loss, that he may be found in Christ*, having the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ : he will not take so much as a stone or little pinning of the works of the law, to help up the new fabrick of grace ; no, it shall be all grace from top to bottom, and through every part of it, and grace reigning through imputed righteousness alone, *Eph. ii. 8. By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God ; not of works, lest any man should boast.* (2.) *strong faith* will build its confidence, as to great matters, upon a *naked word* coming from the mouth of Christ, even though sense and reason, yea, the ordinary course of providence, be against it. This we see exemplified in the case of *Abraham*, formerly mentioned, *Rom. 4.* though everything seemed to make against him, yet he staggered not at the

promise

promise through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, glorifying God: yea, strong faith will catch at the least hint of encouragement from the Lord, and build its assurance thereupon, as to the desired event, Matt. viii. 6, 7, 8. The Centurion comes to Christ in behalf of his servant, who was stricken with a palsy, and grievously tormented. Christ answers, verse 7. I will come and heal him. Well, the man's faith fixes upon this simple word of promise, and is so much assured of the good-will, power, and faithfulness of the promiser, that he makes no more doubt of his servant's recovery, than if it were already done, being persuaded that diseases and distempers were as much at Christ's beck, and much more, than his soldiers or servants were at his; and that Christ's word of command could as effectually heal at a distance, as though he were present: whereupon, verse 10. we are told that Jesus marvelled, saying, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. (3.) strong faith is ordinarily attended with a firm and fixed resolution to hang on the Lord, till it get the errand it comes for; and no supposeable discouragements shall make it quit its hold. Jacob was a strong believer, and, by the strength of his faith, he had power with God, he had power with the angel, and prevailed. We read, Gen. 32. after a long night's wrestling, the Lord says to him, Let me go, for the day breaks: Jacob answers, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. This, one would think, looked like rudeness and ill manners in Jacob, to speak so to God: no, it was not rudeness, but only the resolution of his faith. Lord, might Jacob say, If thou ask my leave to go, I can by no means yield to it; let the day break and pass on, let night come, and the next day break again,

lame Jacob, and the living God, shall never part, till I get the blessing ; and his resolute faith like a prince prevailed. O let all the true seed of Jacob follow his example, and they shall be fed with the heritage of Jacob their father. The like instance we see in the *Syrophœnician woman*, Matt. xv. 22. Her faith breaks through all discouragements, yea, improves seeming discouragements as arguments to fortify her suit ; whereupon Christ at length answers, *O woman, great is thy faith.* Strong faith will rather die upon the spot, than quit its hold : *though he should kill me (says Job) yet will I trust in him.* (4.) Though strong faith, may be troubled at the hiding of the Lord's countenance, yet it will not be *cast down* at every cloud, as tho' the Lord had forgotten to be gracious : no, it presently casts its eyes on the covenant, and reads love in God's words, when it cannot see them in his looks ; saying with the church in Mich. 7. *Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me : he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.* Why ? He has said, and his word is sure, that his *goings forth are prepared*, or secured, as the outgoings of the morning-light, Hos. vi. and therefore I no more doubt of the Lord's return, than I doubt of the return of the sun in the morning, when he sets out of sight in the evening. However dark the night may be, yet the day will break, and the shadows will fly away : *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* And as strong faith keeps up the heart from sinking under the clouds of desertion, temptation, and inward trouble ; so it keeps the spirit of a man in an equal poise, under all the vicissitudes of time, so that *he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart being fixed, trusting in the Lord.* Though the fig-tree should

should not blossom, &c. yet will he rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of his salvation, Hab. iii. 17, 18. Heroick faith hath the *moon* of this world *under its feet*; it tramples upon all the changes of time, saying with the apostle, *I have learned in every state wherein I am, therewith to be content, &c.* However matters may be situate in the conduct of providence, yet a lively faith can see, that there are no changes in God's covenant, no change of his love or purpose of grace. (5.) The more *fruitful* a person is in the exercise of other graces, the *stronger* is his faith. You know, the plenty and bigness of the fruit of a tree flows from the abundance of sap and strength in the root; so here, faith is the radical grace, the root upon which the other graces grow; and therefore, the more that a person abounds in love, hope, repentance, meekness, humility, and other graces, the more vigorous is his faith; for as the tree strikes its roots into the ground, and from thence draws and sends a digested nourishment through the several branches, whereby they are made to blossom and bring forth; so faith unites the soul to Christ, thro' the word of grace, and fetches out sap and strength from that true olive, whereby the soul is made to *revive as the corn, to grow as the vine, and its scent and savour like that of Lebanon.*

The second question was, What are the usual attendants of a *weak* faith? An answer to this question may easily be deduced from what has been already suggested in answer to the former; a weak faith having the opposite symptoms of a strong. However, beside what may be gathered this way, I shall suggest the two particulars following, (1.) Frequent *doubting, staggering* and *wavering* of the heart, is a concomitant of weak
U 2 faith.

faith. You know, there is a great deal of smoke goes up from the fire, while it is weak, not thoroughly broken up; so, the more of the smoke of unbelieving doubts, fears and jealousies, there is the less faith. Hence doubting and believing are opposed, *Wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?* A staggering at the promise through unbelief is opposed to the strength of faith, *Rom. iv. 20.* The word is borrowed from a man walking, whose feet through weakness hit one another, which makes him alter his pace, one step is quick, and another slow; so here, the way of weak faith is not equal: perhaps under a sensible enjoyment, he is this hour triumphing in his high places; but anon the enjoyment is withdrawn, and he alters his pace, and staggers through unbelief, saying, *His promise fails for evermore, he hath forgotten to be gracious.* (2.) The more hasty and impatient the soul is under delays, the weaker is its faith. This I gather from *Isa. 28.* *He that believeth shall not make haste.* Weak faith is so hasty, that it will allow of no time to interveen betwixt the petition and its answer, betwixt the promise and the accomplishment: if the answer do not come presently, the man is ready to conclude, *The Lord doth not hear, neither doth the God of Jacob regard.* But now, strong faith makes the soul to wait God's time and leisure, saying, *I will direct my prayer to thee, and will look up; I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will bear me.*

The third question was this, How may the truth and reality of faith be known, though it be in the weakest and lowest degree? I answer, 1. True faith, even in the weakest measure, *will look on sin as an enemy, though it perhaps dare not lay claim*

claim to Christ as a friend. True faith is said to *purify the heart*, Acts xv. 9. It is a living principle in the soul, which is always opposing the motions of indwelling corruption. Although indeed sometimes, through the prevalency of sin, it cannot be discerned, more than the living spring at the bottom of the well, when the waters are muddied; yet, like the living spring, it is always working out the mud and filth, till the waters be perfectly clear. Perhaps the soul is so far from perceiving any real grace, any actual interest in Christ, that it can see nothing but atheism, enmity, unbelief, ignorance, pride, and such vermine of hell crawling in every corner; and yet at the same time the living principle of faith, at the bottom of the heart, will be working and wrestling against these, sometimes by groans, *Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?* Sometimes by complaints, *iniquity prevails against me.* Sometimes by looks to heaven for relief, *I know not what to do, but mine eyes are towards thee.* Sometimes by cries to heaven, *I am oppressed, undertake for me.* Sometimes by breathing desires after more holiness, *Create in me a clean heart; Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!* By such things as these, the truth and reality of faith may be discovered, even in its weakest measure and degree. 2. True faith, though never so weak, will have a *high estimate and valuation of Christ*, and the habitual bent and bias of the soul will be toward him, 1 Pet. ii. 8. *To you that believe he is precious.* Isa. xxvi. 8. *The desire of our soul is unto thy name, and the remembrance of thee.* Weak faith perhaps dare not go the length of saying with the spouse, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*: yet it will be often saying, *O that he were mine! O that*

thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! And if it could get out its breath, it would even cry, *Abba, Father*; my Lord and my God; but it is, as it were, suppressed and smothered, when it would say so, with prevailing unbelief. Where true faith is, there is void, emptiness and restlessness of the soul, like the fish out of its element, or a bone out of joint, till some view of Christ come, and then indeed it *returns unto its rest*. I remember, after the creation of *Adam*, God caused all the creatures to pass before him; but among them all there was not found an help meet for him: There was something disagreeable and unsatisfying in all the inferior creatures; so that though he had them all at his command, yet still man was in a solitary condition, *Gen. ii. 20.* but, so soon as ever the woman was presented to him, he says, verse 23. *This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh*; this indeed is a help meet for me. Just so is it with the soul, in whom there is a principle of true faith; present riches, profits, pleasures, and all worldly contentments to him, he still finds something unsuitable and unfavoury in them all; but let Christ be revealed to him, immediately he cries out, *O this is a help meet for me indeed!* *Isa. xi. 10.* *To him shall the Gentiles seek, for his rest is glorious.* *Psal. lxxiii. 25.* *There is none in all the earth that I desire beside thee*; and, *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* 3. True faith, though in the lowest degree, will *not rest there*, but breathes after higher *degrees* of faith. Set the highest degree of faith before a weak believer, tell him of the faith of *Abraham*, how he believed without staggering; the man will indeed be humbled under a sense of his short-comings, and lament his own unbelief; yet, at the same time, he will

will find a breathing, and eager desire in his soul to win such a length of believing: thus, like *Paul*, he *forgets things that are behind, and reacheth forth after things that are before, &c.* When the weak believer hears of the full assurance of faith, his language is, *Lord, help my unbelief; Lord, increase my faith.* I might tell you of many other evidences of faith in its truth and reality, though weak, as, that it works by love; it empties the soul, and humbles it; tho' the man cannot see himself great in God's eyes, yet he sees himself nothing in his own eyes; as he values Christ highly, so he values himself less than the least of all God's mercies. But I do not insist.

Inf. 5. Is it the will of God that we should draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith? *Then let us study to do the will of God in this matter.* Seeing the door of the holiest is open, the way consecrated for us, and the High-Priest entred within the veil; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. I exhort you not only to believe, but to be strong in the faith. Study to have a faith proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds of faith already mentioned.

But here a question will readily be moved, Is it the duty of all the hearers of the gospel, at first, to believe after this manner, or to draw near with a full assurance of faith? For answer, (1.) I grant, that the first approaches of a sinner to God in Christ by faith, are for the most part weak and feeble, attended with much fear and trembling, through the prevalency and strength of unbelief, a sense of utter unworthiness, and awful impressions of the glorious majesty of God; all which readily makes him, with the *Publican*, to stand afar off, smiting on his breast, crying, *God have mer-*

cy on me a sinner. But yet, (2.) I affirm, that there is a sufficient *ground* laid in the gospel-revelation and promise, for a sinner, even in his first approach to God in Christ, to come *with full assurance of faith*: This will evidently appear, if we consider, that by the glorious gospel a wide door of access is cast open unto all without exception; all grounds of unbelief and distrust are removed, every bar and impediment, which might make them to halt and hesitate, is rolled away. This is given in commission to ministers, to *prepare the way of the people, to cast up the high-way, to gather out the stones, and lift up a standard unto the people*, Isa. lxii. 10. When we call sinners to believe, we do not call them to come with a *weak* faith, or with a *doubting* disputing faith; but we invite and call them to come with *assurance* of acceptance and welcome, grounded upon his infallible word of promise, *come to me who will, I will in no wise cast out*. (3.) I find the Lord directing sinners, even in their first approaches, to draw near to him, in Christ, with full assurance of faith, *Jer. iii. 19. But I said, how shall I put thee among the children, or give thee a pleasant portion, or a goodly heritage of the host of nations?* Here is a very puzzling question, such as none can answer but God himself. Well, but what is the answer, which the Lord puts in the sinner's mouth? Thou shalt call me, *my Father*, and shall not turn away from me. The first breath of the spirit of adoption, is, *Abba Father*, Rom. viii. 15. a word of faith or confidence. Christ puts words of assurance in our mouths, teaching us, when we pray, to say, *Our Father which art in heaven*. And every one apart is to say, *my Father* which art in heaven, &c. Agreeable unto which is the direction given, *James i. 6.*

We

We are told, *verse 5.* that if *any man* (be he a saint, or a sinner,) *lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* Well, here is a noble encouragement to all; but they who would speed well, are ordered to come in the full assurance of faith, *verse 6.* *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, &c.* (4.) I find sinners, in their first approaches, sometimes practising this direction, and coming with words of assurance, *Jer. iii. 22.* says the Lord, *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* And what is the first eccho of faith unto this call? Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord, *Our God.* So, *Zach. xiii. 9.* *I will say, it is my people;* there is the word of grace, and ground of faith: and the language of faith, correspondent thereunto, immediately follows, *they shall say, the Lord is my God, Isa. xlv. 24.* Surely, shall one say, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Besides all this, none, I think, can doubt, but it is the sinner's duty, at first, in obedience to the first commandment, to know, and acknowledge the Lord as God, and as our God; and, how this can be done but by believing, I cannot tell.

Well then, seeing there is such a door of faith opened to sinners in the gospel, let sinners enter in with boldness and be saved, *John x. 9.* *I am the door* (says Christ) *by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

Object. 1. May the sinner say, how shall I adventure to draw near with assurance of acceptance? *I have such a burden of sin and guilt lying upon me, and it has such a prevalency and ascendant over me, that my confidence is quite marred: for my*
part,

part, I may well say with *David*, Psalm xl. 12. *Innumerable evils compass me about, mine iniquities have taken hold of me, that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.* To this I answer, (1.) By way of concession, that it is indeed impossible for a person living in the love and practice of sin, to draw near to God with the confidence of faith; for, in the very act of drawing near, the heart is purified by faith in the blood of Jesus; or, as it is expressed in the latter clause of the text, he bath his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water. In believing, we cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Faith, apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, turns the soul from sin unto God: so that it is as impossible for a person to draw near to God with the confidence of faith, while he lives in the love and practice of sin, as it is for a person to come to you, and go from you, at the same instant of time. While the heart is in league with sin, it is departing from the Lord: How then in this case can the sinner draw near to God? Far less can he draw near with assurance of acceptance. There is a great difference betwixt iniquity prevailing in the heart, and iniquity regarded in the heart. In the last case, a person cannot draw near with acceptance, Psalm lxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,* q. d. If I love it, or give it kindly harbour in my heart, God will not accept of me, or of my prayers, because, in that case, he could not draw near with a true heart, which is an inseparable concomitant of the assurance of faith. But in the former case, viz. of prevailing iniquity, it is not only possible but actually preceded, for a person to draw near with the

the full assurance of faith ; as we see in the instance of *David*, *Pfam lxxv. 3. Iniquity* (says he) *prevails against me.* But what follows? *As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* Now, this being the case pointed at in the objection, it ought to be no prejudice, or hindrance to your drawing near unto the holiest by the blood of *Jesus*, with full assurance of faith, seeing he is faithful who hath promised acceptance in the beloved. (2.) Whereas, O sinner, thou complaineest of a burden of sin and guilt lying upon thee, which mars thy confidence ; I only ask, *for whom*, thinkest thou, was the way to the holiest opened by the blood of *Jesus*? Was it for the *righteous*, or for *guilty* sinners? An *innocent*, or *holy* person needs no such way of access : it is only calculated and shaped for the *guilty* criminal and transgressor, such as thou art ; and though thy sins be as *scarlet*, and *red like crimson*, yet *they shall be as snow and wool*, that moment thou enters by the blood of *Jesus* : and therefore, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Whither can a guilty sinner go, but to the Lord pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin? Whither can a polluted sinner go, save to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness? 3. The boldness and assurance of faith is not only consistent, but is always accompanied with a soul-abasing sense of utter unworthiness, because of the guilt and filth and power of sin : and the reason of this is plain, because, in believing, the man, thro' an uptaking of sin and guilt, is carried out of himself to seek his standing and the ground of his confidence in another, even in *Christ*, and the mercy of *God* in him. So *David*, *Psalms cxxx. 3, 4. If thou, Lord, mark iniquity, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest*

mayest be feared, &c. And therefore let a sense of sin in its guilt and prevalency, carry thee out of thy self, to draw near by the blood of Jesus with full assurance of faith. It was a preposterous way of reasoning in *Peter* to say, *Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.* He should rather have said, *Lord, come to me, for I am a sinful man:* For, where can a sinner be better than with the Saviour of sinners?

Object. 2. You call us to draw near with the assurance of faith; but, alas! how can I do this, seeing *I am in the dark about my interest in Christ?* If I knew that I had peace with God, my sin pardoned, my person accepted, and that I was in a state of grace and favour; in that case I could draw near with confidence indeed; but the case is quite otherwise, clouds and darkness are round about me, I doubt if ever God dealt with my heart effectually by his grace: How then can I draw near with the confidence of faith? *Answer.* (1.) If you never draw near to God with the assurance of faith, till you come to a sensible assurance of your interest in Christ, and of your being in a state of grace, you will never draw near to him in your life; and the reason of this is, because a sensible assurance of an interest in Christ, is the *fruit* and *effect* of the soul's drawing near by faith, and the effect can never go before its cause. The way to come at that assurance of a state of grace, is to draw near with the assurance of faith, grounded, not upon any gracious work within you, but upon the gracious promise of God in his word, and the mediation of the great High-Priest over the house of God, *Heb. iv. 14, 16. Seeing we have a great High-Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, &c.*

Faith

Faith (as I said just now) still seeks a ground of confidence, not in grace received, nor in any thing within the man, but only in Christ, and the gracious promise of acceptance through him: and therefore, the best way in the world to win above all these doubts, fears, and perplexities anent your gracious state, is, by a *direct* act of faith, to go in to God by the new and living way, assuring and persuading your own souls, that a God of grace and love *bates putting away*. Isa. l. 10. He that *walks in darkness and hath no light*, What course is he to take? *Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.* Where, by the *name of the Lord*, we are to understand the grace and mercy, power and faithfulness of God, pawned in the promises of the covenant. Here we are to cast anchor; upon these we are to build the confidence and assurance of faith, when we have nothing to look or trust to. Faith, both in its first act, and in its after-actings, fastens upon this name of the Lord; when at first it fetches the soul out of the darkness of a natural state, and when afterward, by its renewed actings, it brings the soul from under the dark and black clouds of desertion, temptation and despondency, it still trusts in the name of God, as it is set in Christ, and set forth in the covenant, particularly the *absolute* promises thereof. And therefore, tho' indeed, in the duty of self-examination, we are to look inward for the marks and evidences of grace, in order to our arriving at an assurance of *sense*: yet, in the duty of believing, and in order to our coming at the assurance of faith, we must look wholly outward to the *promise*, and the *name* of God pledged therein. Thus did *Abraham*, the father of the faithful,

faithful, *Rom. iv. 20, 21.* and so must we, if we would be the true seed of *Abraham*.

Object. 3. You call sinners to believe, and to believe with an assured faith; but to what purpose is all this? may one say; *Faith is the Gift of God*, the work of his spirit, *I have no power to believe, till God work it in me*; and therefore, all this labour in persuading us to believe might be spared. I answer, your own inability to believe, by any strength or power of yours, is so far from being an argument against, that it is one of the strongest arguments why you should believe: for, when we call you to believe, we do not call you to *work*, or do any thing by your own power; but, because you have no power to trust in the doings and strength of another, who, as he has wrought all your works *for you*, so engages himself by promise, to work all your works *in you*: (and particularly, being the *author and finisher of faith*, is ready and willing to fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the *work of faith with power*. Every creature answers its name, and will God be wanting to answer his? No surely, the name that he takes to himself is declarative of his nature; and therefore, since he has taken this *name* to himself, of being the *author of faith*, and the *finisher* thereof, we may, with the greatest assurance of faith, *trust* in this *name of the Lord*, that he will both begin the good work, and carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. And this very committing of the work of faith unto him, from a sense of your own inability, is that believing which we urge and call you to. Faith is a grace which just springs out of the ruin of all self-sufficiency and excellency; finding neither righteousness nor strength within, it looks abroad, and

and cries, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and Strength.*

Unbelief and carnal reason are ready to argue, because God by his spirit must do all, therefore we will sit still and do nothing: but the spirit of God, whose reasonings I am sure are infinitely better, argues after a quite different manner, *Phil. ii. 13. Work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* O what glorious encouragement is here for a poor impotent sinner to essay and aim at believing! here is the *arm* of omnipotency, reaching forth itself for the help and through-bearing in the work he calls thee to. Up therefore and be doing, for *thy God commands thy strength*, and therefore let him be the *glory of thy strength*.

But say you, seeing we cannot *work* the work of faith, why does he yet *command* it? Is it not a hardship to require of us what we have no ability to do? *Ans. 1.* Why do you send your little children to school with the A, B, C, in their hands, before they can read one letter? You don't think it a hardship to put the book in their hand and bid them read, tho' they know not a letter, because you offer to teach them yourself, or by another in your place. So here, we are commanded to work the work of God, which is to believe in him whom he hath sent; which is yet no hardship, notwithstanding our utter inability for it in ourselves, because, at the same time that he commands believing, he tells us, for our encouragement, that he himself is the author of faith, and his ready to work in us both to will and to do. If a *master* should command a *servant* to poise or lift a burden which he is not able to move, or to work a turn which

which he has no skill to manage ; it might indeed discourage the servant from attempting it, if he were required to do it by his own strength or skill : but when the master tells him, I will assist, I will direct, I will *do all*, only *put to thy hand* ; what servant would refuse, or decline the service in this case ? Or if he should, do you not think he would deserve to be beaten with many stripes ? The application is obvious : it is God's ordinary way to come and join with the poor soul, and enable it to believe, while, in obedience to his command, it is aiming to believe in Christ. Like a kind master of a school, when the child in obedience to him takes the pen in his hand, and scribbles the best way he can, the master takes his hand in his, and leads and learns him to write : so, when we take, as it were, the pen in our hand, and offer to write, at his command, he takes our hand in his, directing, strengthening, and enabling us to believe. So that, if there be but a willing mind to this work, it is accepted : where he gives to *will*, he will also give to *do*, of his good pleasure ; these two are inseparably connected in the order of God's covenant.

But you may still object, all the endeavours of a natural man are still but natural and sinful actions ; And will ever God concur by his almighty power with the acts or endeavours of nature ? *Ans.* Altho' God be not obliged to concur with the endeavours of nature, yet such is his grace, love, and goodwill toward man upon earth, such is the strength of his desire after our salvation, such the pleasure he has in a sinner's believing, such a regard has he to what he himself has commanded, that we find him many times actually concurring with the poor helpless sinner, in his impotent aimings at obedience to
what

what he calls for. It was no gracious principle, that moved *Naaman* the *Syrian* to go wash in the waters of *Jordan*, yet, because he did what was commanded, God was pleased to concur with the mean of his own appointment, and cured his leprous body, and, for ought I know, his soul also. Let us believe as we can, in obedience to God's command, and in a dependence upon his Almighty power; and while we are doing so, although the act be, at the beginning, but natural, yet, in the very acting, promised and purchased grace may strike in, and turn it into a supernatural act of believing: as when Christ was about to work that famous miracle at *Cana* in *Galilee*, he does not first turn the water into wine, but he first bids them pour out the water, and, in pouring of it out, the water was changed into wine; so the *loaves* were multiplied, while the disciples, in obedience to the command of Christ, were dividing them among the multitude: just so here; while the poor soul, in a subordination to the divine power, and in obedience to the divine command, is attempting to believe, a God of grace changes the attempt into a true genuine faith; so that the soul, through the mighty power of God, ere ever it is aware, is brought really to believe, and that in a way it knows not how; for the wind blows where it listeth, thou hearest the sound of it, but canst tell whence it comes, or whither it goeth: *So is every one that is born of the spirit.*

Thus, I say, in the very acting of faith we are enabled to act it; when we take the pen in our hand, God takes us by the hand, and writes for us, leading us in the *way we know not.* It is with us in *believing* many times, as in *praying*; the man goes to prayer, with his heart as cold as the ice, and

as hard as the nether mill-stone ; he cannot open a mouth before the Lord, his tongue is tacked, his heart is locked up : but yet, while the poor soul is aiming to pour out its heart into God's bosom, the spirit of the Lord falls on him, even the spirit of grace and supplication, whereby his bonds are loosed, and his soul made like the *chariots of Amminadib*. So while the poor soul is aiming at believing, the spirit of faith comes, and concurs with it, exerting that exceeding great and mighty power which raised Christ from the dead, whereby he comes to be filled with *joy and peace in believing*.

Perhaps you may say, You urge us much to essay believing ; but pray, give us your best *advice* how to manage in this matter : O that the spirit of God may concur ! There are these two or three things I offer, by way of *advice*, to you who are in good earnest ; and O what man is there that has a soul to be saved, and who looks forward to a vast eternity of well or woe, that should not be in good earnest as to this matter ! My *first advice* then is this, *Study to have your hearts well stored with all these considerations, which are fit jewel, and matter, whereby faith is ingenerated, or begotten in the hearts of sinners*. Although the act of saving faith be the effect of the divine power and grace, yet it is in the power of nature, by a common course, to stock and store the mind with these things, which are the seed of faith. The husbandman, though he cannot make one grain of corn to grow, yet he can plow and sow his ground ; and when he has done his part, he leaves the seed under the clod, and looks up to heaven for the waterings of the former and latter rains : and accordingly God for ordinary crowns his endeavour with
success,

success, making the heavens to hear the earth, and the earth to hear the corn, whereby it brings forth ten, twenty, or an hundred-fold. So here, let us do what is incumbent on us, and what we have power in an ordinary way to do: let us sow the seeds, I mean, let us store our minds with the pure and precious truths of God, and acquaint ourselves with these things which are to be believed, as they are laid before us in the holy oracles of the scriptures of truth; and, having thus laid in the seed into the ground, or soil of our hearts, let us look heavenward, and wait for a shower of the spirit's influences, according to that word of grace or promise, *Isa. xliv. 3. I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.* You know, they that offered sacrifices of old, tho' they could not make fire come down from heaven to consume their sacrifices, yet they could fetch the bullock out of the stall, or the lamb out of the fold; they could bring it to the altar, and bind it with cords to the horns of the altar; they could gather their sticks, and lay in proper fuel; and having done their part, they looked up to heaven for the celestial fire to set all on a flame together: in like manner, I say, do what is incumbent on you, gather your sticks, lay in the proper fuel of faith, store your minds with the materials of believing which you are daily reading or hearing in the word: study to impress your souls with the doctrines of your lost estate in the first *Adam*, and the way of your salvation by grace, in and thro' the second *Adam* Jesus Christ: think upon the near approach that the high and lofty One has made to us in the person of his eternal Son, by his manifestation in our nature, when he pass by the nature of angels: O think on the excellency

of his person, as he is Emmanuel, God-Man, God with us, God on our side to bruise the head of the old serpent, who had spoiled and ruined us: think upon his suretyship and substitution in our room, how he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; how he was made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse; how he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification: think upon the fulness of grace and truth, of merit and spirit, that is in him; and how all that fulness of grace that is laid up in him, is laid out to us in a covenant of grace and promise, and that promise or covenant *left to us*, and put in our hands, and we required to *take hold of it*, to make use of it in a way of believing. These are some of the materials of faith; faith comes by hearing of these things, and by thinking and meditating upon them: by these things do men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirits, *Isa. xxxviii. 6.* and therefore revolve them in your minds, roll them like a sweet morsel under your tongues, think and think again upon them; and, in thinking, present them to your understanding, as things wherein your eternal state is concerned. You have as good ground to expect the concurring power of the spirit of faith, in this way and method, to fulfil in you the work of faith with power, as ever they of old had to look for the celestial fire to come down and consume their sacrifices, as a testimony of the divine acceptance, when they had, according to the command of God, done what was incumbent on them, in preparing their materials.

(2) Another advice I give you is this, study not only to gather these materials of faith, but to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of every thing that God has revealed in his word, especially of these things which relate more immediately to the mystery of salvation through Christ. We must needs *believe the report* of the Gospel, and *set our seal* to the *record of God* in his word : particularly, be fully persuaded that you are bankrupt, ruined and lost to all intents and purposes by the breach of the first covenant, being under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the power of satan ; and that you have no more power to relieve yourselves out of this miserable condition, than the new-born infant cast out into the open field, *Ezek. 16.* and, in digging into this *rock whence you were hewn*, be not afraid to go to the bottom, I mean, to know the worst of yourselves ; for true faith springs out of the ruin of self ; despair and self-lothing make way for a suitable prizing and improving of the blessed remedy ; want of necessaries at home, obliges men to go abroad, either to beg or buy where they may have them. The denial of self, in point of righteousness and strength, lands the soul in Christ, saying, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Again, study to be fully assured, that there is no help or relief for you out of your lost condition, but only by faith's acceptance and application of Christ upon the warrant of God's word of grace ; there is no coming to the Father but by him, no other name whereby men can be saved ; every other door of access is barred and condemned since the fall. Be convinced of Christ's ability and sufficiency to save you from sin, and all its dismal train of miseries ; he is a mighty redeemer, on whom

God hath laid our help, able to save to the very uttermost: be persuaded that he is a Saviour every way calculated and suited unto thy necessity, being made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; and that his office as a Saviour, as well as his own promise, obliges him to save every one that comes to him in a way of believing: that everlasting life is yours, and you actually have it that moment you receive him as the free gift of God; *He that hath the Son hath life*: that there is no condition or qualification, no work or duty required in the word of God, in order to procure a right and title to eternal life; but that you are to come in upon Christ's title, who is the righteous heir, and who has made a disposition or assignation of his right to us in his testament, without any clogs or conditions. For if you adventure to make your works, duties, or any good thing in you, the condition of Christ's latter-will, you alter the will of the dead, you in effect destroy the freedom of a covenant of grace, and build up a partition-wall between Christ and you, which you shall never be able to climb over.

(3.) Another advice I give you is this, believe that it is your duty to believe in obedience to the express command of God, with an eye to his promised spirit. First view the grounds that your faith has to go upon, already spoken to; and then cast your eye upon the divine command and call, warranting, encouraging, and requiring you to venture upon these grounds; and, so long as these are kept in view, there is no fear of presumption: how can it be presumption to obey the express command of heaven? Yea, the greatest command that ever was issued out to man from the throne of

of glory above, 1 *John* iii. 23. He speaks as if there were no other command in the word of God; because we fulfil the whole law as a covenant, in the very first act of believing, by renouncing our own, and submitting to the law-biding, and law-magnifying righteousness of the Son of God; and thereby our personal obedience also to the law as a *rule*, is set upon such a footing as to be accepted in the beloved: for, let us do what we will, we shall never please God, or be accepted of him, till we believe in the name of his Son, *Heb.* xi. 6. And therefore I say again, aim at believing, in obedience to the command of God: it is as much your duty to believe, as to obey any command of the moral law; and disobedience to this command of believing, will damn you eternally, yea, do it more effectually than murder, adultery, theft, or any other breach of the law that I can name. Pray tell me, first, why do you ever bow a knee, or open a mouth to God in prayer? Do you set about this duty, because you have power and strength in yourselves to pierce heaven by your prayers, or to order your cause before God? No surely, but because God has commanded you to call upon him, therefore, powerless as you are, though you know not how to pray, or what to pray for, yet you essay it: now, why do you not the same in the case of believing, as in praying, since the one is commanded as well as the other? For I say, you have as little power in yourselves to pray aright, as to believe aright. There are many, who, as I was saying before, shift off the great duty of believing from day to day, under this pretext, that they want power to believe: but this is an objection that militates against all duties, as well as that of believing. We are not sufficient

of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, as the apostle assures us; but will you, for this reason, desist from any essay to think upon what is good and beneficial to your souls? no, we try meditation, we aim to think on what is good, and in musing the fire burns; God comes in with the breathings of his spirit, and then our meditations of him are sweet, and we are glad in the Lord: so, while the soul, from a sense of its lost estate, is aiming to roll and rest itself on Christ in obedience to the command of God, God comes in with his spirit of faith, and fills us with joy and peace in believing.

(4.) Although you should not find any sensible concurrence of the power of God coming along with your aiming at obedience to the command of believing, yet give it not over, but still continue the attempt; *wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.* *Object.* I have often attempted to believe, but yet I am as far from it as ever; the power of God does not come along, and therefore I may quite give it over. For answer, I refer you to a word, *Heb. x. 36, 37. Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* In trying to act faith in obedience to the divine command, ye have need of patience; for he that believeth, doth not make haste. You must resolve to believe, and wait, and wait, and believe, and never give it over: and, when ye have done the will of God in this matter, as you can, you must hold on with them that have clean hands, even though you find no sensible influence concurring; for it is the command of God in his word, and
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not the influence of the Spirit, that is the rule and measure of your duty. And if you continue doing the will of God in this matter, with an eye to him, who is the author and finisher of faith, you may assure yourselves, that in a little while, he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. It is the *will of God*, and the *work of God*, which thou art aiming at, even to *believe in him whom he hath sent*; and will not a God of grace and love, with whom compassions flow, put to his hand to his own work, and help a poor creature to do what is his own will? Yea, surely thou mayest be *confident of this very thing*, when he has passed his word for it, that *he will work in thee both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*. There is nothing in all the world so pleasing to God, as to see a poor soul aiming to close with, and accept of his Christ; he is, as it were, pained at the heart, when sinners are backward to believe in his son; and, will he not then be forward to help a poor soul that is aiming at it? You know, an indulgent mother, when her breasts are full and swelled with milk, will be ready, not only to draw out her breast, but to help her poor infant toward it, when in want of milk, or aiming to suck. Has a mother such compassion toward her sucking child, and, Is there not infinitely more compassion with the Father of mercies toward a poor soul, that is trying to suck the full breasts of his grace and mercy drawn out to all in a gospel dispensation? He whose bowels are sending out a sound after sinners in the gospel-call, will not be wanting to lend his helping hand to enable you to believe; and therefore, say with *David*, Psalm xlii. *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, for the help of his countenance.*

Object.

Object. I have tried believing so long and so often, that I am quite wearied, my strength is gone, and yet no power from above, what shall I do? God takes no notice of me. *Ans.* Isa. xl. 27, 28. &c. *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? Hast not thou heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching out of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.* Thou imaginest, that God's helping hand is withdrawn, and that he takes no notice of thy aims to believe; but, why sayest thou so? He is nearer than thou apprehendest; behold, he standeth behind our wall, ready to give grace, and mercy to help in time of need, ready to give power to the faint, and strength to them that have no might: and power from on high to believe, is nearest, when we are most carried out of ourselves in point of strength and sufficiency, and therefore give it not over; wait, I say, on the Lord, for they that wait on him shall renew their strength. It is only the weak man that will lean to the help of another; now, faith is a leaning on Christ, when we cannot stand alone, *Cant. viii. 5. Who is this that cometh up through the wilderness leaning on her beloved?* It is only the wearied man, that will sit down and rest him; now, faith is the soul's resting in or upon Christ, *Psalms xxxvii. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently on him, Heb. iv. He that hath believed hath entered into his rest.* When a man can do nothing else, when he is so feeble that he cannot put his hand to a turn, yet he can rest him: so here, because thou art weak, and with-

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out strength for any work of the law, therefore the Lord calls thee to rest thy weary, sinking soul upon the Lord Jesus, on whom he has laid thy help; and therefore, let thy weakness encourage thee to revive, instead of discouraging thee.

But now, I come to offer a word of exhortation to these whose hearts do fall in with the foregoing exhortation. Do ye now believe, tho' in the weakest degree? Let me exhort you not to rest in a low measure of faith, but press after the highest degree of it. Forget things behind, reach forth unto things that are before; believe better than ye have yet done. Go on from faith to faith, and thus learn to draw near with a true heart, in **FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH**: and thus you shall be the children of faithful *Abraham*, who *staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* You see what was the ground of *Abraham's* faith, by which he believed without staggering; it was nothing else but the promise of life and salvation, through a Messiah to come: well, you have the very same ground of faith laid before you, with a far greater advantage now under the new testament, namely, the promise of acceptance, peace, pardon, grace and glory, through a Messiah, who is already come, and finished the work which the Father gave him to do; and therefore, believe without staggering, as he did.

That I may quicken you to press after a higher measure of faith, I offer the following considerations. (1.) Little faith is not easily discerned, it is but like a grain of mustard-seed lying in the ground, which one can scarce distinguish from the dust,

dust which lies under his feet ; and when faith is not discerned, God loses the glory of his own grace, and you also lose the comfort of it. (2.) The world we live in requires a strong faith ; it is a den of lions, and a mountain of leopards ; the roaring lyon is going about seeking to devour ; red-seas and *Jordans* of trouble lie in our way to *Canaan*, through the howling wilderness. Storms and tempests of persecution and tribulation may blow, which will make the strong believer to stagger and shake ; and if so, has not the weak believer reason to fortify himself, by studying to believe better than he has done ? For it is by faith that we stand in an evil day. (3.) Contentment with little faith, is no good sign of the reality of faith : for (as was hinted before) it is of the nature of true grace, to breathe after its own perfection. They who have the least degree of it, press after the highest. They that know the Lord, follow on to know him. (4.) Consider the advantages of a strong faith, beyond a weak. 1st, A strong faith hath a firm and solid peace coming along with it, *Isa. xxvi. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee :* but weak faith has its peace disturbed at every turn of providence. 2^{dly}, Strong faith brings great joy with it ; hence we are said to be filled with joy and peace in believing ; yea, the joy of a lively faith is a joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 *Pet. i. 8.* But now the weak believer, though he may perhaps sometimes be filled with the joy of sense, yet he has but little of the joy of believing ; hence it is, than whenever sense is withdrawn, he is in the very suburbs of hell, crying, the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, his promise fails for evermore. 3^{dly}, Strong faith is more steady in a storm,

storm, than a weak faith is. Strong faith, when the storm blows, casts out the *anchor of hope*, and rides in safety, crying, I will not be afraid, though the *mountains should be removed, and cast into the midst of the seas, and the waters roar*. But now weak faith, like *Peter*, walking on the waters, is ready, at every billow, to cry out, *Master, I perish*. When created comforts fail, when the fields yield no increase, weak faith is ready to say, I and my family will perish: but strong faith will say, up the heart, there is no fear, *my bread shall be given me, my water shall be sure*; because a God of truth hath said it, whose is the *earth, and the fulness thereof*. He that *feeds the ravens*, will not let his children starve: he that *clothes the lilies*, will not let me go naked. *4thly*, Strong faith has more confidence and boldness, in entering into the holiest, more moyen and interest in heaven, than weak faith has, *John* xiv. 13. 14. *Mark* vii. 24. *James* i. 6. Weak faith, although God will not reject its suits, yet its returns are not so clear and full: yea, I will adventure to say, that unbelieving doubts, and fears, and jealousies, mar the success of many a good petition. *5thly*, Strong faith makes the approaches of death more easy than they are to the weak believer. Strong faith takes up the telescope of the promise, and looks beyond death, to the land afar off, and rejoiceth in the hope of the glory of God, saying, as the head Christ did, *Psalms* xvi. My heart is glad, my glory rejoiceth, my flesh shall rest in hope: for he hath shewed me the path of life, the new and living way to these rivers of pleasures, and that fulness of joy, which are at God's right hand for evermore. Strong faith viewing an exalted Redeemer, it sees death and hell among the trophies of his victory, and thereupon

thereupon triumphs over it as a vanquished and slain enemy, saying, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? thanks be unto God, who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord.* But now weak faith shivers and trembles at the approaches of death, lest it should be swallowed up in the swellings of that *Jordan*. Let these considerations, I say, quicken you to breathe after the increase of your weak faith, that you may draw near with full assurance of faith.

I conclude this whole discourse with a word, *1st*, of encouragement; *2dly*, of advice to weak believers: for our glorious master has commanded us to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; and to say to them that are of a fearful spirit, be strong, fear not.

1st, A word of comfort and encouragement to the poortender lambs and weaklings in God's flock, who are frequently halting and staggering through the prevalency of unbelief. (1.) Know for thy comfort, That the weakest believer is as nearly related to God as a Father, as the strongest believer is. The weakest and youngest babe in a family, is as sib to the father as the first-born, or the son who is come to his full strength and stature. Every branch of the tree is not alike strong or big, and yet the tenderest twig is as really united to the root, and as really partakes of the sap of the root, as the strongest and most principal branch: so here, the weakest believer is in Christ, and partakes of his spirit, as well as the strongest (2.) The weak believer is clothed with the white raiment of Christ's righteousness, and is as much justified thereby as the strongest. Our great High Priest is clothed with a garment down
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to his feet, whereby every member of his body mystical is equally covered. It is equally true of every believer, that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1. (3.) The least and weakest degree of faith shall hold out to the end. They are all *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax: where the good work is begun, his faithfulness is engaged to carry it on to the day of Christ. The weakest degree of faith has glory and salvation knit to it, by God's promise, as well as the strongest: it is not *he that believes strongly shall be saved*, but *he that believes indefinitely*, whether his faith be weak or strong. (4.) Our blessed Redeemer for ordinary vents his affection in a more tender and sensible manner toward weak believers, than toward the strong. The good Shepherd of *Israel*, he carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads them that are with young: hence it comes, that weak believers have commonly more sensible ravishing joys and consolation than strong believers. Much like a wise and affectionate parent, who will take his young infant on his knee, dandle it, and hug it in his bosom, while he will not allow his affections to run out after such a manner toward his son of age and stature, for that were to make a fool of him.

May the poor weak believer say, these are strong consolations indeed, if I might lay claim unto them; but that is what I still fear, that I have no faith at all, no, not like a grain of mustard-seed. Besides what was said to this in the former part of the discourse, I shall only ask these two questions. (1.) Does not thy Heart throb and faint

faint within thee, when thou thinks of a parting with the Lord Jesus? If so, this says, that his love is shed abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost, and consequently a root and principle of faith, from whence it flows, cleaving to the Lord like the iron touched with the loadstone: and I tell thee good news, that as thou hatest to be put away from him, so *he hates putting away*, and therefore there never shall be a separation. (2.) Does thou not find a restlessness in thy spirit, and uneasiness in thy bosom, when the Lord withdraws, like a bone out of joint, or a fish out of its element? If so, the root of faith is within; Christ has been with thee in a way of grace and love, otherwise thou could not distinguish between absence and presence. And if ever Christ made thee a visit, his first visit shall not be his last; for his goings forth are prepared or secured like the morning.

2dly, I come to shut up all with a few advices to weak believers, in order to the increase of their faith toward a full assurance. (1.) Be humbled under a sense of remaining unbelief, and the weakness of your faith; for the Lord giveth grace, and more grace, to the humble. The more that self is pulled down, the higher is Christ exalted in a way of believing. (2.) Be greedy of more faith. Covetousness in other things of this world is idolatry: but this is among the best things which you are allowed earnestly to covet; and the more you covet and desire of the spirit of faith, the more you shall get: for *he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* (3.) Be well acquainted with the grounds of faith, as they are laid in the gospel-revelation, some of which I have pointed at

at in the preceeding discourse. I am persuaded that one great reason why so many do not believe at all, and why the faith of many real believers remains so weak, is their unacquaintedness with the strong and sure grounds that their faith has to build upon. Weak timorous believers, fixed upon the foundation God hath laid in *Zion*, are just like a man standing on a firm immovable rock, his head turns giddy, and he imagines that the rock is turning upside down with him, while the failure is not in the rock, but in his own head. Our faith fails us through our unacquaintedness with the stability of God's covenant and promise: and therefore, I say, study to be better acquainted with the promise and faithfulness, power and love of the promiser. (4.) If you would have weak faith increased and strengthened, then be frequently exercising any weak faith you have: for gracious as well as natural habits are increased and improved by repeated acts. To him that *hath*, and improveth well what he hath, shall be given. This is the way to have your mite turned into a talent; and your talent of faith, by frequent exercise, shall in due time become as ten talents. (5.) When you get any sensible experiences of the Lord's love, improve them, not as the grounds of your faith, but as encouragements to go on in trusting and believing, upon the grounds of faith laid before you in the word. These sensible tastes of the Lords loving-kindness are given you, not that you should dote upon the sweetness of them, but to encourage and further you in trusting and believing, *Psal. xxxvi. 6. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the sons of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* It is a common fault among many believers in our day, when they find

any thing of sensible presence, then indeed they rejoice, and they have good reason so to do: but no sooner doth a cloud come, but their faith as well as their joy evanishes, and they have as little trust to put in the word and promise of the God of their life, when his back is turned, or he out of their sight, as though they had never received a kindness at his hand. And this is a reason, I am convinced, why it fares so ill with many of us at this day: and therefore let us amend it. And what comfort and joy we find in his presence, let it encourage and engage us to trust and hope, and wait and believe in him, when absent to our sense. And if we thus improve the marks of grace and consolations of his spirit, the joy of the Lord shall be our strength; and our path shall be indeed as the path of the just, and *as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

*The LAMB in the midst of the
throne.*

B E I N G

A S E R M O N preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the LORD's SUPPER, at *Dunfermline June 10, 1733.*

By Mr. R A L P H E R S K I N E.

*A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of
our sanctuary.* Jer. xvii. 12.

R E V. vii. 17.

*For the Lamb, which is in the midst of
the throne, shall feed them, &c.*

WE are met this day to celebrate the memorials of the love of Christ, in his death and crucifixion upon mount *Calvary*; and that our faith may look to him in the best light, and to the best advantage, we are to remember, not only where he once was, but where he now is: and we will find, we need not be ashamed of a crucified Christ that was once upon the cross, for now he is upon the throne. The Lamb that was slain as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for us, the once dying Lamb in the midst of the cross, is now the ever-living Lamb in the midst of the throne.

And from this throne of God, where he reigns, we expect our food and provision upon the feast-day; according to the words of the text, *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them.*

From the 13th verse of this chapter, we have a description of the honour and happiness of these, that shall faithfully serve, and patiently suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ. Some interpreters think, that the happiness of the saints militant, even in this world, is here described; some, that it is only the happiness of the saints triumphant in heaven; others make this place of scripture relate to both, and with these especially I join, because, whatever honour and happiness of suffering saints is here set forth, they enjoy the same partly in this life, and fully in the life to come, as may appear by the particulars here mentioned.

The happy persons here spoken of, verse 14th, *These are they that have come out of great tribulation.* Whatever relation some think this may have to the Church of Christ on earth, after they have escaped the antichristian bloody persecution; or, as others, to the martyrs in heaven that have suffered unto death for the Lord Jesus Christ; yet it may be said of all the militant saints, who thro' much trouble enter into the kingdom of heaven, and therein are conformed to their suffering head the Lord Jesus Christ, and *bear about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus.* Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all. It may be said of all the saints, *These are they that have come from trouble to rest, from bondage to liberty, from death to life, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* The perfection of this purity

purity they have in heaven, but even here on earth they are washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed with the white robe of his imputed and imparted righteousness.

Verse 15th, this seems to be a further description of the happiness of the saints both militant and triumphant; as they are happy,

1st, In their state, being *washed, justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the the spirit of their God.*

2dly, They are happy in their station, being always *before the throne of God.* The glorified saints in heaven are always in that presence where there is fulness of joy; and the sanctified ones upon earth have this blessing also bestowed upon them, they are said to sit with him in heavenly places, and it is their daily work to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Again, *3dly*, They are happy in their service, for *they serve him day and night in his temple.* Tho' these that are in heaven serve him without weakness or weariness, which we cannot here do; yet it is the property of all the true circumcision to worship God in the spirit and in truth, and to pray without ceasing, meditating on his law day and night, and going to the altar of God, to God in Christ the true spiritual temple.

4thly, They are happy in their company; for *he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them.* This points out friendship, fellowship, and familiarity between God and the redeemed; which also Christ allows to the militant saints in part, when, upon opening the door of their heart, he *comes in and sups with them, and they with him*, Rev. iii. 20. and they are in case to say, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ*, 1 John i. 3.

yea, God says, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

5thly, They are happy in their freedom; they shall be freed from all want, and all uneasiness. From all want; for *they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more*: for this freedom will be perfected in heaven, as it is commenced on earth; as the prophet says, speaking of Christ's spiritual kingdom, *Isa. xlix. 10. They shall not hunger, nor thirst, &c.* Hence says Christ, *John vi. 35. He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst*; pointing out the spiritual pleasure and satisfaction they shall have, and never be altogether deprived of. From all uneasiness also shall they be freed, *neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat*; or, as it is in the forecited *Isa. xlix. 10. Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them.* The redeemed above are perfectly freed from all uneasiness; and even the redeemed on earth, according to the measure of faith, such will be their measure of ease, even amidst all things that tend to make them uneasy. Christ says to them, *Fear not, only believe; Fear not, I am with you; Fear not him that can at most but kill the body; The very hairs of your head are all numbred*; you may be perfectly easy. Nothing is more uneasy than the sun in the meridian regions; so are afflictions and persecutions to the saints, and the temptations they are attacked with from earth and hell; but *God is faithful*, says the apostle, *who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 12.

6thly, They are happy in their provision; *The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them*;

them; hence he has said to *feed his flock like a shepherd*. The feeding here spoken of, imports also rule and government, such as a shepherd hath over his flock. It is in the believing view of the provident loving shepherd, the psalmist says, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*, Psal. xxiii. 1.

7thly, They are happy in their direction and conduct; in their director, guide and conductor: *He shall lead them unto living fountains of water*. Now, of these living waters the Lord Jesus speaks, as they respect even his people in this world, *John* iv. 14. and vii. 38. *The water that I give, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life*; and, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters*. By these they have matter of comfort amidst all their crosses.

Hence 8thly, They are here said to be happy in their joys; *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*, that is, all their griefs and sorrows shall be swallowed up with the fulness of joy and consolation, that shall be abundantly allowed them. The commencement of this joy is even here, amidst all the troubles and trials of the militant saints: *For behold*, says God, *Isa.* lxxv. 18. *I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard*. And hence they are sometimes filled with joy and peace in believing, yea, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is the first part of this last verse that I have especially my eye upon; particularly, that description of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Commentators I consulted pass over more slightly than I expected, namely, *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne*. Where we have our Lord Jesus described, 1. From his meekness and humility; therefore he is called *the Lamb*. 2. From his ma-

jeſty and authority; he his the Lamb *in the miſt of the throne*. What benefit accrues to his Church, from his meek and majeſtick government, follows in the reſt of the *verſe*, which, if I have time, I may a little inſiſt upon. But what I eſpecially propoſe to ſpeak to, as the Lord may aſſiſt, is, from the ſweet account of our Lord Jeſus here.

Obſerve then, *That our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the Lamb in the miſt of the throne of God.*

And, as the pſalmiſt ſays, *Pſal. cxxi. 1. I will liſt mine eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help*; ſo let us liſt our eyes to the throne, from whence comes our food to-day: and we may the more readily and joyfully do ſo, that the Lamb is in the miſt of the throne, to be the feeder. That I may open and apply this doctrine for our benefit, I propoſe the following method;

1. Speak a little of the *Lamb*. 2. Of the *throne*. 3. *How* the Lamb comes to be upon the throne. 4. What is imported in the Lamb's being *in the miſt of the throne*. 5. Notice the benefit of *feeding*, that iſſues from the Lamb's being in the miſt of the throne. 6. Deduce ſome *inferences* for application.

Fiſt, I ſhall offer a word concerning the *Lamb*. This is a name frequently given to our Lord Jeſus in ſcripture; and he is ſo called, both becauſe of his immaculate whiteness and innocency, and becauſe of his incomparable meekneſs and patience: He is *a Lamb without blemiſh, and without ſpot*, 1 Pet. i. 19. and his meekneſs was matchleſs, of which more afterwards: he is the *Lamb of God, the worthy Lamb, the Lamb that was ſlain*.

I ſhall only here mention four periods wherein he his represented as a Lamb.

1st, In his designation from the beginning, yea, from all eternity, to be a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice : hence, *Rev. xiii. 8.* he is called *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* ; slain decreatively, in the purpose of God, before the foundation of the world was laid ; and slain typically, in all the sacrifices under the law. 2^{dly}, In his manifestation, when he appeared in our nature, he is pointed out as the Lamb that was come to be a sacrifice for sin, *John i. 29.* *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world* ; and again, verse 36. *Behold the Lamb of God.* To this purpose says the same beloved disciple, 1 *John iii. 5.* *You know that he was manifested to take away our sin.* 3^{dly}, In his humiliation unto death, he is represented as the meek and patient Lamb, *Acts viii. 32.* *He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter ; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth* ; which are the words of the prophet *Isa. liii. 7.* Thus saith the Lord by the same prophet, chap. 1. 5, 6. *I was not rebellious, neither turned away back ; I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair ; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* 4^{thly}, In his exaltation, or in his exalted estate, he is in scripture represented as a Lamb ; particularly, *Rev. v. 6.* *And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, &c.* This is the place that our present text hath a reference unto : and therefore, concerning it ye may notice the description given of this Lamb ; 1st, As the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, of which more afterward. Only, you see, in his exalted estate at the Father's right-hand, he is still the Lamb ; change of place hath not made him change his name, or nature : he

took our human nature along with him, and he is still the meek and lowly Lamb, though he be upon the throne. *2dly*, He is described by being a Lamb slain, *a Lamb as it had been slain*. He appears with the marks of his sufferings upon him, to show that he intercedes in heaven in the virtue of his satisfaction, because he *entred the holy place by his own blood*, Heb. ix. 12. And the virtue of the sacrifice he offered is always fresh, as if he were newly slain. *3dly*, He is described as a Lamb having *seven horns*, pointing out the perfection of his power to execute all the will of God, and to conquer all his enemies. This Lamb is the *power* of God. *4thly*, He is described as a Lamb having *seven eyes*, pointing out the perfection of his wisdom, to understand all the will of God, and to do it in the most effectual manner. As he is the *power* of God, so he is the *wisdom* of God; for he hath the *spirit* of God *above measure*: therefore it is said, *The seven eyes are the seven spirits of God*; not seven in number, or in nature, but in respect of the diversity of the gifts and operations of that One and eternal spirit of God: this Lamb of God then is he, that hath the *spirit of the Lord God upon him*, *for he hath anointed him*; and he is anointed, that he may anoint. And O may the Lamb with the seven eyes look upon this assembly, and give eyes to us to see his glory this day, that our hearts may join issue with the heavenly company, Rev. v. 12. *Worthy is the Lamb, &c.*

Second thing I proposed was a word concerning the *throne*. Here I would shortly consider what sort of a throne it is, and why called a throne.

1st, What sort of a throne it is which the Lamb is said to be in the midst of? I may answer, it is the throne of God, Rev. xxii. 1, 3.

There

There it is called *the throne of God, and of the Lamb*: the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb, and the throne of the Lamb is the throne of God; it is the throne of his grace, the throne of his glory, the throne of his holiness, and the throne of his justice.

1. It is called the throne of divine *grace*, *Heb. iv.* last. *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.* Why? because we have a *High-Priest* there, the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. And indeed, the throne of grace is nothing else than a God in Christ, a God reconciled in Christ, a God upon a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

2. It is called the throne of divine *glory*, *Jer. xiv. 21.* *Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember break not thy covenant with us.* The prophet there speaks of the temple, and the ark in it, the symbol of God's presence; which was typical of Christ, in whom the covenant of grace stands fast: and so it is called the throne of glory, because all the glory of God shines about that throne. As the grace of God is the glory of God, so all the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ: Therefore,

3. It is called a throne of divine *holiness*, *Psalms xlvii. 8.* *God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.* Holiness becomes his house, holiness becomes his throne, and holiness is his throne; there is nothing there, but the holy God, the holy Lamb, the holy throne, and they that are about it cry, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, Isa. vi. 3.*

4. It is called the throne of his *justice*, *Psalms lxxxix. 14.* *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* And *Psalms xcvi. 2.* *Clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* His glorious

rious and holy throne of grace stands firm upon the basis and foundation of justice satisfied for the sinner, and judgment executed against sin, in the blood of the Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne. It is therefore no hindrance, nor impediment to our access to the throne of grace, that it is also a throne of justice; but rather a furtherance and encouragement, because there *grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. and last. And, since grace reigns there through justice-satisfying righteousness, why then, there God may with honour meet with sinners, and there sinners may with hope draw near to God. This is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2dly, Why is it called a throne? The place, in the midst whereof the Lamb is, is called a throne, on these accounts; 1st, A throne is a place of powerful and majestick glory, honour and dignity. Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is set in the midst of this place, crowned with Glory and honour. *Heb. ii. 9. His Father hath crowned him King there, saying, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* 2. A throne is a place of power and authority. Christ the Lamb is set in the midst of this throne; for, *All power in heaven and earth is given to him, Matt. xxviii. 18. All judgment is committed to him, and the government is upon his shoulders.* 3dly, A throne is a place of height and eminency. Christ the Lamb is in the midst of this place, *Isa. vi. 7. I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.* His Father hath set him on the highest throne; he hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. 4thly, A throne is a place of plenty; thence the royal bounty is communicated. Christ the Lamb is in the midst of the place; hence it is said, *Col.*
i. 19.

i. 19. *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*; and again, *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, all the treasures of grace; and *out of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. 5thly, A throne is a place of beauty as well as bounty; it is a beautiful and splendid place. And to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, is to see the King in his beauty, Isa. xxxiii. 17. *Strength is within his holy place, and there doth beauty shine*, there doth glory shine. In a word, a throne is a place of pleasure, peace, joy, and triumph. The Lamb is in the midst of this place: having *ascended up on high, and led captivity captive*, Psalm lxxviii. 18. he sits triumphant upon the throne, *making all his enemies his footstool*. If he triumphed over them on the cross, as it is said, Col. ii. 15. how much more does he triumph over them on the throne, making all believers sharers of his joyful triumph!

The *third* thing I proposed was, To show how the Lamb comes to be upon the throne. I shall tell you in a few words, that he *bargained* for the throne, he *wrought* for the throne, he *fought* for the throne, he *died* for the throne.

1st, He *bargained* for the throne. In the council of peace betwixt the Father and the Son, it was promised to Christ, That, upon his doing and suffering for his people, he should have a glorious throne, and a numerous retinue: that he should *see his seed*, and *see the travel of his soul*, and *be satisfied*, Isa. liii. 10, 11. The Lamb cries out, It is a bargain, that I cheerfully go in to: *Lo, I come*; in the volume of thy book it is written of me: *I delight to do thy will, O my God*; *thy law is within my heart*. Hence says the Father, *I have made a covenant with my chosen*, Psalm lxxxix. 3.

2dly,

2dly, He wrought for the throne. According to the bargain and covenant between the Father and him, *he brought in everlasting righteousness*, Dan. ix. 24. He fulfilled all righteousness, Matt. iii. 15. And hence he claims the crown and the throne, *John xvii. 4, 5. I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do: And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the Glory I had with thee before the world was.* Thus he wrought for the throne.

3dly, He fought for the throne. Ye may see how he fought, *Isa. lxiii. 1. Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel? &c. verse 2, 3.* And on this account, the Lamb sits upon a triumphant throne, having spoiled principalities and powers, bruised the head of the old serpent, destroyed the works of the devil, and come off the field like a victorious conqueror. Therefore *the Lord said unto our Lord, sit thou at my right-hand*, Psalm cx. where you read both of the bloody battle, and the glorious enthronement of the Lamb.

4thly, He died for the throne. *Having drunk of the brook in the way, therefore did he lift up the head.* And, because he became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross; therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, Phil. ii. 8, 9. When he had the cross upon his back, he had the throne in his eye, *Heb. xii. 2. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.* And thus, for the suffering of death he was crowned with glory and honour,

nour, Heb. ii. 9. Our faith then may see and be satisfied how he came by the throne: but, for widening faith's view of this enthronement, I proceed

To the *fourth* thing proposed, namely, to show what may be imported in the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne. And,

1st, That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, speaks forth the dignity of his person, his supreme Deity, and equality with the Father. Though in his infinite love he thought it no disparagement, at his Father's call, to *make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant*; yet, *being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Philip. ii. 6. And his Father thinks it no disparagement to him, to call even the suffering Lamb, the crucified Jesus, his fellow and equal; *Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow*, Zach. xiii. 7. yea, to crown him King upon his everlasting throne, saying to him, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, Heb. i. 8. O but, if the Christ-disparaging and soul-damning doctrine of *Arians* was true, the Lamb would not be worthy of such a throne, far less the midst of the throne.

2^{dly}, That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports and speaks forth the height of his exaltation. Beside the natural right, as God, that Christ hath to the throne, he hath a donative right as Mediator; and because, as Mediator, he hath brought in glory to God in the highest, therefore he is exalted to the highest throne, that his Father can give him. *I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth*, Psalm lxxxix. 27. And now, according to his promise, *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same*
Jesus

Jesus that was crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 36. And being now possessed of the throne, he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS ; and the rather that it is a scarlet robe, a vesture dipped in blood, Rev. xix. 13, 16. to show that it is the worthy Lamb, that was slain, that is in the midst of the throne.

3dly, That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports, I think, the perfection of his mediation, and exactness thereof. O but this part of the throne must be fit for him, and he fit for it ! It well becomes him to be there ; he is the middle person between the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the middle person between God and man ; and it well becomes him to have the middle part of the throne. The Mediator and Mids-man having the midst of the throne, it says, he is a perfect Mediator, *a merciful and faithful High-Priest*, Heb. ii. 17. faithful to God, and merciful to man, true to both parties, between whom he stands in the midst of the throne.

4thly, That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports the beautiful order and equity of his administration. As the government is upon his shoulders, so it will be a just, righteous and equal government. *Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness ; even the man that shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, Isa. xxxii. 1, 2. With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins, Isa. xi. 4, 5.* His administration shall be so righteous and equal, that none shall have occasion to complain, that he hath gone too far, either to the right-hand or to the

the left-hand of the throne : no, he will for ever keep the midst of the throne, and his government, like his covenant, will be well ordered in all things.

5thly, That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports the accessibleness of the throne of God on every hand. The Lamb is upon the throne of God, and therefore there is access to the throne ; for the Lamb being there clothed with his vesture dipped in blood, we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and have *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. iv. last. and x. 19. If the Lamb were not there, such guilty sinners durst not be so bold as to look a just and holy God in the face, or approach to his throne ; but O good news ! The Lamb being our fore-runner, we may boldly go as far in as the blood of the Lamb hath run in like a river before us, and that is to the very heart and centre of the throne of God. Yea, not only is the Lamb upon the throne, which speaks access thither ; but he is in the midst of the throne, which speaks access on every hand, and on every side of the throne. If he were only placed at the one side of the throne, it might be thought there would be no access at the other side ; but, being in the midst of the throne, he is ready to welcome all comers from every corner, *saying, whosoever will, let him come*, from east, west, north or south, let him come on this side, or that side, or directly before the throne ; yea, let any poor believer, who thinks shame to be seen, come creeping, as it were, behind the throne, like the woman with the bloody issue, that came behind him, saying, *If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole* ; O to get in if it were behind the throne

this day, to get a touch of the royal robes of the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne ! Welcome sinner, there is access on every hand of the throne, for the Lamb is in the midst of it. The Lamb of God, which lies in the midst of his Father's bosom, sits in the midst of his Father's throne, to welcome and receive all comers, saying, *Him that cometh, I will in no ways cast out.*

6thly, That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports, That the Lamb is the *centre* of all the glory, that surrounds and encompasses the throne of God, or the throne of grace. He is the centre of divine *fulness*, and of all the glorious perfections of God ; for *in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. Every attribute of God shines gloriously in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the centre of all divine *truths* ; and we cannot know any precious gospel truths or mysteries in a saving and satisfying manner, unless we know the truth, as it is in Jesus, *Eph. iv. 21.* He is the centre of all the divine *promises*, being the centre of the covenant of grace, in whom it stands fast, and *in whom all the promises are yea and amen, to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20. He is the centre of all divine *blessings* ; for God blesses us with *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, only in Christ*, Eph. i. 3. He is the centre of all divine *grace* ; for it is *out of his fulness that we receive, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. He is the centre of all divine *comfort*, for he is the *consolation of Israel*, and is *anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows*, Psalm xlv. 7. that he may anoint with the same oil, and bring his people to fellowship with him in the same spirit of joy and consolation, according to their measure. He is the centre of all saving *offices* ; being, as a *Prophet*, the *wisdom of God*

God for our illumination; as a *Priest*, the *righteousness* of God for our justification; and, as a *King*, the *power* of God for our sanctification. He is the centre of all sweet *relations*; the *Saviour*, the *surety*, the *head*, the *husband*, the *all and in all* of his people, their *light*, and *life*, and *strength*, and *righteousness*, and *rock*, and *refuge*, and *portion*. He is the centre, where God and man may meet together; for he dwells between the cherubims, on the mercy-seat, and over these: *There will I meet with thee*, *Exod. xxy. 22.* *There will I commune with thee.* And no communion with God can we have, but in him, who is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the mid-man between God and us. In a word, being in the centre of the throne, he is the centre of all things: he is the centre of all the sins of the redeemed for their expiation; for *the Lord hath laid on him*, or made to meet in him, *the iniquity of us all*, *Isa. liii. 6.* And the centre of all their service for their acceptation, for *we are accepted in the beloved*, *Eph. i. 6.* And thus he is someway the centre of all things; for, as all things are in his hands, so all things in heaven and earth are said to *meet in him*, *Eph. i. 10.* *Colos. i. 20.* And therefore the Lamb, that is in the midst and centre of the throne, ought to be the centre of our hearts and affections, the centre of our love and delight. Thus, among other things, he is the centre of all our provision. Which leads to

The *fitst* thing proposed, which was, to notice the benefit of *feeding*, that issues from the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne; *he shall feed them.* Whatever other pastoral care, rule or government, this word imports; yet I shall, because this is a feast-day, notice that part of his pastoral

care, that is here exprest by the word *feed*: the Lamb that is in the throne shall *feed them*. If I were to enlarge upon this subject, I might tell you, how the Lamb feeds his church and people, with the *manifestations* of his glory, with the *intimations* of his love, with the *communications* of his grace, and with the *consolations* of his Spirit: but I confine myself to the doctrine of the Lamb being in the midst of the throne, and therefore I shall speak to this *feeding* only as it relates to that doctrine. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is the food; the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is the feeder; and the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne makes the feeding of those that are the followers of the Lamb, to have the following qualities. All our sacramental food and provision, this day, must come from the throne of God, and of the Lamb. Therefore,

1st, It must be *kindly* food and provision, that comes from that throne, since the Lamb is in the midst of it. The meek Lamb, the loving Lamb, that *feeds his flock like a shepherd, gathers the lambs with his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young*, Isa. xl. 11. *He makes them to lie down in green pastures*, Psalm xxiii. 2. He makes them to go out and in, and find pasture: it is sweet, and easy, and kindly feeding, that issues from the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And yet,

2^{dly}, It must be *powerful* feeding that comes from thence, it is from the throne of power: and indeed you will not feed to advantage this day, unless power come from the throne to make you take your food. It is the work of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to feed by the efficacy of his grace: All the means and ministers in the world cannot

cannot make a soul open its mouth, or heart, for this food, till power come from the throne; and yet, when it comes, it comes so sweetly and kindly, that there is nothing like force or violence. The man is made as frank and free, in the going out after Christ, to be the food of his perishing soul, as if there were no power at all put forth in the case. Power makes him eat and feed heartily; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,* Psalm cx. 3.

3dly, It must be *spiritual* feeding, that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne; for his throne, his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, it is not of this world; *the flesh profits nothing*, his words are *spirit* and *life*. Food for the soul must be spiritual food: *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17.

4thly, It must be *plentiful* provision and feeding that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne; for it is a rich throne, and *all fulness* is there. There is plenty of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; abundance of all sorts. Here is *Wisdom* enough for the most ignorant, *righteousness* enough for the most guilty, *sanctification* enough for the most filthy, *redemption* enough for the most ruined, *comfort* enough for the most sorrowful, *strength* enough for the weakest, *Psalm xxxvi. 8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.* O the plenty that is about the throne! Plenty of divine perfections to feed upon, when viewed in Christ. Indeed, the mildest attributes of God out of Christ will be a terrible sight, but the most terrible attributes of God in Christ are a pleasant feast, even *justice, holiness and truth.* Here is plenty of pro-

mises to feed upon, while the performance is delayed. Every thing in Christ is a feast; his names, and natures, offices, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession; his merit, his spirit, his word, his flesh, his blood, and his victory.

5thly, It must be *suitable* food that comes from this throne; for the Lamb, being in the midst of it, will distribute equally and suitably. He cannot possibly fail and miscarry, by giving too much, or too little: being in the middle of the throne, and the middle person between God and man, to communicate what is suitable for God to give, and suitable for man to have, no more and no less does he communicate, because he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And indeed, as a key is suited to a lock, so is Christ's fulness to our wants. We are *diseased*, he is a *physician*; we are *lost*, he is a *Saviour*; we are *debtors*, he is a *surety*; we are *dead*, he is *life*; we are *blind*, he is *eye-salve*; we are *naked*, he is *clothing*; we are *troubled*, he is *rest*; are we *bewildered*? he is a *guide*: are we in *danger*? he is a *guard*: are we *benighted*? he is a *sun*: are we *assaulted*? he is a *shield*. Who in heaven or earth can thus supply our wants, heal our wounds, bear our burdens, sweeten our afflictions, subdue our enemies, as Christ? O suitable feeding to the soul is here in all cases!

6thly, It must be *joyful* feeding and provision that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne; for the throne is a place of joy and triumph. Here must be the choicest cheer, amidst the choicest company; God, and Christ, and angels, and saints. There is as much sweetness in Christ, as there is fulness and suitableness: he is the fountain of sweetness; his mouth is most sweet, his presence is most sweet, his fruits are most sweet; *I sat down under*

der his shadow with great delight (says the church) *and his fruits were sweet to my taste.* Here are the sweet rivers of living waters, that drive away all death and sorrow, as it here follows in the text.

7thly, It must be *free* provision and feeding, that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There is nothing to pay about a throne, as this would be a disgrace and disparagement to the prince, that possesses the throne, so here, all is to be had freely. The finest feast is always the freest, *Isa. lv. 1.* The Legalists, that cannot feed upon Christ and his righteousness freely, but only upon their own works and duties, they *feed upon ashes*: the legal preacher, that cannot offer Christ freely, is like the unnatural fathers, that, when their children ask *bread*, give them a *stone*; when they ask a *fish*, give them a *scorpion*. What is our best performances but scorpions, serpents, stones, yea, poison to them that make them their foul-food? Nothing can feed the soul but Christ. *Rabshakeh* threatned, *2 Kings xviii. 26.* *to make all the people on the wall to eat their own dung*: the legal preacher accomplishes this threatning, in a spiritual sense; our best works are but dung; *I will spread the dung of your sacrifices on your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts.* But O here the finest and sweetest feast is the freest; from the throne of grace proceed all blessings freely.

8thly, It must be *durable* provision and feeding that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne; for he ever lives upon the throne, and his throne is for ever and ever; and therefore everlasting food comes from thence, and food that nourishes to everlasting life. *I am the living bread, that came down from heaven,* says Christ; *if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever,* John vi. 51.

Here is provision for eternity; *Labour not for the meat that perisheth*, says Christ, *but for that meat that endures to everlasting life, which the son of man shall give unto you*, John vi. 27. What a fool was he, that filled his barns, and then said, *Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years!* while God said to him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.* But O what wisdom were it to lay up for eternity this day, that death may not be able to rob you of your store, but that ye may have it all before your hand! The Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne, lives for ever there to feed, he lives for ever to make intercession, he lives for ever to make provision: they have everlasting food, who have the Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne, to feed them. Thus you see what sort of feeding is to be had under the throne of the Lamb, and who it is that must cover our table this day, even the Lamb in the midst of the throne; he hath mounted the throne, to be a feeder, and to let down blessings to his footstool.

Sixth thing proposed was the APPLICATION. Is it so, that our Lord Jesus is the Lamb in the midst of the throne? Hence we may infer these following particulars;

1st, Surely we need not be ashamed of a crucified Christ, nor of our christian passover this day, the Lamb that was sacrificed for us. Since now the Lamb is upon the throne, and in the midst of the throne, the shame and reproach of the cross is wiped away, with the glory and splendor of the throne. We need not be ashamed of the cross of Christ, who is now in the midst of the throne. Let none despise those, that espouse the cause and interest of the Lamb, whatever hardships they may

may be brought under before courts, councils and judicatories on earth: they need not be ashamed to go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach: *God forbid I should glory (says Paul) save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* O! it is our greatest glory to be bearing his cross, who is now wearing the crown; to be followers of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne.

2dly, Hence we may learn, that the church of God is safe, since the Lamb, who is their head, is in the midst of the throne. Believers in Christ are happy and safe; their head and husband, their Lord and King, is upon the throne: the militant church, the fighting remnant, are in no great danger, while he hath the government. May be there are some here, like *Eli*, whose hearts are trembling for the ark of God and the work of God at this day, when so many axes and hammers are lifted up against the carved work of the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of God's house: but let this be matter of joy to their hearts, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne; and therefore, as he *rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth*, and over-rules all damage done to his house, so he will make it appear in the issue, that, according to his word, *Upon all the glory there shall be a defence.*

3dly, Hence we may learn, that the enemies of Christ may have a quaking heart, since the Lamb, whom they despise, is in the midst of the throne. His Father, that set him on the throne, hath said, *Psal. lxxxix. 23. I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and his anointed, saying, let us break their*

their bands, and cast their cords from us. But he that sits in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision: having set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, he will break them in pieces with a rod of iron, &c. Psal. ii. 1, 2, &c. The Lord reigns, let the people tremble, Psal. xciv. 11. He dwells between the cherubims, let the earth be moved. The Lamb being in the midst of the throne, is matter of terror to the enemies of his glory; for he sits upon the throne of power, and the Lamb will be a lion to tear them to pieces.

4^{thly}, Hence we may learn, that there is a sure foundation laid for the faith and hope of life and justification by the blood of the lamb. Since the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, the throne of grace is the door of hope; and, that our hearts may be raised and lifted up to a lively hope, the Lamb, that was slain, is raised and lifted up to the throne. Did he rise again for our justification, and does his resurrection seal upon our consciences the sufficiency of his death, and the acceptableness of his righteousness unto God? Much more may our faith and hope be confirmed herein, that he is exalted to the midst of the throne; for his Father had never put so much honour upon him, had he not been infinitely well pleased and satisfied with his obedience unto the death. We may now read the dream that *Jacob* had at *Bethel*, Gen. xxviii. 12. *Behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: the ladder is the Lamb; the foot of the ladder was fixed in the midst of the earth when he was here in a humbled estate, and now the top of the ladder is fixed in the midst of the throne; all the rounds of it are compleated, that we may ascend by this way from earth to heaven.*

5thly, Hence we may learn, what good reason there is for having a high esteem of Christ, since God hath so highly exalted him, to the very midst of the throne. O should not Christ be high in our valuation, when God hath set him so high ! No wonder then that it is said, *If any man love not, nor esteem our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.* Woe will be to them that will not put honour upon him, whom God the Father put so much honour upon, and that as our redeemer and kinsman.

6thly, Hence learn, that the throne of God needs not be terrible unto us, since the Lamb, the meek Lamb, is in the midst of the throne ; sinners need not fear to go to the throne of God, as long as the Lamb is there. If unbelief look toward the throne, it views it only as it is the *throne of God*, and so fills the soul with slavish fear, and frightful apprehensions : but true faith views it as the *throne of God and of the Lamb* ; and the view of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, raises some joy, hope and pleasure in the midst of the heart. Why, there is meekness as well as majesty, grace as well as grandeur about the throne, because the Lamb is there.

7thly, Hence we may learn what ground there is to expect the great God to be present in the midst of us this day, because the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. We would have no ground to expect, that God would be with us on the footstool, if Christ were not with God upon the throne. Christ promised, upon his ascending to the throne, that he would be with his people, saying, *Lo, I am with you always* : he promised, when he went up to the throne, he would send down his spirit, *John xvi. 8. If I go away, I will send*

send him ; therefore, if he be, by his spirit, in the midst of us this day, it is because he is in the midst of the throne. It is easy for him to be both sitting gloriously in the midst of the throne, and at the same time walking graciously in the midst of the golden candlesticks, *Rev. ii. 1.* He is both the blest *Λόγος*, the word of God ; and the blest *Immanuel*, God with us. The seven spirits are said to be before the throne. The spirit of God is one, but his gifts, operations and influences are various : and the Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne, hath the spirit to give ; and, having said that he will send him, O let us look to the throne, and thence expect the spirit according to his word.

8thly, Hence we may learn, what is the mark of a worthy communicant, namely, if he be a true believer of this doctrine, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. *Let a man examine himself* upon this, *and so let him eat*. I ask not if you say you believe, or think you believe ; but I bid you try if you truly believe, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. For helping you to this search, you may consider two things, namely, what *view* you have of this truth, and what *virtue* you find in it.

(1.) What *view* have you of this truth ? If you truly believe it, then you view it with approbation. Is your heart satisfied, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne ? Do you cordially approve of the Father's setting him so high ? Did it ever fill your heart with joy and satisfaction, and with some secret pleasure and exultation, that God hath put such honour upon Jesus ? And have you thus received this truth in the love of it, and in the sweetness of it ? O did ever your heart leap as
it

it were, within you, to think that the throne of God is also the throne of the Lamb, and so a throne open to you to come boldly unto by the blood of the Lamb, that encircles the throne like a rainbow? How does your heart stand affected to this truth? *With the heart man believes unto righteousness.*

(2.) What *virtue* have you found in this truth for leading you to enthrone Christ, as the Father hath done? As the Father hath set the Lamb in the midst of the throne of glory; so, have you set him in the midst of the throne of your heart? Is he, that is in the midst of the throne of God, in the midst of the throne with you? Surely, *to them that believe he is precious*, or an *honour*, as the word may be read: and they put this honour upon him, even to set him in the midst of the throne. O my dear friends, let me tell you, that by this you may try and examine yourselves, and prove your own selves, whether Christ be in you: if he be in you at all, he will be in the midst of the throne. You are not fit for a communion-table, and, at your peril be it, if you go, and yet some other things than Christ have the throne of your heart: if self be in the midst of the throne, if the world be in the midst of the throne, if your lusts be in the midst of the throne, Christ is not in you. It is true, the heart of the believer, while here, is not quite free of sin, and self, and the world: they may fight for the throne, and many times they may seem to gain the throne of their heart; but, sure I am, they never got peaceable possession of the throne of their heart. The believer is free from *peace* with sin, tho' he is never free from *war* with sin in this world: his league with it is broken, he can never consent to its rule and government

vernment any more ; and hence, whenever sin usurps the throne, like *Adonijah*, then the believer enters his protest against it before the King of kings, saying, *Lord, hast thou not said, that Solomon shall reign ?* Hast thou not promised, that grace shall reign, and that *sin shall not have the dominion ?* O down, down with this usurper ; and let Christ have his own proper room and place, which is the midst of the throne. Hath vertue come from the throne of the Lamb to enable you to enthrone Christ in the midst of your heart ? Hath he the throne of your esteem, the throne of your delight, the throne of your affection ? Felt you ever any vertue coming down from the throne of Christ, to dethrone sin, and to draw your heart up to the throne of God ? Did you ever find so much grace descending from the throne, as to make your hearts ascend to the throne ? And, is it the view of the Lamb's being there, that fires your heart, and makes it flame upwards to the very midst of the throne where he is ?

Again, *lastly*, Hence we may learn the *duty* of sinners, that hear this doctrine of the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne. I think it is your duty, yea, I am sure it is your duty, to come and *see* the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to come and *match* with the Lamb, and then to come to the *marriage-supper* of the Lamb.

1st, It is your duty, to come and *see* this great sight, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. If the question be, Where is the Lamb ? the answer is, in the midst of the throne. But, if the question again be, Where is the throne, that we may see it, and the Lamb in the midst of it ? I answer, God's throne of glory is properly in heaven, but his throne of grace is really on earth, as
well

well as in heaven; it is erected in the church, and in this gospel-dispensation, declaring that *God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself*. A God in Christ is a throne of grace every where, and *a glorious throne every where is the place of our sanctuary*, Jer. xvii. 12. Hence, when the apostle says, *Let us come boldly to the throne*; he does not mean locally climbing up to heaven, but believingly approaching to God in Christ, as held forth in the gospel of his grace. Why then, as Christ is in the midst of the throne, so the throne is in the midst of this house.

Question, What shall we see, if we come and see the Lamb in the midst of the throne? *Answer*, You will see, that the throne of God is open to sinners, because the Lamb is there; and that there is access with boldness from all quarters, at every side of the throne, because the Lamb is in the midst of it. The blood of the Lamb encircles the throne, and sprinkles the mercy-seat; and therefore guilty sinners may come, through this guilt-expiating blood. Here you will see the most dreadful attributes of God divested of all their dread and terror, and appearing amiable. Infinite holiness and infinite justice are awful attributes, and both are upon the throne of God, but the Lamb is in the midst of them: holiness is gratified, justice is satisfied, every attribute is glorified; *Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other*, and all harmoniously conspire, because the Lamb is in the midst of them. The mildest attributes would be dreadful to sinners, if the Lamb were not in the midst of them; but the most terrible attributes are amiable and lovely, when you see the Lamb in the midst of them.

Here you will see the most terrible dispensations of God *smiling* in your face, when you see the Lamb in the midst of them; for, though *Clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*. He that *rides in heaven by his name J A H*, and makes the clouds his chariots, as he sits in the midst of his throne, so he sits in the midst of the cloudy and dark dispensations of our day, to order and over-rule. Black clouds are over the church of *Scotland*, and the government, as it is in the hands of men, is all in disorder and confusion, and turning upside down; but, if you see the Lamb in the midst of these dispensations, you will see that the government is upon his shoulders, and that not only justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, but that justice and judgment sit with mercy and grace, and that God hath some glorious design on foot, however terrible to his enemies, yet merciful to all the followers of the Lamb. In a word, here you will see all the glory of God, when you see the Lamb in the midst of the throne. O the throne of glory is a throne of grace, because the Lamb is there; the throne of justice is a throne of mercy, because the Lamb is there; the throne of infinite holiness is accessible by guilty sinners, because the Lamb is there. O come and see.

2dly, It is your duty to come and *match* with the Lamb. O sinner, that hast been married to the devil hitherto, married to your lusts, married to the world; O man, woman, young men and maidens, will ye come and be *the bride, the Lamb's wife*? as the word is, *Rev. xix. 7*. Let none dare to go to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to the communion table, until once they have given their heart and hand to the Son of God, and joined in marriage

marriage with the Lamb; and may this be a marriage-day. It is a great part of our work to court a bride for the Lamb, and then to lead her to the table; and O may drawing power come from the throne, to draw out many hearts after him! O sinner, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, is come to court your heart, saying, *My son, give me thy heart*; and he is come to offer himself to thee man, to thee woman, saying, *Behold me, behold me; come to me that you may have life*. What sort of a match would you have? Would you be well married, and happy in a husband to all eternity?

1st, Are you for an *honourable* match, a *royal* match? O here is the King of Kings, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the *Head of all principalities and powers*!

2dly, Are you for a *rich* and *opulent* match? Here is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, in whom are hid *unsearchable riches*, and *all the fulness of the Godhead*, everlasting treasures of grace and glory.

3dly, Are you for a *bountiful* match? O! there is none like the Lamb in the midst of the throne for a generous spirit, willing and ready to lay out all his riches, that *out of his fulness* ye may receive, and *grace for grace*.

4thly, Are you for a *beautiful* match? Behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the *King in his beauty*; he is *white and ruddy*, and *altogether lovely*: no wonder, for he is the *brightness of the Father's glory*; all the glory of God shines in his face. Some of God's glory shines in the works of creation, the sun, moon, and stars; some of it in the works of providence: but all the glory

of God is here. He is the temple of God, and *there doth beauty shine*, Psalm xcvi. 6.

5thly, Are you for a *loving* as well as a lovely Match? Behold, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is a mirror of love, without all dimension: *O the height and depth, and length and breadth of his Love!* He loved and prayed for his enemies that murdered him, and how then must he love his friends that will match with him? Again,

6thly, Are you for a *beloved* match, who is valued and esteemed of all, whose love and esteem is worth the regarding? O the Lamb in the midst of the throne is beloved of all the holy angels, they admire and adore him; he is beloved of all the saints in heaven and earth, they say, *This is our beloved*; he is beloved of God the Father, who says, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*: he is hated of none but the devil, and his wicked crew.

In a word, 7thly, Are you for an *immortal* match? Well, here is the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne; he lives for ever and ever: *I am he that was dead, and am alive; and behold, I live for evermore.* The best friends here in this world are mortal, and may leave you in a moment; but the Lamb is the *King eternal and immortal*: he lives for ever, and he can make you live for ever. O mortal worms, whose bodies will be laid in the dust in a few days or hours, and who have nothing but a thin wall of flesh between you and eternity; are ye for a match, that can abundantly jointure you for another world, and portion you for eternity? Is this a despicable bargain? Are your lusts and idols and perishing vanities of this world, a better bargain? Nay, you dare not say it for your life. This very offer of Christ,

accept

accept or reject it as you will, it is worth ten thousand worlds.

8thly, Are you for a match, that can pay all your debt to law and justice, that can supply all your wants, that can heal all your diseases, that can bear all your burdens, sanctify all your crosses, and sweeten all your afflictions, subdue all your enemies, and manage all your concerns, and make you happy for ever? Then come and match with the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne: a greater offer cannot be made to you than this most glorious king, upon the most glorious throne. O great proposal! Wonder, men and angels, at this gospel-offer! Be astonished, O heavens and earth! If such a matchless match be offered and rejected, all the angels and saints that are about his throne will cry, *shame upon you for ever*, that reject and refuse such a bargain; and we must say, *Amen*, everlasting shame must be upon you. What was the *Gadarenes* blasphemy, but their preferring their swine to our Lord Jesus Christ, when he was upon the earth, and not yet upon the throne? But greater is your blasphemy, O sinner, if you prefer your swinish lusts to our glorious Lord, now exalted to the throne. What! prefer the swine, that are in the midst of the dunghill, to the Lamb in the midst of the throne! O base, brutish, mad, and devilish blasphemy!

I hope, by this time, there are none hearing me, but are so far self-convicted, that they see they must condemn themselves, if they reject such an offer as is made to them; and therefore I take witness upon it, that when the Lamb, that is now in the midst of the throne of grace, will be the Lamb in the midst of the throne of judgment, at the last day, ye must own that the sentence of con-

demnation, that shall be then passed against you, will be just and righteous, if you stand to your refusal: therefore, though this should be a rejected offer to day, yet it shall redound to the honour of the Lamb at the great day, insomuch that the condemnation of you will be the justification of him; your own consciences witness, that he will be *just when he speaks, and clear when he judges* and adjudges you to hell and damnation, because of your neglecting the great salvation, and rejecting the offer of the great Saviour, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. By way of anticipation the tribunal is now erected before-hand in your bosom, where God's deputy conscience, sits as the judge; and there the Lamb is acquitted as free of your blood, and the sentence comes forth, that your blood is upon your own head. Well, I hope your judgment is persuaded of this, that such an offer is made to you, as is worthy of all acceptance: but O, since the judgment may be informed and gained, while yet the heart is not engaged; therefore, though faith come by hearing what a worthy Lamb is offered to you, yet bare hearing will not do without the heart-drawing power of the Spirit, which is before the throne: and therefore, this being the *pure crystal river*, that *proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*, Rev. xxii. 1, 2. that this river of the drawing influences of the spirit, may run down among you, I will put the best rope in your hand, that I know, for bringing down this blessing; it is even the Lamb's own sweet promise, *John xii. 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* Where notice, 1. The persons concerned. 2. The promise. And, 3. The condition of it.

1st, The persons, *all men*. There is an *all* among sinful men, that Christ the second *Adam* hath to draw to him; these were *given of the Father* to him, and they *shall come*, *John* vi. 37. Yea, these he *must bring* to him, *John* x. 16. He must draw them, and they shall hear his voice. But, lest any should hereupon say, perhaps I am not among the number of the second *Adam's all*, that he is to draw; perhaps I am excluded by the secret counsel, or hidden decree of God from all eternity. Therefore I will tell you what may satisfy you fully upon this point, that the Lamb, that now is in the midst of his Father's throne, was in the midst of his Father's counsels from all eternity; the Lamb was at that council-table: therefore let not the thoughts of the eternal decree be terrible and dreadful to you; for the Lamb was upon the concert, and therefore nothing passed at that council to the prejudice of any poor sinner, that would venture his soul upon the blood of the Lamb. It was concerted there, that the ground and object of faith should be no hidden counsel, no past decree, but a present openly declared truth; namely, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and that whosoever will, might come to him, and him that comes, he will in no wise cast out: and therefore, if you venture your life and salvation upon the Lamb, that is at present upon the throne of grace, you have nothing either past or future to fear; neither any past decree, or any future wrath: and now, by this free offer of Christ to you all, God is accomplishing his glorious decree, that you may be for ever happy upon your acceptance, or for ever inexcusable upon your refusal.

2dly, The promise, which is, *I will draw all men unto me.* In case any should say, there is indeed a free offer, and a good bargain; but I have a reluctant as well as a deceitful heart, I cannot embrace the offer, nor bring up my heart to close with Christ, and make up the match. Why, here is the encouraging promise, *I will draw*; that is, I will send the spirit to draw out your heart, to make it rise and mount, like a flame towards the throne, where the Lamb sits. But if I do not find this drawing power, what encouragement have I to look for it? Why, notice,

3dly, The condition of this promise, *If I be lifted up from the earth.* Not an uncertain condition, depending upon us; but a sure condition, depending upon himself: *If I be lifted up, or, when I am lifted up.* Now, the condition is performed; Christ was not only lifted up upon the cross, but now he is lifted up to the throne. Now, Christ said, *John xvi. 7.* If I go to the Father, I will send the spirit; If I go to the throne, I will send down the spirit in his drawing influences. And now, may you not plead, Lord, the condition is performed, the time is come, thou art lifted up, thou art upon the throne; therefore let the crystal river run down out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. Is this the language of your heart and soul? Lord, draw, draw; thou that art the Lamb in the midst of the throne, draw my heart to thee, according to thy word. Is your heart burning or beating, saying, O! I am the blackest, the vilest sinner that ever matched with such a glorious one; but yet I find my heart beating and burning within me, saying, O! to be drawn, O! to have the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, to erect his throne in the midst of my heart, and to rule

there

here in the midst of his enemies, and to be *all in all* to me, for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, to me? Why then, we may say, your heart is the throne, and the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. And, if the drawing power of his spirit, hath made up the match between him and you, we are warranted to lead you next to the marriage-supper, where *the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you.*

A Word at the Close on the Monday.

BEFORE you go, I shall conclude this solemn work in two words, one directed to the *enemies* of the Lamb, and another to the *Lovers* of the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

First, to you that are *enemies* to him. If the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, then let sinners stoop to him; O sink down at his feet, and be content to be ruled by him: If you be ruled by your own lusts, and by your sins, you put Christ out of his throne in effect, and put your Lusts in his room. O sinner, consider how you cross and contradict the great God by this means: he hath said of Christ, *Psalms ii. I have set my King upon mine holy hill*; I have set him in the midst of the throne: and, are you saying to your lusts, be ye king over me? Man will you live in sin, and sin against him that is in the midst of God's throne? If a thief cut a purse when the judge is upon the bench, and the sentence ready to pass against him, he is worthy to be hanged: Christ is on the bench, in the act of judgment;

O Man, beware of sinning against him : be afraid, O ye that are enemies to the Lamb, *enemies in your minds by wicked works ; it is hard for you to kick against the pricks : Can you harden yourself against God and prosper ?* Nay, you shall be so far from prospering in this way, that the Lamb in the midst of the throne hath a rod of iron, to break and dash you to pieces. *Consider this, ye that forget God.* The Lamb will in a little while be a lyon to *tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver.* The Lamb is yet upon the throne of grace, inviting you ; but it may be, this is the last invitation you shall have, till you see him upon a judgment-seat : and what shall be the effect of these gospel-offers ye have enjoyed ? These solemn feasts will not always last, and it may be, death will dash you down to the dust before another season of this sort. Can ye find in your heart to let Christ go, and this occasion over, without getting any good of him ? Are you content that salvation hath come so near you, and you miss it for ever ? If not, O will ye take the first opportunity of retiring to some corner, and crying to the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to come and draw you, and back these precious means with his powerful blessing ! He that is in the midst of the throne, hath been setting his throne in the midst of *Dunfermline*, and saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men !* O let him not lift his tent, till you be taken in ! Again, O crown him King, whom the Father hath crowned ! O might this be his coronation-day ! a day of espousals with the Lamb, is his coronation-day. *Go forth, O daughter of Jerusalem, &c.* Happy day, if you could go away, saying, such a day, at the communion of *Dunfermline*, Christ was crowned

King ;

King ; I beheld King Jesus with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him, and saw that the Father set him in the midst of the throne, and I helped to put the crown upon his head ; for, through grace, I set him in the midst of the throne of my heart, and crowned him King there : I found in my heart to dethrone sin, and enthrone Christ. O is Christ crowned king here ! Hath no virtue come from the throne to draw my heart, as the Adamant draws the iron ? The clucking of the hen makes the chicken to run : gospel-preaching is the clucking of the Lord-Jesus ; and much of this you have had these days by gone. O have you run under his wings ! See what Christ says to *Jerusalem*, Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered ! &c. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.* May we hope, that God will not yet leave *Scotland* desolate, but that Christ will be crowned King in the church of *Scotland* ; though he be robbed of his royalties, and notwithstanding of all unwarrantable acts that tend to the hurt of his government, he is in the midst of the throne.

Secondly, To you that are the lovers of the Lamb, I offer first a word of comfort : surely *tho' the earth should be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea* ; though external governments should be dissolved and overturned, yet, while the Lamb is upon the throne, all shall be ruled to advantage, unto all the lovers of the Lamb. What though ye should see ministers of Christ suspended, or deposed for adhering to the testimony of Christ, and endeavouring to keep a good conscience in an evil day ? *Tho' they should be reproached and persecuted, yet still there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God :*

God: and still there is this great ground of comfort, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and the crystal river proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb: and upon this throne, the Lamb rules righteously and mercifully, though men rule never so unjustly and cruelly; and in a little time, there will be an end of man's rule and government, but the Lamb's dominion is for ever and ever. God the Father hath proclaimed that he is the everlasting King, saying, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* The followers of the Lamb have unspeakable ground of comfort in Christ, whatever trouble they have in the world; *In the world you shall have tribulation, but in me you shall have peace, &c.* I have overcome the world, and I am now upon the throne; and you at last shall overcome, and sit down with me on my throne.

1. Here is comfort against desertion. Though the Lord may hide himself, and seem to be far away, yet still it is food to your faith, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne; and, as he never deserts the throne, so he will never leave you nor forsake you: Why? The promises are all yea and amen, in him that is ever upon the throne, to make out his word.

2. Here is comfort against the cross. While you have the cross upon your back, you may keep the throne in your eye, and you may be sure of pity and favour thence, because the Lamb is there, who went from the cross to the throne.

3. Here is comfort against the power of sin, corruption and spiritual enemies, be they never so powerful: for the Lamb is upon the throne of power, and *all power in heaven and earth is given to him,*
and

and he is concerned in honour to destroy these enemies.

4. Here is comfort against want and weakness. Your strength lies in the Lamb, &c.

5. Here is comfort against church-tyranny. Times have been, when there was tyranny in the state over the consciences of men; these were reckoned very evil days: but, when there is tyranny in the church over the consciences of men, it is in many respects worse: for church-persecution is a kind of blasphemy; it is, in the name of God, to persecute the people of God. But yet here is comfort in this case, that church-tyranny cannot keep the throne; *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee; which frameth mischief by a law?* No, no; *Psaln xciv. 20, 21.* The Lamb will keep the midst of the throne, and tread down his enemies in due time.

What would make a church-government glorious and eminent? namely, when the Lamb is kept in the midst of the throne, and when his spiritual kingdom is kept distinct from the temporal kingdoms of this world. The government of the church is quite mismanaged, when the Lamb is put out of the throne, and temporal heritages are made the foundation of spiritual privileges: as for example, when in the choice of pastors to any congregation, which is a spiritual privilege relating to immortal souls, the heritors of this earth, the heirs of a little yellow dust, have such a privilege and preference given them, by vertue of their temporal inheritance, as if they were lords of the consciences of men, and lords over God's heritage: surely their secular advantages in this world can entitle them to no spiritual privilege in the house of God, no more than an earthly inheritance

heritance can entitle them to heaven ; but to give them a dominion over the souls of men in this matter, is a practical dethroning of the Lamb from the midst of the throne. Church-officers themselves are discharged to usurp such a dominion, as to be lords over God's heritage : it is unlawful for them to obtrude pastors upon a christian people, without their consent ; far less have they power to put such a dominion, over men's consciences, into the hands of earthly superiors. How can they give what they have not themselves ? In spirituals we are to own no man Lord, but he that is Lord of lords, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. Church-government is quite overturned, when the throne of Christ's spiritual kingdom is possessed by any other in this world but only the Lamb.

Here is comfort against death. Death shall not reign, because the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and liveth for ever and ever, and hath the keys of hell and death ; and therefore death shall be swallowed up in victory. Here is comfort against the fear of judgment ; that awful day needs be no terror to the lovers of the Lamb, because, when the fiery tribunal will be erected, the Lamb will be in the midst of the throne ; and the friends of the Lamb will be received into his bosom, while all his enemies will stand trembling before his throne. Here is comfort in the view of a long eternity, that the Lamb, that is for ever in the midst of the throne, will for ever feed you, and lead you unto living fountains of waters, and wipe away all tears from your eyes. O who can tell the happiness of the higher house, the glorious feeding and leading you shall have there, the everlasting and everliving fountain of divine consolation,

tion, wherewith ye shall be for ever refreshed! The fountain is God and his glorious attributes, Christ and his inexhaustible fulness, the spirit and his everlasting consolation, a glorious trinity: God who is now a promising God, will then be a performing God. Who can tell the sweetness of that blessing, his wiping all tears from your eyes? He that hath a bottle for your tears now, hath a napkin to wipe them all away then; for *ye shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

Secondly, I offer a word of advice to you. O if the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, then be quiet amidst all the maladministrations of men, amidst all the mismanagements of churchmen and church-judicatories; because, tho' men cannot be justified in their church-ruining projects, yet the Lamb, being in the midst of the throne, hath a just, holy, and sovereign hand in ordering these evils, when he hath a controversy to plead with us. Let us see the hand of God in leaving men to themselves, to rob the church and people of God of their rights and reformation-privileges. What was the hand of *Pilate* against Christ, the cruellest act that ever was done? Why, it was the hand of God himself: for it is said, when *Pilate* spake, saying, *Dost thou not know that I have power to crucify thee, or to set thee at liberty?* Christ answered, *Thou couldst have no power, except it were given thee of my Father.* Even so say I, churchmen or church-judicatories, courts or assemblies, could have no power to break down any of the carved work of reformation, no power to harm the liberties of God's people in chusing their pastors, no power to obtrude ministers on christian congregations, willing to chuse faithful pastors, no
power

power to pass sentence against such as oppose that flood of defection, except it were given them of our Father ; and therefore let us be quiet and sober : we have some other thing to do, than to break out in a passionate resentment against poor mortal men, the sinful instruments of the church's confusion and disorder. When *Shimei* railed upon *David*, *Let him alone*, says *David*, *may be the Lord hath bidden him*. The Lord, for our trial and chastisement, may be, hath bidden some in our day, go and tread upon the rights of yonder people ; go and reproach and persecute, suspend and depose such ministers for keeping a good conscience in an evil time : I say, it may be the Lord hath bidden ; yea, *Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it ?* Is there evil in the church, and the Lord hath not done it ; No, no : Well, what of that ? This does not justify evil instruments, no ; but it says, we are to be sober, and lay our hand upon our mouth, and bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him : we are to be dumb, and not to open our mouth, because he does it. The Lamb in the midst of the throne hath the government upon his shoulders, and he is righteously ordering and over-ruling these matters for the profitable trial of his people, and the glorious praise of his name in the issue. *The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of his wrath wilt thou restrain*. The Lord hath his own time and way of restraining his enemies, and his own time and way of reforming his church ; and when the Lord shall appear in his glory, he will build up *Zion*. Sometimes he sees fit to appear in his wrath, and then he lets out the wrath of man, the enmity of man, to the breaking down of *Zion*, and of his carved work :

but

but there is another time, when he sees fit to appear in his glory, and then to restrain the wrath of man, and reform his church. And since he is appearing in his wrath in our day, letting out the reins of man's wrath, to the ruining of reformation-work; O be sober and humble, and depend upon him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who hath the reins in his hand, to let them out, or take them in, as he pleases. Instruments are but his word, his hand, by which he does what he pleases, *Psal. xvii. 13, 14. Deliver my soul from the wicked, from men which are thy band, O Lord.* Think not then, that the government is out of Christ's hand, when men are doing many sad things, and giving many heavy blows to the work of God: no, no; men are but his hand, and it is the hand of God that justly and righteously is lying heavy upon his people. Look above men then, you have not to do with them; there is a turn of matters just as he is pleased to turn his hand; the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of heavy clouds hanging over *Scotland*; therefore look to him, that he may turn away his wrath; *Psal. ii. at the close, Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Again, (2.) If it is only the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, O then be tender of these that are followers of the Lamb, while they are yet upon the footstool, and not yet set down with Christ upon his throne. They are in danger in an evil day, wherein they are called to give testimony against the evils and corruptions of the day, to go aside to some extreme or other. There are many thoughts of heart, and many needless words
among

among people at present about the manner of testifying. Some are accused as if they were too far forward, others are accused as if they were too far behind, in their testimony. Well, not to meddle with mistakes people may be under, it may be both these are true: for, who can say, I am clean, and do not err toward the right or left-hand, when they would appear for Christ and his cause? But O be tender of the militant followers of Christ: I hope you will remember, that it is only the Lamb that is able to keep the midst of the throne; and I hope, we are all willing to subscribe to this, that this honour only belongs to him, that he was able to keep the midst of the way to the throne, without going to one side or other: none but himself was ever able to do so; let him alone have the glory.

(3.) Let me say to you that have become the bride, the Lamb's wife, if the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, O then see, that ye frequent the throne. What more inviting argument than this can there be, that the Lamb is in the midst of it? and the farther in the better. Never rest till you be in the midst of the throne, where the Lamb is. You may have boldness to go as far in as the Lamb goes, and you will find this the most pleasant exercise in the world, and the most profitable also: for grace and mercy is about the throne of grace; it is a mercy-seat, because the Lamb is there.

(4.) O believer, if the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, even the Lamb, your Head, your Husband, see that you live upon him by faith; let the Lamb be your feeder, and the Lamb your food every day; and beware you do not disgrace your honourable Husband. Are you married to
the

the Lamb in the midst of the throne? We read, that *Bathsheba* said to her son, *Prov. xxxi. 4. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink.* So, it is not for believers in Christ to drink and tittle, to swear and cheat; the graceless world do so. But, O have you been at a communion-table? Hath the Lord graced and honoured you with marriage to the Lamb in the midst of the throne? Do not disgrace yourself, it is below your rank: see that you live as becomes those that are matched and married to the Prince of the kings of the earth.

I remember some years ago, after certain disputing in the church about the doctrine of the gospel, we had a solemnity here, on which occasion I was led to speak of the substance of gospel-doctrine, Christ given of God to be a covenant of the people; and now I am obliged to remark, That after some contendings, or rather in the midst of some contendings in the church, about the government of his house, I have been led, without any design in me, but only as the text was pleasant to my own soul, to speak of the sum and centre of ecclesiastical government, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. I remember, at that former occasion, the Lord was present by his spirit, and gave evidence thereof unto many; and now I hope, at this occasion also, there shall be some blessings dropped down from the throne. And O to be going away from this place, with this truth sealed upon our heart, concerning the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne! Come what will, there is no fear of the followers of the Lamb, and the sufferers for him; for the Lamb is in the midst of the throne.

*A Treasure of Gospel-grace digged
out of mount Sinai.*

O R,

The sinner's claim of right, cleared from God's
Covenant with *Israel* at *Sinai*.

B E I N G

A S E R M O N preached on a sacramental oc-
casion at *Kinglassie*.

By Mr. E B E N E Z E R E R S K I N E.

E X O D. XX. 2, 3.

*I am the Lord thy God.---Thou shalt have
no other gods before me.*

S O L O M O N says, *Where the word of a King
is, there is power*; What power then must
there be, where the word of God is, who is the
King of kings, and the Lord of lords! Pray, first,
notice and consider what is said, *verse 1. God spake
all these words*: this is enough to make heaven and
earth to listen, with the most profound silence and
adoration, *Isa. i. 2. Hear, O heavens, give ear, O
earth; for the Lord hath spoken. The mighty God
the Lord hath spoken. And, when he speaks, he
calls the earth, from the rising of the sun to the going
down*

down thereof, to listen: and therefore, O *earth, earth, earth*, hear the word of the Lord. *God spake all these words*: this is like the sounding of a trumpet before the Kings proclamation. God spake all the words of this bible in a mediate way, by the mouths of his holy prophets and apostles; but, here, GOD himself is the immediate speaker; surely it must be some matter of vast moment, and of the highest importance, when God himself is the preacher. Well, what are the words God spake in such an immediate manner? *Ans.* All these words, from the 2d *verse* of this chapter, to the close of *verse* 17. And, first, I would have you remember, that all these words are spoken as directly to you, and to every soul hearing me, as ever they were unto *Israel*; and you and I are to reckon ourselves no less concerned now, to hear and regard them, than if we had been standing at the foot of *Sinai* among the children of *Israel*, when the heavenly trumpet sounded, and the voice of God was uttered with such awful majesty, as made *Moses* and all *Israel* fall a quaking and trembling: for all these words are directed unto us, as much as they were unto them; and therefore do not shift them, as though they were spoken only to *Israel*, or as if they were spoken to others, and not to you; no, no; to thee man, to thee woman, God now speaks all these words in this bible; and therefore hear and listen, with particular application of them to thy own soul, as if God were calling thee out of heaven, by name and surname. Two of these ten words I design to speak to, namely *these*, taken in their connection; *I am the Lord thy God,----Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*

Where two things are considerable ; 1st, A great and gracious promise, even the leading promise of the covenant, *I am the Lord thy God.* 2^{dly}, A great and gracious law or commandment, founded upon the *covenant promise* and grant ; a law, the obligation whereof the very light of nature cannot shake off ; *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

First, We have a great promise or new covenant-grant ; *I AM the Lord thy God.* The greatest word ever God spake since the fall of *Adam* ; for here he not only speaks forth his own glory and transcendent being, but he speaks over himself unto us ; as *our God.* Here is a promise, yea something more than a promise ; a promise is commonly expressed with respect to the time to come, concerning something God hath a mind to do hereafter ; but, here, God speaks in the present time, *I AM the Lord thy God.* i. e. Now while I am speaking, from this moment, I become your God ; and from this time forward, you may claim me as such, and hold me to it, by this my grant that I make of myself unto you. God's covenant of promise is not a thing *past*, or a thing *to come* only ; but a thing *present*, *I AM the Lord thy God.* Faith never wants a foundation ; no, it is always invariably the same : and, if our faith did bear a just proportion unto the ground of faith in the covenant, we would not be up and down in our believing ; no, we would be always believing, and that with the fullest assurance of faith. There is a two-fold title, by which God describes himself here, in this *covenant-grant* ; the one is *essential*, and the other *relative*. 1. The essential title is *JEHOVAH* ; the force of which is opened, *Rev. i. 4. He that is, that was, and is to come.* And it implies his *self-existence*, that he hath his being

being of himself, independent of all other beings ; and, that he giveth being to all other beings whatever, in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. The *Jews* think this name so sacred, that they judge it unlawful to pronounce it. It is a name common to each person of the glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are one God. Christ is called *J E H O V A H* frequently in the scripture, as well as the Father, *Jer. xxiii. 6. This is the name wherewith he shall be called, J E H O V A H our righteousness.* And we have very good ground to think that it was *Jehovah*, in the person of the *eternal Son*, that spake all these words from the top of *Sinai* unto *Israel*, as we may have occasion to clear more fully afterwards. 2. Another title whereby he here describes himself is *relative* ; *THY GOD* ; this is that which sweetens the name of *Jehovah* unto *us*, he is *Jehovah our God*. The terror of his amazing and infinite greatness was enough to affright and astonish all mankind : but when he says, *I am thy God, even thy own God* ; not an avenging God, to execute the penalty of the broken law upon thee, but a *God with thee*, a God on thy side, to pity, pardon and defend thee ; *a God gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and in truth* : this, O this ! renders his name *Jehovah* amiable and desirable.

Secondly, In the words we have a *law or commandment*, suited unto, and founded upon this *covenant-grant* ; *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. This, as many of the rest of the commandments are, is delivered in negative terms, prohibiting and forbidding, ‘ the denying or not worship-
‘ ping and glorifying the true God as God, and *our*
‘ *God* ; and the giving that worship and glory to

‘ any other, which is due to him alone.’ And this law or commandment, as the generality of the other commandments, is delivered in negative terms, because of the perpetual propensity of our natures, since the fall, to depart from the living God through an evil heart of unbelief. But, altho’ the command be delivered in negative terms, yet the contrary positive duty is manifestly included in it, or under it, namely, ‘ To know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God ; and to worship and glorify him accordingly’, as is well expressed in our catechism. As for these words, *Before me*, or *before my face*, as it may be read ; this expression plainly teaches us, that an omniscient and all-seeing God, before whom all things are open and naked, and who *sets our most secret sins in the light of his countenance*, taketh notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God ; and consequently is well pleased with the sinner, who knows and acknowledges him as the only true God, and his own God, according to the gift of the covenant, which is the foundation of our claim to him. From which words,

Obser. *That as God is the Lord and our God, by his own free gift in a covenant of Grace, so it is his royal will and pleasure, intimated to us in the first commandment of his law, that we should know and acknowledge him to be our own God, upon the ground of that covenant-grant.* I have framed the doctrine almost in the words of our lesser catechism, opening up the import of this promise and precept ; and, O that I could make all this company, and the whole world of mankind, if I had access, to understand what a glorious and rich treasure they have among their hands, when they

they hear these words repeated, or repeat them themselves! *I am the Lord thy God,—Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.* Alas! there are many have these words by rote, who never consider what is in them; just like a company of people travelling the high-way, where an immense treasure lies under their feet; they pass and repass it, but miss the treasure, because they never dig into the field: so, people read and repeat these words, and lose God and eternal life, that lie hid in them, because they don't advert to what they are saying or reading.

But, O sirs, let me beseech and intreat you, for your soul's sake, to *pause a little*, and consider what is in these words, *I am the Lord thy God,—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* You and I, by the breach and violation of the first covenant, in our father *Adam*, lost our God; and, ever since, every man and woman is *without God in the world*; and, being without God, we are without hope, without help, without grace, light, life, strength, or any thing that is good. When we lost our God, we lost all, and lost it to all intents and purposes. Well, but sirs, *I tell you glad tidings of the greatest joy* that ever mankind heard since the fall of *Adam*. Here you have your God, whom you lost by the first covenant, coming back again to you in a new covenant, a covenant of grace, and saying to every one of you, *I am the Lord thy God*: he becomes our God, not upon the footing of works, but of free grace. And because the sinner, through a sense of guilt and wrath, might be ready to fear and say, O I cannot think that God is speaking to me, when he says, *I am the Lord thy God!* I doubt, may the sinner say, if I be

warranted to claim him as my God, who have forfeited all claim and title to him : in answer unto this, consider; That a royal law is issued out ; yea, the very law of nature, written at first upon *Adam's* heart, is repeated, and adapted unto the *dispensation* of the covenant of grace, binding and obliging every one, to whom these presents are intimated, to take him as their God in Christ, upon the footing of this new covenant. And 'tis remarkable, how infinite wisdom outwits the policy of hell, and *turns the counsel thereof into foolishness*. Satan ruins man by tempting him to break the law, and so to affront God in his authority and sovereignty : well, but God takes the very first commandment of that law, which *Adam* broke, and brings it in under a new covenant, the sum of which is this, *I am the Lord thy God* ; and so makes that very law subservient to man's recovery, and his greatest warrant to lay claim to *Jehovah* as his God : so that you see, this first commandment, in this situation, connected with the preface, is just big and pregnant with amazing grace and love. But this will yet further appear in the prosecution of this subject, which I shall attempt to speak to in the following order and method, thro' divine assistance.

I. To speak a little of this covenant-promise, *I am the Lord thy God*.

II. To speak a little of the precept, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

III. To enquire a little into the connection betwixt these two.

IV. Apply the whole.

First thing is to speak a little of this covenant-promise, *I am the Lord thy God*. And here I shall, (1.) Offer a few general remarks concerning this

this fundamental promise, or grant of the covenant. (2.) Enquire a little more particularly into the import of it; or what that is which God promises when he says so.

1. I would offer a few general remarks concerning this great covenant-grant and promise, *I am the Lord thy God*; as, (1.) I remark, that *this*, as all the other promises, is in *Christ*: my meaning is, that it goes upon a ransom found, and a satisfaction paid, unto justice, by Christ our glorious surety. Sirs, be aware of imagining, that an absolute God, or a God out of Christ, utters this promise: no, no; an absolute God is *a consuming fire* unto guilty sinners, and he could never speak in such a dialect to any of the sinful rebellious race of *Adam*, in a consistency with the honour of his holiness, justice and sovereignty, which were offended and affronted in the violation of his royal law. Unless the Son of God had promised, as our surety, to pay the infinite ransom, that justice demanded, none of *Adam's* posterity had ever heard any thing but the terrible thunders of his wrath and justice pursuing them for sin: so that this *covenant-grant* and *promise*, as well as the other declarations of the grace and love of God in the word to perishing sinners, must needs go upon the footing of the blood and satisfaction of Jesus, 2 Cor. v. 19. *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* And therefore, sirs, whenever you read or hear a word of Grace from God, think upon Christ, in and through whom only God is a God of peace; and let your souls say, *O thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!* (2.) It is more than probable, that it was God, in the person of his

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his eternal Son, that uttered all these words at mount *Sinai*; and this promise in particular, whereby the law was ushered in. Here was a parliament, or general assembly of angels, called at mount *Sinai*; and Christ the great angel of the covenant was the president, or great Lord-speaker. This I gather from *Psalms* lxxviii. 17, and 18, verses, compared. Verse 17. it is said, *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is in the midst of them as in Sinai, in the holy place*: Well, what Lord was it that was among them at *Sinai*? Even that same Lord, verse 18. *who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, &c.* See also to the same purpose, *Acts* vii. 37, 38. compared. Verse 37. *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear.* Christ is that great prophet: but then notice what follows, verse 38. *This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel, that spake to him, viz. (unto Moses and the children of Israel) in mount Sinai, and with our Fathers*: so that it was Christ the Son of God that spake all these words in mount *Sinai*, saying, *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me, &c.* And, by the way, this furnishes us with a notable confutation of the *Arians*, who deny Christ to be the supreme, self-existent and independent God. Who did ever doubt, that it was the supreme God, the self-existent God that spake all these words, and delivered the law with such awful solemnity at mount *Sinai*? Yet, from what I was saying, it appears, that it was none other than Christ the eternal Son. But more of this in the application. (3.) I remark, that this covenant-grant and promise is the same upon the

matter with the promise God had made unto *Abraham* several hundreds of years before. Now God's promise to *Abraham* was, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*; and here he meets with his seed at *Sinai*, and repeats what he had said to their fathers, *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*; i. e. I am the very same promising God, that spake unto *Abraham*, and what I said unto him, I say it over again unto you his posterity, and give the same ground for your faith that he had; as *I was his God*, so *I am the Lord thy God*. God does not come and go upon his promise, he is not *yea* and *nay*; he does not make a promise one day and retract it another; no, it is *always yea and amen*. He does not speak of the promise made to *Abraham*, as a thing out of date after so many years; no, it is as fresh and green with me as the first day I made it, *I am still the Lord thy God*: the promise is renewed in their own persons immediately by God, and they have as good a foundation laid by this means, as ever *Abraham* had, who believed without staggering.

(4.) These words, *I am the Lord thy God*, contain the leading promise of the covenant of grace; and there is more in them than heart can conceive, or tongue express: for here is an infinite God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, making over himself in two or three words to man upon earth. O what can he give more than himself! and what will he not give when he gives himself? *Rom. viii. 29. He that spared not his own Son, but gave him unto the death for us all; How will he not with him freely give us all things?* (5.) This promise is so framed by infinite wisdom, as to point to every individual person in the camp of *Israel*: it is not *ye* collectively, but *thou* in the singular, as if he spake to every individual person in the camp, and every

every man was to look to it as pointing at him in particular; like a well drawn picture, it looked every man in the camp straight in the face. And, not only did this promise point to every man and woman there present at mount *Sinai*, when the law was delivered, but it looked forward to all succeeding generations, and every man and woman that should spring of them; for this *promise was to them and to their seed*: so that no sooner did any of the posterity of *Abraham* come into the world, but God said to him, as much as to the men that were at the foot of *Sinai*, *I am the Lord thy God*. And no sooner did one of the *Gentile* nations join himself to the commonwealth of *Israel*, but immediately he found the God of *Israel* saying to him, *I am the Lord thy God*: and, in this respect, this promise was a door of faith opened unto the *Gentiles*, even before the coming of Christ. And when Christ came in the flesh, and by his death and resurrection, and publication of the everlasting gospel unto the *Gentile* world, broke down the partition-wall betwixt them and the *Jews*, this promise, as well as the law subjoined thereunto, extended itself, not only to the *Jews* and their seed, but to the *Gentiles*, who were *afar off*, and to as many as the Lord our God should call by the sound of the gospel-trumpet: so that now, under the new testament, this promise becomes a ground of faith unto us, as well as unto them; and we have the same interest in it that they had. But, to clear this, I shall add a (6.) remark, namely, That this promise may be considered in a threefold situation; either as it is in the heart of God, or as it is in the word of God, or as in the hand of faith.

1st, As it is the heart of God, or in his counsel or decree; and, when viewed in this situation, it is peculiar only to his chosen people, whom *he has loved*

loved with an everlasting love, before the foundations of the world: but, as it is in God's heart, it is not an object of faith unto any of *Adam's* posterity; no, not to the elect themselves, because they do not know that they are among the number of the elect, till they be actually believers: no man can say, at the first instant, in a way of believing, *The Lord is my God* upon the ground of electing love; so that the promise, in this situation, being all one with the decree, must be laid aside as an object of faith at the first instance. 2dly, The promise may be viewed as situate in the word, as it is published and proclaimed to the visible church, to whom belong the adoption, and the giving of the law, and the promises: view it in this situation, it is a ground of faith to every one that hears it; God said to every man in the camp of *Israel*, and he says to every man and woman in the visible church, *I am the Lord thy God*; and, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. And the man or woman that does not know and acknowledge God as his God in Christ, upon the ground of the promise considered in this situation (in the word) as it is held forth in common to all, as the object and ground of faith, at once rebels against the authority of God in the command, and gives the lye to his faithfulness engaged in the promise, and therefore, *Let us fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it*; for unto us is this gospel preached, as well as to them, Heb. iv. 1, 2. 3dly, This promise is also to be considered as in the hand of faith, or as it is applied and possessed in a way of believing; and, in this situation, it is only peculiar to a believer to have the Lord as his God; because it is only he that has a saving interest; it is he only whose

soul

soul hath said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, upon a covenant-ground.

2. I come to enquire, What may be the import of this promise, or of this covenant-grant, that is here laid as a foundation of faith unto *Israel*, and unto the church in all succeeding generations?

Before I go on, I would put you in mind of what I said already, *viz.* That this covenant-grant or promise, goes upon the ground of a ransom found, and satisfaction paid unto justice; upon which account only God's anger is turned away, and he comforts us with such declarations of his grace as this in my text, *I am the Lord thy God.* In which words, I conceive, he promises these three or four things, not to multiply particulars; 1. The infinite God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, makes over himself by covenant, as the soul's portion and inheritance for ever; and O what a vast, large and glorious inheritance is this! O sirs, when God says, *I am the Lord thy God*, he says more than if he had said, heaven is thine, earth is thine, the glories of both are thine! There is something in this promise, that *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, &c.* No wonder tho' David cryed out, upon the views of the Lord's being *the portion of his cup*, *Psalms xvi. 6. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage.* O it is a surprising armful the soul has, when by faith it grasps an infinite God in this little word, *I am the Lord thy God!*

2. When he says, *I am the Lord thy God*, he in effect says, all that I have, I make it over unto you: and O! when he makes a grant of himself what else will he withhold? *He that spared not his*

his own Son, but gave him to the death for us all, how will he not with him freely give us all things? Rom. viii. 32. Has he life? Yea, he is the fountain of life: Well, in this promise he gives life unto thee; *because I live, ye shall live also.* Has he light in himself? Yea, *God is light, and with him is no darkness at all:* Well, *he shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.* Has he love? Yea, *God is love:* Well, he who says he is *thy God, will shed abroad his love upon thy heart by the Holy Ghost, and circumcise thy heart to love him.* Has he honour? Yea, *his work is honourable and glorious:* Well, thou shalt be preferred; if thou take him as thy God, thou shalt have a place among them that stand by about his throne. Has he riches? Yea, *honour and riches are with me:* Well, *he will fill all thy treasures with gold better than the gold of Ophir.* Has he *rivers of pleasures, and fulness of joy in his presence, and at his right-hand?* Well, *the times of refreshing shall come forth from his presence into thy soul.*

3. When he says, *I am the Lord thy God,* he engages, that all the attributes and perfections of his glorious nature shall jointly conspire and be forthcoming for thy good. O! sirs, immediately upon the breach of the first covenant, all the attributes of God put on an air of wrath and vengeance against man; hence *Adam*, after he had sinned, falls a trembling, and flees in among the thickets of *Paradise* to hide himself: But O! the divine attributes, as they shine in the face of our *Immanuel*, and are displayed through his blood and satisfaction, appear with an air of grace, love, and pity, inviting sinners to come and shelter themselves under them, from the wrath and curse due to them for sin. So that, when God says,
I am

I am the Lord thy God, it is upon the matter, as if he should say, O impotent and helpless sinner, come under my shadow, take me as thy own God, and my power shall be employed to help and protect thee. O foolish and bewildred sinner, my wisdom shall be thine to direct and instruct thee. O polluted sinner, who hast *lien among the pots*, my holiness shall sanctify thee, and *make thee like the wings of a dove*, &c. O guilty sinner, my mercy shall pardon thee ; yea, my justice shall acquit thee, on the score of the ransom that I have found ; my goodness shall supply all thy need, and my truth and faithfulness is impignored to accomplish all the promises unto thee ; *my omniscient eye shall run to and fro through the whole earth to shew myself strong on thy behalf*. My providence shall be employed to manage all things for thy good and advantage. *I will ride in the heavens for thy help, and in mine excellency on the skies*.

(4.) *I am the Lord thy God* ; i. e. Whatever I the infinite and eternal God can do for thy advantage, it shall not be wanting ; and O what cannot the arm of omnipotency do ! he doth great things, yea, wonders without number : what wonders has God wrought for his children and people, in all ages of the world ? It was he, that saved *Noah* by water from perishing in the flood : it was he, that made a lane for *Israel* through the deeps, *as if it had been dry land* : it was he, that dissolved the flinty rocks into *floods of water*, suspended the fury of the devouring flames, and stopt the course of the sun. *His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save* : now, whatever that omnipotent arm, that *stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth*, can do for thy salvation, it shall not be wanting. All this, and infinitely

infinitely more, than I can name, is wrapt up in the bosom of this covenant-grant, which is here laid as the foundation and ground of our faith; *I am the Lord thy God*. And thus much concerning the promise. The

Second thing proposed was to speak a little of the precept subjoined, or annexed, unto this covenant-promise, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. And, in speaking to the precept, I shall observe the same method, as in discoursing upon the promise. 1. I shall premise some remarks. 2. Enquire into its import.

(1) I would offer some remarks upon it; As, 1. I remark, That, as the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, is given forth by a God in Christ; so the precept, in this situation, must needs come from the same fountain. This law, or commandment, must be viewed as in the hand of a mediator, and not of an absolute God: the reason is plain, because the command obliges us to have him as our God, to love and trust in him as our own God, which a sinner cannot do, but only as he is in Christ. Here the command stands under a covenant of grace, as is evident from the *preface*. Indeed, if that glorious *preface*, or covenant-grant, *I am the Lord thy God*, had not gone before the command, we might have taken it as coming from an absolute God; but taking the precept in connection with the preface, we must needs take up the law here as in the hand of a reconciled God in Christ, and as coming from that glorious fountain: and therefore let us say, with the church, *The Lord is our king, the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, and he will save us*.

(2.) This commandment of the law, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, narrows and extends

its obligation upon the children of men, in a suitability to the revelation, that he makes of himself. When God reveals himself only by the works of creation and providence, as he doth to the *heathen* world, then this commandment obliges us to know and acknowledge him as a God Creator and Preserver; but, when he superadds to this the revelation of himself as a reconciled God, a redeeming God in Christ, then the law superadds a new obligation, namely to know and acknowledge him as such, and to claim him as the God of salvation; a saving, pitying, pardoning God.

(3.) As the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, is the leading and fundamental *blessing* promised in the covenant of grace, which draws all other blessings along with it; so this precept, Thou shalt have the Lord Jehovah as thy God, is the leading and fundamental duty of the law, which sweetly and powerfully constrains the soul to obey all the other commands of it. The reason of this is plain: when a person is determined to know and acknowledge God as his own God in Christ, it binds and obliges him inevitably, not to bow down to images, or to give that worship and glory to any other, which is due to him alone: he will be concerned to sanctify the name of God and his holy sabbath, and, in a word, to have a respect unto all his commandments. Hence it is, That faith in Christ Jesus (which is just the first commandment in other words) is so much inculcated in the scriptures, particularly, of the New Testament: yea, we are expressly told, that, *Without faith it is impossible to please God; and he that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

(4.) That

(4.) That the command and promise are of equal extent, so that every man that is bound to obey the command, or to have a God in Christ as his own God, is concerned in this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*. Or in other words, he is as much obliged to believe this promise with application, as he is obliged to obey the command. The reason of this is plain, because a believing the promise with application, is the very thing that the first commandment requires of us; and the promise is the very ground and foundation of that faith, that is required in the command; and the foundation of faith must be as extensive as the command of believing, unless we would say that God commands man to believe, without giving them a foundation to believe upon: so that, if I be obliged to have the Lord as my God, then it is lawful, yea, plain duty for me, viewing the covenant-grant, to say to the Lord, *thou art my Lord*.

(5.) As the promise is indefinite, *I am the Lord thy God*, without mentioning any, or including any, but pointing to every man in particular; so the precept is indefinite, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, without mentioning any particular person to whom it extends. And I think it is observable, that both the promise and precept are in the singular number, as if God spoke to every individual, and I do think, that infinite wisdom has so ordered it of design, that no man might neglect the promise, that thinks himself bound to obey the precept. The legal heart of man is ready to fall in with this command of the law, and own its obligation; while, in the mean time, it rejects the promise, as a thing it has no concern in. What more ordinary, than to hear some, especially

ally under awakings of conscience by the law, say, O 'tis a sad truth indeed, that I am a debtor to the law, and obliged to obey it! But, as for the promise of God, *I am the Lord thy God*, I have no interest or concern in it. But, first, whatever you may imagine, I tell you, that, by this way, you are separating what God has joined: he has joined the command and the promise together; therefore let not your unbelieving hearts, or legal spirits, put them asunder: for you can never obey the first command without closing with this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*. But more of this afterward.

2. I come to enquire what is included, or required, of us in this command of the moral law, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. I don't design to launch out in opening of this precept in its greatest latitude, or in telling you of all the duties required, and sins forbidden, in it: that, which I have especially in my view, is the obligation that it lays upon us to receive and believe the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*: and, for clearing of this, there are only these few things I name, as included in this commandment: 1st, This commandment obliges us to believe, that God is, which is the first and fundamental truth both of natural and revealed religion; and, except you be stablished in the faith of this, you believe nothing to the purpose. We cannot open our eyes, or look upon any of the creatures of God, whether in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, but this truth must shine into our minds with such a glaring evidence, that one would think, there were no need of a command to oblige us to believe it. 2^{dly}, This command obliges us to believe, that he is such a God, as he has revealed himself to be in his word and in his works; it binds us to believe all the displays, that he

he has given of his eternal power and godhead, in his works of creation and providence; but especially us, who enjoy the revelation of his word, to believe every thing that he has revealed of himself there; as, That he is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, &c. That he is but one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the same in substance, equal in power and glory: that from eternity he decreed all things that come to pass in time: That he is the great creator, that made all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good: That, by his providence, he preserves and governs all his creatures, and all their actions: and, that this great God, in the *fulneſs of time, was manifested in the flesh* in the person of his eternal Son, and became a Redeemer and Saviour of lost sinners: That he was *made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* And, in a word, every other thing, that God has revealed of himself. 3dly, This commandment requires us to believe and be persuaded, that this glorious God is the chief good of the rational soul: That, as his glory is to be our ultimate end, so our chief happiness lies in the enjoyment of him alone; *Thou shalt have no other gods before me,* i. e. Thou shalt place thy chief happiness in the enjoyment of me, *who am the Lord thy God:* so that, when God commands us to have him as our God, he commands us to be happy for ever in himself, and to say, with David, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none in all the Earth whom I desire besides thee.* 4thly, This command requires us to assent unto every word God speaks, as a truth of infallible verity, and unto the truth of this promise in particular;

lar; that he speaks the truth in his heart, when he says, *I am the Lord thy God*: And therefore, not to believe that it is, as God says in this promise, is to call God a liar; 'tis an impeaching of his veracity in the promise, and a contempt of his authority interposed in the command: from whence it appears, that an unbeliever breaks the very first command of the law of nature. 5thly, This command requires us, not only to believe the truth of the promise in general, but to believe it with particular application of it, each one of us unto ourselves. It is not a fulfilling of the contents of this command, to believe that he was the God of *Israel*, or the God of the visible church, or the God of the elect, or of all that believe in him; for all this do the devils and reprobates believe: but we must believe, know and acknowledge, that he is *our* God; and every one for himself must say, in faith, with *Israel*, *He is my God, I will prepare him a habitation*. The first command requires of us a faith exactly corresponding unto the promise: now, the promise is to every one in particular, *I am the Lord thy God*; and the command runs parallel with it, pointing out every man in particular, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*: and therefore it is a particular applying faith, that is here required and called for. Perhaps this may appear somewhat surprising to these, who never considered it, that, by the first commandment, they are obliged to believe, that the Lord is their God by covenant-grant and promise: they believe that he is their creator, and preserver, and benefactor; but they never thought, that he was their God by covenant-grant, or that they were bound to believe it with application, till once they found themselves so and so qualified. To take down this fortress of

unbelief, I would only have you consider, (1.) If ever there was a time, since you had a being, and had the law of God intimate unto you, wherein you was free from the obligation of the first command of the moral law, as it here stands connected with the covenant or the promise? No, surely; and if so, there was never a time wherein you was not obliged to believe, know, and acknowledge the Lord as your God, upon the ground of the *covenant-grant*; and all the time you have neglected to do so, you have been living in disobedience to the first command; and while the first command is not obeyed, which is the foundation of all the rest, not one of them can be obeyed. And I only leave it to yourselves to be considered, whether you may lawfully live in disobedience to the first command of the law of the great God, or suspend your obedience thereunto, till you find qualifications in yourselves, upon which you think may lay claim to him in a way of sense. This is not to ground your faith upon the veracity of God in his promise, but to seek a ground for your faith within you. (2.) However surprizing this way of teaching may appear from the first commandment, yet it is nothing else than what you are taught in your lesser received and approved catechisms. The first command requires us to know and acknowledge the Lord as God and *our God*, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. (3.) I find God requiring faith of sinners, and of notorious backsliders, in the same terms as is here called for, *Jer. iii. 4.* compared with verse 1. If we notice the 1st verse, and the two following, we shall find, that God is there dealing with a company of people, who had made defection into idolatry; and he charges them with a perfidious and

treacherous dealing with him, under the notion of an adulteress, that had *forsaken the guide of her youth*, and prostituted herself unto other lovers: however, infinite love opens up its bowels of pity, sends out a flood of grace and love to them, saying in the close of *verse 1. Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord.* Well, what is the return, so-
 vercign grace expects from them, after such a discovery of his readiness to receive them? See it, *verse 4. Wilt thou not from this time call me, My Father? thou art the guide of my youth.* i. e. Wilt thou not from this time obey the first commandment of my law, and know and acknowledge me, and me only, as thy God and Father in Christ? (4.) I find, that, whenever a sinful people begins to act faith, their faith, even the first receptive act of faith, is expressed in words, which bear a plain obedience unto what is required in the first commandment; as in the case of these, *Jer. iii.* Whenever the call of the word is carried home by the efficacy of the spirit upon their hearts, they cry out, *verse 23. Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God;* whereby they acknowledge him as their God, even their own God. So *Zech. xiii. 9.* And I find the saints of God in scripture, when in the exercise of faith, still yielding obedience to this first command of the law, and coming in with their appropriating *My*, *Psalms* xvi. 2. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord.* With what pleasure does *David* obey this command, *Psalms* xviii. 1. where, eight or nine times he repeats his claim, acknowledging God, as God, and his own God? And unbelieving *Thomas*, so soon as he gets his foot upon the neck of his unbelief, obeys

obeys this command, making a solemn acknowledgment of Christ, *My Lord, and my God.*

Unto all this, I shall only add, to prevent mistakes, that, when the first commandment requires us *to know and acknowledge God as our God*, it is not to be understood, as if this were done by a saying it with the mouth only; no, no, *With the heart man believes unto righteousness*: we read of some that *remembred God as their rock, and the High God as their Redeemer*; but, *they lied unto him with their lips, they flattered him with their mouth, for their heart was not right with him*: they did not acknowledge him as their God with their hearts, acquiescing in him as their chief good and only portion; and therefore God rejects all their profession of kindness. Let us then embrace and acknowledge him as our God, with our hearts, lips, and lives, worshipping, glorifying, and serving him, as our God, all the days of our appointed time. The

Third thing proposed, was to speak a little of the connection betwixt the promise and the precept. That there is a connection between them is plain; for the promise is repeated in the command, and the meaning is, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, who engage myself by covenant to be *the Lord thy God*: how sweetly is the law and gospel connected here! how sweetly does the law stand in a subserviency unto the glorious designs of grace!

I would have you carefully observe, as to this order and connection, that it is suited unto the circumstances of the lost sinner, or of fallen man, who has nothing, and can do nothing, but *is wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked*. Because man can now do nothing for his life, therefore God will give him life and glory
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for nothing at all : and, as a testimony of his having got all freely from God, he will have him to obey. It is an order and method suited to God's great design, of debasing man, staining his pride, and of exalting the glorious freedom and riches of his grace : *Where is boasting?* says the apostle ; *it is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith.* The law of faith is just the free promise ; *I am the Lord thy God ; I will be to them a father, &c.* Now, by this law, and not by the way of works, self is abased, and the glory of free grace exalted.

I shall only add, as to this connection and order, that God, like a wise builder, first lays the foundation of faith in the promise, saying, *I am the Lord thy God* ; and then enjoins the duty of believing : he first reveals the object of faith, and then lays on the duty of faith : he first makes a grant of grace, and then warrants us by his command to lay hold on it. The promise is a plaister or medicine, and the command orders the application or use-making of it : the promise is the door of salvation opened, and the command enjoins us to enter in by that door ; the promise is the testament, and the command is the judge's order and warrant to make use of the goods without fear of vitious intromission ; the promise gives us a right of access ; the command, when obeyed and complied with, gives a right of possession. By the grant of the covenant, God manifests his free and sovereign grace ; and by the command he manifests his royal authority, which he makes subservient unto his glorious design of grace. And so much shall serve for clearing the order and connection between the promise, *I am the Lord thy God* ;

God; and the precept, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*

The *fourth* general head was the application. And the first use shall be comprised in these inferences;

1st, From what has been said, we may see, that Christ our glorious redeemer is none other than the supreme, self-existent and independent God. Who ever doubted, as was hinted before, but it was the supreme God, the great law-giver of heaven and earth, who spoke all these words, saying, *I am the Lord thy God; Thou shalt have no other gods before me? &c.* Whosoever reads or hears these words with opened eyes, or understanding hearts, cannot shun to cry out, *It is the voice of God and not of man;* yea, the voice of the supreme, self-existent God, and not of any inferior or dependent being; the voice of him, whose prerogative alone it is to be Lord of the conscience, and to *search the heart and the reins;* for these words are *quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.* As all the works, so all the words of God, carry the stamp and evidence of their glorious author in their bosom. And, are we not immediately struck with the impressions of the supreme, self-existent being, when these words are uttered, *I am the Lord thy God? &c.* Had *Moses*, or the children of *Israel*, when they stood quaking and trembling at the foot of the mount, any notions of a dependent deity speaking to them? No, they knew and believed, that it was he whose name alone is *J E H O V A H*, most high over all the earth. Yet, as was cleared already, this was Christ the eternal Son of God; and therefore he must needs be the supreme God,
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the same in substance, equal in power and glory with his Father. It is the most daring presumption, the most consummate ingratitude, for any of *Adam's* race, especially for any professed Christian, bearing his blessed name, and wearing his livery, to lessen his glory, and derogate from his excellency; as if, when he is called the supreme God, it were to be understood *cum grano salis*, with grains of allowance or abatement. I am persuaded, there was not an *Arian* at the foot of *Sinai* among all the many thousands of *Israel*: and, were these words to be repeated by the Son of God with the same awful solemnity among us, I am very sure, there would not be one *Arian* among us either. What pity is it, that the resentment of our Redeemer's quarrel, against a notorious blasphemer of his supreme Deity, has not run deeper; than it has done of late, in the supreme judicatory of this national church, whose peculiar province it has been, in former times, to contend for the royalties of his crown against these who attempted to invade them?

2dly, From what has been said, we may see the mistake of those who assert, that faith in Christ is a new precept of the gospel, not required in the moral law, but by a new positive law, given forth under the gospel. None, I suppose, will deny, that the law required faith in a God Creator from our first parents in innocency; and, if so, what need of any new law, to bind and oblige us, to believe in the same God, revealing himself in the capacity of a Redeemer? We have already observed from the text, how sweetly the old law of nature is grafted in, in a subserviency unto the grace of the new covenant, obliging us to know and acknowledge a God in Christ,

Christ, as our own God, upon the footing of this glorious grant of grace, *I am the Lord thy God.* The applying or appropriating act of faith, when it is expressed in words, comes forth carrying the stamp of obedience to what the first commandment of the moral law requires. What need then of any new positive law to injoin it? The same law, that bound *Adam* before the fall, to believe the promise of life, upon the footing of perfect obedience, bound him to believe the promise of life, after the fall, upon the footing of the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God: and therefore, when the first promise of the seed of the woman is uttered, *Gen. iii. 15.* we read of no new law enjoining him to believe it; the very light of nature told our first parents, that a promise, especially the promise of God was to be believed.

3dly, See hence the necessity, excellency, and warrantableness of the great duty of believing, which we ministers are so much pressing upon you who are hearers. It must needs be the most necessary and excellent duty, which God enjoins in the first precept of his law, and which he has laid as the very spring and foundation of obedience to all the other precepts, namely, to receive him and to acknowledge him as our own God in Christ, and him alone; and to rest in him, and upon him, as our upmaking and everlasting all. Hence, *John vi. 28, 29.* when the *Jews* were fond to know what they should do, to work the work of God, he directs them to faith in himself; because this was the first thing that the law required, as it stood under a covenant of grace; *This is the work of God,* (his work in a way of eminence; the very first and fundamental

tal work, and the spring and soul of all obedience) *that ye believe in him, whom he hath sent.* For this reason, true obedience to the law is called *the obedience of faith*: and we are told, *Heb. xi. 6. That without faith it is impossible to please God*; and, *Whatever is not of faith is sin, Rom. xiv. 23.* because, until this first command of the law be obeyed, till we receive, embrace, and acknowledge the Lord, as our God in Christ, we do nothing at all in obedience to God's law, but break it every moment of our life. Again, as I said, we see here also the warrantableness of believing in Christ, and of embracing the promise. It is as warrantable for a lost sinner to embrace the promise, and to receive Christ by virtue of the promise, as to do any other thing that the law requires. Will any man doubt his warrant to honour and reverence the name of God, to honour his father and mother, to sanctify the sabbath? &c. As little reason has he to doubt his warrant, by faith, to lay claim to this glorious grant of sovereign grace through Christ, *I am the Lord thy God*; seeing this is the very thing, that is required in this command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* And, as this command is a noble warrant for believing, so it is a warrant of universal extent: none, who own the obligation of the moral law, can shift the obligation of its very first command. This view of matters, if taken up in the light of the spirit, serves to overthrow one of the principal strong holds of unbelief, and, at the same time, discovers a ground of believing with boldness, without any manner of presumption. The unbelieving deceitful heart turns us away from the living God, by telling us, that we are not warranted to believe in Christ, and that it is
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arrogancy and presumption for us to intermeddle with the promise. But so far is this surmise from being truth, that, unless you believe in Christ, or, which is all one, except you acknowledge a God in Christ, as your God, you make God a liar, who says, *I am the Lord thy God*, and rebel against his authority interposed in his first commandment, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

4th Inf. See hence a solid ground for the assurance of faith. Why, it has the noblest ground in the world to go upon, namely, the infallible word of a God of truth, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*; and the best warrant in the world, namely, the first commandment of the law, requiring us to know and acknowledge him as *our God*. The first command requires a persuasion of the promise, with application, or appropriation of it, to the soul in particular: and, what is it but the assurance of faith? And no doubt the law requires every duty, and particularly this of faith, in its perfection; the consideration of which, may make every one of us, yea, even the best believer 'upon earth, to cry out, with the poor man in the gospel, *I believe, Lord, help my unbelief*; and, with the disciples, *Lord, increase our faith*.

5th Inf. See hence the proper bottom of true christian morality, and an excellent test whereby to distinguish betwixt gospel and legal preaching. You see here, upon what foundation, God himself inculcates the duties of the moral law: he first discovers himself as a reconciled God, a promising God in Christ, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*; and, upon this ground, urges the duties of the law. Now, the order of doctrine observed by God himself ought certainly to be observed by us, in our inculcating any duty of the law upon
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our hearers ; and, if this method be not observed, it is certainly legal. Neither do I think, that it is enough, when we are pressing any duty of the law, to come in with a direction or advice at the end, telling that all is to be done in the strength of Christ : we see here, that God begins his sermon of morality to *Israel*, from mount *Sinai*, with a revelation of himself, as the Lord God gracious and merciful through Christ, *I am the Lord thy God* ; and lays this as the foundation of obedience to the following precepts. And I do think, that we, who are ministers, when we inculcate the duties of the law upon people, ought always, to keep the grace of the new covenant in their eye ; for, unless obedience to the law be influenced with this view, it cannot be the obedience of faith, and consequently cannot be acceptable ; *Without faith it is impossible to please God*. It is observable, that God, in the promulgation of the law to *Israel*, frequently intermixes the grace of the new covenant with the precepts of the law, and every now and then casts it in their view, that he was the Lord their God in Christ : so in the second command, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c. for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, &c. shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments*. So in the third commandment, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, &c.* So in the fourth, *The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, &c.* So likewise in the fifth, *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee*. Thus, I say, he makes gospel-grace, like a thread of gold, to run through the duties of the law, where-

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by the whole law is sweetened and beautified, his yoke made easy, and his burden light.

Upon the other hand, there is an error, I fear, too common among some. Whenever they hear a minister pressing duty, immediately they conclude him to be a legal preacher, without ever considering upon what ground he doth it: for, if he press the duties of the law upon the ground of covenanted grace, he acts according to his commission, and keeps the order and method, that God has laid; but, if this method be not followed, if the duties of the law be urged as the foundation of our claim to the privileges of the gospel, or without keeping Christ and the grace of the gospel in the eye of the sinner, as the foundation of duty, you may indeed conclude, that it is legal. Although what the man says, may be truth, abstractedly considered, yet the truth is not delivered in its due order and connection, and therefore has a tendency to mislead the hearer, at least to lead him into perplexing exercises.

6th Inf. See hence the truth of what the apostle asserts concerning God, 1 *John* iv. 16. *God is love.* Why? The promise here, is a promise of love. What more can infinite love say than what is here said? *I am the Lord thy God.* What can he give more than himself? And, as the promise is a promise of love, so the precept is a precept of love, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* He first makes a free grant and gift of himself to us in his covenant, and then concludes us under a law of love, whereby he makes it the first and fundamental duty of obedience to him, that we shall know and acknowledge him as *our own God*; or, in other words, that we should be happy for ever in the enjoyment of him. The most consummate

happiness of the rational creature lies in what God here commands, *viz.* in having him and none other, as *our God*. O how excellent is his loving-kindness! Surely *God is love*, it is the regnant perfection of his nature; and O how reasonable is it that we should love the Lord *OUR GOD* with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind! And O how unreasonable is the enmity of the heart against God! Do we thus requite a God of love? Well may the Lord say to us, as he did to *Israel*, *O my people, what have I done unto thee? Wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.*

7th Inf. See hence what it is that makes the yoke of obedience easy, and the burden thereof light to a believer. Whence is it, that the believer delights in the law after the inward man? Why doth he rejoice to work righteousness? Why? he remembers God in his ways; he remembers, that the law-giver is none other than *the Lord his God and Redeemer*, and therefore he keeps all his commandments with pleasure: therefore he runs, and doth not weary, walks, and doth not faint. He views God, not as an enemy, not as an avenging judge, but as his own God in Christ; he views him in *Immanuel*, as a God *with* him, not a God against him: and this is like oil to his chariot-wheels, which makes him run without wearying. On the other hand, we may see here, what it is that makes the duties of the law an insupportable yoke, and burden, to hypocrites and christless professors, who tire in the duties of obedience, before they be well set out; why? they do not begin their obedience where God begins his law, or they do not set their obedience upon the same foundation of gospel-grace, that God has set his law upon: they do not begin, with acting faith on
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the covenant, or with receiving a God in Christ, as their God, by virtue of the covenant-grant and promise; and if people do not begin here, where God begins, their blossoms cannot miss to wither, and come to nought.

8th Inf. See hence the errors of those, who imagine, that it was a covenant of works which God entred into with *Israel*, at mount *Sinai*. Indeed, if the promise had followed after the commandments of the law; and if God had said, *Keep these Commandments, and, upon your so doing, I will be the Lord your God*; in this case, it had been a pure covenant of works: whether perfect, or sincere, obedience had been the condition, it is all one: still the reward would have been in a way of pactional debt as in the first covenant: but, as you heard, the order of the covenant of works, or the connection betwixt the precept and promise, as it was laid in that covenant, is now inverted. For now, God first promises, in a way of sovereign grace, to be the Lord *our God* and *Redeemer*, which is the substance and sum of the new covenant, and, having made such a grant of grace, to be received by faith, without, or before, any works of obedience can be performed by us, he immediately subjoins the law of nature in ten words, showing us, *what is good*, and *what the Lord our God requires of us*, not as a condition of his own gracious grant, but as a testimony of our love and gratitude to him, who promises, of his own free and sovereign grace, to be the Lord our God. So that, I say, it was God's covenant of grace, that was promulgated at mount *Sinai*, and the law was added to it because of transgression, and grafted upon it as a rule of obedience. And whatever covenants, or engagements to duty, we

read of, whether *national* or *personal*, still they went upon the foundation of grace, laid in God's covenant of grace; and in so far as *Israel*, or any else, go off from this foundation, in their engagements to duty, in so far as they pervert the design of the promise and law annexed to it, and turn back to a covenant of works. So much for information.

A second *use* shall be of tryal. And that which I would have you to try is, Whether you, ever to this day, obeyed the first commandment of the moral law? Did you ever taste or receive *Jehovah*, a God in Christ, as your own God, by virtue of the covenant promise, *I am the Lord your God*? Why, may some be ready to say, that is a strange question; ever since we had the exercise of reason, or could repeat the first commandment, we have been endeavouring to know and acknowledge God, to be the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. I confess it is an easy matter to say this with the mouth; but, the question is, if the heart has said it in a way of *believing*, setting to the seal to the veracity of the promiser? *With the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. First the heart believes it, because God has said it; and then the tongue follows the heart. Canst thou turn inward, and entertain thyself with *David's* soliloquy, *Psalms* xvi. 2. *O my soul thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord*?

In order to a discovery of the hypocrite or presumptuous believer, here I would have it carefully observed, that the first commandment, which is the correlate of the promise, has both a positive and a negative part: the positive part is, *to know*
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and acknowledge the Lord, as the only true God, and our God; the negative part is, *to have no other gods before him.* Now, the hypocrite or presumptuous person, altho' he outwardly professes to obey the positive part, or to acknowledge *Jehovah* as his God in Christ; yet, as he never doth this really with his heart, so he shifts the negative part of the precept, for secretly he worships and acknowledges some other God: there is still some idol of jealousy lies hid among the rotten stuff of his depraved heart, which gets God's room and God's throne in his soul; much like the people transplanted by the King of *Assyria* into *Samaria*; concerning whom it is said, *2 Kings xvii. 33. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.* And therefore, I say, still the question remains to be answered, Do you really and from the heart obey the first commandment? Have you any other Gods before him, who says, *I am the Lord thy God?* Is their any idol, or lust, that gets the Lord's place in thy heart?

I shall, for your tryal, take notice of some idols or false gods, which are worshipped and served by many, while they profess to have no other God but *Jehovah* alone: only, before I proceed, I would have it considered, that there is a twofold idolatry; one gross and corporeal, when, by the external actions of the body, such as bowing, prostration, or the like, men do homage unto stocks or stones, dead and dumb idols, I hope, I have none such to do with at present. But there is a more refined and spiritual idolatry, which I fear, is more common in the visible church, than many are aware of; and that is, when the acts of the heart and mind, such as, trust, love, hope, fear, joy, delight, desire, where-

in the essence of soul-worship doth consist, are alienated from God, and placed upon any thing besides him. In such a case, one neither believes the promise, nor obeys the precept, now before us. Why? Because, whatever he pretends, yet still, he hath some other god, before him, who is the only living and true God.

This premised, I would have you consider, that there are two grand idols worshipped and served by the generality of the world, yea, of the visible church, *viz. self and the world.*

First, I say, *self* is the great *Diana*, which all the world worshippeth, excepting a very few, whom God hath called out of the world. Every man, while in a natural state, makes a god of *himself*. Hence it is, that the principal batteries of the gospel are mounted against this idol. The very first lesson in the school of christianity, which is materially the same with the first precept of the moral law, is, *Let a man deny himself*; let him renounce *self* as his god, that he may have no other gods before me, who am God manifested in the flesh.

This idol of self is pregnant with a numerous brood of lesser or subordinate idols: some make a god of their understanding; for vain man would be wise, though he be born as the wild asses colt. What cursed pride is it in some, even in our own bowels, that they will needs exalt their own depraved reason above the wisdom of God? making it the standard of revelation; as if nothing were to be received or believed, but what corrupted reason, which is nonplust by the least work of nature, is able to comprehend. Is not this a giving that glory to our own understanding, which is due unto an infinitely wise God?

God? If ever we be believers indeed, reason must quit the throne, and lye down at the foot of faith, owning that reason is but folly before the wisdom of God, revealed in his word. Others idolize their own understandings, when, inwardly, they disapprove of God's providential dispensations, as if they could manage things more to advantage, if the reins of administration were in their hands.

Some make a god of their wills. When a person follows the swing of his own corrupted and rebellious will, in opposition to the commanding will of God in his word; what else is that but to exalt self-will above the will of God? It is the will of God, that men should read and hear his word, attend his courts, wait upon his ordinances, sanctify his name, keep his sabbath, that they should forego such a lust, that they should pluck out a right-eye, and cut off a right-hand sin, in obedience to him, who is the Lord our God. No, says the rebellious depraved will, *I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him? And what profit is it if I pray unto him? Let him depart, for I desire not the knowledge of his ways; I know not the Lord, neither will I let my lusts go.*

Will any man practically treat God after this manner, and yet pretend that he obeys this command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me?* No; his own will is his god, and therefore he never yet closed by a true faith with this covenant-grant, *I am the Lord thy God.*

Some again make a god of their righteousness, putting it in the room of him who is *Jehovah our righteousness*; like the Jews, Rom. x. 3. who, *Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, would not submit*

mit themselves to the righteousness of God. This is the idol, which, of all others, it is the hardest to pull out of the sinner's embraces: and the reason is, because self-righteousness is a thing, which seems to have the countenance of the law of God. And, while a man has the law on his side, he thinks himself in safety, and that he has the approbation of the lawgiver. God, *I thank thee I am not as other men*, said the self-righteous Pharisee. It is harder to convince this man of his dangerous state, than to convince an hundred profane wretches of their danger. Hence Christ says to the self-righteous Pharisees; *Publicans and Harlots shall enter into the kingdom of God before you*. I shall only say to you, who are hugging this idol of your own *law-righteousness* in your bosoms, you shall as surely perish in your righteousness, as ever any of Adam's race perished in their sins. Why? because God has said, *That by the works of the law, no flesh living shall be justified*; and, *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse*. You are pretending to keep the law, and seeking righteousness by the law; and yet are living in the neglect and contempt of the first and greatest command in the whole law, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. You never yet discarded the idol of self, and therefore never learned that first lesson of religion; *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself*, &c.

Secondly, Another grand idol to which the greatest multitude do bow, is *the world*. Solomon tells us of some, who *have the world set in their heart*. Ever since the fall of Adam, the world and vanities thereof have usurped that room in the heart of man, which is due unto God only; and nothing less than infinite power can unhinge the world

world from that seat, which it has got in our hearts. Hence it is, that, until a day of power come, we are ever making a god of one thing or another, in this visible perishing world.

Some make a god of their worldly riches and substance. This is done when the desire, delight, and esteem of the soul terminate more upon these, than upon God, who is the chief good. *O who will shew us any good,* is the cry of many? But few say, with *David*, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, &c.* The covetous worldling sees more beauty in gathering dust, than he sees in him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and is more concerned to get and keep the *Mammon* of this world, than how to be interested in the unfearchable riches of Christ, or to lay up for himself treasures in heaven, which moth and rust do not corrupt. And, will such a man pretend, that he keeps the first commandment, or hath no other gods before the Lord?

Some make a god of their worldly relations. The husband may idolize his wife, the wife her husband, parents their children, and children their parents, by giving more of their affection to them than unto God himself. Upon this account Christ tell us, *If we love father or mother, brother or sister more than him, we are not worthy of him.* When we delight more in the societies of our friends and relations, than in fellowship with God; or are more impatient of their absence, than we are under God's hidings and withdrawals from our souls: in that case, we put them in God's room, and so break his command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*; and also sin against the love and grace
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of his covenant, where he says *I am the Lord thy God*. Of this kind of idolatry they are guilty, who value themselves more upon their relation to, or descent from, such and such families or ancestors, than upon their relation to God, or these who are dignified with his image; or are of his household and family by regeneration and adoption.

Some make a god of their worldly pleasures. *2 Tim. iii. 4.* The apostle tells us of some, who are *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*. The drunkard has more pleasure in his cups, the swearer in his oaths, the unclean person in his swinish lusts, the unjust person in his unlawful gains, than in God. Many will rather risque the displeasure of God, and *rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler*, than *make a covenant with their eyes*, or other senses, that they may not be porches for the fiery darts of satan to enter in, and inflame the fewel of inward lust and corruption. The apostle speaks of some *whose god is their belly*, *Phil. iii. 19.* They are more concerned what they shall eat and drink, or wherewith they shall be clothed, than how they shall glorify God, or advance their own, or others, spiritual and eternal well-being. They have more pleasure in an ordinary meal among friends, than in eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God among his friends and members at his table: and, is this to have no other gods before Jehovah *our God*?

Some again make a god of their worldly credit and reputation, *John v. 44.* The *Pharisees loved the praise of men more than that honour, which comes from God*; and this was the reason of their rejecting Christ. Will not our spirits rise with resentment, when our own character or reputation is attacked, and yet bear it with patience when God is dishonoured

dishonoured, or his holy name profaned? Which plainly says, that our own honour is dearer to us than the honour of God; which could never be, if we had no other god before Him.

Some make a god of their worldly helps and confidence in the time of danger, and trust more to these for deliverance than unto himself, *Isa. xxxi. 1. Wo to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots and horsemen, because they are many: but look not to the holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord.* There is a solemn curse pronounced against idolaters of this kind; *Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.* Some again make a god of their very enemies, and are more afraid of him, that can only kill the body, than they are of him, who is able to cast both soul and body into hell. Some make a god of the devil, who is indeed called *the god of this world*: when any lust, or idol, is set up and served, either with body or mind, the devil himself, in that case, is worshipped and served, though not intentionously; hence *Jeroboam's* calves are called devils, although by these he only intended to worship the true God. The devil is then worshipped, when we are more afraid of him, than we are to displease God by sin; and when people run to wizards, or such as are supposed to be in compact with the devil, in order to ask advice, or to know future events, or to discover what is stolen or lost; this, I say, is devil-worship, and was the immediate forerunner of *Saul's* ruin, when he went to the witch of *En-dor* to seek counsel. It is joined with the abominable idolatry of *Molech*, *Lev. xx. 6.* To conclude, how many are there that make gods of their vile lusts, and serve and obey these
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rather than God? Some serve the lust of uncleanness, some that of intemperance, some the lust of revenge, others of covetousness, or ambition, or the like. O how innumerable are the lusts of the unmortified heart! Yet, according to the number of thy lusts, O sinner, so are thy gods. *Know ye not*, says the apostle, *that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey; his servants ye are, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?* Rom. vi. 16.

Thus I have given you a short account of some other gods, which people may have secretly lodged in their hearts, while they pretend to obey this command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. Take heed, that the word of the Lord be not against you; and that, while I have been aiming to open this law or commandment of God, in its spirituality, conscience be not saying, as *Ahab* to the prophet, *Thou hast found me, O mine enemy*: has not this commandment, which is exceeding broad, discovered some other god in thy heart than him, who says here, *I am the Lord thy God*? If any one of these idols be reigning upon the throne of thy heart, thou never to this day obeyedst the first commandment of the law of God. From whence it is easy to infer, that thy obedience is yet to begin, with respect to the whole law, and every other commandment of it: for, if the first be not obeyed first, none of the rest can be obeyed; no, it is impossible; because, as I said already, the foundation of all obedience is laid in having no other god but Him only, who promises in the preface to be the Lord our God. O sirs, for the Lord's sake, look to it in time, that there be not a lye in your right-hand, while you profess to close with this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*; for, if you close with

with it aright by faith, you will just do as required in this command, saying, I will have no other gods before God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Thus, by obeying the first command, we receive Christ, and rest upon him *alone*, for salvation, as he is offered, given or promised in the gospel or covenant of grace.

Use 3d of this doctrine may be by way of *consolation* to believers, whose souls, in obedience to this commandment, have, upon the foundation of this covenant-grant, said unto the Lord, *Thou art my Lord*; and who, in the faith of this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, have gone to a communion-table, and taken the bread and wine in that ordinance, as the seal of this promise, and all the other promises that depend thereupon. That you may see what strong consolation is here, I pray you consider, that this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, draws all the blessings of heaven and eternity with it. There is not one promise, from the beginning of *Genesis* to the end of the *Revelation*, which thou mayst not confidently claim as thine own, if thou hast obeyed the command of God, in laying hold of God as thy God, thy only God, by vertue of this glorious grant of sovereign grace, *I am the Lord thy God*.

It is impossible, that I can tell you the tenthousandth part of that grace and glory, that lies in the womb of this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*; an infinite God, who is an infinite good, is in it: *Who can by searching find out God? Who can find him out to perfection?* New scenes of his infinite glory will be opened to saints and angels through eternity in heaven. O then, how immense is the treasure that is here secured to thee, O believer, in these two or three words, *I am the Lord thy God!*
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Well mayst thou sing, *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places.* He that gave himself unto the death for thy redemption in the person of the Son, and gives himself as *JEHOVAH*, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, by covenant-gift and grant; how will he not with this freely give thee all things? Canst thou doubt of his liberality as to other things, when he does not withhold his infinitely glorious self? Canst thou doubt of his fulfilling any other promise of the covenant, when thou hast set to the seal of faith to this, with application of it to thy soul, *I am the Lord thy God?*

I might here, for the believer's consolation, and the encouragement of his faith, shew how this covenant-promise draws all the rest of the promises in its train, they being inseparably connected therewith. To instance only in a few instead of many; **I AM THE LORD THY GOD:** therefore *I will give thee a heart to know me.* **I AM THE LORD THY GOD:** therefore *I will sprinkle thee with clean water, and thou shalt be clean; from all thy idols and filthiness will I cleanse thee.* **I AM THE LORD THY GOD:** therefore *I will be merciful unto thy unrighteousness, thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* *I am the Lord thy God:* therefore *I will put my spirit within thee, and cause thee to walk in my statutes, to keep my judgments and to do them.* And so of all the other promises of the covenant; they are all yea and amen in him, who is the *Lord thy God.* He, who is so kind and good, as to make over himself to thee as thy God, will infallibly make out and make good every promise; and thou mayst trust him, with assured confidence, that he will do it, because he has said, **I AM THE LORD THY GOD.** O! let not the frequent
repetition

repetition of these words make them unfavoury; for there is more, than ten thousand millions of heavens of glory, in them to the soul, that views them with the eye of faith, in the light of the spirit.

I might further add, for the believer's comfort, that this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, draws along with it, the sweetest and most endearing offices and relations that can be imagined. To instance in a few; (1.) He who is thy God, is thy sun to enlighten, direct, warm and fructify thy soul with his benign and gracious influences, *Psalms lxxxiv. 11. The day-spring from on high hath begun to visit thee, the day-star hath arisen in thy heart*; and, though clouds may overcast thy sky, yet the sun of righteousness will break through them, and return with the refreshing visits of everlasting kindness; for his *going-forth are prepared, or secured, as the morning. Unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves in the stall, Mal. iv. 2.* (2.) The Lord thy God is a shield, to protect and defend thee against all the attacks of thy temporal or spiritual enemies. When sin, satan and the world come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against them. He is the *strength of the poor, the strength of the needy in their distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thy God is the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency; He rides in the heavens for thy help, and in his excellency on the skies.* (3.) Thy God is thy reward: *fear not*, says the Lord to Abraham, *I am thy shield and exceeding great reward, Gen. xv. 1.* He is, not only thy rewarder,

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but he himself is thy reward. And, thy God being thy reward, it must be exceeding great, great beyond all expression or imagination; it is exceeding great beyond what eye ever saw, or ear heard, or hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. Sure such a reward cannot be of debt, but of grace only. It is the reward, not of our service or obedience, but the reward of the obedience and death of our glorious surety. He is the righteous new heir, and we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. (4.) Thy God, believer, is thy friend. There is a covenant of friendship implied in my text, *I am the Lord thy God*. It is said of *Abraham* that he was *the friend of God*; and the friendship is mutual. Whatever kind Offices ever one friend performed to another, these doth thy God perform unto thee. Thy God, as a friend, sympathizes with thee, in all thy afflictions, *Isa.* lxiii. 9. Supplies thy needs, *Phil.* iv. 18. Imparts his secrets to thee, the secrets of his covenant, and mysteries of his kingdom, which he hides from the rest of the world, *Matt.* vii. 25. Promises to bear thee company through fire and water, life and death, *Isa.* xliii. 3. As a friend, he will pay you kindly visits, and meet you more than half-way, when you come to visit him; *Thou meetest him who rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, and remembers thee in thy ways*. (5.) Thy God, believer, is thy Father, *2 Cor.* vi. 16, 17. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. And, verse 18. it is added, *I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*. Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God! Let men and angels wonder at it, that we, who are sprung of hell, should be dignified with a name among the
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general assembly and church of the first-born. Thy God is thy Father; and, as a tender-hearted Father, his eye is upon thee for good, his ear is open unto thy cry, his heart follows thee wherever thou goest, his hand is ready to help thee and hold thee up, his spirit, in and by the word, to counsel and comfort thee, his house of many mansions prepared and ready to receive thee, whenever thou art dislodged from the earthly house of this tabernacle. (6.) Thy God is thy Husband, *Isa.* liv. 6. *Thy Maker is thy Husband, whose name is the Lord of Hosts; and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel.* Thy name before him is *Hephziba* and *Beula*; he rejoiceth over thee, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride. There is a complication of interests betwixt him and thee, and thy concerns are so much his, that, whatever action the law has against thee, he is bound, by vertue of his relation to thee as a husband, to cover and defend thee against all deadly. (7.) Thy God, believer, is thy very life, yea, the strength of thy life, *Psalms* vii. 1. *The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* Thy God lives, and because he lives thou shalt live also. *The Lord liveth, blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.* Thus you see by these little hints, what this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, draws after it for the consolation of the believer, who has by faith laid hold of it, and so obeyed the first command. O sirs, faith's views of the grace wrapped up in this promise, would make us all to join issue with *David*, *Psalms* xxxi. 19. *O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!* So much for the use of comfort.

The last *use* I shall make of this subject, is of exhortation. 1st, To all in general. 2^{dly}, To believers.

First, A word of exhortation to all in general, to obey and keep the first commandment, by taking hold of this covenant-grant, *I am the Lord thy God*: which is all one, as if I should exhort you to believe in Christ, or receive and rest upon him alone, &c. When a sinner believes in Christ, what does he else but receive God in Christ, as his God, by virtue of the covenant of grace, placing his only rest and happiness through eternity in the enjoyment of him alone? And, is not this the very thing required in the first commandment, or a having no other gods before him? The gospel, holding forth the object of faith, and the command requiring the obedience of faith, has been one and the same in all ages of the world, however differently expressed and dispensed. We generally look upon the law of God, delivered to *Israel* at mount *Sinai*, as binding and obligatory upon us; and no doubt it is the rule of obedience to all mankind, unto the end of the world, who shall read or hear of it. And I am so far from thinking, or teaching, that the obligation of the holy law is dissolved by the grace of the gospel, that I think it plain, from the connection infinite wisdom has laid betwixt them here, it is simply impossible any man can share of the grace of the gospel, but in a way of obedience to the very first command of the law, as already explained: and therefore my exhortation to every one hearing me, is to yield obedience to this first commandment of the law; lay claim by faith unto a God in Christ, as your God, by virtue of the covenant, where he says, *I am the Lord thy God*; and see that

that you *have no other gods before him*. Do not think I exhort you to this, as though I supposed you had any strength or power of your own to obey; no, we are naturally without strength, wholly impotent to do any thing spiritually good: but, when I exhort you to obey this commandment, I exhort you to obey it, in a dependence upon the grace of him, who commands you to have him as your own God, and who engages himself by covenant to be *our God*, and so to be the author and finisher of our faith.

Now, to quicken your compliance, to excite your obedience, consider these few particulars, which I shall not much enlarge upon; (i.) Consider, that, by the breach of the first covenant, you and I have forfeited all claim and title to the Lord as our God. Indeed he never ceased to be our sovereign Lord-Creator; in no state can this relation to God be dissolved; this relation stands even in the state of the damned: but, I say, by the violation of the holy law, we have lost our covenant-relation to God, as our God, our Father, our friend, our portion: and, having lost our God, we have lost our life, peace, comfort, and happiness for ever; and, not only so, but are under his wrath and curse, and so are liable to all miseries in soul and body through time and eternity. Now, by hearkning unto this exhortation, all this unspeakable loss is repaired: here you have God coming in a new and better covenant, even in a covenant of grace, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*; yea, requiring thee, by his sovereign authority to take him again as thy own God, and thy only God, upon the footing of this new grant of grace. O what sinner is it, that considers his own eternal interest, but will comply with this com-

mand, in knowing and acknowledging the Lord as his God! Who would not take back the forfeiture upon such an easy ground?

(2.) Consider who it is that says, *I am the Lord thy God*; who it is that issues out this command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. It is he whose name alone is J E H O V A H, most high over all the earth; he who doth whatever pleases him, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; he who humbles himself, when he beholds things in heaven, cherubims, and seraphims, angels and archangels. O what astonishing grace and condescension is it in this God to come to a sinful worm of the fallen children of *Adam*, saying, *I am the Lord thy God!* O shall we not fall in with the design of such condescending grace, and say, we will have no other gods before him! *This is our God for ever and ever!* If we do not, we reject the council of God against ourselves, and despise the riches of his grace.

(3.) Consider, that this is the very first duty of natural and revealed religion, *to know and acknowledge God as the only true God, and our God*. The light of nature teaches us to own him as our creating God, upon the ground of that revelation he makes of himself to us, in the works of creation and providence. Revealed religion teaches us to own him, as our God in Christ, upon the ground of his own promise and grant, *I am the Lord thy God*. So that, till this command be obeyed, a man is an atheist, an idolater, without God in the world, and is an utter stranger both to natural and revealed religion. Wo, wo, wo to the man, or woman, that is in such a case; thou art condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on thee,

thee, because thou rejectest *Jehovah*, in the person of the Son, as thy God and Redeemer; and upon the matter, sayest, I will have other gods before him, I will not have him as the Lord my God.

(4.) Consider thou can'st perform no duty of the law acceptably, until thou obeyest this command, and close with this covenant-grant, as was cleared already. All thy acts of obedience to the other commandments, are but splendid sins, an abomination to God, till this covenant-grant be received in obedience to the first precept of his law. The soul of all obedience is wanting, till a man begin here, hence all his works are but dead works.

(5.) Consider, how willing he is to be thy God, even thy *own God*, O sinner. If he were not willing, would he ever speak in such a dialect to thee, as here, saying, *I am the Lord thy God?* Would he ever lay thee under such a command of love, as to say, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me?* Thou shalt know and acknowledge me, as thy own God and portion, as thy only hope and happiness, in time and through eternity? O do not suspect his candor and ingenuity! for the strength of *Israel* will not lie; he hates it in others, and therefore it is impossible he can be guilty of it himself. We would reckon that man a blasphemer, who, with his mouth, should utter such words as these, it is not as God says, he is not the Lord my God: and yet this blasphemy every unbelieving sinner is guilty of: he makes God a liar, and denies that God speaks the truth in his heart, when he says to him, *I am the Lord thy God*; and, at the same time, rebels against his authority, requiring him to make faith's application of this covenant-grant to his own soul.

(6) Consider, there is an absolute necessity that thou lay hold on this covenant-grant, in obedience to this command. Why? there is no living, and no safe dying without God. Without God, thou art without hope in the world. Without God, thou, and all thou hast in a world, are cursed; *cursed in thy basket and store, in the house and field, in thy outgoings and incomings.* Without God you cannot die, without dying the second death, as well as the first: *all that are afar from thee, shall perish*; What wilt thou do, O sinner, in the day of visitation, who livest in disobedience to this command, and refusest the grace contained in this covenant-grant? Whither wilt thou flee for help? And where wilt thou leave thy glory? How will you look God in the face, when arraigned before his awful tribunal? What a knell will it give to thy heart, when thou hearest this, as the first and leading article of thy indictment? there is the man, who would not know and acknowledge me, as his God and Redeemer, me, who stretched out my arms of grace to embrace him, and whose bowels sent out a sound after him saying, *I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me!* He preferred self and the world to me, and therefore, now I will laugh at his calamity, and mock when his fear is come upon him. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver out of his hand.

(7.) Consider what advantage will redound to thy soul, by obeying this command with an eye to the covenant-promise. Thou art made up for ever; all salvation, as you heard, is wrapt up in this one word, *I am the Lord thy God.* And in the faith of it, thou mayest go through the valley of

of the shadow of death, without fearing any evil; for thy God is with thee, he will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

But I shall not further insist in pressing this exhortation with arguments. One would think, that no man, that believes a future state of eternal happiness or misery, needs to be much urged to know and acknowledge God in Christ, as his God, upon this new grant of sovereign grace; this being the very hinge, upon which a comfortable eternity doth turn. All I shall do further in prosecuting this exhortation, is to answer a few objections, which carnal reason and unbelief will very readily muster up against this doctrine and exhortation.

Object. 1st, May one say, I have lost all claim and title to the Lord as my God, by violating the holy law, and I think, I hear God saying to me, with a frown, *How shall I put thee among the children*, who hast forfeited thy relation to me? and therefore I dare not own and acknowledge him, as the Lord my God. *Answer.* It is indeed true, that you, and I, and all mankind, have lost our title and relation to him as our God, by the first *Adam*, and the breach of the first covenant; and, since the fall of *Adam*, God never said to any sinner upon a law-ground, *I am the Lord thy God*: no, when a sinner looks to that quarter, his hope and strength perishes for ever from the Lord. But, O! sirs, here is a new covenant, a new gift or grant, that God makes of himself, which does not go upon the ground of our obedience to the law, as its condition, but upon the ground of sovereign grace, reigning through the righteousness of God-man: here I say, is a new claim of right presented to the guilty sinner; *I am the Lord thy God; I will be unto them a Father, and they shall be my*

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sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. These and the like absolute and indefinite promises are universally dispensed to all and every one, as the ground of faith : and, lest any sinner through a sense of guilt, should fear to lay hold upon this new claim of right, here is the warrant subjoined, and annexed to the claim, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Object. 2d. I am afraid, lest God be not saying this to me in particular, *I am the Lord thy God* ; and therefore dare not lay hold of it, I fear, lest he be not requiring me in particular by this commandment, to know and acknowledge him as my God. *Answe.* It is by these and the like groundless surmises and insinuations, that an *evil heart of unbelief* turns us away from the living God, and from taking hold of his covenant. But pray, tell me, in good earnest, do you think to dispute away the binding obligation of the very first commandment of the law of God ? For, as was said, at the same time that you refuse to take hold of this covenant-grant, you disobey the first and leading precept to the law. Why will you own the obligation of the other commandments of the law, and reject this ? I suppose there are none of you, but will readily acknowledge, that you in particular are bound to honour your parents, not to kill, steal, commit adultery, &c. You may with as good reason, say, or think, that these other precepts do not bind you in particular, as imagine, that you are not particularly bound by the first to own and acknowledge a God in Christ, as your God. Why so much prejudiced against the first and chief commandment of God beyond all others ? What account can be rendered for it, that men should thrust away from them the first command-

commandment of the very law of nature, when grafted in to the gospel-covenant, and made so subservient to their eternal salvation? I know of no solid reason that can be given for it, but that of the apostle, *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.*

Object. 3d. I cannot refuse, that the command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, is binding upon me in particular: but I can never think, that it is to me in particular, that God is saying, *I am the Lord thy God.* *Ans.* Who authorised you, or any of *Adam's* race, to put asunder what God has joined? I am sure, it is not by God's warrant that this is done; and therefore you may easily divine, that it comes from a worse quarter. It is the great plot of satan to break that connection which God has laid betwixt the gospel and the law; for he knows very well, that, if the gospel be separate from the law, or the law from the gospel, in the matter of practice, not one of the commandments of the law can be obeyed to purpose. And if this first command, in particular, be disjoined from the gospel promise laid in the preface, *I am the Lord thy God*, it can no more be obeyed by a sinner, than if he were commanded to pull the sun, or moon, out of the firmament. Pray consider, while you own the obligation of the precept, and, mean while, refuse your interest or concern with the preface, you acknowledge your obligation to obedience, and yet, at the same time, cast away the foundation upon which your obedience is to stand; thus you build without a foundation, and how can that building stand? It will fall, and great will be the fall of it. And therefore, in the name of God, I proclaim, that this promise, *I am the Lord thy*

thy God, is to you, and your seed, and to all that are afar off. Did not God speak to every individual in the camp, when he uttered these words, *I am the Lord thy God*; as well as when he added, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*? The same is he saying to you, and me, and every one of us; and therefore let us not cast away our own mercy: To us, as well as unto them, *belong the adoption, the covenants, the giving of the law, and the promises*.

Object. 4th. What if all that is intended in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*, be only, either an assertion of divine sovereignty, or of an external federal relation to *Israel*, as the seed and posterity of *Abraham*, and the only visible church? And, if so, where is there a foundation in them for me to believe in him, as the Lord my God? *Answer.* I am far from excluding any of these things which the objection mentions as comprehended in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*: and I grant, that if no more were included in them, I do not see, how they could be a foundation of special and saving faith to me, or any else. But, that it is otherwise, will not readily be denied by any, if they consider, what it is God requires of us in the first command, as inseparably connected with the preface. Pray consider it a little; is this all that God calls for by the first precept of his law, to know and acknowledge him as our sovereign Lord-creator, or that he is a God to the visible church by external federal relation? No doubt these are truths indispensably to be believed: but, there is more required, namely, to believe that he is the Lord our God in Christ, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. The external federal relation, that God bears to the visible church, becomes

becomes special, when this promise is applied by a saving faith: hence this is the common argument wherewith *Israel* is urged to believe and repent through all the old testament; particularly, *Psalms* lxxx. 9, 10, 11. And whenever saving faith was acted, whereby their turning unto him was influenced, they commonly fasten upon, and apply, this fundamental promise in my text, *Jer.* iii. 22. So that, I say, there is more in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*, than a bare assertion of divine sovereignty, or of his covenant-relation to *Israel*, as a visible church: there is in them a glorious new-covenant grant, or gift, that God makes of himself to us in Christ as our God, to be applied by a saving faith; and, when such a faith is acted upon it, the native echo of the soul unto it, is, *This God is my God*; I believe it, because he himself hath said it, and said it, not to others only, but to me in particular: *I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God*. It is true indeed, no man can speak this dialect of faith without the Holy Spirit; but, to say that there is not sufficient ground for a particular applicatory faith in the bare word or promise of God, abstractedly considered, is to apologize for the unbelief of the hearers of the gospel, and to run into the error of the enthusiasts, who suspend the duty of believing, not upon the word of God, but upon the work and light of the spirit within.

Object. 5th. If this promise be made to every one in the visible church, how shall the veracity of the promiser be salved or vindicated, seeing there are many who come short of it, many to whom he never becomes their God in a special covenant-relation?

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Unto this objection I might answer by way of retortion, How is it that the unbeliever makes God a Liar, if the promise be not made to him in particular? For, if the promise and the faithfulness of the promiser be not to him, he cannot be blamed for not believing, or not setting to his seal to a promise never made to him. Can he be condemned for not intermeddling with a thing that does not belong to him? Again, I ask, How was it, that God, in a consistency with his faithfulness made unbelieving *Israel*, to know his breach of promise, *Numb. xiv. 34.* after he had made a grant or gift of the land of *Canaan* to them, and promised to bring them into it, while yet they never were allowed to enter it, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness, God having sworn that they should not enter into his rest? The faithfulness of God, in breaking his promise that he had made to that generation, is salved by landing the blame upon their own unbelief; they believed not his word, they trusted not in his salvation, they gave more credit to the false lying report of the wicked spies, than to the word and promise of him, for whom it is impossible to lye; and, because they made God a liar, therefore his promise made to them, turned to be of no effect unto them. In like manner, a promise is left us of entering into a spiritual and eternal rest; but mean time, most have reason to fear, lest God, make them to know his breach of promise, by excluding them out of that promised rest, because of their unbelief. The faithfulness of God is not in the least impeached hereby, because the unbeliever calls his faithfulness in question, and rejects his promise, as a thing not worthy of regard. Can
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a man be charged with unfaithfulness, in not bestowing himself and his estate upon a woman to whom he has made a promise of marriage, if the woman to whom it was made, refuse his offer and promise? The faithfulness of the bankers of *Scotland* is engaged in particular to the bearer of their note; but, if the bearer shall tear the note, or throw it away as a piece of useless paper, their veracity is no ways impeached, tho' they never pay that man the sum contained in the note: so here.

Obj. 6th. If I could find the marks and evidences of saving grace once wrought in my soul, then indeed I could acknowledge and believe the Lord is my God; but till then I dare not, neither do I think it my duty. *Ans.* I do own, that none can warrantably draw this conclusion, that they are in a state of grace, within the bond of the covenant, or savingly interested in the Lord as their God, till they have examined the matter at the bar of the word, and, upon trial, have found such marks of grace, as warrant them to draw such a conclusion. But this is not the question now under consideration: the question at present is, Whether it be lawful and warrantable for a poor sinner, who is so far from finding any works of grace or gracious qualifications in himself, that he can see nothing but sin and misery, feels himself to be an heir of hell and wrath; whether, I say, it be his duty, upon the footing of this covenant-grant and promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, to know, believe and acknowledge the Lord as his God? And if this be the question, which it must be, it is all one as if it were asked, Whether it be the immediate duty of such a person to obey the first command of the moral law, as it stands under a covenant of grace?

grace? or, Whether a person is to forbear obedience to the first command in the law of God, till he find gracious qualifications wrought in his soul? To affirm which, were upon the matter to say, that the first commandment of the law does not enjoin the first duty of religion, but that something is to be done, before we do the thing that God requires of us in the first place, as the foundation of all other acts of obedience; and that is, to know and believe that God in Christ is our God, by virtue of a covenant of grace contained in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*. Such strange absurdities we inevitably run ourselves into, when we keep not in the cleanly path of faith chalked out to us in the word.

Obj. 7th. We fear, that this way of teaching will lead us into a presumptuous confidence, and therefore we are afraid to meddle with it. *Ans.* God teaches no man to presume, when he requires him to have no other gods before him. Your approved catechism does not teach you to presume, when it tells you, that God, in this commandment, requires you to know and acknowledge him as God, and as your God; and that, because he is the Lord and *our* God, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments. But besides, as I told you in the use of trial, the man, who, in a presumptuous way, lays claim to the Lord as his God, either lays claim to him out of Christ, or he does it not upon the footing of the faithfulness of God, engaged in the covenant; or else, while he says with his mouth, that the Lord is God, he hath other gods before him: in which case, God says to the man, *What hast thou to do to make mention of my covenant, seeing thou hast other gods before*

fore me in thy heart, and thus *thou hatest instruction, and casteth my counsel behind thy back?*

Obj. 8th. God is angry, he carries toward me as an enemy; he smites by the word and rod: how then shall I adventure to say, he is the Lord my God? *Ans.* It is true, God was angry; but, his anger or vindictive wrath having spent itself upon our glorious surety, we may now say, with the church, *Isa. xii. 1. His anger is turned away, and he comforteth us. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.* Having smelt a sweet favour in the sacrifice of the death of Christ; the deluge of wrath is recalled, and a proclamation issued out, *Fury is not in me; I am the Lord thy God; Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* O sirs, this is not the language of anger and wrath, but the language of love, mercy, and of infinite bowels of pity and good-will toward man upon earth. As for the appearance of anger in his dispensations, no man can know either love or hatred by all that is before him: the only way to judge of the love of his heart, is to read it in, and by his words of grace; for these, and not his external dispensations, are the exact portraiture of his deep and infinite heart. It is true indeed, we are told, that *God is angry with the wicked every day:* But what is his grand and fundamental quarrel with them? It is this, that, though he has said, *I am the Lord thy God and Redeemer;* though he has given such a glorious proof of this, as to give his only begotten Son, and to give him up to the death for our redemption; though he has engaged his faithfulness to us in a new covenant: yet they will not know and acknowledge the Lord as God, and as their God, but will have some other gods before him. To conclude, the design of all the threat-

threatnings of the word, and of all the angry-like dispensations of his providence, is, that we may flee from his wrath; and may not rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler, but may *turn to him as our God* in Christ, *and live*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Obj. 9th. What if it was only to the elect or believers in the camp of *Israel*, that God spake when he said, *I am the Lord thy God*? if so, they cannot be a foundation of faith to all. *Ans.* This objection still breaks the connection, God has made betwixt the promise and the precept, which must not be. I believe no man will adventure to say, that the command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, was only to the elect, or believers, but to elect and reprobate, believers and unbelievers. The whole law was given to every man, no man exempted: Now, did God tie them all to obedience by his command, and yet, at the same time, take away the foundation of obedience, which lies in the promise? No; the one must run parallel with the other. The promise, in its exhibition, must be as extensive as the obligation of the command. The object of faith must be presented to all, whose duty it is to believe. The promise is among things revealed as well as the precept, and therefore does equally belong unto us. *What God has joined, let no man separate.* It is true, these words, *I am the Lord thy God*, considered as in his mind, purpose and decree, belonged only to the elect; but, considered as uttered or spoken indefinitely, they cease to be a decree with respect unto us: we are to look upon them as a promise tendered to us as the ground of our faith, and so they have a respect to every one commanded to have him as his own God.

I shall shut up this discourse with two or three words of exhortation, or advice, to you who have in reality obeyed this first commandment of the royal law, by laying hold upon God in Christ as your God, by vertue of his faithfulness engaged in this glorious grant, *I am the Lord thy God.* O what shall we, or what can we, render unto him, who, after we had lost him as our God by sin, renders himself back to us in a new covenant, sealing it with his own blood, and attesting it by the three, that bear record in heaven! There are these few things, the Lord thy God requires of thee in a way of gratitude; (1.) Love him as thy God, and love all that bear his image; for this is the sum of the ten commandments, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.* This love is the fulfilling of the law. (2.) Trust him as thy God; *Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Trust in him at all times, ye people.* Trust him for every promised blessing, and ask them of him in prayer; for they are agreeable to his will. *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. Cast all thy cares upon thy God, and in every thing by prayer let your requests be made known unto him.* (3.) Worship him as thy God; *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.* And O worship him in the beauties of holiness, *For holiness becomes his sanctuary for ever.* (4.) *Walk before thy God and be thou perfect. All people will walk in the name of their God; we also will walk in the name of the Lord our God. Walk worthy of him, who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Let your light so shine before men, as others seeing*

your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven. (5.) Praise, extol and magnify him as your God, Exod. 15. He is my God, I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Let the high praises of thy God be continually in thy mouth, that ever said to thy soul, I am the Lord thy God. Join issue with David, Psalm 18. saying, The Lord liveth, blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted. Lastly. Disband all other gods: Thou shalt have no other gods before me: let nothing usurp his room. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Hear, O my people, I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wiltarken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, Psalm lxxxi. 8, 9, 10.

The promising GOD, a performing GOD.

A S E R M O N preached on a Thanksgiving-Day, after the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, at *Abbot's Hall*, October 22, 1733.

By Mr. R A L P H E R S K I N E.

GEN. xxviii. 15.

— *For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

AT the last sacramental solemnity of this sort, I spoke a little, concerning the great plea and prayer of faith upon the divine promise in the words of *David*, 2 Sam. vii. 25. — *Lord, do as thou hast said.* We may now look upon this text that I have read, as the gracious answer of God to that prayer of faith, in the words of the great God himself to *Jacob*, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of; or, till I have done as I have said.*

What God said once to *Joshua*, chap. i. 5. — *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*, is applied, as spoken to all believers, *Heb. xiii. 5. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Even so, what God said to *Jacob* here, doth equally belong to all be-

lievers in Christ; *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* Hath God condescended to speak to you, and *caused you to hope upon his word of grace*, or promise, at this, or any former, occasion? Here is good news to take away with you, that the promising God will, in due time, be a performing God, and that you may not think long, and *weary or faint in your mind*, apprehending what a weary time it may be, between the promise and the performance. Here is supporting encouragement, in the mean time, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* What I have said I will do, and will not leave thee, till I have done it.

In the preceeding part of this chapter you find, *Jacob* was forced to fly from his father's house, upon the account of the wrath of his brother *Esau*: he is hastned away to *Padan-aram*, and on his way he comes to *Luz*, which afterwards, on the account of a notable emergent, was called *Bethel*, where God signally appeared, and discovered himself to him in great glory, suitably to his strait. Here he was benighted, *verse 11.* and was obliged to lye in the open field. Some of the saints and servants of God have been put to great hardships, through the violence and rage of their persecuting brethren. But though *Jacob's* bed was hard, yet his rest was sweet, while he had a hard pillow of stone under his head, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and spake comfortably to him. God's time, of speaking comfort to his people, is readily when they are most destitute of other comforts, then he is most kind, when brethren come to be most unkind.

You may notice what God shewed to *Jacob*, and what he said to him. (1.) What he shewed
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to him, he manifested to him his glory, as the God of providence, and the God of grace in Christ, who is here represented to him by the ladder reaching from heaven to earth, *verse* 12. and all the intercourse between heaven and earth is by this ladder. (2.) What he spake to him, *verse* 13. as the vision was suitable to his present case, letting him understand, that he had a good guide, and a good guard, not only the angel of God, but the Lord of angels; so the words, that God spake to him, were suitable to his present need. The Lord spake from the top of the ladder; for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven, come through Jesus Christ. Here are former promises, made to *Abraham* and *Isaac* his father and grandfather, repeated and ratified to *Jacob*, whereby God intimated, that he would be the same to him, that he had been to them. Here are fresh promises made to him suited to his present condition. He was to leave his kindred, and to want their presence: God promised to be present with him. *I am with thee*. He was in fear of *Esau*: God promised, saying, *I will keep thee*. He was journeying to an unknown place: God promised to keep him in all places, whithersoever he went. He was apprehensive he would never see his own country again: God promised, he would bring him again to that land. He seemed to be left of all his friends and relations: God promised, saying, *I'll not leave thee*. Providence seemed to cross the promise, while he is thus going as an exile to a place far distant: God assures him of the performance of all he had said, in due season, *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*. When God speaks to his people, he speaks to the point, he speaks to the case, his words are suited to their

present exigencies ; and not only so, but to their future straits also. *Jacob* knew not, but God knew, and foresaw, what hardships he would meet with in his uncle *Laban's* service ; and, in a suitableness to the event that was to take place, he assures him, saying, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* This was such a gracious manifestation, and such a wonderful intercourse, that God had with *Jacob*, as obliged *Jacob* to put a remark upon the place, and call it *Bethel*, the house of God, the gate of heaven.

The text is not so much a new promise, as a repeated confirmation of what he had before promised, for establishing and fortifying of *Jacob's* faith ; for, says God, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* Where notice (1.) A confirming word concerning the issue, or what he would bring out of these promises, that they shall not be mere sayings, but doings ; *I will do what I have spoken to thee of.* Have I said it, and will I not do it ? *In the end the vision shall speak.* (2.) A supporting word in the interim, that faith may not faint in the mean time, before the accomplishment come, *I will not leave thee, till I have done it.* *Jacob* might think, O ! it may be a long time between the promise now made, and the accomplishment of it. What will become of me in the mean time ? And indeed he had dark days, and hard service before his hand, and there was long twenty years between *Bethel*-visit here, where he met with God, and God spake to him in this manner, and *Peniel*-visit, when he wrestled with God and prevailed, and when God came to do for him some of the great things he had here spoken to him of. And in that interval of twenty years between *Bethel*
and

and *Peniel*, many ups and downs, trials and difficulties occurred in *Jacob's* lot; but for his support in the mean time, God assures him, that he would never leave him, until he had done that which he had spoken to him of. Hence the doctrine I would speak a little unto is,

That whatever dark and dismal days may befall the children of God, upon the back of sweet Bethel visits, that he allows to them; yet he will not leave them, till he hath accomplished all the Bethel promises, that he made to them.

He will never leave them, till he do what he hath spoken to them of. He will go on till he hath done as he hath said. We may say of our Lord Jesus, when once he hath spoken to a soul, and begun to do graciously, as *Naomi* said to *Ruth* concerning *Boaz*, *Ruth* iii. last verse, *Sit still, my daughter, till thou knowest how the matter will fall: for the man will not rest, till he hath finished the thing this day.* Even so, when Christ hath begun to speak kindly, the poor believer may sit still and wait patiently, till the appointed time of accomplishing his word; for the God-man will not rest, until he hath finished the thing. We may be confident of this very thing, *Philip* i. 6. *That he that hath begun the good work in us, and said the good word to us, will perform it, and finish it; I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

We find how this doctrine was verified, both in *Jacob* and his seed. (1.) In *Jacob's* own person. After this discovery of God, that he enjoyed at *Bethel*, many dark days, and much hard service he endured, yet God did not leave him. When *Laban* cast down his countenance on him, God lift up the light of his countenance on him, and

said, putting him in mind of this *Bethel*-visit he made to him, and the *Bethel*-vow he caused him to make, *Gen.* xxxi. 13. *I am the God of Bethel.* Yea, God never left him, till he did what he spoke to him, both in prospering him in the place where he was a stranger so long, and in bringing him back to his own land, though he was in great danger, when *Laban* was pursuing him behind, and his brother *Esau* meeting him in the face, yet God preserved him according to his word, and brought him back to the land he promised to bring him to, and then sent him to visit *Bethel*, *Gen.* xxxv. 7. where he built an altar, and called it *El-bethel*, that is, the God of *Bethel*, and so remarked the goodness of God to him, in not leaving him, till he had *done all that he spoke to him of.* (2.) In *Jacob's* seed this doctrine was verified, particularly with reference to the promise made to them, concerning their inheriting the land of *Canaan*, and expelling the *Canaanites* to make room for them. See and compare *Josh.* xxi. close, with *Josh.* xxiii. 14, 15. and *1 Kings* viii. 56. God will take his own time of doing what he hath spoken; but he will be sure to do it, whatever difficulties intervene between the promise and performance.

Here I will shew (1.) What we are to understand by the *Bethel*-visits, that God may allow his people. (2.) Consider some of the dark days, that may follow upon these *Bethel* interviews. (3.) Consider and explain the promise here made, that *he will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*, notwithstanding the dark days, that may intervene between the promise and the accomplishment. (4.) Offer some grounds, upon which the believer may be assured, that

God

God will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of. (5.) Deduce some inferences for the application.

The *first* thing proposed, was to shew, what we are to understand by the *Bethel*-visits God may allow his people. In order to this I premise, it is sure, none are acquainted with what we call a *Bethel*-visit, except these that are, in a peculiar manner, blessed of the Lord, as *Jacob* was, of whom his father *Isaac* said, *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed*, Gen. xxvii. 33. They are the blessed objects of God's love, and the blessed heirs of the promises, brought into covenant with God, and joined to the Lord, by converting grace, and saving faith. And as none are acquainted with *Bethel*-visits, but these that are thus blessed; so, it is with great variety, that the Lord's people do enjoy such appearances of God. Though they have not all experience of *Bethel*-interviews with God, in the same measure and degree that *Jacob* had; yet they have such experience of meeting with God, as are substantially the same. Whatever difference there may be in circumstances; yet, they are such, as they may call the place *Bethel*, the house of God, the gate of heaven. I shall here notice, (1.) The substance. (2.) The ordinary circumstances of such interviews with God, as may be called the *Bethel*-visits.

(1.) The substance, or substantial part thereof, is God's gracious meeting with them, so as they may have it to say, *the Lord God of the Hebrews met with us*, Exod. iii. 18. And that either in publick ordinances, or in secret duties, by night, or by day, in the city, or in the field, and this meeting with them, has these two things especially in it, which we find was in *Jacob's* meeting with God here in *Bethel*, the one is the manifestation

festation of his glory, and the other is the communication of his mind. (1.) This *Bethel*-visit includes a manifestation of his glory. *Jacob* here sees the glory of God in Christ represented as the ladder reaching between heaven and earth. Why then, you may call that a *Bethel*, wherever it hath pleased God to reveal Christ in you, and to open your eyes, to see his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, as the way to the Father, and as the ladder, by which you may climb up to heaven. Have you seen at this or any former occasion, Christ to be, as it were, the ladder set upon the earth in his humiliation, and reaching unto heaven in his exaltation, and so that all the rounds and steps of the ladder are compleated in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting, at the right hand of God, and *by him do we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God?* 1 Pet. i. 21. And have we thus by faith stepped up the ladder, or are we on the way stepping up, as we can, through grace upon the view of Christ, as the only ladder, the only way? Hath thus the God, that *commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts*, not our heads only, but our hearts, to give us the *light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ*, so as our hearts have gone out after a revealed Christ? Why, this is one substantial part of a *Bethel*-visit, the manifestation of his glory.

(2.) This *Bethel*-visit includes a communication of his mind. *Jacob* here not only hath God manifesting his glory to him, but also communicating his mind as a promising God, saying, I am your Father's God, the God of *Abraham* and *Isaac*, and in testimony, that I will be your God also,

also, I will do, so and so, to you, and thus he communicates his mind to him by promises of grace. Why then, you may call that a *Bethel*-visit, when God comes and intimates his love, or communicates his mind, and speaks into your heart by some word of grace and promise, opening up some folded leaf of the gospel to you, and opening your understanding to apprehend, and your heart to apply it, and causing you to hope in his word, as *yea* and *amen* in Christ. If God hath said a word to your heart, and made you take him at his word, so as you can look to him, and say, *Remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope*, wherever it was, you may say the name of the place was *Bethel*, and that you found him in *Bethel*, and there he spake to you, *Hos.* xii. 4. Now concerning these visits we may remark four things.

(1.) That the Lord may allow a *Bethel*-manifestation and communication to his people, and yet they may not know that God is present with them, in such a manner as he is, till an after reflection thereupon. Hence said *Jacob* here, *verse* 16. when he *awaked out of his sleep, surely God was in this place, and I knew it not*. God's people may be so surprised with his visits, that tho' they cannot but be conscious of his coming, when he approaches to them, yet they may not be sure about the qualities of that visit, whether it was a saving divine manifestation, till they come to examine and reflect upon it, and find, that it was none other but the powerful presence of God. For they carry their own evidence along with them, *Surely he was here*.

(2.) *Bethel*-visits fill the soul with a holy awe of God, *verse* 17. *How dreadful is this place?*
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They that will see God, will see cause of holy trembling and blushing before him, and the sight will humble and fill them with holy awe and reverence. Saving discoveries do not elevate and puff up with pride, but impress the soul with holy dread. The sweet pleasure, and joy that attend the discovery, is tempered with holy fear and awe, insomuch that they *fear the Lord and his goodness, and rejoice with trembling.* The place, where God manifests himself, is both a joyful and a dreadful place. Praise is the most joyful and delightful exercise; yet God is said to be fearful in praises, because of the dread and awe of God, that is on the heart of those that praise him, for great is the glory of the Lord, which they see, who sing in the ways of the Lord.

(3.) Divine visits are not excluded from any place; even here, where *Jacob* little thought of meeting with God, he meets with him, he finds him in *Bethel*, and says this is the house of God, and the gate of heaven. Wherever we are in the house or field, if we meet with God there, we may call it the house of God and the gate of heaven, for heaven is in his gracious presence.

(4.) Divine visits are quickening, *verse* 18. He rises early in the morning, and sets about solemn worship of the God that appeared to him. He sets up the stone for a pillar, and anoints it as a memorial of what past, and gave the place a new name. As sweet communion we have with God ought to be remembered; so his grant of mercy calls for our return of duty. *Jacob* is here also quickened to vow himself away to the Lord, and promise to serve him; and indeed our vows and promises are then regular and evangelical, when they are the fruit of God's manifesting himself
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in the covenant of promise to us, as to *Jacob* here. For whatever we promise, we can perform nothing, but in the vertue of his promise to us.

(2.) As to the ordinary circumstances of such *Bethel* interviews with God. Several of these may be gathered from the history of *Jacob*, and will be found to correspond with the believer's experience, as in these following particulars. (1.) That in the Lord's ordinary way of dealing, when he deals effectually with poor souls, and when he hath a mind to bring them to a *Bethel*, he generally brings them to a wilderness, and there deals powerfully with them, and speaks kindly to them. Thus here, *Jacob* is in a wilderness, being banished from his father's house. Though he was a son of the promise, yet he was forced to run to a strange country. God allures his people, and brings them to a wilderness, and then speaks comfortably, gives them the valley of *Achor*, for a door of hope. Some here readily have come to this communion, or the like, and have found themselves in a wilderness of confusion, darkness and despondency, and yet had, e're all was done, ground to call the place *Bethel*, by reason of his meeting with them, and speaking to them.

(2.) The sweetest discoveries of God, are readily ushered in with the darkest nights. God's visit is ordinarily like the break of the day upon the back of a dark night. And indeed *weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*, Psalm xxx. 5. As it was literally in the dark night that God visited *Jacob* here, so you will see what a dark night of trouble, distress, and perplexity *Jacob* was in, when he met with God at *Peniel*, and wrestled with the angel and prevailed, Gen. xxxii. 24. *Jacob was left alone ;*
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and there wrestled a man with him till the break of day. He had been before this compassed with clouds of fear, on the account of *Esau*, who was meeting him with four hundred men. You, that are in a dark night of fear and distress, may be encouraged to wait on, for readily the Lord ushers in manifestations of himself with the darkest nights.

(3.) As the Lord is pleased to usher in sweet manifestations of himself with a dark night; so readily a dark night follows upon these sweet manifestations. And many times, they are as a clear sun-beam before a storm, and the people of God oft find this to their sad experience, making them see ground to be sober after their sweet experiences. *Jacob* had a good night in *Bethel*, but new straits followed upon it, particularly in the hard service and harsh treatment he met with from *Laban*. Here is a visit, and presently follows a night of trouble again. We mention this, not for your discouragement, but that you may not be surprized, for there may be a sudden turn in your spiritual affairs, *I said my mountain stands strong, but thou dost hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

(4.) Sometimes the night that follows upon the Lord's manifesting himself may be darker, and the darkness of it greater, than the night they had before their *Bethel*-manifestation. *Jacob* was in a strait before the *Bethel* visit, through the fear of *Esau*; but after that kindly visit, the strait was greater, and the night darker, while he had not only the fear, but the feeling of *Laban's* displeasure: perhaps you had a dark night, before the Lord paid you a visit; but what if a darker night shall follow upon that visit, even some grievous temptation to raze all again. The church was brought

brought to the banqueting house, and his banner over her was love; yet, afterwards to the dark shadow, where she cries, *I sought him, but I found him not*. What a sweet communion had the disciples with Christ, at the last supper! yet, followed with the darkest night of temptation, trouble, and scattering: the shepherd of *Israel* himself being smitten, the sheep were scattered. When the Lord allows you sweet *Bethel* blessings, you may mistake them, and think they bode nothing, but a life of joy and comfort, henceforth, and that former trials are at an end, and yet, they may be, only preparations for approaching trials, and encouragements to faith, and hope, under future troubles. This leads me to

The second thing proposed; which was to shew, what dark and dismal days may follow upon these *Bethel* discoveries. There are these following dark days, or rather dark nights, that may follow upon *Bethel*-visits. (1.) A dark night of long absence, a night of weary desertion may follow. *Jacob* had not, for twenty years, such a night, as he had at *Bethel*: there may be long twenty years travel between *Bethel* and *Peniel*. May be, you had much heavenly-warmness by a live coal from the altar, when God manifested himself, and you got a heart to close with Christ. The place was like a heaven upon earth to you; but perhaps many a weary day you have had since that time. May be you have never had such a gale since that time. Or if this communion hath been a *Bethel* to you, think it not strange, tho' a night of absence and hiding may follow, and tho' the night be long.

(2.) A dark night of forgetfulness may follow upon the *Bethel*-visit, so, as it is hard to know how secure

secure people may grow, and they may lose the sweet impression of the visit, and have little or no kindly remembrance of the sweet days, they had at *Bethel*. This dark night followed upon *Jacob's* meeting with God here; it seems he had much forgotten it, till God put him in mind of it, saying, *Gen. xxxi. 13. I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow.* *Jacob*, might he say, do you not mind the time, do you not mind the place, do you not mind the two pillars? Do you not mind the promise? Do you not mind the *Bethel*, where I shewed my covenant to thee, and accepted thy vows unto me? Be not discouraged with the fear of *Laban*, behind pursuing you, and *Esau*, before meeting you; it is enough, to drive all fears and discouragements away, that *I am the God of Bethel*; I am the same God now, that I was at that day to you: however, *Jacob* had lost the sweet impression, and lost the kind remembrance of *Bethel*, till God himself was the remembrancer. In the dark night of oblivion, all may go out of sight, and be forgot.

(3.) A dark night of temptations, fears, and discouragements may follow upon a sweet *Bethel*-visit. The gracious encouragement, that God gave to *Jacob* afterwards, shews what fears and discouragements he was under, under which he was ready to sink, if God had not supported and comforted him from time to time. Well, even after a *Bethel*-visit you may be grievously tempted, to call all that you met with but a delusion; yea, to think that it was satan, that was working with thee, and not the living God; and to think that thy coming to a communion-table, was but a taking a seal of thy own condemnation. Some
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may be tempted to fear, that God hath a controversy with them, and to think, that he hath cast off all care and concern about them, and does not notice their affliction. It seems, this was a part of the dark night that came upon *Jacob*; and therefore God shews him, that it was an ill-grounded jealousy; For, says he, *I have seen all that Laban hath done to thee*, Gen. xxxi. 12. Though thou wast not sensible of my care, yet I have, all this time, had a special care about thee, and increased thy stock, notwithstanding what *Laban* did. It is hard to believe the divine care in a dark day, wherein we apprehend his displeasure; and yet, when he returns, he can make us see he had a special care of us, when we wist not of it; and that he hath been doing all things well, even when we were fearing all these things were against us.

(4.) A dark night of want and straits may follow upon *Bethel*-visits, both outward and inward wants, temporal wants, such as *Jacob* mentions, when he complained, that *Laban* had changed his wages ten times, Gen. xxxi. 41. Spiritual wants, and wants of comfort, such as *Jacob* was under, when, in his strait, he could draw no comfort, even from an old *Bethel*, till God gave him a new visit, by telling him, that he was the God of *Bethel*. Think not strange, though, upon the back of *Bethel*-visits, you be put to great straits outward and inward, and perhaps can draw no comfort from a back-look upon *Bethel*; for whenever you can draw comfort and encouragement from it, you may reckon it a new visit, when in a dark day, you can remember him from the land of *Jordan*, and remember what God did to thee at such a time.

(5.) A dark night of persecution, even by friends and brethren, may follow upon *Bethel*-visits, as *Jacob* found after this visit, when persecuted by *Laban* his father-in-law, and *Esau* his brother, that was conceived in the same womb with him, though God mercifully restrained their anger and fury, that they got not their will of *Jacob*; *For the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder thereof he will restrain.* Think not strange then, even after *Bethel*-meetings with God, though you should be tried with a dark night of persecution, even from envious friends and false brethren. The church and spouse of Christ speaks of a *Bethel*, Song i. 4. *The King has brought me into his chambers, we will be glad and rejoice in thee*; and yet a hot and scorching persecution followed, verse 6. *The sun hath looked upon me.* Why? *my mother's children were angry with me.* There is hardly any persecution more grievous and violent, than that of angry brethren; but they are under a restraint, they can go no further than God permits; only we need not think strange to see church persecutions, even after *Bethel*-visits.

(6.) A dark night of back-sliding and relapse into former unwatchfulness, security and sloth may follow upon the *Bethel*-visit, though it was solemnly renounced at *Bethel*. *Jacob* seems to have been under a lamentable decay, as to the exercise of faith that once he had at *Bethel*, till once God returned and quickned him again. Christ said to his disciples after the communion, *Ye shall all be offended, because of me this night*; ye shall all turn your backs upon me, you may lamentably relapse into these sins, that were renounced. I know not your particular case, but it hath been the sad experience of God's remnant. You may relapse to
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the omission of known duty, yea, to the embracement of known idols, the very thing that parted between God and you. This is a sad and sorrowful night, that you need to take care you bring not upon yourselves through unwatchfulness, in so provoking the Lord to anger with you, as he was with *Solomon*, 1 Kings xi. 9. It is said, *the Lord was angry with him, because his heart turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice*. What a sad matter is it, if after a *Bethel*-interview with God, you turn your back upon the God of *Bethel*! Will you also go away?

(7.) A dark night of strange dispensations may follow upon *Bethel*-interviews. Various trials, ups and downs, such as was in *Jacob's* lot, between the time of *Bethel*-promises and *Peniel*-performances thereof. *Jacob* did not want chastisements, *If his children break my law, I will visit their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail*. God may cover your table at *Bethel*, but behold! afterwards, the ordinary means of relief may fail you, as it was with *Jacob* in *Laban's* family, even so the means of spiritual relief may fail you. You may go to sermons, and return as dark as before. You may go to your closet, and that mean may fail you. You may go to publick ordinances and sacraments, and these means may fail you. Tho' at *Bethel* you, may be, thought; O I will never be what I have been, I will never do as I have done, I will never doubt nor fear any more; yet all this may be out of sight, and *the comforter, that should relieve your soul, may be far from you*, Lam. i. 16. Strange dispensations may beset you. *All God's*

waves and billows may pass over you, and deeps call unto deeps, Psalm xlii. 7.

(8.) A dark night of perplexities, amidst these strange dispensations, may follow upon *Bethel-interviews*. Thus it was with *Jacob*, before he came off from *Laban's* house, he knew not what to do, till the Lord directed him to *arise and return to the land of his kindred*, Gen. xxxi. 13. You may come to such a night of perplexities, that you know not what to do, or what hand to turn you to. You may come to look upon yourself as in a perishing condition, and to say, *your strength and hope is perished from the Lord. Remembring your affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall*, Lam. iii. 18, 19. What shall I say? May we not observe with fear and trembling, that some, who have met with God, have afterwards come under dreadful dark clouds both in point of sin and of misery? Some have been so far left to sin after manifestations, as deservedly to be called devils: *Peter* got such a discovery of God in Christ, that the Lord says to him, *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee, but my Father that is in heaven*. Yet instantly *Peter* is left so far to sin, that Christ says to him, *Get thee behind me Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God*, Matt. xvi. 17, 23. And what think you of his denying his master with curses? Let us not imagine, they are all strangers to *Bethel-interviews* with God that deny, or do not zealously own the cause and interest of Christ at this day. But let us fear and tremble to consider, how far the children of God may be left to depart from him and his way, in a dark time, and in a day of temptation. It is possible, that good men may be left to sin, and to justify
their

their sin. I will be loath to say, that they are all wicked men, that justify their sinful proceedings in publick matters at this day, and that justify their persecuting rage and anger at their brethren, when I consider how *Jonah* justified his anger against God, saying, *I do well to be angry*. So it is possible, that even some that have met with God may justify their anger at their brethren, saying, *We do well to be angry even unto death*, and angry even to suspension, deposition, excommunication. I hope none need be offended, If I have charity for some that are of that opinion, through their ignorant zeal, while carried away, like *Barnabas*, with the dissimulations of the day, and whose eyes God will open in due time, to see that their anger was as ill founded as that of *Jonah's*. For if ever God met with them at *Bethel*, when he is pleased to return, their eyes will readily be opened, and they will see, they did ill to be angry with their brethren, who were contending for the rights of their mother's house: yea, another merciful turn upon their hearts will make them say, as *Jacob's* sons once did of *Joseph*, *We have verily been guilty concerning our brother*. So we hope of some, if ever they have met with God at *Bethel*, surely, upon the Lord's return, they will regret their miscarriage, and say, *We have been guilty concerning our brother*. However, as some that have met with God may come under dreadful clouds of sin, (for we are not to unfaint them all, and every one that are carried down the stream of defection, though we are to have no charity for their ways, yet let us not meddle with their state, till we see, if God shall reclaim them) so in point of misery, some, that have met with God, may be put to say, O he breaks me with breach upon breach, and

runs upon me like a giant; yea, while suffering his terrors, they have in a manner been distracted, and sometimes cursed the day wherein they were born. Thus you see what dark days may follow upon *Bethel*-interviews with God; and yet, after all, the promise stands good to all the seed of *Jacob*, that have met with God at *Bethel*. He will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of.

The *third* general head proposed was to consider and explain this promise, *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*. For explaining hereof, there are these following questions. (1.) How God speaks to his people? (2.) How he doth, or accomplisheth, that which he hath spoken to them of? (3.) When is it that he will do that which he hath promised? (4.) What is the import of this privilege, that he will not leave them? (5.) In what sense it is said, he will not leave them, till he hath done what he hath promised?

First, How God speaks to his people; when they have a *Bethel*-visit of him? I answer, in a few words, (1.) He speaks divinely, he speaks like himself, letting them know that it is he that speaks: as Christ said to the woman of *Samaria*, John iv. 26. *I that speak to thee, am he*; so says he here to *Jacob*, *It is I that speak to thee, I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken*. Never man spake like this man: man's speaking only reaches the ear, but God's speaking reaches and touches the heart. Hence (2.) He speaks powerfully, as it is said of Christ, *He spake as one having authority, and not as the Scribes*: so when the Lord speaks, there is power and authority accompanying the word, either in its first coming,

coming, or in its after-working, upon the heart. *1 Thes. ii. 13. Ye received the word, not as the word of man, but, as it is, in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe. (3.)* He speaks particularly as here to *Jacob*, *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* People may hear the word delivered in general to all the congregation; but it doth them no good, till they hear it in particular spoken to them. Then God calls the person by name, and says, To thee I speak, and the heart says, It is to me that God is speaking. O! hath God spoken to thee man, to thee woman? (4.) He speaks kindly and comfortably. *Hos. ii. 14. I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness; and then speak comfortably to her.* His kindness in speaking appears most evidently, when it is in a wilderness that he communicates himself: every word, he speaks to *Jacob* here, is a word of kindness. O the light, life, strength and comfort, that the word brings, when God speaks it! He hath a view both to their present comfort and their future support, when he speaks with them in *Bethel*. (5.) He speaks plainly, and not in parables: for he opens their understandings to apprehend, and their hearts to apply; *for to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; to others it is not given, Matt. xiii. 11.* The word of grace is a sealed book, till the lion of the tribe of *Judah* open the seal. (6.) He speaks suitably to their case, for he hath *the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary, Isa. l. 4.* He suits his words here to *Jacob's* weary case, as I shewed in the explication. He gives them a word that suits their difficulties. Sometimes they have difficulty about this, and sometimes about that and the other affair, and

they come with their burdens before the Lord, and he presents a word to them relative to it. Sometimes they are burden'd about their provision; and he gives a word for that: *Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.* They are burden'd with fears of danger; and they get a word for that: *Fear not for I am with thee: the eternal God is thy refuge.* Sometimes they want direction; and get a word for that: *I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.* They want the spirit; and they get a word for that: *I will put my spirit within you, and the water that I give shall be in you a well of water, springing up to everlasting life.* They want strength for duty or trial; and they get a word for that: *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness.* They want pardon; and they get a word for that: *I even, I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* They want to have sin subdued and mortified; and they get a word for that: *Sin shall not have dominion over you.* They want something for the church; and they get a word for that: *That the wall shall be built in perilous times, that at evening time it shall be light, and upon all the glory there shall be a defence.* They want a blessing for their children; and they get a word for that: *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed, &c.*

The second question here was, how he doth what he hath spoken to them? *I will do what I have spoken of to thee.* Why (1.) He will do it faithfully. *Not a word shall fail of what he hath spoken.* Josh. xxi. last. The history of Jacob shews, how faithfully God accomplished his promise, and
all

all that he spoke to him, and he hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins. *God is not man, that he should lie, not the son of man that he should repent.* He will do what he hath spoken, surely, and certainly, *The vision shall speak, it shall surely come.* (2.) As he will do certainly what he hath spoken, so he will do it wonderfully, and he will work wonders before he do it not, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot of his word fall to the ground.* And it is in a very marvellous and mysterious way, that God doth accomplish his word, through a world of dark dispensations, *thro' fire and water he brings to a wealthy land.* Though impassable mountains be in the way; yet he will come, and do what he hath said, and give his people occasion to say when he comes, *It is the voice of my beloved, behold he cometh skipping upon the mountains, leaping upon the hills.* (3.) He will do what he hath spoken, and do it remarkably. Thus he did what he said to *Jacob*; and if the believer may put a remark upon the *Bethel*-visit, when he comes to promise; much more upon the *Peniel*-visit, when he comes to perform what he hath promised. In the *Bethel*-visit, we see him by faith in his word: but in the *Peniel*-visit we see him by sense in his work: for then he not only says, but does what he hath said, and shews himself face to face. (4.) When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it surprisingly. *Jacob* was not expecting such a way of God's accomplishing his word, *Psalms cxxvi. 1. When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.* He sweetly surprizes when he comes to do what he hath spoken: *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs; the Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad.* Again

(5.)

(5.) When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it gloriously. His glory shines in all his works, and especially in accomplishing his promises, *that are yea and amen in Christ*. He makes the glory of his wisdom, power and holiness, the glory of his mercy, truth and faithfulness to shine in the accomplishment, he doth more than he hath spoken, and is better than his word, *Exod. xv. 1*. When God accomplished his promise of delivering *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and out of the hand of *Pharaoh* and his host, then their voices was lifted up, *saying, I will sing unto the Lord: for he hath triumphed gloriously*. (6.) When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it seasonably: *Hab. ii. 3*. *The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry*. It will not tarry beyond the appointed time, nor beyond the proper time, and therefore let faith wait upon a faithful God, who will do as he hath said. This leads to

The third question, *When is it that he will do what he hath spoken to them of?* You may take the answer of this in the following particulars. (1.) Some things he hath spoken relate to a day of trouble; and when that day comes, he will do what he hath spoken to them of: *Psalms xci. 15*. *I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him*. Hence his people never enjoy more of his presence and pity, than in days of tribulation and affliction. And sometimes he lets the trouble come to an extremity, before he sensibly accomplish his promise of help. *Psalms cxvi. 6*. *I was brought low, and he helped me*.

(2.) Some things that he hath spoken to them of relate to a day of temptation: and when that comes,

comes, then he will do what he hath spoken. He hath said, *Rom. xvi. 20. The God of peace will bruise satan under your feet shortly.* He hath said, *1 Cor. x. 13. That he is faithful, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but with the temptation will make a way to escape.* And hence it is, for ordinary, in a time of great and grievous temptation, he opens some door by which they escape from time to time, while they wait upon him.

(3.) Some things that he hath spoken relate to a day of work, of great work that he puts into their hand; and when that day comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said, *That he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13.* He hath said that he will strengthen, he will uphold with the right-hand of his righteousness, *Isa. xli. 10.* And hence it is, that his people can sometimes say with Paul, *I can do all things through Christ strengthning me. Tho' we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God.* And hence the church, *Isa. xxvi. 12. Thou hast wrought all our works in us.* And David, *Psalms lvii. 2. I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

(4.) Some things that he hath spoken of relate to a day of warfare: and when that day of bloody battle comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said, concerning this, even he *who is the Captain of salvation, the Lord mighty in battle* hath said, for the encouragement of his soldiers, *Who go a warfare upon their own charges? 1 Cor. ix. 7. He is the strength of their salvation, that covers their head in the day of battle, Psalm cxl. 7.* And hence it is, that, according to his word, his people are
said

said *always to triumph in Christ Jesus, and to be more than conquerors.* See *Psaln xviii.* 30, 32, 34. *The word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. It is God that girdeth me with strength: he teaches my hands to war, and bows of steel are broken by mine arms. All their ability to stand in a day of trial and dangers flows from this.*

(5.) Some things he hath spoken of relate to the day of death: and when that comes, he will do what he hath spoken to them. He hath said, *Death shall be swallowed up in victory,* 1 Cor. xv. 54. He hath said, *Hos. xiii.* 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction.* And hence it is, that as all believers in Christ are blessed in death, for *blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, and that sleep in Jesus;* so some believers have got the sensible and comfortable view of this, even when passing through that valley between time and eternity, and have fallen a singing in the midst of the valley, and saying, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* With the staff of the promise in their hand, they walk through *Jordan dry shod.* And when the soul is separated from the body, then it enters into the *rest, that remains for the people of God,* according to what he hath spoken.

(6.) Some things he hath spoken relate to a day of Judgment; and when that day comes, then *he will do what he hath spoken to them of.* He hath
said

said four times in one chapter; namely, *John vi. That he will raise them up at the last day; and 1 Thess. iv. close, That if we believe, that Jesus died, and rose again, even so, upon the same ground, and with the same certainty, them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; and that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they ever be with the Lord. He hath said, 1 Cor. xv. 52. That, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible. That this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality. He hath said, Col. iii. 4. When he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory. He hath said, Philip iii. close, That he will change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. He hath said, That the saints shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and shall judge the world.*

What I have said, may give some light to the question, When will he do what he hath spoken to his people? He will do all that he hath spoken, partly here, and perfectly hereafter. He hath promised eternal life to the believer: *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* This he doth in part here, and to perfection hereafter; and we may appeal to every believer of any standing, if the promise of heaven and glory be not, even in part, allowed him here by a personal possession. He is possessed of heaven, not only, 1. By union to Christ, so as is head is in heaven, Christ the fore-runner having taken possession, and gone to prepare the place for him; so that he sits with him in heavenly places; but also, 2. By communion he hath some personal possession, if you consider
what

what heaven is. Is heaven a state of light, perfect light? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *he hath the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* Is heaven a state of liberty, perfect liberty? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as, at any time, *his bands are loosed, and the spirit of God is poured out upon him: where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* Is heaven a state of love, perfect love? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost; and the love of Christ constraineth him to duty and service.* Is heaven a state of perfect holiness? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *he is sanctified in Christ Jesus, and going on to perfection; yea, is already perfectly holy in desire.* Is heaven a state of perfect joy? The believer hath this also in begun possession, when he is *filled with joy and peace in believing; yea sometimes with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Is heaven a state of triumph and victory? The believer hath the begun possession of this, when he boasts in the Lord, and says, *Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.* Is heaven a place of praise and wonder at the grace of God, and the glorious perfections of God? The believer hath the begun possession of this also, when sometimes his heart is filled with the high praise of God, and filled with wonder at his matchless love and distinguishing grace. He would invite all the world to wonder and praise. Yet O what a small portion of heaven hath he here, in comparison of what he will have! *He shall drink of the river of pleasure for ever.* Yet that part he enjoys here, is the earnest of the full possession, and the evidence that
he

will do all that he hath spoken to them of, concerning grace and glory, and every good thing.

The fourth question was, What is the import of this privilege, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of?* Why, how can it be said he will not leave them, when yet, after *Bethel*-visits, and *Bethel*-promises, given them, they may meet with such dark nights, as I have been speaking of? For clearing this subject, there are these two remarks I would offer.

(1.) Remark is, that there are some respects wherein God may be said to leave people, as (1.) when he takes away his word, his candlestick, his ordinances, and brings a famine not of bread and water, but of the word of the Lord, *Amos* viii. 11, 12. This is the worst famine in the world. (2.) When he takes away his spirit and commands the clouds to rain no rain, *Isa.* v. 6. This is a fearful leaving; for though the word and ordinances remain; yet, if the spirit be gone, then the word can do no good, it hath no power to convince or convert, to confirm or comfort. (3.) When he takes away his ear, and doth not regard their prayers; when he doth not suffer them to pray, nor answer their prayers, but shuts them out, *Lament.* iii. 8. (4.) When he takes away his hand, his help and assistance, and leaves persons to themselves, to their own lusts and counsels, *Psalms* lxxxix. 11. *My people would not hearken, Israel would have none of me: therefore I gave them up to their own hearts lusts; and they walked after their own counsels.* O a sad leaving! but then the

(2.) Remark I offer, is, that there are some respects, wherein God will not leave his people. Thus (1.) He will never leave them really,
but

but in appearance. And hence they many times think and fear he is gone, when he is really present, *Verily, God was in this place, and I knew it not*, says *Jacob*. (2.) He never leaves them absolutely, but in some respect: he may leave them in respect of the influence of grace, tho' he doth not leave them as to the presence of grace. He may leave them in respect of comfort; tho' he may allow the influences of grace, yet he may deny the comfort of grace. He may leave them in respect of assistance; though he may allow them the comfort of grace, yet he may deny them that assistance and strength they want, and also the sensible answer of their prayers. (3.) He never leaves them totally, but in some degree. He may leave them to be buffeted by satan; but will not leave them to be overcome by satan. And he may leave them to be buffeted and captivated by strong corruptions; though he doth not leave them to be conquered thereby. (4.) He never leaves them finally, but for some time: he may *hide his face for a little moment, but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them*, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He will never leave them, so as to forget to do what he hath spoken to them of.

This promise then, *I will not leave thee*, it says, that something of God is ever with them, and in them. They have in them, *a well of water, springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. God loves to abide, where once he comes, *I will not leave thee*. It says also, that he will not stay away: though he hides himself out of sight, he will not be long absent. It says, that in whatever respect he may be said to leave them for a while, yet he will return to their joy, *John xvi. 22. Now you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your*

your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. It says, there are some things, God will never deprive them of, never take away from them. He will never take away his love and favour, *for he hath loved them with an everlasting love.* He will never take away his covenant of peace and of promise from them, *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,* Isa. liv. 10. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,* Heb. xiii. 5.

The fifth question is, in what sense is it said of *Jacob*, and of all the spiritual seed of *Jacob*, that God will not leave them, until he hath done that, which he hath spoken to them of? To explain this a little further, I shall show, (1.) In what sense, we are to understand this interim promise *I will not leave thee.* (2.) In what sense we are to understand this particle *until*, which seems to point at a period of this promise.

(1.) In what sense are we to understand this interim promise, *I will not leave thee*? Why? Whatever way he may be said to leave his people, yet, (1.) He will never leave them godless, but will still be their God: for his covenant with them is, *I will be thy God*: they can never be so far left, but that God is still their God, and they may still go to him as their God. (2.) He will never leave them christless: He hath given Christ *the unspeakable gift of God* to them, and he will never recall that gift; *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*: they shall still have *Christ in them the hope of glory.* Hence (3.) He will never leave them spiritless: he hath given his spirit to you, that are believers, and this anointing which you have received of him, abides

in you, *John* xiv. 16. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* The spirit may be hid in the believer, but never absent. (4.) Hence he will never leave them comfortless, *John* xiv. 18. *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.* However the streams of their comforts may be abated, yet the spring of comfort still remains; and hence the well of consolation now and then springs up. (5.) He will never leave them helpless, but still be to them *a present help in time of trouble*: even when they have destroyed themselves, yet in him is their help. He helps their infirmities, when they cannot pray. He helps them up, when they are down. He helps them forward when behind. (6.) He will not leave them hopeless, even when they are saying, *my hope is perished from the Lord*; yet he opens to them a door of hope in the valley of *Achor*. They are never again *without God, and without hope in the world*. Their hope lives. Yea (7.) He will not leave them faithless: *For he hath prayed for them, that their faith fail not.* Their faith may indeed languish, and be like to give up the Ghost, as that of the disciples, when they said, *we trusted, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*: but now we doubt of this fundamental article of our creed. But when their faith was just at the failing, the Lord Jesus restored and revived it. (8.) He will not leave them friendless and fatherless: he is a friend that sticks closer than a brother, and as *a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them*: as a father chastises his children, so the Lord chastiseth them: as a father provideth for his children, so the Lord provideth for them, that they may not be in total want, between the promise, and the
time

time of the performance. Thus he *will not leave them, until he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*. He will not leave dealing with them. He will not leave blessing of them, he will not leave guiding of them, and guarding of them, he will not leave making all things working together for good to them, and working for the accomplishment of his promise.

(2.) In what sense, are we to understand this particle *until*, which seems to point at a period of this *interim* promise? Surely, the meaning is not, that when *he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*, then he *will leave them*; but rather, that they will no more need such an encouraging word as this, *I will never leave thee*: for then, they will be free of all fears of his leaving them. But the word imports, (1.) That there may be a good time between the promise, and the accomplishment, between the time of God's speaking to them, and the time of his doing what he hath spoken. There was twenty years distance between these two in *Jacob's* case. (2.) It imports, that in this interval, God is carrying on his work, *I will not leave thee, until I have done it*. Saying and doing, is all one to God, he speaks the word, and it is done, and when he hath spoken the word, it is always a-doing, till it be done compleatly. (3.) It imports, that though he be still carrying on his work, yet it may *be hid from our eyes*, what way he is doing it; and though we may suspect, on this account, that God has left us, and left his work, when we do not see him with us, nor see what he is doing; yet, he is not absent, when he is delaying the accomplishing of his word to our sense and feeling, but only taking his own time and his own way, *whose ways are in-*

initely higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. (4.) It imports, that this interval of time, wherein God is carrying on his work, tho' in a way hid from our eyes, is the time of faith, wherein we are called to wait upon a promising God, believing, that not only he will be a performing God in due time, to our sensible feeling and experience; but that he is a performing God, at present, making all intervening providences, so many steps towards the accomplishment of his word, tho' to carnal sense and reason, they may seem to be so many lets and impediments to hinder the accomplishment thereof. *Joseph* had it revealed to him, once and again, that he would be lord over his brethren, and that all the family should yield obeysance to him. How was this accomplished? Why, he is thrown into a pit, he is sold into *Egypt* for a slave, and afterwards he is cast into a prison: these seemed all so many lets and obstructions, in the way of such advancement. How could faith keep its hold here? unless it should shut its eye upon providences, and open its eye upon the promise, and keep it fixed upon a promising God, and then it would see all these seeming lets to be so many steps towards the accomplishment of the promise, *I will not leave thee, till I have done what I have spoken*; therefore, let faith see, and believe, that I am still carrying on my work, and doing what I promised, whatever secret hidden ways I take, to bring about my counsel, I am still doing, and *will not leave thee, till I have done what I have spoken to thee of*.

The fourth general head proposed was, To offer some grounds of the doctrine, upon which the believer may be assured, that God *will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken*

spoken to him of, and that he will be all that he hath promised to him at *Bethel*. (1.) Believers may be assured of it, upon the ground of the unchangeableness of God, there may be many ups and downs in thy case: it is only the communion day *above*, that shall have no more night. Thou wilt certainly change, and change e're it be long: but darest thou say, God will change as oft as thou dost? Thinkest thou, that he will change in his love, when thou changeest in thy frame? No, he will rest in his love, *Whom he loves, he loves to the end*. Thy security stands upon God's immutability, *Mal. iii. 6. I am the Lord, I change not: therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed*.

(2.) Believers may be assured, that God will not leave them, *till he hath done, what he hath spoken*; upon the ground of God's fore-knowledge. The thing that makes men many times alter their sentiments is, because there are many things fall out contrary to what they projected; but God foresaw what would be; he foresaw, that, even after a *Bethel* heart-burning interview with God, thou wouldst grow cold-rife; yet notwithstanding this, he met with you in *Bethel*, and spake with you there; and therefore he *will do what he hath spoken to thee*. He foresaw what a prodigal, what a backslider you would be, yet he gave his word to you; and therefore he will not go back.

(3.) You may be assured he *will not leave you, believer, till he hath done what he hath spoken*, because he is faithful. *Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it*. Though, when his children break his law, and keep not his commandments, then will he visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless

his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. Once hath he sworn by his holiness, that he will not lie unto David, Psalm lxxxix. 33. God is faithful, who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son.

(4.) Believers may be assured of this, upon the ground of the divine power; or, because God is almighty, and able to do what he hath spoken *Rom. xi. 23.* The apostle says, the *Jews shall be grafted in.* Why? *For God is able to graft them in again,* having once promised it, and said that he will do it. It is enough to support our faith, that he is able to do what he hath said. *Abraham's faith leaned upon the power of God, Rom. iv. 21. He was fully persuaded, that he that had spoken, was able to perform.* You may then be assured, believer, *that he will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken;* unless you can suppose, that he hath out-promised his own power, and said more than he is able to do.

(5.) It is evident *he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken,* if you consider the experience of his people, and your own experience. The experience of God's people, from the beginning of the world, who have always found God to be as good as his word, and the same God, that he manifested himself to be at their *Bethel*-meeting with him. They have still found him to be the God of *Bethel*, whatever jealousies they entertained of his love; yet upon their return, after their dark day was over, they found that *his word endureth for ever;* and that he never came short of his promise; but that notwithstanding all their temptations, they were continually with him, and he was continually with them, holding them by his right hand, *Psalms lxxiii. 23.* They still
found

found him welcoming the returning prodigal, saying, *This my son was dead, and is alive, was lost, and is found.* Now is it consistent with their experience, and will he take a singular way with you? Yea, thou dar'st not deny, believer, but thou hast found God to be still the God of *Bethel*, even though many times you were fearing that God would never smile upon you again; yet, upon your looking back to his holy temple, you have been made to say, *O! he is the same, and his love is not altered nor changed, and that he hath not forgotten his promise.* Hence, how many times have believers reason to set to their seal to *David's* exercise and experience, *Psalms xxx. 9, 10, 11.* when he is crying, *what profit is there in my blood, if I shall go down to the pit?* They fall a praying, *Hear, Lord, and have mercy upon me, Lord be thou my helper;* and then have been made to say, *thou hast turned for me, my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.* May not then experience assure you, that he will not leave you, till he hath done that which he hath spoken?

(6.) The everlasting nature of the covenant of promise may assure you of this, *2 Sam. xxiii. 5.* *Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure.* The bargain was not left to your making a covenant with him, but God himself made it with you; and therefore ye shall be kept by his power, through faith to salvation. Though thou shouldst change a hundred times, God will not change one word of the sweet bargain he made with you: because,

(7.) It is his bargain made with Christ, *Psalms lxxxix. 3, 28.* *I have made a covenant with my chosen,*

chosen, and my covenant shall stand fast with him : And hence, if his children break my law, I will visit their iniquity with rods : nevertheless my loving kindness will not I take from him : And because I will not take it from HIM, I will not take it from them. Your assurance then of his not leaving you, till he hath done what he hath spoken, may stand upon the everlasting love that he hath to Christ, and the standing bargain between Christ and him. He cannot fail you, because he cannot fail his son Christ, who hath sealed the covenant with his blood, and in whom therefore all the promises are yea and amen, to the glory of God : and so the glory of God in Christ, the glory of his mercy and truth in Christ, obliges him to do as he hath spoken.

(8.) There is one ground of assurance more that I offer, and it lies in the bosom of the text, namely, the divine will and pleasure, *I WILL not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken. I will not ; it is my will and pleasure, not to leave you till all be done. You have a word, 1 Sam. xii. 22. The Lord WILL not forsake his people, for his great name's sake : Why? because, it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Thus it is said, Deut. vii. 7, 8. The Lord set his love upon Israel ; Why? because he loved them : he will, because he will. And who hath resisted his will? His will is uncontroulable : and hath he manifested his will in this, that he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said? Then you may be assured of it, for he will do all his pleasure : and well may you say, Thy will be done. The covenant of grace, is made up of I wills, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. and downwards. I will give thee a new heart, a new spirit will I put within you : I will take away the heart of stone, I will give you a heart*

heart of flesh ; I will put my spirit within you, &c. ten or twelve *I wills*. And this part of the covenant, delivered to *Jacob* in the text, is like a crowning promise put upon the head of all : *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*. And what better assurance would you have than this, that God says, *I will*? What he will do, must be.

The fifth general head proposed, was, to make application of the whole, in some inferences. If it be so as I have been saying, hence see (1.) Whence it is, that some may seem to be of all men the most miserable, who are yet of all men the most happy, I mean believers in Christ, that are acquainted with *Bethel*-meetings with God, and to whom God hath spoken favourably and graciously. They may seem to be most miserable, in respect of the dark and dismal nights that may follow, upon their sweet intercourse with God, and yet are the most happy persons in the world, in respect of their having God, binding and obliging himself never to leave them, till he hath performed all the gracious promises of the everlasting covenant to them. This is the honour of all the saints ; God will not leave them, though they seem to be left of all the world. And God will do what he hath spoken to them of, though clouds and darkness, and mountains of difficulty stand in the way.

(2.) See whence it is, that some may seem to be the most happy persons in the world, who are yet the most miserable ; I mean, unbelievers, whether they be profane, or professors, that have no acquaintance with God in Christ. They may seem to be most happy folk for a while, in respect they know not what it is to have a dark day, a day of trouble and adversity ; they have peace
and

and prosperity in the world: *They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued like other men,* Psal. lxxiii. They have no fear, either from church or state. They have easy consciences, that can comply with every thing right or wrong, that is imposed upon them, whether by civil or ecclesiastical authority. They can sell truth, to buy peace, and so they live at ease, and yet they are the most miserable, because they are left and forsaken of God, and are not the children of the promise, to whom God hath spoken peace; but the heirs of the threatening, against whom God hath denounced judgments, to whom he hath spoken wrath, yea, and *sworn in wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest: for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* And whatever temptations the people of God may be under, to fret at their prosperity; yet, whenever the believer goes *to the sanctuary, then will he see their end, and how they are set but in slippery places, and suddenly cast down into destruction.*

3. Hence see, that the ground of faith stands immutable amidst all changes. The most dark and dismal days cannot hinder the accomplishment of the divine promise; neither need any dark providence, or heavy dispensation, hinder the exercise of faith, and the life of faith in the divine promise. Nay, these cross providences may rather further the life of faith, than hinder it: for faith is never properly exercised; but upon the supposition of dark providences, crossing and seeming to oppose the accomplishment of the promise: for in such a case the soul hath nothing to do but to believe, nothing to look to but the promise, nothing to trust to but a promising God, and this is fair and honest believing; like that which our

Lord

Lord Jesus called the ruler of the synagogue unto, when news came that his child was dead, *Fear not, only believe*, Mark v. 36. For then it is time for God to shew himself. Faith hath a *but*, that can stand out against all the arrows of cross providence, that are shot against it: *Psalms* lv. 23. *But I will trust in thee*. He had been speaking of many hard things in his way, such as his being pain'd, because of the voice of the enemy, and *the oppression of the wicked*, verse 3. *How they cast iniquity upon him. and in wrath hated him; yea, but I will trust in thee*. As God will accomplish his promise, notwithstanding all the *but*s, that are in the way; so there is ground for faith to trust confidently, because God hath spoken, therefore no matter, though men and devils really, and dark providences seemingly, speak to the contrary.

4. Hence see, who are the greatest blessing to a church or nation. Surely these to whom God hath said, that he will not leave them. God hath not altogether left the church, or the land, where any such are in it; but if they were gone, then God is gone also, and *Wo to them when I depart from them, saith the Lord*. Some are fond to have God's people persecuted, and his saints banished out of their coasts: they cannot bear their faithfulness and honesty, they are a torment to them; but yet what would become of a church or land, if God's faithful remnant were gone? his presence would go with them, and none would remain behind to whom God hath said, *I will not leave them*. Then would that church be left of God, and wo would be to them. May we not say with the prophet, *Isa. i. 9. Except the Lord had left us a very small remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrah?* Surely when a
church

church begins to cast out the faithful from among them, then they begin to destroy themselves, and to bring down wo upon their own heads.

5. Hence see, where lies the safety of God's children, when they are cast out by their friends and brethren, as *Jacob* was in a manner cast out at all hands; he was the object of his friend *Laban's* envy, and his brother *Esau's* spite and rage, which occasioned his being cast out of his father's family, and the country of his kindred for twenty years. Well, but where was his safety? Why? When all other comforts left him, God said, *I will not leave thee, till I have done what I have promised.* God's promise was his inheritance, and God's presence was his guard, amidst all frowning providences: and so it is, and will be, with all the true spiritual seed of *Jacob*. Whoever leaves them, God will not leave them, whatever men speak reproachfully against them, yet God speaks comfortably to them: yea, and whatever men do against them, God will do for them, and do all that he hath spoken to them of.

6. Hence see, the different state of the church visible, from the church invisible upon earth, or the difference between the true and faithful children of God, and any particular visible church. Why all true believers have this promise secured in their persons, that God will never leave them, till he hath accomplished all his promises of grace and mercy to them. He hath said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*; but it cannot be said of any particular visible church, that God will never leave them. God hath left many particular churches, and called them *Lo-ammi*, saying, *Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God*, Hof. i. 9. And how far he may leave the church of *Scotland*, who can tell? The glory sometimes
departs

departs from the threshold to the mountains, and God seems to be making fearful removes from the present generation. I would not love to give any just offence, nay, nor to grate the ears of any hearers, with reflections upon any that are but poor mortal sinful men, like ourselves, subject to the like passions, and clothed with the like infirmities : but I would desire to keep mine eyes on a higher hand, than any sinful instruments of the churches misery and confusion. They could do nothing if God were not provoked by our sins to leave them to themselves, and to their violent measures. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?* May we not say of the church of Scotland? *Her rowers have brought her into great waters,* Ezek. xxvii. 26. But it is our sins, that have provoked God to leave the rowers and managers, who could do nothing either against the sacred office of ministers, or the christian rights of people, except it were given from heaven, as Christ said to *Pilate, Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given.* As I love not to offend or grate any, as I said, so I would not love to be chargeable with sinful silence in such a time, when God seems to be saying, *Cry aloud and spare not, tell the house of Israel their sins.* Wo would be to us, if we should be afraid of man that shall die, or the son of man that shall be made as grass, Isa. li. 12. May we not consider, as a matter of lamentation, how far God seems to have left the church of Scotland and her judicatories? I shall not assert at this time what I shall speak by way of supposition, and leave it to every one to judge, whether it be matter of lamentation before God, in case the supposition should be found a truth. And I shall speak in the first person of the *plural* number,

that

that I may take in myself as having a hand, as well as others, in provoking the Lord to leave us.

If God hath left us and our judicatories to make unscriptural and unwarrantable acts, denuding the Lord's people of their just rights and christian privileges; would it not be lamentable? If he hath left us, so far as to make these acts terms of communion, so as none shall have communion with us, that dare oppose these unwarranted proceedings: again, if he hath left us, so far as to indulge *Arians* and *blasphemers*, and deal gently with these that are guilty of fundamental errors, and yet to proceed violently and furiously against some of the friends of truth, and to shew hardly so much regard for the supreme authority and dignity of the Son of God, as we shew for the supreme authority and dignity of our erring assemblies; if this were so, would it not be lamentable? If God hath left us, so far as to destroy ourselves by sacrificing a covenanted reformation and covenanted principles, together with the sacred office of ministers, and the spiritual rights of people, that would adhere thereto, and all unto what we call church authority and good order, which yet is but another name for church-tyranny, and dreadful confusion; would not this be very lamentable? If God hath left us to cast out, of our bosom, some that are the friends and favourites perhaps of heaven, and that, because of their faithful testimony against the evils and defections of the day; would not this be lamentable, and evidence that God had very far left us? These and many other things I might suppose?

What is the world saying, but that our *rowers have brought us into great waters?* Ezek. xxvii. 26. What is this they are saying of the judicatories of the church of *Scotland* in our day? Are people saying, that God hath left us and our judicatories,

dicatories, so far as to make unscriptural and unwarrantable acts? &c. Are they saying that *Bethel* is turned to *Bethaven*? That *Philadelphia* is turned to *Laodicea*? It would be good news, if there were no truth in what the world are now saying of us. But if there be any truth in it, then surely God hath left us very far; and who knows, how far he may yet further remove? Better sword, famine and pestilence among us than that God should utterly leave us. But how far soever he may leave a visible church, yet he will never leave his invisible remnant: for to them he hath said, *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

7. Hence see reason to try what side you are upon, whether you be a *Jacob* or an *Esau*. They were both born of the same mother, and in the same womb, but the one was blessed and the other cursed. You may be of the same mother-church, yet *born after the flesh, and not after the spirit*. If you be the true seed of *Jacob*, then you will know something of a *Bethel*-interview with God. Hath God ever brought you to a wilderness, and there met with, and spoke comfortably to you? Have you ever seen the glory of God in Christ, as a ladder to heaven, *The way, the truth and the life*, so as you were made to close with him, and climb up to God by this ladder: *For by him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.* Have you heard God speaking to you, and communicating his mind, or discovering himself as a promising God, in words of grace to your humiliation, sanctification and consolation? O man, woman, if all places be alike to you, so as you never met with God, in a place that might be called *Bethel*; and

and if all words of scripture be alike to you, so as you know no word on which *he hath caused you to hope*, you are yet a stranger in Israel: but if you can point at the place where the Lord God of the *Hebrews* met with, you on a former occasion, so as you can sometimes look back upon it with pleasure, saying, O! I thought it was a *Bethel*, a house of God; and if you can point at the word, with which God opened your heart, as he did the heart of *Lydia*, and made it the porch both of holiness and comfort, 'tis good. Did he make the word to you, as it was to *Job*, *better and more precious than your necessary food*; and as it was to *Jeremiah*, *the joy and rejoicing of your heart*; and as it was to *David*, *sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb*, and the very ground on which *he hath caused you to hope*? and are you from that time to this still hoping in his word, when the Lord restores your soul out of its sleepy fit? Why then it seems you are a child of promise, to whom God hath said *I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*.

8. Hence see the duty of all that hear me both unbelievers and believers.

1. Ye that are unbelievers, and know not the God of *Bethel*, but are *strangers to the covenant of promise*, living without God and without hope in the world, living in the lusts of the flesh; poor, wretched, worldly creature, drunkard, whoremonger, sabbath-breaker or hypocrite, that may be comes to communions, but never had communion with God there, and never came out of *Sodom* to this day, that was never brought to a wilderness of fear and despair, and then to a *Bethel* of hope and comfort in God, as a promising God in Christ; I would tell you your duty in two words.

(1.) If

(1.) It is your duty, to consider the dangerous state you are in. And I must tell you a terrible word for wakening your seared conscience, if God would bless it for that end. As you have been hearing that God is bound, by his own promise, never to leave his children, till he doth that which he hath spoken to them of in the gospel: so on the other hand, that same God is bound and obliged by his threatning, if you remain in that state, never to leave contending with you, until he hath done that which he hath spoken of in the law; that is, you are under the curse of the law, and God is obliged to curse you. He that is faithful to his promise, and will accomplish it to all that flee to Christ, is as faithful to his threatning, and will accomplish it to all that remain out of Christ. What a trembling heart would you have, man, woman, if you were but in *Paul's* case, when more than forty men bound themselves with an oath, that they would not eat nor drink, till they killed him? If so many men were bound under oath, to kill and destroy you, I believe it would take sleep from your eyes, and make you restless how to escape their fury; and yet their oath could relate but to a temporal life. But tremble and fear to think, that the great God is bound, by a solemn oath, to damn and destroy you to all eternity, if you remain in that Christless state, *Heb. iii. 11. He hath sworn in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest.*

(2.) It is your duty, to flee from this wrath to come, by fleeing to *Bethel*, to the God of *Bethel*, to a promising God in Christ. You will never go to heaven, if you go not to *Bethel*, by the way; I mean, if you remain strangers to Christ. Think not these are words of course, that we are speaking to you; for, as *knowing the terrors of*

God, we persuade you to fly out of Sodom, and away from the divine wrath: so, I hope, knowing the comforts of God, as the God of *Bethel*, we would persuade you, to come and see what is to be seen at *Bethel*, and to come and hear the voice of a promising God, that is to be heard there. *What we have heard and seen, may we not declare unto you, that there is such a thing as Bethel-interviews with God?* For woe to us that are ministers, if we be preaching to you an absolutely unknown God, an unknown *Bethel*, an unknown Jesus. If we know neither the terrors, nor comforts of God, at any time, I think we would have no commission to speak any of them to you, my dear friends, whom I never expect to see all again, on the like occasion as this, till we see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven. In the fear of God, and in the faith of our meeting together before his tribunal, I would tell you, that the great day's meeting, we shall have, will be terrible to you; if, before you leave this world, you know nothing of a *Bethel*-meeting with God, as a promising God in Christ: therefore let me exhort you, in the last day of the feast, and in the prospect of the great day, to come to Christ, in whom *all the promises are yea and amen, to the glory of God.* Come to him, by owning, that you cannot come of yourself. Come to him, by crying to him, that he would draw you. Come to him, by believing that you cannot believe, and yet by believing as you can, till you believe as you should. Come to him, by believing, that you are cursed, wretched, and undone without him, and that you shall be blessed and happy in him. Come to him, by believing, that you have no righteousness but guilt, no strength but weakness;

weakness; and that *in the Lord only you have righteousness and strength*. Come to him, by believing, that you have nothing, and that he hath all; that you can do nothing, and he can do all for you. Come to him, by employing him to be your *Prophet, Priest, and King, your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. Come to him, not upon such and such terms and conditions, that you are ready to dream you must come up to: but come to him, by coming down to his terms; that is, to be willing to be saved by free-grace. *Come down, Zaccheus, for this day salvation is come to thy house*: so, say I, come down, sinner, from the tree of legal qualifications, and legal hopes built upon your own naughty duties. Come down, for you cannot save yourself with all your climbing, nor bring salvation to yourself; but *this day salvation is come to your house*; salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it; salvation is come to your hand; salvation is come to your heart. The saviour is knocking at the door of your heart, and calling you to come down, and take the free salvation that is offered to you. *Who-soever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely*. It may be, this shall be, the last communion you shall see in time, and the last communion offer that ever you shall hear; or if you be spared to live sometime longer, it may be the last communion you shall have, with peace, in the church of *Scotland*; it may be so, and it may be otherwise; only we have had long forty years peace; and it is possible, the present emergencies in this church, may be the beginning of sorrows: but whatever be a coming, as death and judgment certainly is com-

ing upon you speedily, it is safest for you *to come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*; let not the last offer be slighted: O! let us not part with one another, till there be good ground to hope, we shall not part with Christ. Alas! I fear, before this day eight days, yea, may be, *before the cock crow twice*, this offer of Christ will be forgotten, and out of your head. Some pitiful trifle in this world will take all out of your heart; but I here take your consciences to witness, forget as you will, that this offer shall not be altogether in vain, though it should be slighted; for, when the book of conscience shall be opened at the great day, this shall be called to remembrance, that, such a day at *Abbots-hall*, after a communion there, Christ and salvation, from sin and wrath, came to you to be freely received, and yet you rejected it; and this will contribute to glorify the justice of God in condemning you, and make it evident to all the world, *that he is clear when he judges.*

Who is me, if there be not so much as a desire kindled in your heart after our glorious Lord. If you think eternal salvation worth your while, O sinner, and this offer of it no contemptible thing, then may I advise you, to set some little time apart, after this occasion is over, and betake yourself to some place, whether in the house or the field, where you may have a little retirement from the world, and there cry to God, that he may follow this offer, and this occasion, with power upon your heart, for drawing you to the Lord, and to his way; while you are thus employed, who knows, but before you come from your knees, the place may become a *Bethel*, a house of God, where you will see and know him,

as a promising God in Christ Jesus? For in this way some have had a meeting with him, that they will never forget. O! be restless in waiting on him, in the use of all appointed means, till he manifest himself to you savingly; for when once he doth so, you may be sure he will never leave you, till he hath perfected the good work according to his promise.

2. To you that are believers in Christ, and know what it is to have some *Bethel*-interviews with God, either at this occasion, or formerly. Are you in this happy state, and have God for your close companion, who having begun to do you good, *will not leave you, till he hath done all that he hath said to you?* Your duty is both to be joyful in your promising God, and fruitful in the work of faith.

(1.) In the faith of this promise, you ought to be joyful. Is it nothing to you, that God himself is your everlasting companion, saying, *I will not leave you?* That he is a promising God to you, and hath condescended to speak to you; that he is your agent to do what he hath spoken, and that, he hath bound himself, never to *leave you, until he hath done what he hath spoken?* O! whatever dark days may come, it is your duty to be joyful in him. *Though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea. Here is a river that makes glad the city of God; that makes glad the children of God. God is in the midst of them; and hath said, I will not leave you.*

Object. O! but may a child of God say, *How can I take in this comfort, when I find the Lord hath left me? Though he said once, I will never leave you, yet it may be a delusion, for I feel the contrary,*

in many sad effects of his absence. O unbelieving believer, will you, with *Thomas*, never believe, till you feel? The ground of your faith is God's promise and not your feeling. But for satisfying the soul, that may be under a dark cloud of desertion, saying, *The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten*; sin prevails, and God is out of sight; I would have you to remark, that there are tokens of God's presence with you, believer, even when you do not observe them, by reason of the clouds that are upon you: for example, whence is it that you are not swallowed up like a ship in a whirlpool; and that there is some secret hair of hope in the heart, even when your unbelief is ready to say, *My hope is perished*? Why? the reason is, he hath not altogether left you. Whence is it, that you are like the burning bush, all in a flame many times, and yet not consumed; burning, but not burnt; flaming but not consumed? You do not observe this; yet it is observable, that you are preserved to this day, to this hour, amidst the flames of temptation, and the floods of corruption; why? the matter is, he hath not yet left you. Whence is it, that you can never give over duties altogether; and however the tempter prevail to slacken your hand, yet you cannot for your heart give up with all religious people: and with all religious duties, wherein you think communion with God may be had? Why? the reason of this is, he hath not altogether left you. Whence is it that you do not break God's prison through utter despondency, and go away, and take your pleasure with the rest of the wicked world? even when you are in the prison of desertion and unbelief, you dare not think of bidding farewell to God, or departing wickedly from him,

or of bidding the Almighty depart from you ; nay, is there not something in your heart, even at your worst, that says, O ! if he would come ! O ! when will he come ? This, he says hath not altogether left you. Whence is it that you cannot agree with sin ? the more it prevails upon you, the more you abhor it, and abhor yourself for it, and dare not give way to it. Doth not this evidence there is some secret power, and presence of God with you, and that he hath not yet left you ? Whence is it, that when you stray from your true resting place, you cannot rest any where else, and can find no quiet in your mind, till you come back again ? May be, you fall a seeking rest and peace in the creature, in the world, in recreations and diversions, and may be in your duties, and yet there was something in your heart that said, O ! it is not here, it is not here ; you find vanity written on all, till you return to your first husband. Again, whence is it, that, at your worst, the least word of news from him, concerning his return, makes your heart leap within you for joy, as the babe in *Elizabeth's* womb at the salutation of *Mary*, while the news of his return, and the hope of his coming again, gives you a glad heart ? Surely he is not far off, and even when you are most secure and stupid, most dead and dull, there is a secret wish at the root of your heart : O ! for such a day again, wherein the candle of the Lord shined on me ; O ! *that it were with me as in months past.* Whence is it, that the outward shell of ordinances cannot content your heart, without the kernel of communion and fellowship with God, and that the dead letter of the word cannot please you, without the living spirit accompanying it ? Why ? he hath not left you to be

content with any thing without himself. Whence is it, that the interest of Christ is your interest, and that you cannot join with the defections of the day, nor side with the errors of the times, but still desire to be on Christ's side? Why cannot you turn with the tide of the times? Even because the Lord hath not altogether left you. In a word, Whence is it, that the least discovery he makes of himself is joyfully welcome to you, when he but knocks softly at the door of your heart: *Song v. 4. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him?* When he seems to be on his way to you, you are ready to say as *Laban to Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 13. Come in thou blessed of the Lord.* Now whence are all these things, but from this, that he is still present, though you see him not, and that he hath never altogether left you, but is still remembering his promise, *I will not leave thee?*

(2.) It is your duty to be fruitful in the work of faith. O believer! give glory to God, by believing that he *will not leave you till he hath done that which he hath spoken to you of.* Dark and cloudy days, that may follow upon *Bethel*-interviews, cannot hinder God's doing what he hath spoken; and therefore let it not hinder your believing that he *will do what he hath spoken to you of.* Hath he spoken to you of pardoning your sins? And hath he spoken to you of subduing your corruptions? Hath he spoken of supplying all your wants? Hath he spoken to you of bearing all your burdens? Hath he spoken to you of healing your diseases? Hath he spoken to you of your provision, and his care of you in this world? Hath he spoken to you of your protection in time of danger? Hath he spoken to you of satisfying your desire? Hath

he

he spoken to you of guiding you by his counsel, and bringing you to his glory? Hath he spoken to you of your trials, that he will support and uphold with the right-hand of his righteousness? Hath he spoken to you of your seed, that he will be your God, and the God of your seed? Hath he spoken to you of your death, that death shall be swallowed up in victory? Hath he spoken to you of eternal life, that you shall be for ever with him? Hath he spoken to you of his love, that he hath loved you with an everlasting love? Hath he spoken to you of his spirit, that his spirit shall be in you as a well of water? &c. Hath he spoken to you of his blessing, that he hath blessed you, and ye shall be blessed, and that in blessing he will bless you? Hath he spoken to you of his presence, that he *will never leave you nor forsake you*, that he will be with you in trouble? Hath he spoken to you of his care about you, that he *will make all things work together for your good*? Hath he spoken to you of his absence, that he will return, that he will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice? Hath he spoken to you of his anger, that it endureth but a moment, and that with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on you? Whatever he hath spoken, O give him the glory of his truth, by believing that whatever he seems to be doing by outward frowning providences, yet he *will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken to you of*. It is your duty, to keep your eye shut upon dark providences, and to keep your eye open upon the clear promise.

Hath he said, he *will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said*? Then wait upon him in the due use and improvement of all means, till he do his work, and do not leave him. Return his promise

mise by your practice, saying, Lord, hast thou said, *I will not leave thee, until I have done what I have spoken?* Behold, through grace, I resolve I will not leave thee, until thou hast done what thou hast spoken. He is a God of judgment, and *blest are all they that wait for him.* Hath he said, and promised to this effect? Then O! put a favourable construction upon all his frowning dispensations; according to your faith of his promise, and of his favour therein, such will be your faith of his favour amidst all afflicting providences. Whatever distress and difficulty you meet with; yet let faith still say, for all this, I hope he will do as he hath spoken: for all this I will not quit the hold, but hope in his word. O believer! remember that whatever God hath said to thee, he hath said it with a *surely*, as he said to *Jacob*, Gen. xxxii. 12. *I will surely do thee good.* And when *Jacob* came to a strait, he put God in mind of it, *Thou didst say, I will surely do thee good*; and therefore let your faith be acted with a *surely* grounded upon the truth and veracity of God, saying with *David*, Psalm xxiii. 6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* *We live by faith, and not by sight*; and therefore though dark days should come, you ought to believe when you cannot see, *And blessed is she that believed*, Luke i. 45. *for there shall be a performance of these things which were told her from the Lord.* *The word of the Lord endureth for ever.*

Let the faith of the promise appear in your sanctification, and holiness of heart, speech and behaviour. 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having these promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear*

fear of God. Let it be evident to all the world you converse with, that now you are clean thro' the words that he hath spoken to you. He that hath this faith and hope, purifieth himself; for faith fetches all its purity out of Christ, or, which is all one, out of the promise, which is *yea* and *amen* in Christ. The faith of God's love will work by love to a holy God, and his holy ways: therefore O believer! let your life be a life of faith, and resolve, through grace, to live and die in the faith of his love, which he himself expresseth in this promise, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

Faith's

Faith's plea upon God's word and covenant.

BEING
An EVENING EXERCISE before the administration of the Lord's-Supper, at *Kinglassie*.

By Mr. RALPH ERSKINE.

PSALM lxxiv. 20.

Have respect unto the covenant, &c.

THE psalmist, in pleading for the church and people of God, and that he would appear for them against their enemies, uses several arguments; particularly in the close of the preceding verse, there is something he pleads God may not forget, *Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever*; and the rather he uses this argument, because he had said, *Psalms ix. 18. The needy shall not be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.* There is in this verse something he pleads, that God may remember and have regard unto, *Have respect unto the covenant.* Thou hast brought us into covenant with thee, might he say, and though we are unworthy to be respected, yet *Have respect unto the covenant of promise.* When God delivers his people, it is in remembrance of his covenant, *Lev. xxvi. 42. Then will I remember my covenant with Abraham, Isaac,*

Isaac, and Jacob; and I will remember the land. We cannot expect he will remember us, till he remember his covenant: hence therefore the

Doctrine is, *That one of faith's strong pleas with God is, that he would have respect to the covenant.* If we would deal with God for mercy, or plead with him for favour, or look to him for any good on this occasion, let us expect it only upon this ground, the respect he hath to the covenant, and plead upon this argument. For method, I shall shew, *1st.* What covenant it is he will have a respect to. *2dly.* What it is for God to have a respect to the covenant. *3dly.* What it is in the covenant he hath respect to. *4thly.* What kind of a respect he hath to it. *5thly.* Why he hath respect to it, and so why it is a suitable plea and argument in suing for mercy. *6thly.* Make some application of the whole.

1st. Shew what covenant it is, he will have a respect to. *Ans.* The covenant here spoken of, is the covenant of grace and promise, made in Christ Jesus before the world began, and published in the gospel to sinners, *Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, &c. Jer. xxxi. 33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and*

write

write it in their hearts, and will be their God; and they shall be my people. Psalm lxxxix. throughout. It is called a covenant of grace; because grace is the beginning and the end, the foundation and top-stone of it, even grace reigning through righteousness. It is called a covenant of mercy; because, therein, mercy to the miserable is proclaimed through justice-satisfying blood; for there *mercy and truth meet together*, and all the *sure mercies of David* are conveyed thereby. It is called a covenant of peace and reconciliation; because it both treats of peace with God, and makes it good. It is called a covenant of promise; because it lies in promises with reference to us, and these to be accomplished upon the condition already fulfilled in Christ's obedience and satisfaction; and because therein the faithfulness of God is pledged, for making out all the promises to believers, the children of promise. It is called a covenant of salt; because it is an incorruptible word, *an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure.* In a word, it is a covenant of help to poor helpless sinners, saying, *I have laid help upon one that is mighty. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.* It is a covenant of pardon to the guilty, saying, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins.* It is a covenant of supply to the needy, saying, *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.* It is a covenant of gifts, wherein grace and glory are freely given; and, in the dispensation thereof, God says, *Come, and take all freely, himself, his Christ, his spirit, and all,* *Rev. xxii. 17. Isa. lv. 1.*

2dly. Shew what it is for God to have respect to the covenant. 1. God hath respect to the covenant when he remembers it, and so remembers us, as in that forecited *Lev. xxvi. 42. I will remember my covenant, and then will I remember the land.* Thus *Psalms cxi. 5. He hath given meat to them that fear him.* Why, he will ever be mindful of his covenant. If he come to give us meat to feed our souls at this occasion, the ground will be, he will be mindful of his covenant, mindful of his promise.

2. God may be said to have respect to his covenant, when he regards it. He hath no reason to have respect or regard to us, but he sees reason to have a regard to his covenant; he puts honour upon it, for reasons that I shall afterwards shew, only I'll say here, his honour is engaged therein, therefore he says, *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips,* *Psalms lxxxix. 34.* He hath more regard to it than he hath to heaven and earth; for he says, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.* He hath such a regard to it, that he will never break it, but ever keep it.

3. He hath respect to his covenant, when he establishes it. And when we pray, that he would have respect to the covenant, we not only pray he would remember the covenant, and regard the covenant, but establish the covenant betwixt him and us, as he said to *Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. I will establish it between me and thee, and thy seed after thee.* He shews respect to the covenant, when he makes the covenant take hold of us, and makes us take hold of the covenant; for then he makes us put respect upon him, and upon his covenant.

4. He

4. He hath respect to the covenant, when he performs the covenant-promises, according to *Micah vii. last, Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old*, when he acts according to the covenant, or according to the mercy that made the promise, and the truth that is engaged to make out the promise. In short, the sum of this prayer, as it concerns the import of the word *respect*, *have respect to the covenant*, is, Lord, remember the covenant, and so remember me; Lord, have regard to the covenant, and let me be remembered on this ground, when there is no other reason why I should be regarded; Lord, establish thy covenant with me, and so put honour upon thy name manifested in that covenant, and do to me according to the promise of the covenant. Cause me to hope in thy word, and then *remember the word, on which thou hast caused me to hope*, and deal with me, not according to my sin and desert, but according to thy covenant and mercy in Christ Jesus.

3dly. Shew what it is in the covenant he hath a respect to, or that we should plead upon. 1. *Have respect to the covenant*; that is, to the Mediator of the covenant: though thou owest no respect to me, yet dost thou not owe respect, and hast thou not a great respect to the Mediator of the covenant, to Christ, whom thou hast *given to be a covenant of the people*? For his sake let me be pitied; have respect to the relation he bears to the covenant, even to him who is the Mediator, Testator, Witness, Messenger, Surety, and All of the covenant. Have respect to his offices, and let him get the glory of his saving offices. It is a strong plea to plead with God upon the respect he bears to

to Christ; God cannot get over such a plea as that. He must own his regard and respect to Christ, who paid such respect to him, and *finished the work he gave him to do.*

2. Have respect to the covenant, by having respect to the blood of the covenant. The blood of Christ, that is represented in the sacrament of the supper, is the blood of the covenant, called *The new testament in his blood*; because all the promises are sealed therewith, and so *yea and amen in Christ*: this is the condition of the new covenant. The covenant of works had only the active obedience of the first *Adam* for its condition; but the condition of the covenant of grace properly, is both the active and passive obedience of the second *Adam*, his doing and dying. Now, Lord, have respect to that blood that sealed the covenant; since the condition is fulfilled to thy infinite satisfaction, let the promised good be conferred upon me.

3. Have respect to the covenant, by having respect to the oath of the covenant, *Heb. vi. 17.* The promise is confirmed with the oath of God; *That by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, &c.* Now, Lord, wilt thou not have respect to thy own oath? Hast thou not *sworn by thy holiness, thou wilt not lye unto David?*

4. Have respect to the covenant, by having a respect to the properties of the covenant. This would be a large field; but I sum it up in a few words. Have respect to the covenant; that is, Lord, have respect to the fulness of the covenant, and let me be supplied, for there is enough there, it contains *all my salvation, and all my desire.* Have respect to the freedom of the covenant, and let

me, however unworthy, share of the grace that runs freely thence. Have respect to the stability of the covenant, and let me be pitied, though unstable as water, and infirm, yet the covenant stands fast; remember thy word, that *endures for ever*. Have respect to the order of the covenant, that *is well ordered in all things*, as well as *sure*. *Though my house be not so with God, says David, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure*. Though my house be out of order, and heart out of order, and my frame out of order, and all be in confusion with me, yet see, according to thy covenant, to order all well.

4thly. To shew what kind of a respect he hath to the covenant, that we may be the more engaged to plead upon it. 1. He hath a great and high respect to the covenant. It is the covenant of the great God with his great and eternal Son, for the honour and glory of his great name; and therefore he cannot but have a great and high respect unto it. His great name is manifested in it; and therefore, when we plead his respect to the covenant, we plead, in effect, saying, *What wilt thou do for thy great name?*

2. He hath a dear and lovely respect to the covenant; for it is the covenant of his grace and love, wherein he shews his infinite love to Christ, and through him to a company of wretched sinners. It is a covenant of kindness, *Isa. liv. 10. My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee*, intimating his covenant of peace is a covenant of kindness, wherein he manifests his dearest love; therefore he hath a dear respect to it.

3. He

3. He hath a full respect to the covenant, a respect to every promise of it; *They are all yea and amen, to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20. He hath a respect to all of them, because *they are all yea and amen*, and because they are all thus ratified in Christ, to the glory of God. He hath a respect to every article of the covenant, *not a jot shall fall to the ground*.

4. He hath an everlasting respect to the covenant, therefore it is called *an everlasting covenant*; it is secured by an everlasting righteousness; it is made between everlasting parties; it is replenished with everlasting blessings; it is rooted in his everlasting love: therefore he is ever mindful of his covenant, and will never cease to have a respect to it.

Why say you then, what need we pray and plead, that he would have respect to his covenant? Why, if it be sure that he hath, and will for ever have, a respect to the covenant, then we may pray with the more assurance and confidence; so that there is here strong footing for our prayer: but besides, when we pray, and say, *Have respect unto the covenant*, we seek, that he would *shew* the respect that he hath unto it, that he would shew and make it manifest unto us, that we may have the faith of it, and enjoy the fruits of it, and the blessed effects of that respect to it, in our participation of the blessings thereof.

5thly. To shew why he will have respect to his covenant; and consequently, whence it is such a suitable plea and argument for us. Why,

1. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to himself, the framer of it he owns himself to be, *Psalms lxxxix. 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen*. Why then, the strength of

the plea is, *Have respect to the covenant*, and so have respect to thyself, and thy own glorious name and attributes, and let them be glorified, in shewing regard to the covenant. Have respect to thy wisdom, that shines in the contrivance of the covenant, *the manifold wisdom of God, yea, the wisdom of God in a mystery* that here appears. Have respect to thy power, that shines in the efficacy of the covenant, not only for over-powering principalities and powers, but overcoming thyself, and the power of thine own wrath, by the power of thy love. Have respect to thy holiness, that shines in the holy oath of *Jehovah*, by which it is confirmed, and the holy obedience of Jesus, by which it is fulfilled; that, as *by the sinful disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the holy obedience of another glorious one, many are made righteous*. Have respect to thy justice, that shines in the blood of the covenant, the sacrifice by which justice hath condign and infinite satisfaction. Have respect to thy mercy and grace, that reigns through this righteousness to eternal life. Have respect to thy truth and faithfulness, that shines in accomplishing all the promises of the covenant, upon the ground of Christ's having fulfilled the condition. Have respect unto thy eternity and immutability in the unchangeableness of the covenant; shew that thou art God, and changeest not. Thus have respect to thyself.

2. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his Son, *Christ*, the center of it, and in whom it stands fast, as he owns *Psalm lxxxix. 28. My covenant shall stand fast with him*. Why then, the strength of the plea is, *Have respect to the covenant*, and so shew respect to thy Son: Have respect to him in his person, as he is
thy

thy Son and our Saviour, *Emmanuel*, God-man, in his divinity, wherein he his equal with God; in his humanity, wherein he his the master-piece of God's work. Have respect to him in his purchase, which is the substance of the covenant bought with his blood. Have respect to his death and resurrection; for thou lovest him on this account, *John x. 17. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again*; where we see that Christ, as dying and rising in the room of his people, is the object of the Father's love, delight and esteem. Have respect unto his intercession, wherein he prays for all the blessings of the covenant that he hath purchased: doth not the Father hear him always? Have respect to his commission, which is sealed by thee; for *him hath God the Father sealed*, anointed, and authorized unto all saving offices, relations and appearances: let him get the glory of all these. O, strong plea!

3. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his spirit, the great applyer of the covenant-blessings, and executor of the testament, sealed with the blood of Christ, and by whom covenant-love is shed abroad upon the heart, *Rom. v. 5*. Why then, the strength of the plea is, *Have respect to the covenant*; that is, have respect to thy own spirit, that he may get the glory of applying, by his power, what Christ hath purchased by his blood. Have respect to the promise of the spirit, that thou hast made, that *when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment*, and testify of Christ, and glorify Christ, by shewing the things of Christ. Have respect to the offices of the spirit, as he is a convincer, sanctifier and comforter, according to

the order and method of the covenant. Have respect to the honour of the spirit, who is the *all in all* of the covenant, in point of power, and powerful manifestation, communication and operation. Have respect to the relations of the spirit, as he is the spirit of the Father and of the Son, the spirit of the covenant, and of all the covenanted seed. Hence,

4. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his people on the account of the covenant of promise; for they, as *Isaac* was, are the children of promise, *Gal. iv. 28.* Why then, the strength of the plea and argument here is, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant*, and so shew regard and respect to us. We have no confidence to claim any respect at thy hand, but merely upon the account of the respect thou hast to thy covenant. Have respect to our persons on this ground, since the covenant provides acceptance *in the beloved*, *Eph. i. 6.* Look upon us in the face of thine anointed, and in the glass of the new covenant. Have respect to our prayers and performances on this ground, since the covenant hath provided much incense, to perfume the prayers and offerings of all saints, upon the golden altar that is before the throne, *Rev. viii. 3.* Have respect to our tears, when we sigh and groan, mourn, and weep before thee, since the covenant provides a bottle for our tears, *Psal. lvi. 8. Put thou my tears in thy bottle.* Have respect to our needs on this ground, when we are hardned, that we can neither pray nor weep, nor shed a tear, since the covenant provides supply to the poor and needy, *Phil. iv. 19. My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches, in glory, by Christ Jesus.*

6thly. I would make some application in these four words. 1. Hence see a mark and character of true believers, that are fit for a communion-table, they are of God's mind; he hath a respect to the covenant, and they have a respect unto the covenant; and hence they know what it is to plead with God, upon the respect that he hath to the covenant; they could not do so, if they had not a high respect to it themselves; they have such a respect to the covenant in kind as God hath: they have a great respect to it, so as they esteem it more than all things in a world; they would not give one promise of it, on which they have been caused to hope, for all the gold of *Ophir*; they have a dear and kindly respect to it, as all their salvation and all their desire, yea, and all their delight also. The word of grace is *sweeter* to them *than the honey and the honey-comb*. They have a full and universal respect to it, and to all the promises of it; they respect the promise of purity, as well as the promise of pardon, the promise of salvation from sin, as well, and as much, as the promise of salvation from hell; the promise of holiness, as well as of happiness. As they have a respect to all God's commandments, so they have a respect to all his promises; and particularly as *David* had his golden psalms, so they have their golden promises, that they are made to hing upon. Yea, they have an everlasting respect to the covenant, and to the promises thereof, even when their frame fails them; when their sweet enjoyments fail them, yet their respect to the covenant remains, and their respect to the Maker of the covenant, to the Mediator of the covenant, to the blood and oath of the covenant, to the spirit of the covenant, and to the blessings and benefits of it. They have an

everlasting respect to the grace of the covenant of grace ; they are adorers and admirers of free grace. They have an everlasting respect to, and remembrance of, the words of the covenant, particularly these words, that have been let in with any life and power upon their soul, or that they have been caused to hope upon ; whatever they forget, they can never forget such a word, that brought life to their souls ; *I will never forget thy words, says David ; for by them thou hast quickned me.* They have such an everlasting respect to the covenant, that, when they have nothing in the world to hold to, they will hing by the covenant, and hold fast such a promise, and plead upon it, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.*

2. Hence we may see the misery of these that are unbelievers, and remain *strangers to the covenant of promise*, and have no respect to the covenant. It is misery enough, that God hath no respect to you ; no respect to your persons nor prayers, as it is said, *To Cain and his offering God had no respect,* Gen. iv. 5. So God hath no respect either to your persons or performances, they are an abomination to him. Your prayers to him are but like the howling of a dog, if you have never taken hold of his covenant, nor seen the respect that God hath to the covenant. You have no respect to God, while you have no respect to that, which he respects so highly : and as he hath no respect to your persons or performances, so he hath no respect to your tears, they never flowed from faith's views of a pierced Christ. He hath no respect to your souls, the redemption thereof ceaseth for ever, because you have no due respect to the Redeemer's blood and righteousness. He hath no respect to your communicating, nay he disapproves of it,
and

and discharges you to sit down at his table, on peril of eating and drinking your own damnation. God hath no regard nor respect to your salvation, because you have no regard nor respect to the Saviour, he hath provided and offered. God thinks as little to damn you, as you think little to dishonour him. God thinks as little of you, as you think little of sin, and he hath as little respect to you, as you have little respect to Christ and to the covenant. Wo to you, if you remain in this case; for the day is coming wherein God will, before all the world, shew no more respect to you, than to say to you, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, &c.* But,

3. Hence we may see the happiness of believers, that have such a respect to the covenant, as I was speaking of, a great, dear, full, and perpetual respect to it, and to the Mediator of it, who have taken hold of the covenant through grace, and who know what it is to take hold of God in the covenant, to take hold of God in a promise, and to hold him by his word, and hing upon him in it, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant*; here is your great happiness, God hath a respect to you: what respect? Even to your persons and offerings, as it is said of *Abel*, Gen. iv. 4. God had a respect to him and to his offerings. Tho' you be saying in your heart, O! how can he have a respect to me, black and vile, and guilty me? Why? not for your sake indeed, be it known unto you, but for his covenant's sake, and his name's sake. He hath a respect to your praying, and praising, and communicating; because he hath a respect to the covenant. He hath a respect to your name. *Tho' the name of the wicked shall rot, your name shall be in everlasting remembrance;*

brance; for God hath put his name in you, something of Christ in you, something of the covenant in you. Some observe, when *Abram's* name was turned to *Abraham*, that there was some of the letters of the name *Jehovah* put in *Abram's* name. Indeed God gives the believer a new name, that he hath a respect unto. He hath a respect to your suits and supplications, *I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. O! my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, &c. Let me hear thy voice, &c.* He hath respect to his crooning doves, when pouring out their hearts before him, that voice that the world laughs at, God hath a respect to it. He hath a respect to your blood; precious in his sight is the blood of his saints. He hath a respect to your souls; and hence he gave his blood to be a ransom for them: and when your souls languish, he sends his spirit to restore them; and when you die, he will send his angels to bring them to heaven. He hath a respect to your bodies: you ought, *being bought with a price*, to glorify him in your souls and bodies, which are his. When your body goes to the dust, he will take care of that dust, and loose nothing of you, but raise you up at *the last day*, and make your *vile bodies like unto his glorious body*; and so shall ye be ever with the Lord. He hath a respect to you, such a respect that he puts honour upon you; *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.* He hath made you kings and priests to your God. *Jacob* was crowned a prince on the field of battle, the field of prayer, when he wrestled with the angel and prevailed, as a prince. The poor wrestling man is a prince, and the poor wrestling woman a princess, in God's sight; *This is the honour of all the saints.* They have power with God, and therefore

fore no wonder then they have power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron; they judge and torment them that dwell upon the earth, even here: and know you not, that hereafter the saints shall judge the world. God hath a respect to you, and he will shew it in due time; because he hath a respect to the covenant, and fills your heart with a respect to it also.

4. Hence see the duty incumbent upon us, in pleading with God for his favour, presence and blessing, let us go to him both in secret prayer, and in solemn approaches to his table, crying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.* I know not a case you can be in, but the *covenant* exhibites a cure, and you are allowed to plead it, *Ezek. xxxvi.* 37. After many precious new *covenant* promises, it is said, *For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them,* and how are we to enquire but by pleading the respect he hath to the *covenant.* Have you a polluted heart with the filth of sin, a polluted conscience with the guilt of sin? Why, here is an article of the *covenant,* *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you,* verse 25. O then go to God for cleansing, and plead, saying, *O Have respect to the covenant.* Have you the old hard stony heart still within you, and would you have it renewed and softened? Here is an article of the *covenant,* *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* O then go to God, and plead it, saying, *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you destitute of the spirit, sensual, not having the spirit? Do you find such a want of the spirit, that you cannot walk in
God's

God's way? Well, there is an article of the *covenant* here, *verse 27. I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* O plead for this great blessing, and say, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.*

In a word, when you consider what kind of a sinner you are, consider also what kind of a *covenant* this is, it is enough to say, that it is a *covenant* of grace, of all sort of grace, for all sort of sinners that are out of hell. Are you under dreadful guilt? Here is a *covenant* of pardoning grace, saying, *I will blot out thy sin as a cloud, and thy transgressions as a thick cloud: return to me, for I have redeemed thee,* Isa. xlv. 22. O then plead that he may *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you under fearful pollutions? O here is a *covenant* of purifying grace, saying, *There is a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.* O then plead he may *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you in darkness and ignorance, having no knowledge of God? O here is a *covenant* of enlightning grace, saying, *They shall be all taught of God.* O then plead it, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you under deadness, and like dead and dry bones? O here is a *covenant* of quickening grace, saying, *I am come to give life, and to give it more abundantly. The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.* O then plead that he may *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you in confusion, and know not what way to take? O here is a *covenant* of directing grace, saying, *I will bring the blind by a way they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.* Are you under

der sad plagues and foul diseases, over-run with sores from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot? O here is a *covenant* of healing grace, saying, *The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. I am the Lord that healeth thee, I will heal your backslidings.* O then plead, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you in extreme danger of hell and damnation, because of your sin and guilt? O here is a *covenant* of delivering grace, saying, *Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.* O then plead it, and say, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you in bondage unto sin, satan and the world, a captive unto lusts, and shut up in unbelief as in a prison? O here is a *covenant* of liberating grace! proclaiming, liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Are you a stupid soul, that cannot move toward God, nor stir heaven-ward, by reason of a backward will, like a brazen gate, that resists all the force of moving means? Well; but, O here is a *covenant* of drawing grace, saying, *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.* As the power and virtue of the load-stone draws the iron, so the virtue of an exalted Christ draws the iron bar of the will. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* O then plead it, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.*

What other concerns have you? Are you concerned for your children, that they may be partakers of *covenant* blessings, and saved of the Lord? O here is a *covenant* of extensive grace, intailing blessings on us and our offspring, saying, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.* O then look to God in behalf of your children, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.* Are you concerned
for

for the church, and the dangerous circumstances she is in, by reason of cruel enemies? This seems to be the great concern of the *psalmist* here, as appears from the body of the psalm, and the words following the text: *For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.* These that live in darkness of ignorance and error, and in the works of darkness, are full of cruelty against the church and people of God, and they are surrounded with them, insomuch that the church is like a lilly among thorns, or a sheep among wolves, what shall become of it? Why, here is a *covenant* of defence, and of defending and protecting grace, saying, *Upon all the glory there shall be a defence*; therefore even when enemies *break down the carved work with axes and hammers*, verse 6. When they are casting *fire into the sanctuary*, verse 7. When they are saying, *Let us destroy them together*, verse 8. Yea, when it shall come to this, that a bloody sword that is raging abroad shall come over to us, and that foreign or domestick enemies, or both, shall devour and destroy, and may be *burn up all the synagogues of God in the land*, as it is *verse 8*. And when *we shall not see our signs*, and *there is no more any prophet*, nor any among us that know the time how long, verse 9. In all such cases, what course shall we take, but that of the *psalmist* here? Lord, *Have respect unto the covenant.*

Are you concerned about inward enemies, spiritual enemies, and molested with the powers of darkness? Is your heart full of the habitations of cruelty, and fearfully inhabited with cruel devils, cruel lusts, cruel corruptions, that master and conquer, and prevail against you, so as you lye many a time wounded and dead at the enemy's feet? O
here

here is a *covenant* of sin-conquering grace, not only a *covenant* of mercy to your soul, but of vengeance to your lusts, saying, *The day of vengeance is in mine heart, the year of my redeemed is come*, Isa. lxiii. 4. O then cry down the promised vengeance on all your cruel soul enemies, saying, Lord, *Have respect to the covenant.*

Are you concerned about your soul poverty and indigency, not only as oppressed with enemies without and within, but oppressed with wants and necessities, being absolutely poor and needy, and destitute of all good? O here is a *covenant* of soul supplying grace, and of all needful provision, saying, *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will bear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.* O then plead the *covenant*, as the *psalmist* here in the following verse, *O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. Have respect unto the covenant.*

In a word, let your case be the worst case out of hell, this *covenant* contains all salvation as a *covenant* of grace, of all grace, of all sort of grace for all sort of sinners, and of all sort of cures for all sort of cases; and if you can get yourself wrapped within the bond of this *covenant* by believing and pleading it; then you draw God upon your interest, so that your concern is his concern, your interest is his interest, your cause is his cause, as the *psalmist* shews here, *verse 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.* It stands upon his honour, and he will do his own work in his own time. If ever you got grace to draw a bill upon God as a covenanting promising God in Christ, and have any bills lying tabled before the throne,
and

and are sometimes unable to plead and pursue the bill, with a Lord, *Have respect unto the covenant*: you have the strongest encouragement to wait on him, and expect his answering the bill in due time; for he will rather work marvelously, and create new worlds, rather turn all things to nothing, than quit his concern in, or give up with his *respect unto the covenant*.

Are you concerned for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the earth, as you ought to be? Here is a *covenant* of grace to the *Jews*, and grace to the *Gentiles*, grace to the *Heathen* nations, saying, *I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*. Are you concerned about generations to come, about the rising generation, when there is little hope of the present? O here is a *covenant* of grace to succeeding generations till the end of the world, saying, *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever*.

Are you concerned about your latter end, and how it shall fare with you, when in the swellings of *Jordan*, how you will fight the last battle? O here is a *covenant* of death-conquering grace, saying, *Death shall be swallowed up in victory, &c.* Are you concerned about a gospel ministry, and thoughtful whether it shall be continued? There is many a word in this covenant about it; but especially that, *Christ is exalted to maintain and support a gospel dispensation to the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. Whatever spot of the earth he chuse or refuse, he having *ascended on high, hath received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them*, Psal. lxxviii. 18.











