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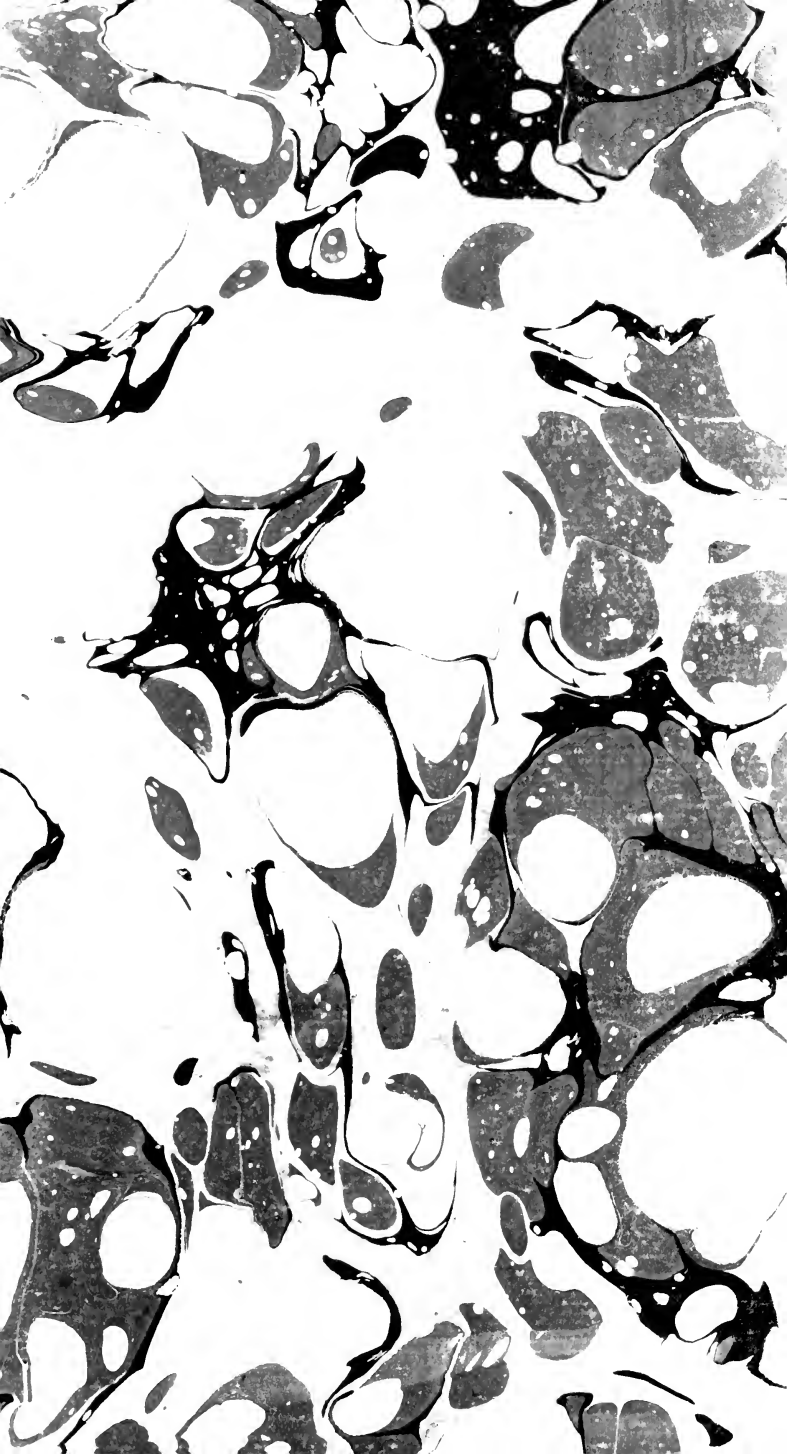
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MDCCLXXVII.



T H E  
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N LVI,—LXIV.

The Happy Congregation ; or, the Great Gathering  
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**GEN. XLIX. 10.** *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

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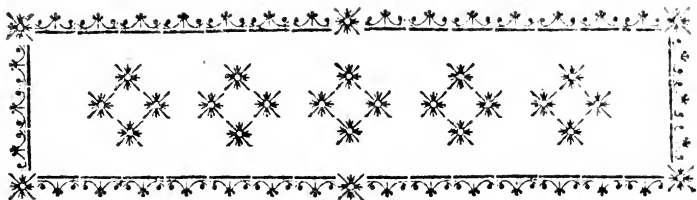
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## S E R M O N LVI,--LXIV.

The HAPPY CONGREGATION; or, the  
*Great Gathering* of the PEOPLE to SHILOH\*.

GENESIS xlix. 10.

*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver  
from between his feet, until Shiloh come? and unto him  
shall the gathering of the people be.*

**T**HE twelve sons of Jacob were very remarkable in their day: but the twelve tribes of Israel, that were descended and denominate from them, were yet more remarkable and renowned: for we find their names upon the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 12. In the view hereof, their dying father, Jacob, says some things remarkable concerning each son, and his tribe. Holy Jacob, the nearer he was to his death, the nearer to God; his soul had not only a kind of divinity, but of divination also, whereby he

\* This subject is the substance of eight discourses, preached at several places, on sacramental occasions. The first three were delivered at the sacrament at Kinglassie, June 5th, 6th, and 7th; and end about the middle of the third general head. The next three were preached at the sacrament of Airth, June 19th, 20th, and 21st: and end with the fifth general head. The last two were delivered at the sacrament of Carnock, July 4th, and 5th; all in the year 1725.—It hath undergone seven editions.

pr prophecies of what shall take place concerning them and come to pass in the latter days. From Jacob's couch, and death-bed prophecy, we may learn some new lessons, though it be an old story, and spoken more than three thousand years ago.—Many great things are said to and of the several sons of Jacob, when now they were gathered together at his bed-side: but especially very glorious things are spoken of Judah and his tribe; as, 1. That it should be an *honourable* tribe; verse 8. *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.* 2. That it should be a *victorious* tribe; *Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies.* 3. That it should be a *superior* tribe to the rest; *Thy Father's children shall bow down before thee.* 4. That it should be a *powerful and courageous* tribe, verse 9. *Judah is a lion's whelp.* 5. That it should be a *royal* tribe, from which the Messias the Prince shall come, verse 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

As Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, so did Jacob here: though his bodily eyes were dim, yet such a clear-sighted soul hath he, that he sees that which the eye of mortality never saw, even an object at such a far distance, that he spake clearly of it more than sixteen hundred years before the accomplishment thereof; and while there was nothing but shadows that interveened betwixt the prophecy and the event. And, notwithstanding all the legal interveening shadows, and that his sun was going down in his hemisphere of nature, his eyes dim through infirmity of age; yet his mind being irradiated by the Spirit of God, he sees *the Sun of righteousness, the Morning-star, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of his people Israel.* As Moses, from the mount, beheld the land of Canaan afar off; so Jacob from the mount of his divine contemplation, even when his heart and eye-strings are breaking, sees to the furthest end and period of all the prophets.

This text is the more remarkable, that it is the third promise of grace and of Christ to mankind sinners af-



ter the fall. The first promise was, Gen. iii. 15. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.* The second was, Gen. xxii. 18. where God says to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* But this is the third, both fuller and plainer than the former two; for these shew *that* it shall be, but this shews, *when* it shall be; pointing out the very precise period of time when Christ shall come: So that, if any one demand, When shall this Messias be revealed? The answer is, When the sceptre is departed from Judah.

This text hath two parts: the first pertaining to the Jews, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come;* the second pertaining to the Gentiles, *To him shall the gathering of the people be.* He shall come to the Jews, and be received by the Gentiles: for Christ, *the king of the Jews,* came to them; *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* The Gentiles shall be subject to the King of the Jews, and at last the Jews shall be subject to the King of the Gentiles. The former part of the verse speaks forth the *conviction* of the Jews, the latter part the *conversion* of the Gentiles.

Now, in the *first part* of the words, relating to the Jews, you may notice two things, *first,* a *sign*; and, *secondly,* an *event.* The sign is, the departing of the sceptre from Judah, and the government. The event is, the coming of Christ the Shiloh.

1. You have the *sign*; and this sign, if it be not doubled, is at least twice mentioned in the text; for the same may be understood by the *sceptre* and the *law-giver*: where there is a sceptre, there must be a legislator. They may be either considered to be the same, namely, *the sceptre,* OR *the law-giver*; or *separately,* as some read it, *the sceptre* OR *the law-giver*; making the one the *principality,* and the other the *magistracy,* as it were, at the feet of the former; as Paul at the feet of Gamaliel. Jacob here foresaw, that the sceptre and government would come to the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, on whose family the crown was intailed. He foresaw also that the sceptre would

continue in that tribe, at least a government of their own, till the coming of the Messias, in whom, as the King of Zion, and great High-priest, it was fit that both the priesthood, and royalty, should terminate and centre.

I know it is objected here, especially by the Jews, who deny that the Messias is come, that in the captivity of Babylon, *where was the sceptre of Judah?* And that the Maccabees were of the tribe of Levi; *where then was the tribe of Judah?* For clearing of this, you are to remember, that when the sceptre entred upon Judah, it remained there. You may see Judges i. 1, 2. *That after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them? The Lord answered, Judah shall go up, because I have delivered the land into his hand.* But when it is said, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,* it is not meant, the sceptre shall still remain there in the same *splendor* and *glory*: it is not taken away, when it pleases God to eclipse the glory, and obscure the splendor of it, as a punishment of their sins. Now, as until the captivity, all along from David's time, the sceptre was in Judah; so in their captivity they had their princes exiles. You see the king of Babylon lifting up the head of Jehoiakim king of Judah, when he was his captive, and advancing him above the other kings that were with him in Babylon, 2 Kings xxv. 27. And after the captivity, their rulers were either by the father or mother's side, descended from the tribe of Judah. They had still a governor of that tribe, or of the Levites, that adhered to it, which was equivalent, till Judah became a province of the Roman empire, just at the time of our Saviour's birth, and was at that time taxed, as one of the provinces of that empire, Luke ii. 1. And though the *act* of government might, at some time or other, cease, yet the *right* of government was still in Judah; the crown still did belong to Judah, and the principality had its denomination from Judah: and to this day, they have the name of Jews from Judah, and will ever be so called; the name shall not wear out, till Christ's second coming:  
how-

however, his first coming did not take place, till the scepter was departed from Judah: and when the government was actually departing, or departed from Judah, that was the time when Christ came into the world; for when Herod, a stranger, and of another nation, was made king and governor of Judah, and thereby the sceptre and royal power departed from Judah, our Lord appeared on earth. Therefore, in the narrative of Christ's nativity, Matt. ii. 1, 2. it is particularly recorded, that he was born in the days of Herod the king, namely, when this notable prophecy of the patriarch Jacob was fulfilled.

The Jews then may hold their peace, and be silent, otherwise we can condemn them out of their own mouths; for, at the time of Christ's death, they expressly owned, saying, *We have no king but Cæsar*, John xix. 15.; no king but the Roman emperor: and now, the sceptre, that was removed from Judah before this time by conquest, is departed from them by consent. Now, they solemnly own, that the right of government was fallen into the hands of the emperor, and so departed from Judah to Cæsar; from Judea to Rome. The sceptre here is publicly resigned; *We have no king but Cæsar*; a plain indication, that the time for the Messias to appear, even the set time, was now come: for, if the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet; hence our Lord Jesus, by their own confession, is that he should come, and we are to look for no other; for he came exactly at the time appointed. Now, from that time, to this very day, they have no king, no magistracy, no governor among themselves: their tribes are confounded, they are vagabonds in the earth, without any rule or government at all. This sign of the coming of Shiloh cannot now take place among them: this may confirm our faith of his being come, and condemn their unbelief, who obstinately deny it, though they cannot but acknowledge, that the sceptre hath ceased from Judah seventeen hundred years ago.—So much concerning the *sign*,

2. The *event* is the coming of *Shiloh*. If the question now be, Where is this *Messias*, in our text? Here it is said, *Until Shiloh come*. But what is this to the sign? where is any mention made of the *Messias*? It is universally received, that this *Shiloh* is *Christ*: but the question is, How *Shiloh* may signify and be called *Christ*? The imposition of the name does agree with the nature of the person, and his work; and from diverse roots, proceed divers reasons of this name: as the lines drawn in a circle may be many, yet all agree in one centre; so, among all the divers opinions about the signification of the word *Shiloh*, yet all agree that it is the *Messias*, who is here meant. I shall lay before you some of the significations of that word. 1. Some notice, that *Shiloh* signifies *peace, prosperity, and happiness*; now, *Christ* is the *Prince of peace*; he preserves against the gates of hell, sin, and death: and the *pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*: and they only are happy that are found in him. 2. Some make it to signify *rest*: *Christ* is indeed the true resting place for weary souls, *Mat. xi. 28, 29. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,—and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* 3. Some notice, that *Shiloh* signifies a *repositum*, a thing laid up in a store: and this agrees to him who is the *desire of all nations*, kept up in the store-house of God, until the fit time in which he might come abroad, and appear: *In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.* And so, 4. Some observe, that *Shiloh*, signifies, *Filius ejus*, his Son, that is, the Son of Judah, or the Son of David; but a certain author puts *ejus* in the *feminine* gender, *HER Son*; that is, the Son of the virgin: and so, in both these senses *Christ* is the Son of David, the *Son of the virgin*, the *seed of the woman*. 5. To this purpose is the observation of these that make *Shiloh* to signify the *membrane*; that is, the skin that wraps up the infant in the mother's womb: *Christ*, according to the flesh, was the Son of the womb, even of the virgin's womb. 6. And more especially, *Shiloh* signifies *Sent*; and *Christ* is indeed the *Sent of God*, and the best present that ever God sent,

John iv. 7. A man that was blind was bid go and wash in *Siloam*, which is by interpretation *Sent*, to heal, not bodily diseases only, but soul diseases. As God said to Moses in the mount, *Get thee down, and visit thy brethren, that commit sin below*; so God said to Christ, *Go down, and visit thy brethren, which are below in sin, and in the shadow of death*: how frequently is he therefore called, *the Sent of God*? Whatever of these meanings you put upon the word, they are all significant, and shew, that *Shiloh* agrees to the person of Christ; and put them all together, they make his name to be as *ointment poured forth*, that fills the whole world with a sweet favour. He is the *King of Zion*, to whom the sceptre belongs; for, *the sceptre was not to depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, till Shiloh came*.—And thus you have the portion of Judah, or that part of the words that belongs to the Jews.

Now, the *second part* of the words is what relates to us, *To him shall the gathering of the people be*. Here is a happy confluence, and concourse of people prophesied of; where you may notice, 1. The *place* of their resort, *to him*. 2. The *manner* of their resorting to him, there will be a *gathering to him*. 3. The *persons* resorting, or the members of the meeting or assembly: it is a gathering of *the people*. 4. The *certainty* of this event, *to him shall the gathering of the people be*. Notice then, I say.

1. The *place* of their resort, or to what centre of rest their motion will tend; even *to him*; that is, to *Shiloh*, the promised *Messias*; *to him*, who is the *Son of God*, the *Sent of God*; *to him*, as the only temple, the only shelter and Saviour; *to him*, who is the *Lion of the tribe of Judah*; *to him*, on whom the sceptre is devolved.

2. The *manner* of their resorting, *To him shall the GATHERING be*. I find this word in the original Hebrew, to be such as gives occasion to render it thus, *To him shall the EXPECTATION of the people be*; or thus, *To him shall the OBEDIENCE of the people be*: but our own translation being most excellent and agreeable to the original, I shall especially hold by it, yet, so as not to ex-

exclude the other significations ; for they agree upon the matter, and declare the manner of this resort of the people to Christ ; that it is not a *simple* assembling to him, or an *outward* gathering, like a confused multitude not knowing wherefore they meet together ; but that Christ shall be so the *desire* of the people, the *hope* of the people ; that it is not only a gathering of bodies, but a gathering of souls, and a gathering of hearts unto *Shiloh*. They shall not only lend an outward ear, but an inward heart-obedience ; not a gathering of external attendance upon him and his ordinances only, but a gathering also of spiritual attendance, and dependence on him, complacency in him, and reverence towards him. In a word, this is such a gathering here, as imports all the acts of faith and hope in him, and all the outgoings of the soul after him in the exercise of grace internally, as well as in the performance of duty externally.

3. You have here the *persons* thus resorting or assembling unto *Shiloh*, namely, *the people* ; To him shall the gathering of the PEOPLE be : that is, the Gentiles : for the blessed *Shiloh* was to break down the partition-wall betwixt them and the Jews. The promise here respects the Gentile nations. It is not a particular sett of people here intended ; it is people in the *plural number*. All our Latin commentators translate it either *aggregatio gentium*, or *aggregatio populorum* ; Junius and Tremellius, *obedientia populorum* \*. The coming of *Shiloh* was to turn the singular number to the plural ; he was to turn *Gens* to *Gentes*, and *populus* to *populi* ; that is to say, (for I design not to speak to you in an unknown tongue) he was to turn a nation in particular, to nations in general ; and instead of making a feast only for one sort of people, to wit, the Jews, he was to *make unto all people a feast of fat things, and wines on the lees, well refined*, Isa. xxv. 6, ; yea, he was to turn out the Jews, and take in the Gentiles in their room for so many hundreds of years. And, alas ! they have been turned to  
the

\* That is, *the gathering of the nations, the gathering of the people ; or the obedience of the people.*

the door these seventeen hundred years by-gone, and we need to pray that the time of their rejection may be of no longer continuance; for it will not fare the worse with us, that they be received in again. Nay, *If the casting away of them, says the apostle, be the reconciling of the Gentile world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?* Rom. xi. 15. However, at present, they that were the only church, are unchurched; they are cut off from *Shiloh*, and there is a gathering of the people in their room: what people? even the people that were *afar off*, the Gentiles; for the Jews had been long the people near to him: they were the children of *Abraham*, and we the *stones*; and glory to him, that *out of these stones can raise up children to Abraham*. They were the *garden of God*, when we were a *desolate wilderness*. The Gentiles were condemned by the Jews: the Levite-priest would scarce look upon a poor Samaritan, but passed by on the other side. We were the dogs that were without, and looked upon them as a cursed people, as indeed we were: but now, by the gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, the curse is turned to a blessing: the Gentiles are invited, and the Jews neglected. Where nature made a separation, grace makes a gathering and conjunction; where sin made a disjunction, grace makes an aggregation: *To him shall the aggregation, or gathering, of the people be.*

4. You have here the *certainty* of this event: *To him SHALL the gathering of the people be.* God revealed this counsel of his to old Jacob; and he by the inspiration of God, declares it, that it *shall* be. It is very true the *shall be* in the text here is not in the original, but it is very fitly supplied by our translators; and the certainty of this event is as strongly asserted, when these two words are left out, as when they are put in, and in my opinion somewhat stronger: for, if you read the text without supplying of these two words, then it runs thus, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, till Shiloh come, and* THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE

TO HIM.—And this way of reading the text says, I think, four things.

(1.) That the gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, is a *certain evidence* that the *sceptre is departed from Judah*; for the sceptre was not to depart from them, till *Shiloh* should come, and gather the people to him. Now, the sceptre is departed from Judah; therefore *Shiloh* is come, and the gathering of the people is to him.

(2.) That the *coming of Shiloh*, and the *gathering of the people to him*, was of *equal certainty* by the counsel of heaven: the gathering of the people to Christ was as certainly foreseen, as it was certainly foreseen that he was to come; and that according to the counsel of God, the gathering of the people hath been and shall be to Christ, is as sure and certain, as it is sure that he is come already; for thus they stand connected, namely, the *coming of Shiloh*, and the *gathering of the people to him*.

(3.) It says, that the coming of *Shiloh*, and gathering of the people to him, was to *take place together*; and indeed the gathering of the Gentiles took its remarkable accomplishment with his coming. Whenever he was born in Bethlehem, behold there came wise men from the east, enquiring after him: we are sure they were Gentiles, and belonged not to the commonwealth of Israel; and the respect they paid to Christ, the King of the Jews, was a happy preface of what would follow, when these that were *afar off should be made nigh by Christ*. It is true, they were magicians; but some take it in a good sense, for the *Magi* among the Persians were their philosophers and their priests: but though we take it in the worst sense, it was an early instance of Christ's victory over the devil; whatever sort of wise-men they were before, now they begin to be wise men indeed, when they set themselves to enquire after Christ. In this there were some early trophies erected of Christ's victory over Satan's territories, abstract from the Gentiles that were religious profelytes of old; herein commenced the gathering of the people to him.

(4.) This



(4.) This reading says, that as upon the coming of *Shiloh*, the gathering of the people should be *no more delayed*; so, upon his coming, their gathering should be *no more discontinued*; but that the gathering of the people should continue and run parallel with the period wherein it can be said that now *Shiloh* is come. The text speaks of a twofold period: the first is the time before Christ's coming, wherein it could be said, *Shiloh is not come*; and, so long as that could be said, the sceptre was to remain with Judah. The second is the time of Christ's coming, and after it, wherein it can be said, that *Shiloh is now come*, and the gathering of the people to him: therefore so long as that period remains, so long must the gathering be.

In a word, this reading of the words imports, that while the scene is now so far altered, that it can be said, *The sceptre is departed from Judah*, which will be to the end of the world; so long we have ground to expect, that *the gathering of the people shall be to Shiloh*, who is now come. The sceptre is departed from the Jews, and the Saviour is come to the Gentiles: whatever way we read it then, it stands established for a firm certainty, that to *Shiloh shall the gathering of the people be*.

Now, omitting many observations that might be drawn from the words, I confine myself to that which especially concerns ourselves, namely,

OBSERV. That it is established in the council of heaven, concerning Jesus Christ, the Messias, that to him shall the gathering of the people be.

Now, that this is established in the council of heaven, is plain from the sacred records of that council, which you have in your hand. I need not cite all the scriptures that speak of the conversion of the nations to him; I will but name two or three. Psalm ii. 8. where God is declaring the decree concerning our Messias; he says to him, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* ASK OF ME;

what shall I give thee in consideration of that noble undertaking of thine, which I am so well-pleas'd with, and so much glorified by? Why, might Christ say, all that I ask is, that I may have a seed to serve and glorify thee and me; that I may have my friends among the lost heathen pagan world; let me see in them, as well as in others, *the travel of my soul, and be satisfied*. Well, says the Father, it is granted; *I give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*. See Isa. xi. 10, 12. Isa. xliii. 5, 6. Isa. lvi. 8. and lx. 4,—9.

The method we would propose for illustrating this proposition, through divine aid, shall be the following:

- I. To offer some *remarks* with respect to the *nature* of this gathering, and the *qualitics* of it.
- II. Who are the *people* of whom it is said this gathering shall be.
- III. To *whom* this gathering of the people shall be, and in what respect it is to Christ.
- IV. The *manner* of this gathering; by what *means*, and in what *method* it shall be.
- V. When are the *special times* and *seasons* wherein this gathering to Christ does, or shall take place.
- VI. Why, or for what *reasons* this gathering shall be to him; why the *people*, and why to *Shiloh*. And then,
- VII. Shut up all with some *inferences* from the whole.

I. The *first* thing propos'd was, to offer some *remarks* with respect to the *nature* of this gathering, especially these four.

1. You may remark, that there are *several sorts* of gatherings, that we would distinguish. There is an *outward corporeal* gathering, and an *inward spiritual* gathering: outward gatherings are not here especially intended. It is true, that a flocking to ordinances is very pleasant, as it was to the psalmist, when he said *I was glad, when they said, Come let us go up to the house of the Lord*; and when that word is accomplish'd, Isa. ii. 3.

*Many*

Many people shall go and say, *Come let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* But many gather about a tent, and gather together to ordinances, that never are gathered to Shiloh. Some like the Athenians, gather to ordinances, to hear if the minister will tell them any news : some, like the Pharisees, watch for a word to carp at, and play the part of the devil in accusing of the brethren : some, like the Jews seek after the law, and legal duties, that they may establish their own righteousness ; some, like the Greeks, seek after wisdom and eloquence, and flowers of rhetoric : some gather only to gaze, and others to muse ; and perhaps they muse upon their market, their journey, their dinner, their supper, their diversion ; and may be the sermon is done before they know well where they are : some gather to hear, but so soon as the minister begins, they fall asleep, as though they had been brought in for dead corpses, and the minister were preaching their funeral-sermon ; some gather to ordinances and hear : but they hear, and scorn ; they hear, and mock ; they hear, and despise. May we not say with Christ, *What went ye out to the wilderness for to SEE ?* rather than, *What went ye out to HEAR ?* For people remember that which they see, but forget all that they hear ; which says, that they came rather to see than to hear. Some indeed will mind what they think to the minister's reproach, or what will afford matter for their own diversion ; but with respect to the main thing, they depart from sermons with their hearts like a bottomless purse, that can hold no money ; and so they go home without gathering any fruits that fall from the tree of life, which should be the greatest design of their gathering together. Nay, as Satan pointed Adam to another tree, lest he should go to the tree of life ; so he points to some other business, and to some other exercise and study : hence they go home, saying, *The minister hath not an edifying gift ;* says another, *I cannot profit by him ;* says another, *He does not keep his text ;* says a fourth, *He preached too long, and I cannot mind all ;* as if the ground should

complain of the seed, which yet will not receive the seed. Few gather to ordinances, or attend upon the word, as the star, that should lead them to Christ, as the ladder that should mount them to heaven; as the manna that should refresh their souls.— Many gatherings of the people consist only in presenting their bodies like dead carcases before the Lord; *They worship God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips; but their heart is far removed from him.* The special gatherings here intended, is an *inward* and *spiritual gathering*. The gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, is the gathering of souls to Christ, a gathering of hearts a gathering of affections to him. An outward gathering, like bodily exercise, profits little, where there is no spiritual gathering and holy approach to a God in Christ; and it is a pity, where there is a great congregation of people, there should be but a small aggregation to Christ; while the soul comes not along with the body to his ordinances. O that only is a blessed gathering, when God gathers souls to himself, and Christ gathers hearts to himself! *Blessed is the man whom thou chooshest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple,* Psal. lxxv. 4. And indeed there will be no gathering to *Shiloh* here, if God himself do not cause us to approach.—Hence as you are to distinguish betwixt a corporal and spiritual gathering, that you may not think it enough when you bring only your bodies before the Lord, while yet you leave your hearts behind you, and the desire of your soul is not to his name; so you are to distinguish betwixt a *passive* and *active* gathering: as a bodily-gathering is unprofitable, where there is no soul-gathering; so active gathering to *Shiloh* is impossible without a passive gathering. That there shall be an active gathering to Christ, is as certain as the firm decree of heaven; John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me;* but it is as certain, that there can be no active, without a passive gathering; ver. 44. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* Both these

these are expressed by the spouse in one word, *Draw me, we will run after thee.* The passive gathering is God's drawing sinners to Christ, the active gathering is their running to him when drawn. This is such a necessary distinction, that it must be taken along with the whole of our discourse upon this subject; wherein we must consider this gathering sometimes in an active and sometimes in a passive sense, because the one cannot be without the other. When irresistible power is put forth, there must be a gathering, Psal. cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power:* and where there is such a gathering it is a fruit of that exerting of divine power in its irresistible efficacy.—Hence I offer,

2. A *second* remark, that in this gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, there are *certain gatherers* employed. The great and glorious gatherer is God himself, when he draws sinners to himself with the cords of love and bands of a man; that is, in a powerful irresistible manner; and yet not violenting the will, as Arminians dream; but with loving and rational arguments, conquering, carrying, captivating, and overpowering the whole soul. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are employed in this gathering-work: it is done by the *care* of the Father, by the *pains* of the Son, and by the *power* of the Holy Ghost: it is done by the *motion* of the Father, by the *mediation* of the Son, and by the *might* of the eternal Spirit. God the Father is the gatherer; he is said to *gather into one all things by Christ*, Eph. i. 10. Christ himself, to whom the gathering is also the gatherer, John xi. 52. where it is said of him, that he *would gather together into one, the children of God that were scattered abroad.* And that the Holy Ghost is the immediate gatherer, is plain, in that as the Father sends the Son to gather, so the Son sends the Spirit to gather the people to him: hence the Spirit is said to *reveal Christ, to testify of Christ, to glorify Christ,* to invite the people to Christ, Rev. xxii. 17. *The Spirit and the Bride say, Come:* And he not only says it externally to the ear by his word; but internally to the soul, by his common motions; and efficaciously to the heart,

heart, by his irresistible operation; like that word by which the world was made, when God said, *Let there be light, and there was light*; so, when the Spirit says, *Let there be faith, there is faith*. Hence, he that is called *the Spirit of faith*, 2 Cor. iv. 13. is also *the Spirit of power*, 2 Tim. i. 7. For he both begins and carries on the work of faith with power, and so powerfully draws sinners to Christ, and effectually gathers the people to *Shiloh*. The principal gatherers then are the blessed persons of the glorious Trinity: the Father does it, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost. This adorable three-in-one work to each other's hand.—There are subordinate gatherers, which God does employ; particularly ministers of the gospel, whose greatest work lies in winning souls, and gathering people to Christ; therefore called, *workers together with God*, 2 Cor. vi. 1. Their principal business is to found the trumpet, and gather the people to *Shiloh*: they are to preach Christ, to proclaim Christ, to offer Christ, to invite sinners to Christ, and that is all they can do. They may cast down the gospel-net, but they will take nothing, unless the Lord himself gather in the fish; *Except the Lord build the city, the builders build in vain*. The gospel is then the *power of God to salvation*; that is, his organical power, the instrument of his power, when it is the ministration of the Spirit; *Not by strength, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord*, Seek then, that his power may accompany the word, otherwise it will not be a gathering word.—Now, as ministers are the subordinate gatherers under Heaven's influence by office; so may private Christians, whose souls are gathered to Christ: they may be gatherers in their station, not indeed by office ministerially and authoritatively, but by private admonition and counsel charitatively. Thus parents, by their precept and example, may be the instruments of gathering their children to Christ; masters, their servants; and private Christians, their neighbours. And happy these that through grace are thus employed, whether as ministers or Christians! for they are wise, *He that winneth souls is wise*. And they that be wise, Dan. xii. 3. or, as it may be read, *they that*

that be TEACHERS, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament : and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. But then again,

3. The *third* remark I offer is, that there are *certain airths*, or particular quarters from whence the gathering of the people is made. Whence are they gathered, may you say ? Why, this is to be considered both in point of *place*, and in point of *state*.

1<sup>st</sup>, In point of *place*. Whence is the gathering to *Shiloh*, and from what airth ? Why, even from every airth ; *They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God*, Luke xiii. 29. This gathering to *Shiloh*, considered even literally and extensively, will be from all the four quarters, and from all the four corners of the earth ; from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. Hence it is said of Christ's dominion, Psal. lxxiii. 8. that he shall have it *from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth* : and not only the large continent, but the *little isles* are included, ver. 10, 11. *The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts : yea, all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him.* You have all the four airths mentioned, Isaiah xliii. 5, 6. *I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west ; and will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back : bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.* While the isles and ends of the earth are so much mentioned, even the outmost ends of the earth, to be Christ's possession ; we may therein see and wonder at the grace of God, that in his council of old, concerning the gathering of the people to *Shiloh* he had a view to our remote northern isles among the rest ; even Britain and Ireland, Scotland and Zetland. When God will count the people that were gathered to *Shiloh*, it will be said of poor remote Scotland, *This man and that man was born there* ; and, O that the number were increased, and a greater gathering-time would come than ever hath been ! O for a gathering of power, a day of power ! However, it is from all airths that the

gathering of the people shall be to Christ : it is not confined to one place ; to him shall the gathering be, from Asia in the east, and from America in the west, from Africa in the south, and from Europe in the north, not forgetting the European isles in the midst of the northern seas.

2dly, In point of *state*. Whence is the gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, and from what airth ? from what state and condition are they to be gathered ? Here let me allude to the four elements, water, fire, earth, and air, out of which they are gathered,

(1.) Some are gathered as it were out of the *water*, and fished out of the *flood* ; and hence, as ministers in gathering souls, are called, *Fishers of men*, and the gospel, the *fish-net cast into the sea for gathering of every kind*, Matth. xiii. 47. ; so they are gathered out of the sea of a troublesome tempestuous world, out of the floods of sin and misery, where they are swimming. When the Lord gathers people to himself, he must fish them, and gather them out of many waters and great depths, even out of the depth of security, out of the depth of sensuality, where they are swimming pleasantly, yet dangerously, ready to swim in to the dead sea of everlasting destruction. Nothing but the hand of God could reach to the bottom of the depth whence the Lord does gather his elect.

(2) Some are gathered as it were out of the *fire* : Zech iii. 2. *Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ?* There is the fire of lust and lewdness that some are burning in ; *For wickedness burns as the fire*, Isa. ix. 18. and to be gathered out of the Torrid Zone, and brought to a temperate climate, is a great matter. Out of this fire they must be gathered, that are gathered unto *Shiloh*. There is the fire of God's wrath, which is a *consuming fire*, wherein they are in utmost danger of being consumed for ever ; but when the Lord gathers the people, he puts his hand, as it were, into the midst of the fire, and *plucks them as brands out of the burning*. Again,

(3.) They are gathered out of the *earth* ; out of the dust and dung of the earth. Some are groveling



on the earth, and licking the dust like serpents, having their hearts and affections clogged with the clay, in respect of their worldly-mindedness, earthly dispositions, and covetousness, while the heart is so set upon earthly things, that they are lost, and hid among the clay, and covered with the dust; and from thence they must be gathered; *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; and lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners,* Isa. lvii. 17, 18. O the kindness of God, in gathering souls out of such a dismal situation! Yea, some are not only covered with the dust, but lying among the dung of this earth, sticking in the miry clay, and wallowing in all the gross abominations and pollutions of the world, such as these mentioned, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.; yet out of the very dung does he gather the people to *Shiloh*; *Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.* He gathers his sheep out of the most dirty mire. Let none presume; for he is sovereign, and lets some stick and perish in the mire: let none despair; for he is merciful, and draws out some from the very dung. When Antigonus, a king, past by a ditch, into which a sheep was fallen, the historian says, he pulled it out, though foul and dirty, with his own hand; for which he was exceedingly beloved, and commended by his subjects.—But behold the king of Israel is yet kinder: he not only stoops to filthy ditches of sin, into which his sheep are fallen, and *gathers them with his arm, but lays them in his bosom,* Isa. xl. 11. that he may warm them with his heart-love, and wash them with his heart-blood. Again,

4. They are gathered out of the *air*, in a manner; while the prince of the power of the air is flying away with them, they are gathered out of his claws. Some that are Satan's captives, they are flying in the air, as it were, with the wings of pride and vanity, *exalting themselves above all that is called God.* They learn of Lucifer to be proud and lofty; looking down upon

others, as if they were the dregs and offscourings of the earth: when God gathers any such, he hath them to bring down from lofty elements, and airy vanities, that he may humble them under his mighty hand, and make them stoop to *Shiloh*. Others are, as it were, building castles in the air: such are these, who *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 3. This is a high and lofty building; but it is like a castle in the air, having no foundation, but the high and airy imagination of these that build it; which the Lord will bring down, when he gathers them out of their heights and altitudes, as you see he does, 2 Cor. x. 5. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*—There you see high things, high thoughts, high imaginations, all high and airy buildings exalted against Christ, and his righteousness; yea, *strong holds*, such as nothing but the mighty power of God can pull down: such are all the false hopes, and legal dreams of poor sinners. They hope they will mend before they die; they will turn a new leaf, and live a new life, and so pay their own debt, and do their own business themselves: thus they build in the air a *refuge of lies, which the hail must sweep away*. And indeed God raises a storm in the air, that he may gather his remnant from thence. As in a dangerous storm, the mariner will cast silk and sattin over board, and the most valuable things, rather than perish; even so God raises a storm of conviction in the man's conscience, that threatens everlasting shipwreck, that he may cast away his confidence, and legal righteousness; that *what things were gain to him, these he may count loss for Christ.*—Thus, I say, there are some airts from whence they are gathered. And this leads me to,

4. A *fourth* remark, *viz.* that there are several things *supposed* and *imported* in this gathering of the people to *Shiloh*. To mention some of these,

(I.) It supposes *straying*, and imports *conversion*. It supposes STRAYING; and indeed the natural state is a straying and wandering state. The man is wandering away from God, wandering from his commandments, wandering in a wilderness, wandering he knows not where away; for the devil hoodwinks him; *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*: and so they wander in the dark; in the darkness of ignorance, unbelief, error, delusion, and confusion; and yet, in the darkness of deep security, never imagining but that they are in the right enough way, though it be the high way to hell, thinking that God is altogether like unto themselves, and approves their way, and allows them in all these things, wherein they allow themselves.—Hence it is impossible to bring them off from their carnal thoughts, and wicked ways, where they are wandering, unless God himself gather them by his convincing grace.—This gathering imports CONVERSION, wherein God says with power (as he made the world with an omnipotent LET IT BE, so here,) *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, Isaiah lv. 7, 8.* But this power of God, whereby he converts sinners, rides in the chariot of grace, saying, as it follows, *I will have mercy on him; I will abundantly pardon.* And here is the cord of love and mercy, with which he draws. The gospel of grace is the power of God to salvation, the power of God to conversion; without the faith and apprehension of this mercy, there is no gospel repenting, nor return, no effectual conversion; *Let him return, for I will abundantly pardon.* There is the motive, which must be viewed, before any can be moved thereby. But when this mercy of God in Christ, in multiplying pardon where sin hath been multiplied, is once viewed, then the soul is melted and moved. What! is there mercy for the like of me? Pardon for the like of me? And abundant pardon, where sin hath abounded? O! will I, for great sins, get great pardons, and for a multitude of sins, a multitude of pardons? Will the

moun-

mountains of mercy overtop and cover all the mountains of my sins? O! says God this, even to wicked me? This makes all my bowels melt, and all my bones to say, *Who is like unto the Lord?* Thus he gathers in conversion, saying, Wicked man, turn; for I will abundantly pardon: and, O that is a powerful *FOR*; like a loadstone, that hath a drawing virtue upon the hard steel; so will this draw the hard heart, and dissolve it.—This *for* is backed with another, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways*; q. d. With respect to the proud secure sinner, do you think that I am altogether like unto yourself, and that I approve of your ways, as if they were my ways, and your thoughts, as if they were my thoughts? Because you allow yourself in that way, you think I allow you also; and your thought is, that *you shall have peace, though you walk after the imagination of your own heart: nay, my thoughts are not your thoughts.*—Or, with respect to the *self-righteous* sinner, what are your thoughts? You think that your way is a very good way, and so that it is God's way: and you think that God will accept of you, because you say you do your best, and do as well as you can, and no-body can impeach you, or say black is your eye: you are a good neighbour; you are honest in your dealings: and so you think you are every way right; and that God thinks as well of you, as you do of yourself; and that his thoughts are your thoughts, and that your way that you are walking in is his way: Nay, nay, says he; *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither my ways your ways; for as the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts and ways.* O do not measure God's thoughts and ways by your sinful or selfish thoughts and ways: if you would not run into a mistake, man, woman, look to the clouds, and see how far they are above the earth; yea, look to the heavens, and see how far they are above the clouds; yea, look to the God that made the heavens, and see how far he is exalted above the heavens: and if the heavens be so far above you, that you cannot reach them, or measure them; O how far

is God above you, that you should attempt to measure his thoughts and ways by yours!—Or, again, with respect to the *humbled* sinner, that is like to be moved and melted with the view of mercy, but yet is tempted to doubt and deny it, saying, O my thoughts are, that God will never have mercy on the like of me, such a God-provoking sinner; and I fear God's thoughts are the same with mine: Nay, *My thoughts are not your thoughts*, says God; look to the heavens, man; look to the heavens, woman; look to the heavens, lass; look to the heavens, lad; for as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways of grace, and thoughts of mercy, above your thoughts and ways: your thoughts are, that I have no way to shew mercy on you; and therefore, that my thoughts are to ruin and destroy you; but I have found a ransom, through which my mercy does make way, and vent to the credit of justice; therefore, *My thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil*. Judge not my thoughts then by the standard of yours, but rather make the height of the heavens above the earth to be the standard, whereby to judge the height of my mercy, for overtopping all your sins with abundant pardon; therefore turn: here is the *for*, the threefold *for*, or motive, upon which turning, or conversion, is urged.—This gathering, I say, supposes straying, and imports conversion.

(2.) It *supposes* SCATTERING, and imports CONVENTION; it is a gathering together into one, the children of God that were scattered abroad, John xi. 52. The natural state is a scattered state; and God's remnant whom he hath a mind to gather, are not only scattered here and there thro' the earth, but before the Lord gather them, they are like dead and dry bones scattered about the grave's mouth, Psal. cxli. 7. They are dead in trespasses and sins: dead spiritually, under the power of sin: dead legally, under the sentence of death and damnation: and not only DEAD bones, but DRY bones; no sap of grace or goodness in them; and not only so, but SCATTERED bones; *How shall these dry bones live, or these scattered bones be gathered together?* You see this repre-

represented, Ezek. xxxvii. 1,—10. The Spirit of life must come, and gather together the bones and make them live : and then, and not till then, are the scattered souls convened, and gathered to Christ. Then the scattered thoughts, that were scattered among the stuff of the world, are gathered to Christ ; *every thought being brought in captivity to the obedience of Christ.* Then the scattered affections, that were lost among *the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,* are gathered and convened together unto Christ, as the proper centre. O then, there is a convention of hearts, that were scattered among other objects ; *My son, give me thy heart.* Then there is a convention of desires, to him is the *desire of all nations* ; a convention of delights, to him who is the delight of God and angels. Instead of the desires of the flesh, and the delights of sense, the *desire of their souls comes to be towards him, and the remembrance of his name,* saying, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee.* Oh ? are there not here dead and dry bones scattered about the mouth of the grave ? dead and dry hearts and affections scattered about the mouth of hell ? Oh ! what need of a gathering ?

(3.) It *supposes* REJECTION, and *imports* RECEPTION. The natural state is a state, wherein the man is rejected of God ; he hath forsaken God, and God hath forsaken him. But when God gathers the people to Shiloh, he receives them into favour ; Isa. liv. 7. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee ; that is, I will love thee freely, and receive thee graciously.*

(4.) It *supposes* SEPARATION, and *imports* UNION. The natural state is a state of separation from God, wherein the man is like the prodigal, in a far country ; far from God, and far from Christ, and far from grace : *Aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,* Eph. ii. 22. There is an infinite moral distance, as well as natural distance, betwixt God and them. The wall of separation is such, as none but  
 God

God can pull down ; which he must do, when he gathers the people to Shiloh : and hence, in gathering sinners, he not only *preaches peace to them that are afar off*, but in Christ Jesus, they that *were afar off*, are *made nigh by the blood of Christ* : they that were separate from God, and without a head, since the first Adam fell, are gathered together to God, under a new head, the second Adam, and unite to him : it is called, *A gathering together into one, all things in Christ*, Eph. i. 10. They are thus unite to God, and one among themselves in Christ. This union is by the bond of the holy Spirit, and instrumentally of saving faith : and the gathered soul becomes one building with Christ, whereof Christ is the foundation ; one temple, one body, one Spirit ; *He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit*.

(5.) It *supposes* REBELLION, and *imports* SUBJECTION, RECONCILIATION, and OBEDIENCE.—The natural state is a state of rebellion, alienation, and enmity. Before people are gathered to Shiloh, they are gathered under the standard of the devil, and carrying on a rebellion against heaven ; every man and woman is a rebel : *The carnal mind is enmity against God* : every thought of every man is a rebel against God ; *Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and only evil continually*. Now, when God gathers people, he brings them into subjection to his Son, as they are unite to him as their Head, so they are subject to him as their King. This subjection and obedience is imported in the original word, as I told in the explication. The gathered people are brought to say, *Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us ; but now, by thee only will we make mention of thy name*. As the Jews said, *We have no king but Cæsar* : so they are brought to say, *We have no king but Shiloh ; no lord but the Lord Jesus*. Rebellion is turned to subjection and obedience ; and their alienation, to amity and love.

(6.) In a word, it *supposes* an AMISSION, or LOSING, and *imports* RESTORATION and RECOVERY. The natural state is a lost state ; we are lost in the rubbish of the fall of Adam. We are lost *privately*, in that we are not what we were, in a state of innocence and uprightness.

nor in a state of friendship and fellowship with God, nor in a state of power, strength and ability to do God's will; we have forfeit all this by our sin and fall; *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii. 25. We are *positively*, in regard we are that which we should not be, even filthy sinners, and guilty criminals; filthy, and so are *children of disobedience*, Eph. ii. 3.; guilty, and so are called, *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. Our bodies and all their members, are corrupted, which is called, *the filthiness of the flesh*; our souls, and all their faculties are corrupted, this is *the filthiness of the spirit*: being filthy and guilty sinners, we are positively lost. —We are lost *judicially*, as being under a sentence of death, and under the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 10. The law saith, *The soul that sinneth shall die*. —We are lost *meritoriously*, in that our sins deserve death, which is the *wages of sin*, Rom. vi. 23. And no wonder, for it is a violation of God's holy, just, and good law, Rom. vii. 12. It is a contrariety and contradiction to God's holy, just, and good nature, Hab. i. 13. In a word, we are lost in point of power and ability to save and recover ourselves: lost as to all capacity in the creature to help us: *We are by nature without strength*, Rom. v. 6. We are not *subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. viii. 7. We cannot *know or discern the things of God*: yea, they are *foolishness to the natural man*, 1 Cor. ii. 14.; far less can we by any atonement satisfy God for our offences; therefore, *The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever*. —Thus we are every way lost.

Now, as this is the lost state supposed, so this gathering of lost souls, imports *the Son of man his coming to seek and save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. While yet the sinner is stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, unwilling to be saved and gathered, like these, Mat. xxiii. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, but ye would not!* He makes inquiry after them by his word, by his rod, by his Spirit, saying, as to Adam, when he made inquiry after him, *Adam, where art thou?* Man, woman, where art thou hiding thyself? I am come to seek, to save, and gather  

you.



you. And as he seeks them out by his word, so he finds them out by his Spirit, and restores them to a state of salvation. Thus he gathers them preparatively by the law, formally and immediately by the gospel, meritoriously by his blood, procuratively by his intercession, occasionally by his providence, and effectually by his Spirit; drawing them with grace, covering them with his righteousness, quickening, sanctifying and sealing them to the day of redemption. But how he gathers, may come to be more particularly shown upon the fourth head. Only so much for the remarks I promised concerning the *nature* and *import* of his gathering.

II. The *second* general head proposed, was, To shew who are *the people* of whom it is said, the gathering of the people shall be to him. Why, in general, by the people you are to understand the Gentiles, Romans xv. 11.; and therefore here is a door of faith open to us, to gather in by it unto *Shiloh*: for the promise is to us, whose forefathers were as black and blinded pagans as any in the world; *To us is the word of this salvation sent*, that the gathering of the people should be to *Shiloh*. And here is encouragement to us to gather in to him by faith; here is a foundation of faith for all the people that hear this gospel; God says, *The gathering of the people shall be to Christ, the Messias*, inasmuch that whoever of all the people shall be persuaded to gather in under his wings, they shall be welcomed to him, and saved by him. Why, says one; it may be I am none of the people here intended, none of the elect that shall be effectually gathered; and therefore my attempting to come to him may be vain. In answer hereunto, you would consider, that there are two distinct questions here, namely, 1. Whom he designs in this *decree*? 2. Whom he defines in his *word* to be the persons that shall gather? And we would consider which of these especially is proposed in the gospel for our encouragement in gathering unto *Shiloh*.

As to the *first*, *Whom he designs in his DECREE to be gathered?* These are indeed the *elect*, who are said to

be chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Ephes. i. 4. They are said to be *predestinate*; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called, Romans viii. 30. They are said to be given to Christ; and, *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me*, John vi. 37.; and, *All that are ordained to eternal life shall believe*, Acts xiii. 48. The election shall obtain, Rom. xi. 7.—And indeed, if God had not, in his eternal purpose, designed to gather some, none at all would be gathered. Now, I think it is observable, that in all these places, where God's design of gathering the elect to him is mentioned, it is readily brought in either as an encouragement to them that are gathered, that they may have the comfort of their election from eternity: or as an encouragement to ministers that are gatherers, that they may know their labour shall not be without success; or else as a check and blow to these that are final rejecters of Christ, and refuse to be gathered to him; but never is it brought in for a discouragement to any people in the world to gather unto *Shiloh*; hence, to the Jews, that obstinately and finally rejected Christ, he says, John vi. 36, 37. *Ye will not come*; but know to your confusion, that *all that the Father hath given me, shall come*. But, that none may be hereupon discouraged, he says, *Whosoever comes, he will in no wise cast out*. Where, as he shuts the door upon final rejecters; so he opens the door to all comers, that they may flock into him; and the rather because it is impossible they can know their election of God, till once they come and gather to Christ. It is devilish reasoning therefore to say, I know not if I be an elect, and therefore I need not come to Christ; for it is divine reasoning rather to say, I know not my election, therefore I will come unto him that I may know it, since it cannot possibly be known otherwise. Election is in Christ, Ephes. i. 4. *We are chosen in him*; and therefore out of Christ it cannot be seen. But, if I be not elected, say you, I will not get grace to come. Indeed if you have no will to come, you have no grace to come; and if you have no will to come, whom can you blame for your enmity but yourselves, that will not

come

to Christ? Will you complain you have not grace to come, and yet reject the gospel of grace, that only can make you willing! O then *Why will you die, O house of Israel?* But, Sir, is it not true, that all will not be gathered: and therefore perhaps not me? Well, but is it not as true, that many shall be gathered; and therefore why not you? Is there any irritant clause in the gospel, excluding you from gathering to *Shiloh* among the rest? Non-election can be no hinderance to you, if a lying devil and deceitful heart do not make it so; for it is a secret you are not concerned with: it is a *secret thing that belongs to God*, Deut. xxix. 29. Your business is to notice what belongs to you, namely, what warrant you have from the word for your gathering unto *Shiloh*. When the gospel-call is among your hands, it belongs not to you to demur upon that question, *Whom he designs in his decree?*

But it belongs to you to answer to your name in the *second* question, namely, *Whom he designs in his word to be the persons that should gather, and shall be gathered to Shiloh?* And that all may press themselves in upon him, without fear of presuming when they are gathering to him, they are defined by the most general terms, namely, **THE PEOPLE**; *To him shall the gathering of THE PEOPLE be.* And that none may have any reason to think that they are cast out, but that all and every one may be encouraged to venture their perishing souls upon Christ, I shall shew what sort of people are here intended.

1. It is a gathering of *pagan* people and *heathens* that is here meant; *Shiloh shall come, and the gathering of the people to him*: accordingly Christ came, that the Gentiles might be gathered, and might glorify God for his mercy; he came to the Jews for the good of the Gentiles: see Rom. xv. 8,—12. And now, for accomplishing of these promises, he allows us to preach among you Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ*. This is a part of *the mystery of godliness*, Christ preached among the Gentiles, 1 Tim. iii. 16. It was a mystery to the Jews and primitive Christians, when Christ was first preached among the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 17, 18. Why,  
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the Gentiles were the uncircumcision; they were abominable outcasts, whose very entering into the temple was enough to pollute it. They were strangers and aliens; but now God declares in the gospel, that he will justify the *uncircumcision through faith*, Rom. iii.

30. And the *scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen thro' faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed*, Gal. iii. 18; The Gentiles here meant were called *dogs*, and the Jews were called the *children*; hence said Christ to the woman of Canaan, when trying her, *It is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it to dogs. Without are dogs*, Rev. xxii. 15.; but such dogs have been gathered, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. *Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.*—Thus the people that may, and shall be gathered are defined, they are *Gentiles, uncircumcised, heathens, dogs*; and if that be a description of you, man, woman: then the promise concerns you, and you are called to embrace it with application.

2. It is a gathering of *graceless* and *ungodly* people that is here designed. Though he makes them gracious and godly when once he hath gathered them; yet, before they be gathered, and while he is seeking to gather them to himself, they are *graceless* and *ungodly*; *I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Mark ii. 17. And, indeed, if he would except sinners, he would except all mankind, and call none at all; for, *All have sinned*: therefore say not, you are a sinner, and therefore cannot be of that number to whom this word of grace belongs; for if you be a sinful creature of Adam's family, we are charged to hold out the word of salvation to you; *Go preach the gospel to every creature*, Mark xvi. 15.

3. It is a gathering of the most *sinful* people that ever were, that is here intended.—Christ, say you, may gather sinners, but none so *gross* as me: therefore I tell you, that even the *grossest* of sinners are included in this *gathering*: hence the stout-hearted people are encouraged to come to him; *Hearken, ye stout-hearted,*

*hearted, and far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness; and my salvation shall not tarry, Isaiah xlv. 12, 13. Hearken to his reasoning, Isaiah i. 18. Tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.—* Why says he thus, but that the *greatest* and most guilty sinner may not be discouraged from gathering about the throne of infinite grace? Hence neither the cruel massacres and cursed forcery of Manasseh, nor the blasphemy and persecution of Paul, did exclude them from *obtaining mercy* and being gathered to Shiloh: yea, the Jews, who *murdered the Lord of glory*, see them both called and converted, Acts ii. 14.

4. It is a gathering of *diseased* people that is here meant, Mark ii. 17. When Shiloh comes, it is to *gather* the sick and diseased about him to heal them; *They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick: multitudes gathered about him to touch him; and as many as touched him, were made whole.* All that are sick are called to come to him, and all that want the physician. We need not understand it of these that are sensibly sick, and see their need, such only will indeed come: but it is true without a figure, *That all that are really sick, and stand in need of a physician, ought to come.* Now, what is your disease, man, woman? For the physician is come here to gather all diseased persons about his hand, that he may get the glory of healing them. Is darkness and ignorance your disease? Behold, Shiloh is come to be a *light to lighten the Gentiles.* Is deadness your disease? Behold, *He is come to give life, and to give it more abundantly.* Is blindness your disease? *He is come to open the eyes of the blind.* Is hardness of heart your disease? *He is come to take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh.—* Whatever be the disease, let the gathering of diseased people be to him. If your disease be unbelief, so as you cannot for your life elicit one act of faith; he hath the Spirit of faith to give for curing of that. If your disease be impenitency, so as you cannot repent of one sin; he hath the Spirit of repentance to give for curing of that. If your disease be enmity and hatred against God and  
Christ;

Christ ; he hath the Spirit of love to give for curing that. If your disease be carnality, so as your thoughts and affections are carnal and fleshly ; he hath the Spirit of holiness to give for curing that. If your disease be weakness, that you cannot think, you cannot act, you cannot pray ; he hath the Spirit of power to give for curing that. If your disease be error and delusion, as well as dimness and confusion ; he hath the Spirit of truth to give, to lead you into all truth. If your disease be security, fearing nothing, but sleeping in the arms of the devil, destitute of all grace, filled with all atheism and blasphemy, and such unconcernedness and indifference, that no arguments in the world can awaken you ; Behold, Shiloh is come, who is the *resurrection and the life*, having the Spirit of all grace to give, Isa. xlii. 1. *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* There is one disease called the unpardonable sin, which the man that is under would never so much as wish to be cured of ; abstracting from that, I know no disease excluded out of the Mediator's commission. Whatever be the disease then, of which you would wish and need to be cured, if you be among the number of diseased people, that is the people of which the gathering must be to Shiloh.

5. It is a gathering of *distracted* people and *mad* fools. This is set forth in the parable of the prodigal, who played the fool and madman, till he came to himself, and came home to his father, who, notwithstanding of his former madness and folly, kindly received and entertained him, Luke xv. 17,—24. What is all the people in the world but a company of mad fools, and besides themselves ; feeding upon swines husks, sensual pleasures, and lying vanities ? yet of such people is the gathering to Shiloh. Therefore, O Sinner, do not exclude yourself from the benefits of this promise, tho' you have been carrying like one that hath been out of his wits all your days.—Some in the world are called wits, and think themselves so, who yet are mad and out of their wits, so long as they do not think of gather-

gathering to Shiloh, *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ; and who of God is made unto us wisdom.*

6. It is a gathering of *imprisoned* people that is here meant : for Shiloh is come to *proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*, Isa. lvi. 1. Now, what sort of a prison are you in, man? This word of salvation is to you ; *Turn ye to your strong holds, ye prisoners of hope*, Zech ix. 12. The people that are gathered to Shiloh, are designed *prisoners* ; and if a *prisoner* be your name and designation be it ever such a deep, dark, and dreadful prison, here is a door of hope for you. Is your prison-door barred and bolted, so as no man or angel can open? Behold, he proclaims *the opening of the prison to them that are bound*. When he in the gospel-proclamation is saying, *Open prison-doors, open, open ; O take hold of his strength, and invite his power to be put forth, and you shall find all the bands shall be broken in pieces*. To give him employment to open your prison, is one of the ways of gathering to him. Do you look upon yourself as a prisoner in the further corner, hidden in the deepest and darkest hole of the prison? Behold the gathering hand of him that can save to the uttermost, can reach to the furthest corner in the prison, and bring you forth, so as your name shall be called, *Sought out, and found out*, Isaiah lxii. 12. But, on this subject, see my notes on Isa. xlii. 6. \*—Now, if the people to be gathered to Shiloh be of that sort, if it be a gathering of pagans, to make them Christians ; a gathering of graceless people, to make them gracious ; a gathering of great sinners, to make them great saints ; a gathering of diseased people, that they may be made whole, a gathering of fools and mad-men, that they may be made wise ; a gathering of prisoners, that they may be made free : if this be the designation of these people of whom the gathering shall be to Shiloh, O then, is your name and designation touched at here! What hinders, but you put in for a share of this gathering

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grace!

\* See Vol. I. Sermon IV. intitled, *Christ the People's Covenant*, pag. 168.

grace! By what clause are you excluded, if you be one of the people here mentioned, man, woman? And why will you exclude yourselves from coming to Christ? The gospel excludes you not, for it names you in a manner; and you should answer to your name, saying, *Lord, here I am*: I find I am mentioned among these of whom the gathering shall be to Shiloh; therefore, behold I come to him; let my soul, and all its faculties be centred on him.

But, in case you think that I have missed your name, I must tell you, that all that are called by the gospel of Christ are allowed to gather under his wings; and it is by the free universal call given to all the people to whom the gospel comes; it is by this, that God gathers all his chosen into Christ; and the promise, given forth indefinitely to all the people, is a ground of encouragement to them all to come to Shiloh by faith; therefore, says the apostle to them whom he was calling to come to Christ, whom they had crucified, Acts ii. 39. *The promise is to you, and to your children; and to all them that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.* And here, as all that are afar off are called, so more particularly there are two sorts of people called, that some do not dream to be so, namely, 1. They that exclude themselves. 2. They that are excluded by men, they are included in the call.

(1.) They that *exclude themselves*; and you will find, they are most particularly called, who are most ready to exclude themselves.—They that are weary and heavy laden, under a sense of sin and apprehension of God's wrath, are ready to exclude themselves; therefore they are particularly called; *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 28. I do not confine the sense of these words indeed to the humbled and convinced; for I think that even these that are wearying themselves in pursuing vanities, and living contentedly under a heavy load of sin and guilt, or wearying themselves with a load of legal and unprofitable service, are called also by that text to come to Christ, in whom alone they can find that rest and satisfaction which they are vainly seeking



seeking in other things. Now, tho' I judge it would straiten the gospel-call there, to confine it only to the first sense; yet I reckon the first to be so much imported, that seeing such persons as find a load of sin and wrath upon them, are readiest to exclude themselves, therefore they are expressly called. Thus again, they that see themselves destitute of all good qualifications, have no money nor money-worth; nothing but poverty, and want, and worthlessness: these are ready to exclude themselves, as being broken and lost; therefore they are particularly encouraged, as Ezek. xxxiv. 16.—Again,

(2.) They that are *excluded by men*; yea, whom ministers are ready to exclude, yet the call reaches them. Men are ready to exclude from the call of the gospel, such as *refuse* the call, and pour contempt upon it, *viz.* Mockers and scorners; yet we find such are called, Proverbs i. 22, 23.—Men are ready to exclude from the call of the gospel, or the invitation to come, and gather unto Shiloh, such are not sensible of the want of him, and think themselves happy enough without them.—Men exclude *unsensible* sinners, that have no thirsty desire after Christ, but are satisfying themselves with other things: yet these are particularly called, as you may see in these two passages, Isa. lv. 1, 2. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye; buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Now, you may notice, that the thirsting here is no desirable quality, it was a *thirsting* for that which did *not satisfy*, and a *labouring* for that which was *not bread*; and yet they are invited to come to him, as one that hath a variety of supply; water, to refresh; wine, to cherish; milk, to nourish; and all offered freely; *Without money, and without price*: so that here, even these that are thirsting after their lusts, and after the world, and unsatisfying vanities, are called. See also, Revel. iii. 18.

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed ; and eye-salve, that thou mayest see.* But who are they that are thus called ? Even these, that in the preceding verse, said they were *rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing* ; even these that had no sense of their need of Christ : true, these that do not see their need will not come ; but whether they see it or not, they are called and obliged to come.—

Now, men are ready to exclude from the call these that are *unhumbled, unsensible* sinners, that are not convinced of their sin and misery ; but because God's free and gracious call can effectually work upon unsensible, stupid, brutish sinners, as well as upon the objects that we reckon most prepared ; therefore sinners want of sense, and due conviction, is brought in as a reason why they are called to come to Christ : *I counsel thee to buy of me tried gold, white raiment, eye-salve* : why, because thou sayest, *I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.*—Let none think then, because they do not see their wretched and undone state without Christ, therefore they are not concerned with his call : nay, upon that very account you are concerned, says the Spirit of God ; and you may object what you will, but you will not get it put by you. Shift this call as you will, it will rise up in judgment against you, if you do not answer it. If you are an unsensible sinner, not knowing that you are *poor and miserable*, thinking that you are *rich enough already*, and does not see that you are *wretched, blind, and naked*, you have the more need to come to Christ, that he may give you eye-salve, that you may see your misery without him, and your remedy in him.—Thus we are warranted to open the mouth of the gospel-net : and I hope, by this time, you may see, that you are all concerned with this call. And, what do you think we intend by this universal call ? Why, there is one of two things will follow ; either, to the glory of God's justice we get you all left inexcusable ; or, to the glory of his mercy, we get you all gathered into Christ ; and

if there be some of both sorts, then both these ends are reached. But, O to see the last especially, even a *happy gathering of the people to Shiloh!*—Thus you see who are the people, of whom it is said, the gathering shall be to the Messias. None are excluded, all are invited, and warranted to assemble to him; and when God says, *To him shall the gathering of the people be,* all the people should say, AMEN.

III. The *third* thing proposed, was, To shew to *whom* shall the gathering of the people be; or what is the *gathering place*, and where is the gathering to be. Here we may enquire, 1. What *place* there is in Christ for the people to gather? 2. In what *respect* the gathering of the people is to him?

*First*, What *place* there is in Christ for the people to gather to? Christ is the *temple* to which we ought to resort; he is the only *refuge* and *sanctuary* of poor miserable souls; and there is room enough in the temple and sanctuary for all that shall gather into it. In general, the very PERSON of Christ is the gathering place, the meeting place, to which people should gather.—They that come to Christ, are to close with his person, and then they are interested in all his purchase: hence the many calls to come to him, to receive him, to rest on him, to trust in him, to flee to him, and so to God in him; for a God in Christ is the throne of grace, to which the gathering of the people should be, Heb. iv. 16. *Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.* More particularly, there is a six-fold place or chamber in the Lord Jesus, that I shall mention, for the gathering of the people into.

1. There is the chamber of his *righteousness*: no doubt this is one of the chambers spoken of, Song i. 4. *The King hath brought me into his chambers*: and Isaiah xxvi. 20. *Come my people enter into your chambers, and hide yourself, till the indignation be overpast.* Indeed there is no escaping of divine wrath and indignation, but by gathering into this chamber of Christ's righteousness. It is one of the most splendid and well-

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adorned chambers that ever was : for it is hung with the red and white hangings which God himself wrought : I mean, with the fair and white obedience, and the red bloody suffering and satisfaction of the Son of God. Guilty sinners cannot be saved without a law-fulfilling, justice-satisfying righteousness : but when they gather into this chamber they are absolutely safe, and may say, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. *The Lord is well-pleased, for his righteousness sake ; infomuch, that none can lay any thing to their charge*, Rom. viii. 33. They may laugh at all challenges, while they shut their chamber-door upon themselves : they are then chambered, like Noah in the ark, which was pitched within and without, Gen. vi 14. so as no drop of water could come in : so here,

2. There is the chamber of his *name*, for the gathering of the people into ; *The name of the Lord is a strong tower, to which the righteous run, and are safe*, Prov. xviii. 10. He is the strength, as well as the righteousness of Israel : and to this chamber, in which there is everlasting strength, we ought to throng. Many a closet there is in this chamber : if we should mention all his titles, all his offices, all his relations, all his divine attributes and perfections which belong to his name, there would be no end of telling ; but every one, and any one of them, is a fit place for gathering to ; every corner of this chamber is perfumed, infomuch, that none are gathered into it, but they are ravished with the sweet smell thereof ; *Because of the savour of thy good ointment thy name is as ointment poured forth*. His name is, *Christ the Anointed* ; and every name he hath is an anointed name : He is an anointed Jesus, an anointed Surety, an anointed King. And when any of his names are cleared up, and opened, it is like the opening of a box of ointment ; it is like the opening of a chamber-door, full of ravishing perfumes.

3. There is the chamber of his *bosom*, for the gathering of the people into ; *He gathers them with his arms, and carries them in his bosom*, Isa. xl. 11. ; his kind and merciful bosom and bowels, which yern toward sinners

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Jer. xxxi. 20. This is a large chamber, Jam. v. 11. *The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy*; the original is, Πάσπλαρχνῶ, he is of LARGE BOWELS, OR FULL OF BOWELS: there is place enough in these bowels of infinite mercy for sinners to gather in into; and this chamber of his bosom is standing open for all comers. The chamber door of his heart is open, that the gathering of the people may be in to it: and as it is a large chamber, that can contain you all, being as broad and wide as the infinite mercy of a God in Christ; so it is a warm chamber: O it is a warm and heartsome chamber, to get into the heart and bosom of Christ. They that gather in there, will sit under the warm and benign influence of God's love and grace in Christ: their hearts are warmed, and made to burn within them; *Did not our hearts burn within us, when he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32. While he was opening the scripture, he was stirring up the fire of love; they were in the chamber of his warm heart and bosom, and it made them to have a warm heart too: surely, believer, you know what a sweet chamber that is.

4. There is the chamber of *fulness*, to which the gathering of the people should be. This is a chamber that comprehends all the rest of the chambers within it; but because it is so notable and glorious, we name it among the rest. It is the best furnished chamber that ever you heard tell of, for, *all the fulness of the Godhead is in it: It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*, Colos. i. 19.; and ii. 9, 10. *In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him.* To this chamber should all poor beggar and bankrupt sinners, that have lost their stock in the first Adam, gather together, that *out of his fulness they may receive, grace for grace*, John i. 16. In this chamber are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all the treasures of grace and glory, all the treasures of God's perfections, and all the treasures of the Spirit's graces. Your great want is the want of God; and you may find him in this chamber: your next want

is the want of grace; and whatever grace you want, be it faith, repentance, love, or whatever else, it is lying treasured up in this chamber: if you want pardon, purity, happiness, holiness, all the stock of riches that you can imagine, to make you up for ever and ever, is treasured up in this chamber; and behold the chamber-door is open to you all, while *we preach among you Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*. Let every soul here be like beggars gathered about this door.

5. There is the chamber of his *covenant*, to which the gathering of the people should be; when God gathers people into it, he is said to *shew them his covenant*, Psalm xxv. 14.; and in shewing his covenant, he shews some divine secrets to them. When the people gather in to this chamber, they are said to take *hold of his covenant*, Isaiah lvi. 4, 6. This chamber is remarkable for the wells that are in the midst of it.—There is both a well for washing, and a well for drinking; and both are open, that the people may gather together to them. The well for washing is the blood of the covenant; and that is the *fountain open for sin and for uncleanness*, Zech. xiii. 1. It is just the boundless bottomless sea of the Redeemer's blood, which *cleanses from all sin*: this fountain is open, that all guilty, filthy, polluted people may gather to it, and be washed. The well for drinking is not only that same blood of Christ, *which is drink indeed*; but all the blessing of the covenant, and all the promises of the covenant; to all or every one of which, people should gather, and *draw water out of these wells of salvation with joy*, Isa. xii. 3. Here is the *well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. and all the people are invited to gather to it; *Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely*, Revel. xxii. 17. In this chamber there is the best of cheer; *bread enough, and to spare*; *all spiritual blessings of heavenly places in Christ Jesus*: and this chamber, and all the cheer that is in it, whereof Christ himself is the all, it is dedicate of God for the use of the people, that their  
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gathering may be to it ; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people,* Isaiah xlii. 6.

6. There is the chamber of his *palace*, for the gathering of the people into : by his palace, I mean, his church ; and by his church, I mean, both his church militant on earth, and triumphant in heaven.

As for the church *militant*, that is the *palace of the great King*, Pſal. xlv. 15. ; there he *desires to dwell*, Pſal. lxxviii. 16. It is his house where he would have the gathering of the people to be ; therefore he calls it a *house of prayer for all people*, Isa. lvii. 7. and all are to *flee unto it*, Isa. ii. 2. The ordinances and provisions of Christ's house are, in a peculiar manner, for the entertainment of the people ; and the stewards of the house have a special commission to invite all sorts of sinners, even these that have played the prodigal and the fool in the way of sin, to come in to it ; Prov. ix. 3. *Whoſe is ſimple, let him turn in hither : As for him who hath no understanding,* Wiſdom ſays to him, *Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled,* Luke xiv. 21, 23. *Go quickly,* ſays the Maſter of the houſe, *to the ſtreets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the blind, the maimed, and the halt : yea, go to the high-ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my houſe may be filled.* It is a pity indeed, that ever people ſhould be diſcouraged from gathering into the Lord's houſe, while the provisions of the houſe are mixed with unwholeſome food of corrupt or erroneous doctrine ; while the ſtewards of the houſe do turn it to a den of thieves and robbers ; robbing the people of their Chriſtian privileges ; and while the ſervants of the houſe do fall by the ears, and begin to ſmite their fellow-ſervants, becauſe the Lord of the houſe is away, and delays his coming : while, in a word, the doctrine, worſhip, diſcipline, and government of the houſe is out of order, and in great confuſion, not garniſhed like the palace of the great King. This indeed is matter of lamentation, and will be ſo, till the King of Zion the Maſter of the houſe himſelf come by the power of his Spirit, and ſet matters right : and, as the prophet ſays, Hag. ii. 7. *I will ſhake all nations, and the Deſire of all*

*nations shall come*; so, before the Lord comes in a glorious manner to his house, we have reason to expect he will give the house a terrible shake, and make it tremble. But in the mean time, let not the *disorders* \* of the house hinder the gathering of the people to it; for at best the lower chambers of our King's palace will never be so clean as the upper chamber in the higher house. The church militant will never be in a state of perfection here; only study you to keep always the cleanest and best side of the house, like sick people betaking themselves to the purest air. But withal, let never your gathering to his house or ordinances content you, without the presence of the Master of the house, and the Lord of ordinances, so as you may have it to say, that not only you *was brought to the banqueting house*, but also *his banner over you was love*.

As to the church *triumphant*, that is his glorious palace, his higher house, of which Christ says, John xiv. 2. *In my Father's house there are many mansions*; thither all that have been gathered graciously, will be gathered gloriously; *with gladness and rejoicing will they be brought, and shall enter into the king's palace*, Psal. xlv. 15. This is by way of eminency, *the ivory palace*, where all his garments *smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia*; where the people gathered to him, *will be like him*; for they shall see him *as he is*: where they will be for ever with him, *In whose presence is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand pleasures for evermore*. As he that drinks of the ocean, though his thirst be never so great and insatiable, yet leaves it as full and flowing as ever; so these that drink of the ocean of these heavenly pleasures, will find the fulness of joy never ebbing, but ever flowing through all eternity. Christ himself will be the heaven of heaven, and the very temple, wherein the happy people will be gathered together; *I saw no temple there: but the Lord God almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it*, Rev. xxi. 22. If the Lamb be the temple there, then the gathering of the people there must be to him.——

\* See Vol. I. pag. 238. at the foot; and more fully, Vol. II. pag. 304, 305. and Vol. III. pag. 46.



Thus you see, what place there is in Christ, and what chambers for the gathering the people to.

The *second* question, upon this head, was, to show in what *respect* the gathering of the people is to him, or in what *capacity*. The scripture is very copious, and elegant in setting forth the various respects, wherein this gathering of the people to Shiloh may take place; and that, for conveying a due apprehension thereof to our souls, it is set forth by what takes place, sometimes among rational creatures, among sensitives, among vegetables, and among inanimate things; and it is not for nought, that the scripture is so copious this way, that our faith may have room and liberty to act upon Christ, in whatever respect he is represented.

1. From *rational*s; while we view political or œconomical affairs among men, or whatever station or relation they are said to be in, or actions they are said to perform, by these we will find this matter represented unto us. Hence our gathering to Shiloh is like the gathering of scholars to a teacher, or of disciples to a master, that we may be taught of him; and he is therefore called the non-such teacher, Job xxvi. 22. *Who teacheth like him?* Man's teaching reacheth the ear; but his teaching reacheth the heart: man's teaching may work upon the capacity where it is; but his teaching can work a capacity where it is not. O let all the people gather to his school, who is the great Prophet, *who teaches with authority, that teacheth as never man taught.*—Again, it is like a gathering of pursued malefactors to a refuge: it is a *flying for refuge to the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 18. To gather to him, is to say by faith, with David, *I flee to thee to hide me; to hide with thy wings, with thy blood, with thy righteousness, from the wrath of God, and from the curse of the law.*—Again, it is like the gathering of rebels to a sovereign, casting down their arms, and owning him to be their only King and Leige-lord: gathered souls put the crown upon King Jesus his head, saying, *Other lords have had dominion over us; but now, O let the King of glory come in!* Psalm xxiv. 7. *Let him*

reign, and let all his enemies be scattered.—It is like the gathering of wanderers to the right way home. *I am the way*, says Christ.—It is like the gathering of weary travellers to an inn, or weary labourers to a resting-place: *Come to me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*—It is a gathering of guests to a feast, Matt. xxii. 10.; and of strangers to their home, that *they may be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, Ephes. ii. 19. Before a man come to Christ, he is abroad in a far country; but whenever he comes to Christ, he is at home.—It is a gathering of children to a father, to be *pitied as a father pities his children*, Psalm ciii. 13.—It is a gathering of brethren to their elder brother, as Joseph's brethren did to their younger, that they might be supplied by him, and live upon him.—It is a gathering of beggars to a store-house, that they may be enriched; of captives to a Redeemer, that they may be liberated; of debtors to a Surety, that they may be ransomed; *Be surety for thy servant for good*; of lepers to a laver, that they may be cleansed; *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; yea, wash thou me, and I shall be whiter than the snow.*—It is a gathering, as broken merchants, to a free market: what a gathering of people will be to a fair or market? But they are not all buyers that come to markets, far less that come to the market of ordinances; however the market is free, we may *buy without money and without price*. The wares are precious, *tried gold, white raiment, eye-salve, and the pearl of great price*. All things are nothing to this pearl; and therefore, when we sell our all to buy this pearl, yet we get it for nothing. Right gathering to Christ, is to come to his market, and to take all his wares for nothing.—It is a gathering of members to an head; *For he is the head of the body, the church*, Colos. i. 18. From the head is derived to the body all the light, life, beauty, motion, sympathy, protection, provision, supply of good, and prevention of evil.—It is a gathering of fugitive servants to their mas-

masters ; of clients to an advocate to plead their cause. —It is a gathering of drowning men to an ark, to save their lives ; and a gathering of patients to a physician, to heal their diseases. Lord, says the gathered soul, my disease is mortal and incurable ; I will die of this disease, if thou do not heal me. Well, says Christ, *this sickness is not unto death* ; I can cure the disease of death itself, spiritual death. Lord, says another, my disease is a lingering disease, it is an halt and lameness, that I cannot so much as come to the physician for healing, and I am like to go halting to the grave, under a certain fore that no body knows of. Is that your disease, woman ? mind that word, Micah vi. 4. *I will heal her that halteth* : and be encouraged still to be about the physician's hands.

2. From *sensitives* ; this gathering of the people to Shiloh is represented in scripture in the following respects. This gathering to Shiloh is like the gathering of *sheep* to a shepherd ; *Ye were as sheep without a shepherd, but now are ye returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.* Other *sheep* I have, that are not of this fold, says Christ ; *these also I must bring.*—He must gather them, and they must be gathered, according to his promise, Ezekiel xxxiv. 11, 12. Isaiah xl. 11. O wandering sheep, here is the fold.—It is like the gathering of *doves* to their windows ; Isaiah lx. 8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, as doves to their windows ?* The wounds of Christ, the holes of the Rock of ages, the promises sealed with his blood, and all his offices, are the windows ; and to gather to him, is to fly to these windows, and make your nest in the rock.—It is like the gathering of *fishes* into a net ; Matt. xiii. 47. *The kingdom of heaven, or the gospel, is likened unto a net cast into the sea, gathering of every kind.* O when the gospel-net is spread, do not swim away ; it may be your thoughts are swimming in the air, when they should be gathered about the mouth of the net.—Sometimes it is likened to the gathering of *chickens* under the wings of a hen ; Mat. xxiii. 37. Luke xiii. 34. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,*  
but

*but ye would not!* O the wings of his grace, the wings of his righteousness, the wings of his merit, the wings of his mercy are stretched! If we will not be gathered, the silly chickens will witness against us; for they gather at the cluck of the hen under her wings.—Again, it is like the gathering of *eagles* to their prey; Matt. xxiv. 28. *Where the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.* Whither should the eagles go, but to the prey? And, whither should the soul go, but to Christ, who hath the words of eternal life? Christ's flesh and blood is the carcase, which, like hungry eagles, we should be gathering unto; for *his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.*

3. From *vegetables*; this gathering of the people to Shiloh is represented, in the following respects. It is like the gathering of *wheat* into a barn; Mat. iii. 12. *He will gather the wheat into his garner.* Mat. xiii. 30. *Gather the wheat into my barn.* God will not lose a grain of his wheat; he will not only gather it to the barn to be kept, but the granary to be purified.—It is like the gathering of *grafts* into a branch; *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,* John xv. 5. When God gathers souls to himself, he takes a branch of the old Adam, cuts it off from the old stock, and ingrafts it into Christ, from whom, as the everlasting root, it derives all sap of grace, all the fruits of righteousness.—It is like the gathering of *plants* into a garden or vineyard; *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant,* Isaiah v. 7. And these, whom he effectually gathers into his garden are called *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.* To be gathered unto Christ, is to be planted in his house.—It is like the gathering of *fruit* into a basket, or of *flowers* and *lilies* for pleasure and entertainment; *My beloved is gone down to his garden to gather lilies,* Song vi. 2. Having gathered them into his garden, and planted them, and suffered them to grow, through his grace, till they be ripe, he gathers them

to himself, and picks them one by one to put them in his bosom. But again,

4. From *inanimate* things, this gathering of the people to Christ is represented, in the following respects. It is a gathering of *vessels* to an harbour; for, before the soul be brought in to Christ, it is like a ship tossed in the tempest, and tumbling in the swelling waves, like the ship in which the disciples were, when the sea was tempestuous, and Christ came walking on the sea towards them: but when they are gathered in to Christ, then they are at anchor in a safe harbour: *Which hope we have, as an anchor sure and stedfast, entering within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered,* Heb. vi. 19. It is a piercing, entering anchor; for, as an anchor will not hold a ship firm and fast, if it only ly on the ground, and do not pierce deep into it; so faith will not establish the heart, if it do not enter into Christ, as it were, and pierce the veil? but when once it enters here, then the soul is at a safe harbour, and a sure anchor both.—Again, this gathering of the people to Shiloh is like the gathering of *stones* to a building; *To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house,* 1 Pet. ii. 4. We are by nature hard stones, senseless stones, stupid, inflexible, dull, heavy stones, having an heart of stone, Ezek. xxxvi. 29.; but *God can, even of these stones, raise up children to Abraham,* Mat. iii. 8. Luke iii. 9. And what does God condescend to do, when he comes to gather sinners? Behold, he comes to gather stones! and he sends us that are ministers out to gather stones. It was a sin for the man to gather sticks on the Sabbath-day; but it would be no sin, but a good Sabbath's work for us, if we were gathering stones this day, to bring them to the *chief corner stone*, the sure foundation, as Christ is called, 1 Pet. ii. 6. Isa. xxviii. 16. *This is the stone which the builders rejected; but the same is become the head of the corner,* Psal. cxviii. 22. What we translate the *chief corner stone*, some translate it the *highest*, and some the *lowest stone*: but it is best to reconcile both, and make him both the highest and lowest, reaching from the first

first to the last; because his name is ALPHA and OMEGA, *the first and the last*: and because he is the stone that reaches from earth to heaven, from the church militant to the church triumphant: he is the corner-stone to bring both sides of the building together, Jews and Gentiles into one temple: and, *Another foundation can no man lay, says the apostle, than that is laid, which is Christ*; to this foundation should the stones be gathered. Solomon says, Eccles. iii. 9. *There is a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together.* In allusion to this, may I say, What sort of time is this! It hath long been a time of casting away stones, many are like castaway stones in the field, or desert of nature, hard and dead stones; they never gather to the living temple, by all the gathering means and ordinances that ever they enjoyed: they look like stones ready to be cast away to hell, to be fuel for God's wrath; because the fire of love and grace, manifested in the gospel, could never melt them. Oh! it hath been thus a time of casting away stones: when it is not a gathering time, it is a rejecting time. But, O shall we now expect a time of gathering stones together! O cry for a day of power, a gathering day, a gathering time to Scotland again; a gathering time to yourselves, even God's hand of power, for gathering stones together to Christ the foundation; and so for gathering the people to Shiloh!

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed was, to speak of the *manner* of this gathering to Shiloh. That which I intend under this head, distinct from the former is, to enquire, 1. Into the *means* of this gathering: 2. The *qualities* thereof.

*First*, As to the *means* thereof, or by what *means* the gathering to Shiloh is brought about. By what means say you, does God gather the people, or are the people gathered to Christ? We have warrant from scripture to speak of these six gathering means.

1. A gathering *hedge* and inclosure; I mean, the hedge of *providence*, by which he gathers people *occasionally*, as sheep within an inclosure are gathered together,

ther, that they may not get leave to stray. This is the thorny hedge of affliction, whereby the Lord stops the sinful career of these, whom he hath aimed to gather in to himself; *Behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths*, Hof. ii. 6. Thus Manasseh was caught among the thorns, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. And to this purpose, says David, *It was good for me that I was afflicted; for before I was afflicted I went astray*, Psal. cxix. 67. Thus some affliction or other many times is made use of, as the occasional mean of gathering straying souls to Christ, or some alarming providence, as that which Paul met with, Acts ix. and the jaylor, Acts xvi. when the foundation of the prison was shaken with an earthquake. But this leads me to another mean.

2. There is a gathering *storm* and *tempest*, with thunder and lightening from mount Sinai, whereby an earthquake is raised in the conscience, or rather an heart-quake in the soul. By this mean of *law-terrors* and *convictions*, according to the measure wherein it is dispensed, he gathers the people *preparatively*, as by the former *occasionally*. This dispensation is called a *tempest*, Heb. xii. 18. accompanied with *blackness and darkness, and burning fire*. And as a blowing storm, or beating tempest, makes a man chearfully to betake himself to a house for shelter; so the storm of legal conviction and humiliation makes people willing to gather unto Shiloh. Hence the law is said to be *our schoolmaster to school us to Christ*, as the word there signifies, Gal. iii. 24. *By the law is the knowledge of sin*, and the conviction of wrath; and while the storm of law-threatenings, law-curses, law-vengeance is beating and battering on the soul, it is glad to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved? And where shall I go to be sheltered? Under this dispensation, there are two things that the soul sees, when the law comes with force, namely, the spirituality of the command, and the severity of the threatening. The spirituality of the precept discovered makes the man cry, Ob! I am unclean, unclean! The severity of the threatening discovered makes him cry out, Ob! I am undone, undone! O the infinite holiness of God in*

the precept can never be gratified by any obedience of mine, for I am a sinful beast! O the infinite justice of God in the threatening can never be satisfied by any suffering of mine, for I am a finite worm; if there be not another shift for me, I am lost and gone for ever! Thus Rom. vii. 9. the soul that was *alive without the law once, now when the commandment comes, sin revives, and it dies.*

3. As the gathering inclosure of providence is the occasional mean, and the gathering storm and tempest of law-conviction is the preparative mean, so the gathering trumpet of the gospel is the more *immediate* mean. The gospel is the great gathering engine of infinite wisdom; for faith comes by hearing of the joyful sound of this trumpet, which is like the trumpet of the jubilee of old, Lev. xxv. 9. There is the joyful sound of gospel-revelations, and good news, *that Christ came to save sinners.* O! when this sound of the silver trumpet reaches not only the ear, but the heart of the sinner, that by the law hath got the knowledge and conviction of sin and misery, what a joyful sound is it, that now he hears of the remedy for him; that justice is satisfied, life is purchased, death is destroyed, wrath is appeased, and the law is magnified, and God reconciled in Christ? Many a gathering sound comes thro' this gospel-trumpet. There is a sound of gathering calls, saying, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; This is his commandment, that ye believe.*—A sound of gathering invitations, saying, *Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.*—A sound of gathering proclamations, saying, *Ho, ho, every one that thirsteth, come; and he that hath no money, let him come; buy wine and milk without money and without price.*—A sound of gathering expostulations, saying, *Why will ye die? joined with complaints, Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*—A sound of gathering counsels, saying, *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.*—A sound of gathering intreaties and obtestations,



tions, saying, *We beseech you in God's name, and pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*—And, finally, A sound of gathering music, and charming melody: and as children gather to the sound of the pipe, so the Lord Jesus complains, Matthew xi. 7. when people do not joyfully gather at the sound thereof, *We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; yea, such are compared to deaf adders, that stop their ears at the voice of the charmer, though charming never so cunningly,* Psalm lviii. 5.—O what melodious music in the world, so sweet as to hear the sound of gospel-promises, of pardon to the guilty, purity to the filthy, and pity to the miserable soul! This trumpet hath a sound of peace, a sound of grace, a sound of mercy, a sound of glory to God in the highest, and of good-will towards men: a certain sound, in opposition to all the legal trumpeters, founding forth life and salvation, depending upon uncertain conditions and qualifications on our part: but, as says the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 8. *If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who goeth forth to battle?* There is no heart to go forth to the battle of the Lord, upon such an uncertain sound: but when the trumpet gives a certain sound of victory, peace, life, salvation, and all, to be had, only, and wholly, and freely for nothing, in and through Jesus Christ, then who would not go forth, under the standard of this Captain of salvation, at the sound of this golden trumpet!

4. There is the gathering wind of the Spirit. Besides the gathering inclosure of providence as the occasional mean, the gathering tempest of the law as the preparatory mean, and the gathering trumpet of the gospel as the immediate mean; there must be a gathering wind of the Spirit, which is the efficacious mean: the former means cannot be effectual without this, though the gathering trumpet of the gospel, and the gathering wind of the Spirit are most nearly related to each other; for it is the gospel only that is the *ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It is this wind of which the Lord Jesus speaks, John iii. 8. which *blows*

where it listeth, and is the great efficient of regeneration, and aggregation unto Christ.—It is this wind that gathers dead sinners out of their grave of spiritual death ; *Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon the slain that they may live,* Ezek. xxxvii. 9. It is this mighty wind that blows down the *strong holds of Satan,* and *casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God ; gathering the thoughts, like captives, to him,* 2 Cor. x. 15. It is this wind that makes the spices of the believer's garden to flow out ; for this gathering wind brings a gathering rain with it ; *He shall come down like rain upon the mowen grass ; as showers that water the earth,* &c. Psalm lxxii. 6, 8. *Awake, O north wind ; come thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out,* Song iv. 16. O it is a happy wind, that can drive a sinking vessel to a safe harbour, and gather perishing sinners in to a Saviour ! But, where is this wind to be had, say you ? Why, it is in God's hand ; it is said with respect to his kingdom of providence, that he *hath gathered the winds in his fist,* Prov. xxx. 4. ; and it is true with respect to his kingdom of grace : this blessed wind is, as it were, gathered in his fist ; and what a man hath gathered in his fist, he can easily distribute of it, by opening his hand ; so our God can easily distribute of the Spirit : this wind is in his fist, and he hath no more ado, but to open his fist. O look to him, and cry to him, to cast a gale of this wind out of his fist, a handful of the gathering motions of his Spirit, a handful of the gathering influences of this heavenly wind, a gale of his gathering operations.

5. I may add, though it be very sib to the former, yet it is what may give us another distinct view of the Lord's way of gathering people ; besides the gathering wind, there is a gathering *sun* : I allude to Psalm civ. 21. where it is said of the young lions, *The sun rises, and they gather themselves together to their dens ; and man goeth forth to his work and labour.* As the rising of the sun makes the beasts gather to their dens, and men gather to their work ; so the rising of the

Sun of righteousness, in the manifestation of the favour of God in Christ, makes the lions of hell gather to their dens, in a manner, and men to gather to their work; I mean, to gather to Christ by faith: for, *this is the work of God, that ye believe in his Son, whom he hath sent.* It is promised, that men shall go forth when the sun rises; *The Sun of righteousness shall arise, and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves in the stall,* Mal. iv. 2. Indeed, they that go forth to meet the rising Sun by faith, they will grow up in all the graces and fruits of the Spirit of holiness. However, I say, it is the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and shining in his glory, that makes sinners gather to him by faith; *He manifested forth his glory, and then his disciples believed on him,* John ii. 11. The displays of his glory are his gathering arms; *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms,* Isa. xl. 11. He gathers with his arms, even the arms of his grace and mercy; yea, the displays of his glorious grace are his military arms, whereby he subdues them, and gathers them into his camp, Psalm xlv. 3, 4, 5.

6. In a subordination to all these gathering means, there is a gathering fan: *Matth. iii. 12. Luke iii. 17. His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner.* The devil hath his fan, wherewith he seeks to winnow God's people as wheat, in order to separate them from Christ, and from one another; but Christ hath his fan, wherewith he will winnow his church and people, in order to gather them to himself, and to one another in him. By the fan of his word, and the fan of his rod, he purges the floor of his church: it is his *threshing floor*; and sometimes he must take the flail of his doctrine and thresh upon his people, to separate the chaff of error from the grains of truth; and the sound from the erroneous. Sometimes he must take the flail of discipline, and severe judgments, rods, and calamities, to purge his floor, and gather the wheat from the chaff. Though the great day of judgment will be the great day of separating the precious from the vile, and gathering

thering of his faints, yet there are trying days in this world, wherein considerable discoveries are made, and the Lord's scattered and divided sheep are gathered together, to be more unite in the Lord. It is necessary sometimes, that the Lord take his fan in his hand, for purging his floor; when it is foul, it needs to be swept with a besom. The floor of his house is sometimes very foul; and as when one sweeps a house, if there be dross and dirt in it, and also gold, and diamonds, and jewels, lying hid among the dust, all may be swept to the door together; but the jewels being soon missed, are gathered again from among the filth: so, when the besom of public judgment and calamities come, the godly, as well as the wicked may be all swept to the door together, and share of the same outward strokes; but God, in due time, will gather the jewels to his cabinet: *They shall be mine, in the day when I make up my jewels*, Mal. iii. 17 — So much concerning the various means of gathering.

*Secondly*, The second question upon this head, was, To speak of the *qualities* of this gathering of the people to Shiloh. And here the qualities of this gathering may be considered, either *passively*, shewing how his power is exerted; or *actively*, shewing how their faith is exercised: or, 1. The qualities of *God's gathering* the people to Shiloh. 2. The qualities of the *peoples gathering* to him, under his conduct, influence, and assistance. Now, of both these particularly.

*1st*, *PASSIVELY*; the *qualities* of *God's gathering* the people to Christ: or, how his powerful grace is exerted, when, in a day of his power, he makes them willing, and gathers them.

1. His gathering power is exerted *congruously*, and agreeably to the rational nature; he *draws with the bands of love, and the cords of a man*, Hof. ix. 4. What is that? He even brings them over, by rational arguments upon the judgment, and powerful persuasion upon the will. While the minds of men are blinded with ignorance, their affections are bent upon their lusts; but now, the understanding being cleared, the affecti-

ons are captivated, the man is bound with invincible reason : and so he gathers souls in a way congruous to the rational nature.

2. His gathering power is exerted *affectionately* and *lovingly* ; Hof. ii. 4. *I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness ; and there will I speak comfortably to her.*—*I will, as it were, BEGUILE her, and speak to her HEART,* as the Hebrew signifies : I will persuade her, that there is more reason to yield to my intreaties, than to the devil's sophistry. The Lord sweetly draws up the lock of the heart, and gets in upon the affections ; *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,* Jer. xxx. 3. As a man puts on his best robes on his wedding-day ; so Christ, in the day of espousals, when he would gather the eyes of the people to look to him, and their affections to centre on him, he puts on his robes of glory and grace ; clothes himself with a garment of salvation, with an alluring attire, when he addresses himself unto and courts sinners.

3. His gathering power is exerted *efficaciously* : he comes with that argument of omnipotence, whereby he *commanded light to shine out of darkness* ; by that same argument whereby he *commanded the dead to arise*, does he conquer and captivate the soul ; by that same argument whereby *Christ himself was raised*, Eph. i. 19, 20. till there be no power to resist, no strength of corruption left to oppose. The infinite bounty of God, the infinite beauty of Christ, and the infinite power of the Holy Ghost, all concur to gain the soul, with infinite ravishing sweetness. Almighty love kills the mighty enmity ; and how can he be resisted ? *Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.* Before conversion, the sinner is unwilling and he cannot come to Christ, because he will not ; but in conversion, the man is made willing, and so he cannot resist, because he will not : the will is gained ; *Thy people shall be willing.*

4. His gathering power and grace is exerted *seasonably*, for, he *speaks a word in season to them*, Isa. l. 4. *The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary.* A word of  
power

power comes at a particular season, at God's set hour; and people are never gathered till that hour come; *The hour comes, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.* "O happy hour, says one, wherein the word and ordinances are impregnated with almighty efficacy?" When the minister finds himself in a better frame than ordinary, he is ready to think that blessed hour is come: but he may be oft mistaken. However, *the counsel of God stands sure: the Lord knows who are his*; therefore, we must preach in faith, and pray in faith, and wait in hope, and water in hope, till the accepted time come, the happy hour; and when it comes, it will be an hour never to be forgotten, a signal time, on which eternity depends. Besides, it is seasonable with respect to the soul that is gathered; it comes at the nick of time, when it is in the extremity of distress, plunged into the deeps, and deep calling unto deep and the soul like to succumb therein. Hence,

5. This gathering grace is manifested *surprisingly*; it is freighted with preventing mercy: herein God anticipates the current of the carnal affections: when the soul is running post to hell, God stops his career, as he did that of Paul, Acts ix. Every sinner that is converted, is gathered beside his proper natural intention: little does the man foresee what is God's design, in bringing him to such a place, to hear such a sermon, to live under such a ministry; even as little as Saul thought of finding a kingdom, when he went out to seek his father's asses. Some have come to hear the word, in a very customary careless manner, not knowing where else to spend an hour; when lo, on a sudden, an arrow of conviction hath been shot into their consciences, and awakened them to seek God. His gathering grace, both in the beginning and progress thereof, is still exerted in such a manner, as sweetly surprises the soul; *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab*, Song vi. 12. When I was expecting that my soul should be gathered among the damned, O! grace stepped in, and gathered me to Shiloh.

6. This gathering power is exerted *sovereignly*; there is much sovereignty manifested, both over the gathering means, and the gathered soul: Over the gathering *means*, such as the word and ordinances: it is not every word that does the business: how many great sermons, and spiritual discourses have you heard, O believer, and yet never a word reached your heart, till the Lord sent it with power? Hence the word that kills one, quickens another; the word that is unfavoury to one, is sweet to another; the word that is galling to one, is gaining to another: the word that hardens one, softens another.—Sovereignty is also manifested over the gathered *soul*: many hundreds are gathered together at a time, yet, perhaps, but one or two are touched, and reached by the word: the minister is speaking to the heart of these, but only to the ears of all the rest. O! is God finding you out by his word, and gathering you? He is sovereign: *Shewing mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion*, Rom. ix. 15.

7. This gathering grace is exerted *particularly*; for *he calls his sheep by name*, John x. 3.; and leads them out: as by the law, the sinner is convinced particularly, *Thou art the man*, the sinful man, the guilty man; so by the gospel, he is called particularly; *I have called thee by name*, Isa. xliii. 1. and xlv. 4. What is offered indefinitely and generally to all, is carried home particularly to the soul: it comes to be as particular, as if God were speaking to none other in all the congregation. Christ came to save sinners, and to seek lost souls, and particularly, I am come for you, man; you, woman; *Rise, for the Master calls you*. O, says the soul, it is me that God is speaking to; there is good news for me!

8. This gathering power is exerted *successfully*: the Lord comes to gather, and the people are gathered; he draws, and they run, and run in to the ark; *The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it, and are safe*: the soul runs, not only to it, but into it, so as to be found in Christ. People may be gathered to Christ, in a manner, and yet not gathered success-

fully, unless gathered in to him: as in the days of Noah, when the deluge of water came upon the world, many might gather to the ark, and hing about the sides of it, and climb up on it for shelter; but the waves at last washed them away; none came to it with success, nor were saved, but such as got into the ark; so, unless you get in to Christ, be united to him, and implanted in him, as a branch to the stock, so as to derive life from him, and grow up in him; if you be not thus found in him, you cannot be saved by him, though in several respects you may lean upon him, and take hold of him. They gather to him with success, that get in to him. O happy they, that are gathered to him, so as to *win him!* Phil. iii. 8. He that wins, succeeds; and much winning, much success; and *they may laugh that win*; for they win all, who win Christ: they win his person, for their Husband; they win his purchase, for their jointure; his covenant, for their charter; his Spirit, for their counsellor; his righteousness for their robe; his grace, for their ornament; his glory, for their crown; and all his fulness, for their supply: they may live upon their winning for ever.

9. This gathering power is exerted *irreversibly*, yet *gradually*: when God gathers sinners to Christ, he gathers them irreversibly; *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*: He never leaves drawing of them, and gathering them to him, till he hath gathered them all round about his throne in glory: his gathering grace works a lasting impression, and abiding effect on them; the seed of God remains in them. Many hundred sermons you have heard, and all these excellent truths vanish, and slip off from your memory, as water falling on a rock: but, O says the believer, though I forget much, yet I think I will never forget such a word, that came to my soul with a glance of glorious majesty in it, and filled all the powers of my soul with a divine seraphic enlargement: *I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast quickened me.* Christ having begun to gather, goes on with the soul constantly, till the business be done and ended;

*For*



*For he waits to be gracious*, Isaiah xxx. 18. He will not take a refusal, nor desist for an ill answer; and whatever interruption may be after laying the foundation, yet he carries on the good work: it is not altogether stopt, as it is with others, that may be under some common operations of the Spirit, the Lord may leave them, and never return, but here he renews his visits, and gradually advances his gathering work; *For his going forth is prepared as the morning*, Hosea vi. 3.; and he comes to them *as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth*, which makes the fruits of the ground gradually to spring up. “A sudden work is seldom a sound work,” says one. However his ordinary way of gathering is by various degrees; he gives them now a pull, and then a pull; *here a little, and there a little.*

10. This gathering power is exerted *remarkably*: Hence the soul can say, *Once I was blind, now I see*. Though the *kingdom of heaven comes not with outward observation*; yet either in the beginning, or progress, or both, it is remarkable, discernable, and sensibly felt, by the soul that is wrought upon and gathered: he hears the voice of the great Shepherd, he sees his glory, he feels his power. Sometimes it is remarkable, in the very beginning; like a man born blind, and come to age, and getting his eyes suddenly opened, he cannot know the time: in others it is not so remarkable, till the progress thereof make it so; like rain dropping from a house-top on a flint-stone, that by constant dropping makes a hollow in the stone; when it begins to make the hollow at first, is hard to tell, but that it is made, is remarkably evident: even so here, by the constant dropping of the rain of the Spirit's influences, from time to time, there is an hollow made in the heart; the man is gradually emptied of sin, and self-righteousness; and nothing can fill that hollow, but a God in Christ, when it began at first, he cannot tell; but now it is remarkable, if grace be in any measure exercised.—Thus you see the qualities of God's gathering people, yet after all, we are not capable to

give an exact account of the outgoings of this mighty gathering grace; many feel it, who cannot tell the particular manner thereof; *For the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth,* John iii. 8\*.

2dly, ACTIVELY, viewed; the qualities of this gathering, that is, of the *peoples gathering* to Shiloh; or the way how faith is exercised, or how the soul acts, when it is prevailed upon to come to the Lord Jesus, and so to be gathered unto Shiloh. In general, it is by FAITH that they gather to him; and hence this gathering to Shiloh is so frequently called a *coming* to him, and *believing* on him, *trusting* and *staying* ourselves upon him. In this gathering unto Shiloh, the soul acts *believingly*; and all the other qualities of this gathering are reducible to this, and are so many ways, wherein faith acts, in coming and gathering to Christ; or how, being acted they act: and here is matter for trial; particularly then,

1. In this *active* gathering unto Shiloh, people are made to act *spiritually*; for it is a spiritual gathering, under the conduct of the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of faith, making the soul to gather under the wings of Christ the Messiah. It is not by natural might, but by the power of the divine Spirit, that sinners gather to a Saviour: *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord; even the exceeding greatness of his almighty power,* Eph. i. 19. There is a spiritual internal principle, from which the man acts, in his gathering to Shiloh, even the Spirit of God as the main, and the new heart as the subordinate principle of faith in the man. It is not the Spirit's working extrinsically upon the man; hypocrites may have the Spirit working on them extrinsically, to the production of great affections and enlargements, while they are not savingly gathered: but this spiritual act is from a spiritual principle, whereof the Spirit of God within is the spring.—The former is but a natural acting by some

\* What follows, to the beginning of the sixth general head of the method, was delivered at Airth, June 19th, 20th, and 21st, 1725. in three discourses.

external objects, it is like a pool fed by water from the clouds; the other is like a well fed by a spring within.

But here a question may be propounded, *How shall I know the difference betwixt these two, viz. the Spirit's working on me by his common motions, and his working in me as a living principle?*

To which we might reply, Why, the common motions of the Spirit, externally moving the affections, differ from the saving operations of the Spirit, internally elevating the soul to a God in Christ, as a land-flood differs from a living spring: the land-flood is maintained externally by the clouds; the living fountain is maintained internally by its own spring; thus the hypocrites frames and affections are maintained only by external means and objects, such as the tunable voice of the minister; so Ezekiel was to his hearers as a *very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument*, Ezek. xxxiii. 32.; and when the external object or excitement is over, then their frame and affection falls, because the only thing that maintained it is gone: whereas, in the spiritual acting of the soul that is gathering to Shiloh, though *faith comes by hearing externally*, yet the Spirit of God being *received by the hearing of faith*, this internal principle of spiritual life does many times animate the soul to spiritual work, when all external objects and operations fail; and this may be known, just as a spring-well is known by the bubbling up of the water. Thus is the Spirit's inhabitation known by the actings of the graces of the Spirit, such as faith, love, repentance, joy in the Lord, and the like.

2. In gathering to Shiloh, people are made to act *knowingly* and *judiciously*, under the influences of the Spirit, as a Spirit of light; and to act as in a matter of the greatest concern, with judgment and understanding, saying, as John vi. 68. *To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* Many gather together in a confused way, and know not wherefore they meet together; but this gathering includes know-

ledge,

ledge, and saving spiritual illumination; *They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee*, Pſal. ix. 10. They that know him, will gather to him: there muſt be a *ſeeing of the Son*, before there can be a *believing in him*, or gathering to him. Many, inſtead of gathering to Chriſt, they gather to an idol of their own fancy; when they hear of Chriſt, their idolatrous carnal mind repreſents a carnal image of Chriſt in their own brain: as thoſe, Hof. xiii. 2. that are ſaid to have made *idols according to their own underſtanding*; ſo many, in their own imagination, form an idea of Chriſt; and this idea or image of Chriſt, that they have in their own mind, is all that they have for Chriſt. But, O, Sirs, when Chriſt is externally revealed in the goſpel, there muſt be a marvellous light diſcovering him in himſelf, making him known, though not perfectly, yet really and truly as he is; not only as he is man, but as God-man, having *all the fulneſs of the Godhead in him*, and *all the glory of God appearing in his face*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. ſo as the ſoul cannot but cleave and adhere to him. A painted ſun will neither give light nor heat, but the real ſun gives both: ſo a painted image and repreſentation of Chriſt, in the imagination, gives no ſpiritual light, heat, nor communicates any transforming virtue; but the true *Sun of righteousneſs ariſeth with healing under his wings*. It is true, this light is not without miſts and ſmoke, ſent forth from the bottomleſs pit, to darken all; but yet there is ſuch a clear diſcovery of the man's inability, of God's gracious offer, and Chriſt's good-will, and mind to the bargain, as determines the ſoul to its duty.

3. In gathering to Shiloh, people are made to act *ſiducially*: this is connected with the former; *They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee*, Pſal. ix. 10. This I call an acting ſiducially; that is, with a believing perſwaſion and particular application.—The good news, that Shiloh is come, that *Jeſus Chriſt is come to ſave ſinners*, even *the chief of ſinners*, is received as a *faithful ſaying*, and ſo with believing perſwaſion; and as *worthy of all acceptance*,  
and

and so with particular application.——Perswasion with application must be in a nature of faith, according to the measure, and degree of faith. If it be weak faith, it is a weak perswasion; if strong faith, a strong perswasion: and it is not a natural perswasion, a man perswading himself that all shall be well with him, and so no more of it; nay, it is supernatural and comes of God, which natural, carnal perswasion does not, Gal. v. 8. This perswasion comes not of him that *calletb you*, intimating that right perswasion comes of God; like that of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God; being fully perswaded that he that had promised was able to perform.* And like that of the old-testament believers, Heb. xi. 13. *who received not the promises by feeling, but by faith.* But how? why, they were *perswaded of them and embraced them.*

But here there is a twofold perswasion that ought to be carefully distinguished, and the confounding whereof occasions many mistakes and misrepresentations; namely, a *fiducial* perswasion, and an *evidential* perswasion. The former is the *assurance of faith*, and in the nature of it; the other is the *assurance of sense*, and consequential to faith; and is not properly faith at all, but sense. Now, this fiducial perswasion differs from evidential, in four respects.

(1.) They differ in their *acts*: by fiducial perswasion, the man *receives* and *rests* upon Christ, and *trusts* in him for salvation to himself, believing and expecting this salvation according to the promise of the gospel, and as Christ is offered and exhibite to him therein: but by evidential perswasion, the man *knows* and *feels* that he hath received Christ. The former every believer hath, when he acts faith; the latter many believers want even when they act faith, because, though they may be conscious that they are acting upon Christ for salvation, yet they may not be conscious of the quality of the act, if it is saving or not.

(2.) They differ in their *order*: we first *believe*, by a fiducial perswasion; before we can be *sure*, by an evidential

vidential persuasion : the one is the *cause*, and the other the *effect*. The persuasion, that is in faith, is like the heat in the fire : the persuasion, that is after faith, is like heat in the room, that is the effect of the former : and because assurance (that is commonly so called, namely, the *assurance*) is the effect of faith : this will not prove, that there is no assurance in faith, no more than heat in the room will prove, that there is no heat in the fire ; for the contrary is rather evident.

(3.) They differ in their *objects* and *grounds* : the object and ground of fiducial persuasion, or of the assurance of faith, is *without* the man, and looks to the word and promise of God, the blood and righteousness of Christ, the truth and faithfulness of God : but the object and foundation of evidential persuasion, or of the assurance of sense, is *within* the man, and looks to the work of God within ; such as graces, attainments, and experiences. As there is a great difference betwixt a man's being persuaded, that he hath such a sum of money, because he hath it upon bond, or good security ; and his being persuaded thereof, because he hath it in his hand, in his chest or coffers ; so here, by the persuasion of faith, the man is persuaded of salvation through Christ, because he hath it upon bond, namely, God's promise sealed with Christ's blood, which is good security : but the ground of the persuasion of sense, is the man's having it in his hand, or so much of it, which is not faith, but sense.

(4.) They differ in their *effects* : the effect of faith, or fiducial persuasion, is justification ; the effect of sense, or evidential persuasion, is consolation ; a man is not justified by his evidential persuasion, or by knowing and feeling that Christ is his : but he is justified by his fiducial persuasion, by his fiducial knowledge, whereby he receives and rests upon Christ as his, and trusts in him for salvation to himself : by this fiducial knowledge, I say, is justification ; *By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many*, Isa. liii. 11. \*

\* See this point likewise treated of, Vol. III. pag. 32,—38.

Now, if these two were carefully distinguished, and that people considered, that it is the former, namely, fiducial persuasion, that we put into the nature of faith, as essential to it, not the latter, namely, evidential persuasion, which is consequential to it; it would prevent many mistakes, and misrepresentations on this head; as if some placed assurance so in the nature of faith, as that none were to be reckoned believers, but such as have this full evidential persuasion, and assurance of sense, which is a gross misapprehension of matters, and flows from the confounding of this twofold persuasion, which differs as much as faith and sense; assurance of faith carries in it the persuasion of the faithfulness of God in the promise; the assurance of sense carries in it a persuasion of the reality of grace in the heart: by the one we see with our eyes, as it were; by the other we *handle with our hands the word of life*: the one, to wit, Faith, is begun vision; the other, to wit, Sense, is begun fruition: assurance of faith is essential to faith, the assurance of sense is consequential to it, and not always in, or with it. And hence we say, with respect to this *evidential assurance* and persuasion, as our Confession hath it, "That it does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it;" namely, of that assurance, that is grounded upon the inward evidence of grace, and testimony of the Spirit, which is the assurance of sense there spoken of; but the *assurance of faith*, which is founded upon the *divine truth of the promise of salvation*, and upon the *word of God without us*, as the object thereof, this must be as essential to faith, as seeing is essential to the eye. And yet this will not say, that the believer hath always even this fiducial persuasion, unless his faith be in exercise: for, as it is the nature of the eye to see, though the man, that hath eyes, is sometimes sleeping, or winking, or dim-sighted; so it is in the nature of faith, to be persuaded of the favour and good-will of God in Christ, as revealed in the word of grace, though he, that hath this faith, is sometimes doubting; sometimes

faith is not exercised; sometimes the eye of faith is dimmed with the dust of corruption and unbelief. It is with faith, as with other graces: as some have a true love to Christ, yet dare not say they love, because they have so much enmity remaining: they have true grace, but dare not say they have it, because they have too much sin and corruption; but their doubting of their love and grace does not infer, that they have no love, no grace; so some have this fiducial persuasion and assurance of faith, who yet dare not say they have it, because they have so much unbelief and so many doubts: but as love is opposite to enmity, and grace opposite to corruption, though they are in the same subject; so is faith opposite to doubting, in its very nature, even though faith and doubting may be in the same believer, as light and darkness in the same air: yet their natures are opposite to one another.

As this *fiducial* act of gathering to Shiloh imports a *believing persuasion*, so also a *particular application*. In the offer of the gospel, salvation is particularly held forth to every one, saying, *The promise is to you; to you is the word of this salvation sent*; therefore in gathering to Christ, people are to lay hold on salvation to themselves particularly: *Christ came to save sinners, of whom, says Faith, I am the chief*; mercy is held out to me, and I lay hold on it as held out to me. As when the law comes with power, it says not only in the general, *All have sinned*; but it comes in particular, saying, *you have sinned*; and makes you say, *I am the man, the sinful man, the guilty man, the condemned man*: so when the gospel comes with power, it speaks to the person particularly, saying, not only, *Christ came to save sinners*; but, *Here is a Saviour for you*: and the soul is made to say, *I am concerned in this*. The gospel offers life and salvation to the poor soul particularly, and he is commanded to believe for salvation particularly; and the man believes with particular application. Thus a certain divine illustrates it: “As the  
“*sad sentence of the law, generally and indefinitely*  
“*held forth in the scripture, is particularly applied for*  
“*his (viz. the man’s) conviction and condemnation*;”  
“fo



“so the precious promise of the gospel, generally and “indefinitely held forth to all sinners, that hears the “gospel, is particularly applied for salvation:” and without this particular application, there is no effectual gathering to Shiloh.—When gospel-light shines into the heart of the awakened sinner, it applies the promise particularly to itself, as it did formerly apply the threatenings of the law particularly; and as from the law it did particularly condemn itself; so now, from the gospel, it does by faith particularly absolve itself, or rather find itself absolved from the law-sentence, in its being helped to make particular application of the gospel-promises. Again,

4. In gathering to Shiloh, the people that are brought to him, are made to act *evangelically*, or to believe in a gospel-manner; to receive and rest upon him as he is offered to us in the gospel.—There is a *gospel-ground*; on which the people gather: legal faith acts, upon a legal ground, such as inherent strength, and natural righteousness; but true faith acts upon the ground of a borrowed strength, and an imputed righteousness of another, saying, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isaiah xlv. 24. This gathering to Shiloh is a self-renouncing business, stripping the man of his own righteousness, of his own strength, and taking him intirely off his own bottom: they that are gathered to Christ, are gathered out of themselves. There is a *gospel-rule* also, whereby they gather, in a suitability to the gospel-offer and dispensation; *So we preach, and so ye believed*, 1 Cor. xv. 11. Faith answers the gospel-call, as the impress upon the wax does answer the engravings of the seal; so Christ offers himself, and so sinners gather unto him, and believe in him for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*.—Hence again, there is a *gospel-order*, wherein the gathering of the people is to him; the soul, in coming to him, receives first the person, and then the portion; even as God gives Christ, and then with him all things, Rom. viii. 32. The people gather to him in a day of power, first, as JESUS, and then, as a LORD; first,

FOR JUSTIFICATION, and then, for SANCTIFICATION \*. Legal adventures invert this gospel-order, seeking sanctification first, that upon that bottom it may build its justification ; *Seeking righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law*, Romans ix. 32. And however confused and indistinct the true believer's faith may be, in his first believing, yet repeated acts of faith, may afterwards make it more and more evident to him ; that right believing is in the forefaid gospel-order.—There is a *gospel-warrant*, upon which this gathering proceeds ; they that gather to Shiloh act warrantably, upon the warrant of an objective sufficiency : there is a sufficient Christ presented. O the sufficiency of his person ; being God-man in one person ! the sufficiency of his offices and commission, being sealed of God to be a Surety, a Saviour, a Prophet, a Priest, and King ! the sufficiency of his righteousness, his doing and dying, his obedience and satisfaction ! the sufficiency of his power, as being able to save to the uttermost ! the sufficiency of his will, while he proclaims his *good-will towards men* ; and that *God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself* ! They gather upon the warrant of a general gospel-dispensation of grace through Christ, in the external revelation of the word, where the elect are not characterised more than others, but life and salvation through Christ is held out to sinners of mankind, without distinction of nation, state, or condition ; and so in an indefinite way. Thus run all the promises, except these that are made to believers, or such as have grace already : to them indeed the promises are definite ; so also they are definite to the elect, in the decree of heaven ; but in the external dispensation of the gospel, they are indefinite and general, saying, *To you belongs the covenants and the promises*, Rom. ix. 4. And as the promise is indefinite, so the call is universal, whether by exhortations, invitations, intreaties, counsels, or commands, to all and every one, to come and receive Christ, and all his sure mercies *freely*, Isa.

\* See this important point of doctrine copiously handled, Vol. III. pag 42, — 47, 71, — 73.

lv. 1. And upon these gospel-warrants do the people gather to Shiloh.—In a word, the whole covenant, and all the promises of it, are held forth to all the people, that they may gather to it; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people*, Isaiah xlii. 6. Hence we are said, *to receive the promise through faith*, Gal. iii. 14. *to be persuaded of them, and embrace them*, Heb. xi. 13.: and the faith we are called to, is said to be a *receiving of the word*, Acts ii. 41.; a *taking hold of his covenant*, Isaiah lvi. 4.; a *believing of the testimony*, 2 Theff. i. 10. Christ cannot be received, but as he is offered; he is not offered to us, but in a word, a promise, a testimony: hence the substantial act of faith being an assent, there must be a word, promise, or testimony, for faith's immediate object, wherein we see and receive Christ: if a man would see his shadow in a glass, he first looks to the glass, and through it sees his own shadow, or image; the glass is the immediate object, to which his sight is directed; so, in order to our seeing of Christ, the glass of the gospel-promise is set before us. Thus a displayed covenant of grace, as standing fast in Christ, seems to be the warrant for the people gathering to Shiloh, Jer. l. 5. *Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant*, (says our translation) *that shall not be forgotten*: I know this is viewed, by some, in another sense, with reference to our covenanting; but I think the original reading that others notice is very pleasant and evangelical; for it may be read, *Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, the perpetual covenant shall not be forgotten*: q, d. Come and let us gather together unto Shiloh; why, the everlasting covenant, that stands fast in him, who is the all of the covenant, shall never be forgotten.—And so it may be viewed, as an encouragement of faith, and reason for the gathering of the people to him: behold he is given for a covenant of the people, and this perpetual covenant shall not be forgotten.—Thus they are made to act evangelically.

5. In gathering to Shiloh, the people that are brought to him, are made to act *cordially* and *spontaneously*, with heart and will; yea, with a thousand good-wills:—

*O take*

*O take my heart*, says the man in the day of power; *take it, and a thousand blessings with it*. It is true, there is no gathering, no approaching to him, without a draught of omnipotency; yet there is no violence in it, no force or compulsion, but when power comes, it takes away the backwardness and unwillingness; *Thy people shall be willingnesse*, Psa. cx. 3. Never did a mariner draw near to a shore with better will after shipwreck, than the soul comes to Christ, in the day of power: the person being drawn, yields necessarily and willingly both: *Draw me, we will run after thee*; DRAW ME, there is the almighty power exerted, in its irresistible operation; WE WILL RUN, there is the voluntary motion of the soul. So that this gathering does not destroy, but establish the liberty of the will of the rational agent.—Reason is not hoodwinked; the person approaches to a God in Christ, upon the most rational grounds, seeing and apprehending his misery while far from God, and the happiness of nearness to him in Christ. And this gathering is as cordial as it is voluntary; as the will is inclined, so the heart is inflamed. Hypocrites may gather to ordinances, and gather to a communion-table with the outward man: they may *draw near to God with the mouth*, and *honour him with the lip*, while *the heart is removed far from him*: this is what God complains of, *Their heart is far from me*. But what do I regard a gathering of dead corpses about my table and ordinances, a gathering of bodies, while there is no gathering of hearts? But in this gracious gathering, the language of the soul is, O many a time I have given my heart away to the devil; I gave my heart and affections away to lusts; I gave my heart away to the world; and now, shall I give Christ less than I gave them? It will be a miracle if he accept of it, after my manifold departures; but, O if I had as many souls as I had sins, I would give them to him! O if I could believe in him with the whole heart, pray to him with the whole heart, serve him with the whole heart; and that all my affections, that have been struggling among the creatures, may be gathered to him, and centred in him! Yea, in the day of power, a man  
finds

finds himself so willingly and freely to come to Christ, that he is rolled upon him, as if he were carried on a wave of the sea, or rather in a chariot paved with love: formerly he found believing hard; yea, that it was impossible for him to come to Christ: but now, he finds it impossible for him to stay away from Christ. Believing is so sweet and easy then, that, as if he had wings, he *flees for refuge to the hope set before him*, Heb. vi. 18. Though, as a great divine, (*viz.* Dr. Owen) expresses it, “ Faith is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence; yet it is in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual working. As to its essence, it lies in assent, but the saving quality of this assent is, that it is cordial; and it is not true faith, if it be not a cordial assent to God’s testimony concerning Christ.” And indeed there is a great difference betwixt a dead assent, and a cordial hearty assent to any truth; “ Suppose, says one, you were in a foreign land, and that you got a sure account, that the Turks have got a victory over the Persians; and at the same time you hear, that your beloved spouse is recovered of a dangerous disease, that all your family is well, and your affairs prosper: there is a great difference betwixt the way of assenting to these two; you believe the former, but it hath no impression on your heart, it is only a naked, heartless, unconcerned assent: but you would believe the other cordially and gladly, because you are much concerned therein: hence you would welcome the messenger.” Thus the gospel is not only a *faithful saying*, but *worthy of all acceptation*: and in gathering to Christ, in the day of power, the soul acts cordially.

6. In this gathering of the people to Shiloh, they are made to act *humbly* and *reverentially*: the man comes with a *what am I? and what is my father’s house? Behold I am vile!* and if the Lord shall have mercy on me, it is well; grace shall have the glory: but if not, I may even preach his righteousness in hell, and declare he never wronged me; he is a just God. O the soul acts *humbly*, in the day of powerful gathering; *That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth,*

mouth, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, Ezek. xvi. 63. O but a soul, convinced of its own unworthiness, and desert of hell, and that scarce can expect any thing but utter damnation ; how does the first dawning of mercy melt and humble it ! O whence is this to such a worm as I ! He stands behind Christ weeping and washing his feet with tears. When one of the first works of the Spirit in conversion, is, to give the soul a light in its hand, to go down into the dark cellars of his heart, and make discoveries, so as he stands amazed, trembling at the sight of himself ; and the next work of the Spirit, is, to lead him to the lightsome chamber of the King of glory, to bring him from darkness to light : O how is he melted with a sense of mercy, and humbled with a sense of his own monstrous vileness ! *Now mine eyes see thee ; wherefore I abhor myself.* Oh ! in such a day, the man sees his heart vile, his lips vile, his practice vile, his righteousness vile and filthy rags ; he sees, in his bosom, as it were, a hell of devils and unclean spirits ; that when he thinks on himself, it makes him loath and scunner, as it were, like a man ready to bock or vomit, when he sees some filthy nasty thing, especially among his meat ; or as a man's flesh will creep, when he sees some venomous toad or viper : so it is with these that see themselves in the Lord's light, in the day of their gathering to Shiloh. They that were never humbled, were never gathered ; and they that have been deeply humbled, have come to God with ropes about their necks, as worthy to be cast over the gibbet, and hanged over the fire of God's everlasting vengeance : they have been humbled to the dust ; yea, humbled to nothing before the Lord ; and to a thousand times less and worse than nothing ; yea, they cannot see such vile monsters among all the devils in hell as themselves ; they come therefore with humility, reverence, and godly fear.

7. In this gathering of the people to Shiloh, under the influence of gathering power and grace, they are made to act *boldly* though *humbly* ; Heb. iv. 16. *Let*

*us come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. x. 19. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Eph. iii. 12. In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him.* Here is the boldness of faith, in opposition to the boldness of presumption: Bold faith comes walking on a sea of blood, or rather upon the red and white pavement of the active and passive obedience of Christ. This boldness of faith's approach to a God in Christ is remarkable for several things.—It is remarkable for the *vehemency*, that is sometimes in it : O how vehemently does the soul act when it is laying siege to heaven, by the prayer of faith and importunate supplication, crying, *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief : Lord, increase my faith ; Lord, give a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem ! O for a drop of the precious blood of the Lamb ! O man, woman, where are the bed-sides, and secret corners, that can bear witness to your besieging heaven with your vehement cries !—It is remarkable for the violence that is in it ; The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* The man acts, as it were, violently ; *If I perish, I perish ; at Christ I must be.* It acts in a manner wilfully ; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him : I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* The soul, as it were, violently casts itself upon the free grace and faithfulness of God, in the greatest distress ; and here it lies, as it were, at anchor in such stormy days, Heb. vi. 19.—It is remarkable for the *confidence* that is in it : it hath the confidence to give God a testimonial, as it were : when faith is acted, not only does God give the man a testimonial, Heb. xi. 5, 6. *Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God ; but without faith it is impossible to please him :* but what is yet more strange, faith not only gets a testimonial from God, but gives a testimonial to him, John iii. 33. *He that received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.* Here is the confidence and assurance of faith ; it acts upon an infallible testimony, the divine veracity and faithfulness ; *a thus saith the Lord,* is the firm foundation, upon which faith is built. It is a receiving the record of God : and all the acts of faith without

this, are but as so many arrows shot at random in the open air. Many a confident address does faith make; it ventures to go as far forward as *the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus*; it ventures the soul upon the blood of the Son of God, and upon the promise of a God in Christ: here is the boldness of faith. To gather in to Shiloh, and believe in him, is in effect to say, I adventure my soul upon nothing in the world, but upon the promise of a God, that I have provoked, and been an enemy to all my days; I have nothing, but the word of this God; and yet I must adventure upon it, even my everlasting ALL. It is an adventuring act, like Peter upon the boisterous water, with this in his mouth and heart, *Master, save me*. To venture upon the promise of a provoked God, and to believe him to be a *God in Christ reconciled*, according to his word, upon the account of the *ransom he hath found out*, and the *propitiation he hath set forth*: here is the boldness of faith.—And again, it is remarkable for its *resoluteness*: the person, like the woman with the bloody issue, presses resolutely through crowds of devils and lusts; and with an irresistible intenseness of soul, forces a passage through all obstructions, to get a touch of the sceptre of King Jesus. We are called to *come with full assurance of faith*, with an holy resolution and courage. When a poor trembling Roman approached the emperor Augustus, he was in some fear; “What,” says the emperor, take you me for an elephant that “will tear you?” So we should come with boldness to Christ. He encourages the worst of sinners; he hath given his word for it, which is as firm as the pillars of heaven and earth, and stable like mountains of brass, that *him that cometh he will in no wise cast out*: when he comes at first, he will not cast him out; when he comes again afterwards, he will not cast him out; he will not cast out the vilest and most desperate sinner that comes; he will not cast him out of his favour now; he will not cast him out of heaven at last: no, no; *He will in no wise cast him out*. We may gather to Shiloh, and come with the greatest boldness; and welcome, welcome, welcome shall we be for ever.—



In a word, this boldness is remarkable for the solemnity that is in it, it is a solemn gathering: the people, that gather to Shiloh, come to him with a *behold*, Jerem. iii. 22. *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* The heart goes out with some kind of eminency and solemnity: *Behold we come:* let heaven and earth be witnesses: we take instruments, as it were, in every angel's hand, in every creature's hand, in every spire of grass's hand, that we come back to a God in Christ: we are satisfied the whole universe attest, and behold what we are going to do. Not that the believer loves to blaze abroad his religion indecently; no, no: it is especially a silent, secret, heart-gathering, and soul-approach to Shiloh: but they are so far from being ashamed of the match, and so well-pleased are they with it, that they are content it be registered in heaven, and that the whole creation attest it; *Behold we come!* The man acts with a solemn boldness.

8. In this gathering of the people to Shiloh, they that are under the conduct of gathering grace and power, are made to act *regularly*: no wonder, for in gathering to Shiloh, *their footsteps are ordered by the Lord*, and according to his word, the unerring rule of faith and manners. It is in many respects a regular address and approach: and here I shall name some other particulars, which I suppose may be included in the regularity of this approach.

(1.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made *penitentially*: and faith in its addresses to him acts penitentially, mournfully, and tenderly; *Going and weeping they shall go, and seek the Lord their God: they shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord*, Jer. l. 4, 5. *Going and weeping*, this manner of gathering is not inconsistent with the cordial and cheerful acting, that I spoke of already; for the tears of gospel repentance are tears of joy: it is said of the New-testament believers, Isa. xxxv. 10. *The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and*

*singing shall flee away.* Though this will not take place in its perfection but in heaven, yet it hath its begun accomplishment in all believers that are gathered in to Shiloh; *they obtain joy and gladness, and LEGAL sorrow and singing do flee away:* for, according to the measure of their faith in Christ, *they have joy and peace in believing: yea, in him believing, they rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* But gospel-sorrow, and godly-sorrow does not marr the music in this joyful song; for, while *they look on him, whom they have pierced and mourn,* Zech. xii. 10. and see him *wounded for their sins,* Isaiah lv. 5. they see, at the same time, the blood issuing out at these wounds, to be justice-satisfying blood, wrath-appeasing blood, hell-quenching blood, and heaven-purchasing blood; hence a sweet mixture of joy and sorrow both.—These seem to be joined together; *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them,* Jer. xxxi. 9. It may be rendered, as you may see, in the margin of some of your Bibles, *with FAVOURS will I lead them.* As the sense of their own sins and ingratitude makes them come with weeping; so, at the same time, the sense of God's favours, and kindness in Christ, makes them come with rejoicing; for, with loving-kindness does he draw them, and with favours does he lead them. O! when he favours such a guilty sinner with a pardon, such a filthy sinner with a laver of blood, such a naked sinner with a robe of righteousness, such a black sinner, with a beautiful ornament, such a hell-deserving sinner with a promise of glory, such a backsliding profligate with a merciful visit or return, and such a prodigal wretch with a compassionate embracement; and thus with favours does lead them: O then it is hard to tell, whether the voice of joy, or the voice of weeping in the soul be loudest. But as we render it also, it is most expressive of this penitential address, in gathering to Shiloh; *With weeping, and with supplication doth he lead them.* Indeed faith's approach is begun, maintained, and nourished, by prayer and supplication, saying, *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief; Lord, increase our faith.* There are some who  
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have a presumptuous faith, that can believe when they will, without praying down the Spirit of faith from God; as they can eat and drink, and sleep, and walk, and talk, though they pray not for strength to do these things; so they can exercise their natural presumptuous faith, saying, *I trust in God's mercy*; and their false repentance, saying, *God forgive me, I am a great sinner*: they can believe and repent, without prayer and supplication for grace and strength to do so. But true grace, true faith and repentance is attained and maintained, in a way of supplication: and hence true faith does increase and decrease, according to the increase and decrease of the Spirit of prayer and supplication. If it be not so with you, man, know it, that though your false faith may give you some false peace for a while, yet when death and eternity stare you in the face, then the rottenness of your faith will be discovered; *The hope of the hypocrite will perish*. They that gather to Shiloh, they come *with weeping, and with supplication doth he lead them*.

I am not here to enter upon the dispute concerning the *priority of faith to repentance*, in their natural order, and in their acting and exercise; it is well if you know both, whether you know the order or not: only, if *whatssoever is not of faith is sin*, you may guess what sort of repentance it is that is not of faith: and when the word of God speaks any where of the proper order, let your experience, consonant to the word, witness, and you will find, that such as the faith is, such will the repentance be. Legal faith works legal repentance; gospel faith, gospel repentance; true faith, true repentance. Thus, when the people of Niniveh believed God, then *they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth*, Jonah iii. 5.: when they believed his threatening, and yet that he was not irreconcilable, nor implacable, then *they repented*. Thus, when a man believes, and apprehends that *God is pacified towards him*, then he is *confounded and ashamed*, Ezek. xvi. 63.—When you have harsh thoughts of God, and no hope of favour at his hand, I suppose then you will find your heart hard like a stone, and inflexible; but when  
you

you get kindly thoughts of God, and apprehension of his mercy and good-will, and love to you in Christ, then I imagine you will find joyful meltings, and gospel sorrow. O the fire of God's love melts the soul! And the hardness and impenitency is healed, when the *Sun of righteousness ariseth with healing under his wings*, Mal. iv. 2. The qualities of this penitential approach you may see, 2 Cor. vii. 11. *For behold this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness is wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge.*— And this penitential acting of faith runs thro' the whole of the believer's life, in an universal tenderness of disposition and deportment, according to the measure of faith. And there are six tender things in it, which the believer hath.

1. He hath a tender *heart* called a *broken and contrite heart*; broken for sin, and from sin; Josiah his heart was tender. 2. A tender *conscience*; some have a *conscience scared as with a hot iron*, and that is a silent conscience: but the penitent hath a smitten conscience; as David's *heart smote him, when he cut of the lap of Saul's garment*. 3. A tender *eye*; *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn: Rivers of tears run down their eyes*, because of their own sins, and the sins of others, who break God's law. 4. A tender *ear*, which being circumcised, does hear and fear; *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and trembles at my word*. 5. A tender *lip* or *tongue*, that dare not lie, nor speak prophanely: *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue*. And, 6. A tender *hand*, that dares not touch the garments spotted with the flesh, but studies to shun all appearances of evil; or, if you will, you may add, 7. That he hath a tender *foot*, saying, with Hezekiah, *I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul*. And this leads to another quality of this regular approach.

(2.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made *obedientially*,

as well as penitentially : it is an obediential gathering. And as faith acts penitentially, so it acts obedientially ; for it *works by love*, Gal. v. 6. ; it *purifies the heart*, Acts xv. 9. ; and the man that hath it *purifies himself, even as God is pure*, 1 John iii. 3. It stirs up to new obedience? for, *Faith without works is dead*, James ii. 20, 26.— Wherever it is, it is still working, and it can no more be idle than the fire can be. It is true, *We are justified by faith, without works*, as the apostle says ; that is, without the causality of works, without conditionality of works, without the instrumentality of works, and without the influence of works upon our justification ; but not without the presence of works : for justifying faith is a sanctifying thing, and natively works, as the fire natively burns. Common faith is a dead, useless faith, making no change or alteration on the soul where it is ; but saving faith acts always obedientially : hence you read of the *obedience of faith*, Rom. xvi. 26. ; importing, both that faith acts in obedience to the divine call at first, and that it influences the soul to all the acts of gospel-obedience afterwards. O, says the returning sinner, that is making this obediential address to a God in Christ, I have been a fugitive servant to the most glorious Lord and Master ; I have deserted his service, and denied my obedience ; but now, Lord, nail my ear to the door-post, that I may serve thee for ever ; nail my heart to thy service, that no trouble, temptation, devil, or desertion may drive me away from thee : nail my eyes to thy service, that I may never look upon vanity ; nail my hands to thy service, that I may never do an ill turn ; nail my feet to thy way, that I may never turn aside from thee : let all the faculties of my soul be nailed to thy service and obedience.

(3.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular address to him is made *speedily* ; O the poor soul, that sees itself ready to drop into hell, how speedily, in the day of power, does it flee unto Christ ! *I flee to thee to hide me*, says the Psalmist : the flight of faith is very quick and swift as lightning, that goes from the one end of heaven to the other in an instant ; so when the soul is on wing, under the influence of the Spirit of faith,

faith, it can flee from earth to heaven in a moment. But this speedy gathering, I understand especially in opposition to delays, which are dangerous in religion: to delay coming to Christ one half-hour, is dangerous exceedingly; for, if you die within that half-hour, you are undone to eternity. Now, in a day of powerful gathering, the soul makes no longer delay; but it is in an holy haste; *I made haste and delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments.* The man is made to flee with speed, and to run with haste out of Sodom.

(4.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made *deliberately*; though it is with speed, yet it is with deliberation; tho' none can believe too soon by a saving faith, yet some believe too soon by a temporary faith, never having weighed matters in the balance of the sanctuary. The true approacher puts the matter in a fair balance: he puts the disadvantages in one scale, saying, What will be my fare, If I come not to Christ? Why, *they that are far from him shall perish*: he puts the advantages in another scale, and comes at length to that conclusion, Psa. lxxiii. 28. *It is good for me to draw near to God.* O! of all the gatherings, the gathering to Shiloh is best: *To whom shall I go? he hath the words of eternal life.* The man is not affected only with a transient flash; no, by no means: he sees the wicked oft in prosperity, and the godly in adversity; he sees the large and alluring offers, that sin, Satan, and the world make; and yet after all, he deliberately affirms, *It is good for me to draw near to God and Christ*: Let others say, as Psa. iv. 6. *Who will shew us any good?* But my say shall be, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance in me.*

(5.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address is made *chastly* and *uprightly*: the soul views the saying, that *Christ came to save sinners from sin and wrath*, not only as a faithful saying, but as *worthy of all acceptation*; because the beauty of Christ is discovered. Some have their reason conquered, but not their love; and, therefore, they come to Christ feignedly, and not with the whole heart: their judgment draws one way, and their affections another;  
for

for their judgment is gained, but not their affections; as if one should marry a woman, not because of her beauty, but because of her patrimony; not from a regard to her person, but love to her portion. Some take on with Christ, and take hold of the skirt of this Jew, who yet see *no form or comeliness in him, for which he should be desired.* But as it is said, *The upright love thee;* so they that in gathering to him act chastly and uprightly, they come to him out of pure love, not for servile ends: not to gratify a natural conscience, not for fear of hell only, but from a great love to him, and a just esteem of him, and a strong desire of fellowship with him.—The man is content to come to Christ on mount Calvary, as well as on mount Tabor; when going to Golgotha in ignominy, as well as when riding to Jerusalem in triumph: he cleaves to him, when people cry, *Away with him, away with him; crucify him;* as well as when they cry, *Hosannah to the son of David.* He loves him when lying in the grave, as well as when mounted on a throne. The chaste and upright comer cleaves to him, when kings and princes are against him, when laws and governments are against him, when potentates and parliaments are against him, as well as when they seem to be upon his side. It is true, indeed, that there are many unchaste thoughts, and looks, and lustings after idols in the hearts of true believers, and many defections and declinings may take place; but these are wrestled with and opposed by them, and that not only by their light and conscience, but by their love and affection to the Lord Jesus, saying, *Oh! shall I thus requite the Lord?* So that in the main they are upright.—But, to the same purpose,

6. When there is a gathering of the people to Shiloh, the right and regular approach and address to him is made *intirely and undividedly.* False and hypocritical comers, they come with a divided heart to a divided Christ; but true comers, with a whole heart to a whole Christ. The legalist would marry Christ, while yet his other husband, the law is not dead to him, nor he dead to it: but it is an adulterous and

unlawful match, to join with another husband while the first is living: hence true believers in Christ are said to be *dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they might be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead*, Rom. vii. 4. And God throws down the old building, turns him out of that shelter, lets him see all his legal duties, best performances, and most glaring graces, are but fig-leaves, insufficient to cover his nakedness; and discovers the necessity, excellency, and glory of Christ's righteousness: and the man submits cordially to it, renouncing all hope and expectation of life, favour, and justification by the deeds of the law.—The carnal man would have Christ and his lusts too; *But if you seek me, says Christ, let these go their way.* Gathering grace makes the man say, *What have I to do any more with idols?*—The covetous man would have Christ and the world too: Christ satisfies his conscience, and he flies to him for that; the world satisfies his heart, and he cleaves to it for that: but in the day of gathering power, the emptiness of the world is discovered, and the man *sells all for the pearl of great price.*

The man that comes to Christ, he comes for all these four things, 1 Corinth. i. 30. for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: He comes to him as a *Prophet*, for wisdom; as a *Priest*, for righteousness; as a *King*, for sanctification; and as his *all in all*, for complete redemption: and he can want none of these, because he knows his own foolishness, guiltiness, filthiness, and misery. The true believer dares not divide righteousness from sanctification, nor pardon from purity; yea, he comes to Christ for remission of sin for the right end. What is that? namely, that, being freed from the guilt of sin, he may be freed from the dominion of it. Knowing that *there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared*, he does not believe remission of sin that he may indulge himself in the commission of it; no, no: the blood of Christ, that purges the conscience from the guilt of sin, does also *purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14. They that come to Christ regularly then, they  
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come so to him for righteousness, that they may have him also for sanctification; otherwise the man does not really desire the favour and enjoyment of God, or to be in friendship with him who is a holy God. As the true lover loves him, not only because he is good and merciful, but because he is a pure and a holy JESUS; so the true believer employs Christ for making him holy as well as happy: and hence draws virtue from him for killing of sin, and quickening the soul in the way of duty. And the faith that can never keep you from a sin, will never keep you out of hell: and the faith that cannot carry you to a duty, will not carry you to heaven. Justifying faith is a sanctifying grace; it improves Christ undividedly. It is true, as it sanctifies, it does not justify; but that faith that justifies, does also sanctify: as the sun that enlightens hath heat with it; but it is not the heat of the sun that enlightens, but the light thereof: so that faith that justifies hath love and sanctity with it; but it is not the love and sanctity that justifies, but faith as closing with Christ.

(7.) When there is a gathering of the people to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made *exclusively*; excluding all other Saviours, all other helps, all other props, saying, *I will make mention of thy righteousness, and of thine only*, Psal. lxxi. 16. To depend partly on Christ, and partly upon our own righteousness, is to set one foot upon firm ground, and another upon quick-sand. If a man set one foot upon a rock, and another upon the deep water, and lean to them both with equal weight; yea, if he give any of his weight to the foot that is on the water, he will be sure to sink into the deep; so here: these who rely partly on the merits of Christ, and partly upon their own good works for justification, will inevitably perish in the issue: therefore in the day of gathering to Christ, the soul is brought to say, *Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24.— Thus Paul excludes the best righteousness that ever he had, either before or after conversion, from the matter

of his justification, Phil. iii. 8. When he compares his best righteousness with Christ's, he looks upon it as a dunghill, a stinking dunghill, where there is no pleasure; and a sinking dunghill, where there is no standing. Such is our righteousness, if it be not excluded from our justification before God, and acceptance with him. If we go about to establish our own righteousness, it stinks in the divine nostrils as dung: and not only so, but it is a sinking ground to stand upon, there is no firm footing; the more a man leans to it, the more he sinks in it. Christ's blood is the only sacrifice of a sweet smelling favour to God; every sacrifice stinks, that is not perfumed therewith:—Christ's righteousness is the only sure foundation and firm ground for standing on before God. As the way of sin is a sinking way, so the way of self-righteousness is little better; for the sin that is in man's best righteousness trips up his heels, and lays him in the mire, where he sinks to hell, if he be not brought to build upon a surer ground, and to take a better way.

(8.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made *progressively*, as also peremptorily and irreversibly, saying, as Psalm lxxx. 17. *Henceforth we will not go back.* O! after we have tasted of the bitterness of sin, and the bitterness of wrath; after the wings of our souls have been singed with the flames of hell; after the arrows of conviction shot out of the bow of omnipotence have pierced our souls, so as no man, minister, or angel, could pull them out; Christ did it, with his own hand, and therein manifested his powerful grace, as being the *Man of God's right-hand*. Shall we again turn our back upon him? No; *Henceforth*, through grace, *we will not go back.* The true believer comes to Christ, so as never to part with him, saying, as Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16. *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Nothing shall part thee and me.* Yea, the man, having once come to Christ, is still coming nearer and nearer to him; *To whom com-*  
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*ing as to a living stone, ye are built up a spiritual house,*  
 I Peter ii. 4. The building goes up gradually, and is still going forward. Some professors are like the mill-wheel, it goes round, yet still it stands in the same place where it was : they go the round of duties, and morning and evening prayers ; and attend Sabbath and week-days sermons, which is well done : but they are at a stand ; they are the same now, that they were ten, twenty years ago, if not worse. But, in gathering to Shiloh, the people are made to advance nearer and nearer to heaven, getting more knowledge, more experience, more hatred of sin, more love and likeness to Christ. It is true, the saints themselves have their winter-decays, but they have also their summer-revivings, that set them forward again. And thus *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto a perfect day.*

V. The *fifth* general head proposed, was, To speak of the *special seasons*, wherein this gathering of the people to Shiloh does take place. When shall this gathering be? Why, in general, *When Shiloh is come*, then shall the gathering of the people be to him : and there are two remarkable seasons of his coming, that the text intends, namely, his coming in the *flesh*, and his coming in the *Spirit*. Now, his coming in the flesh, I spoke of in the explication ; and his coming in the Spirit, I spoke of, when I shewed by what means this gathering is brought about : particularly the gathering wind of the Spirit, when he gathers the dead sinners, as it were, out of the graves ; according to that word, *Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live*, Ez. xxxvii. 9. Christ's coming in the flesh was the beginning, and commencement of the New-Testament dispensation, which is to last till his second coming ; and during the whole of that dispensation, there will be a gathering of the Gentiles, a gathering of the people to him. Christ's coming in the Spirit, is the very efficient cause of all the spiritual and effectual gatherings, that do take place under that dispensation ; and therefore, his coming

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ing in the Spirit, to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, is promised for that end, John xvi. 8. His coming thus is like the gathering shower spoken of, Psalm lxxii. 6. *He shall come down like rain upon the mowen grass, as showers that water the earth; whereupon a gathering ensues, verse 8. His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; and all nations shall serve him.* O cry for a gathering shower of the Spirit's influences and operations; for there will be no gathering till then. But more particularly, the gathering seasons may be considered under a fourfold view.

1. With relation to the *public* and *remarkable* gathering of the *church* in general. 2. With relation to the *initial* gathering of *sinners* in particular. 3. With relation to the *progressive* gathering of *believers*. 4. With relation to the *consummate* gathering of the *saints*.

1<sup>st</sup>, The gathering seasons may be considered, with relation to the *public* and *remarkable* gathering of the *church* in general. And, there are *four* or *five* seasons, that have been very remarkable, for public and numerous gatherings of the people to Shiloh. As,

1. *Reformation times*, in the church, have been gathering times, under the powerful influence of the Spirit of God accompanying reformation-work, and leading forward thereunto. Thus was it in the days of Hezekiah, when a multitude having destroyed the altars of idolatry, and Hezekiah having joined fervent prayers with his reforming measures, *The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people,* 2 Chron. xxx. 20. Reforming times have been remarkable gathering times, in Britain and Ireland. The Lord brought gospel-light very early, particularly into Scotland, by which our forefathers were delivered from heathenism and paganism: and we wanted not some gospel-light, for the space of five hundred years after Christ: about which time, popery came to put in its foot among us, when

one Palladius was sent from Rome to corrupt us : and though there was a strenuous opposition for several hundred years after that, against the Romish rites and hierarchy ; yet popish darkness did gradually overspread these lands, till it came to the greatest height, in the space of a thousand years ; after which time, to wit, in the fifteenth century, I mean a thousand five hundred years after Christ, which was the reformation period ; and now, about two hundred years ago, the Lord was pleased to make reformation-light to arise by stirring up eminent instruments to preach the gospel clearly, and to put their hands zealously to reformation-work ; especially in Scotland, even to the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, and Erastianism, and the solemn renunciation thereof, and of all heretical and sectarian errors, whether in doctrine, worship, discipline, or government. Then it was, that ministers were clothed with *righteousness and salvation*, and were eminent in their faithfulness to God, in his truth and interests, and zealous against sin, and all lukewarmness in the Lord's cause : then it was, that the representative body of the nation put to their hand for the reformation thereof : then it was, that Scotland particularly was famed through the world, under the name of PHILADELPHIA ; because of the purity of its reformation, having left all the rags of Popery behind it in the grave, from whence it arose ; which could not be said of many other churches, particularly of our neighbour church of England : for, as Lazarus came out of the grave, bound hand and foot, and his face bound about with a napkin, so was it with England in their first reformation. It was indeed like a resurrection from the grave, in the days of king Edward and queen Elizabeth ; but yet they came out of this grave, bound hand and foot with their grave-cloths bringing many things out with them, which they should have left behind, especially all these ceremonies, superstitions, and modes of worship and government, wherein they symbolize with the church of Rome, and which they brought along with them, when they left her ; these grave-clothes they have not cast off to this day. And, alas ! many in Scotland are fond of borrowing from them

them some of their old garments, which smell of the prison of Popery, which they left. But with respect to Scotland's reformation-days, as Christ, when he arose from the dead, left all his linen's and grave-clothes behind him : so he helped Scotland, in rising out of the grave of Popery, to rise and reform so purely, as to leave all the rags of Popery, to be buried in the grave from whence they arose. And then in these days it was, that the *work of the Lord prospered*, the gospel flourished, iniquity was made to stop its mouth : our church was glorious to all its beholders, *And terrible to her enemies, as an army with banners*, and multitudes of people were gathered to Shiloh. But, alas ! one of the great reasons why there are so few gathering to Shiloh now, is too plainly this, that reformation-work is much at a stand, little reformation-zeal and spirit among magistrates, ministers, or people, as it is said, Neh. iii. 5. *The nobles of Tekoah did not put their necks to the work of the Lord* : yea, deformity, defilement, corruption, and defection, instead of reformation, is too palpable in our day, wherein many pollutions have crept into our doctrine, much defilement into our worship, partiality and pithlessness into our discipline, and tyranny and disorder in the church-government : manifold incroachments made upon the liberties of the Lord's people, and the privileges of the Lord's house, too well known that we need to mention them all : insomuch, that the very foundations are ready to shake, and the garden is much grown over with weeds, Oh ! cry for the return of reformation-days ! for till then, there is but little hope of remarkable gathering of the people to Shiloh. And as Christ commanded his disciples to unbind Lazarus, when he was raised out of the grave, and to take away his grave-cloaths ; so, seek and earnestly intreat that the Lord may come and take away whatever is opposite to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house, and to the perfecting the work of reformation, and whatever tends to hinder it. But, again,

2. *Covenanting times*, in the church, have been gathering times ; as you may see in the time of Josiah,  
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2 Kings xxiii. 3. when the people made a covenant,—to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart and soul, and all the people stood to the covenant. Thus it was with these lands, when, after the reformation, all ranks were brought into holy and solemn covenants with God: in those days the Lord delighted in us, and our land was married to him; when, with uplifted hands, we swore allegiance to him, and abjured all rivals with him in his government. Never a nation was more solemnly bound to the Lord by national covenants, in the fifteenth century, the eightieth and eighty-first years thereof; and renewed again and again in the sixteenth century, the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth years thereof, and in latter times also; together with the solemn league afterwards for furthering the ends, designs, and obligations of the former. I know indeed some dispute, and deny the obligations of these covenants upon posterity: but as good Josiah brought back the people, and caused them to stand to the covenant of their fathers, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32.; so we find that religious covenants in scripture, comprehend absent, as well as present; and posterity to come, as well as the covenanting forefathers, Deut. xxix. 14, 15, 22, 24, 25. Now, our Solemn Covenants, that our forefathers entred into, being nothing but a superadded, and accumulative obligation, to what we were previously bound to by the word of God, they cannot but stand binding upon us their posterity. But as these covenanting days were gathering days, wherein many flocked in to Shiloh, and wherein God appended his seal to the covenanted work of reformation, by a numerous accession of souls to the Messias, under the influence of the powerful Spirit of God, blessing his word, and ordinances to their conversion; so our covenant-breaking days, on the other hand, are far from being gathering days. Little wonder, when we have occasion to lament, that our covenant hath been broken, burnt, and buried! and if our covenant-breaking be not duly lamented, and covenanted-reformation revived, we have ground to expect the Lord will send a sword a dreadful judgment, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant.

*nant.* Till there be a remarkable reviving hereof, we can hardly expect a remarkable gathering of the people to Shiloh.

3. *Confessing times*, in the church, have been gathering times; times of humble acknowledging of personal and national guilt, as you see, Ezra viii. 23. and ix. 7. and downwards, compared with chap. x. 1, 2, 3. No doubt, there were better days of the gospel, in respect of the power thereof, with us than now, when there was public and solemn acknowledgment of public sins and breaches of the Covenant; such as you have an account of in the ordinary Confessions of Faith among your hands. But in our days, we seem to be so far from taking with our public sins and defections, that we are rather upon the self-justifying lay, as if we had done nothing amiss, and as if matters had never been better with us. May we not hereupon conclude, that the Lord is speaking to us, as he did of old to Judah, Jer. ii. 34, 35. *Behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned?* While our mother-church is not duly taking with her sin, how can we expect a remarkable gathering of her children to Shiloh? Whereas, if our uncircumcised hearts were humbled, and that we were *confessing our iniquities*, and the *iniquities of our fathers*, then we might expect the Lord would yet *remember his covenant*, and *heal our land*, as it is, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. Not that public reformings, covenantings, and confessings have any meritorious influence upon, or are procuring causes of remarkable gatherings unto Shiloh; only in this method and order he uses to work, preparing the way of the people, Isa. lvii. 14. and lxii. 10. He *gathers out the stones*, *lifts up a standard for the people*, and then follows the gathering of the people to him: therefore, while none of these national revivings, or public acknowledgments of our own and our forefathers iniquities, appear, little wonder, that, instead of a gathering of the people to Shiloh, we see clouds gathering in our sky, and more and more national bondage and thralldom taking place: *We walk contrary to God, and God walks contrary to us, and will punish seven times more for our iniquities.* Therefore,



fore, if you would wish for a remarkable gathering, O cry for a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of repentance and reformation, whereof there is so little to be seen in church or state in our day. O seek for a return of his departed glory, and that our land may not be called LO-AMMI and LO-RUHAMAH, as it is said, Hof. i. 6, 9. but rather AMMI and RUHAMAH, Hof. ii. 1. and that we may be called HEPHZI-BAH and BEULAH, Isa. lxii. 4. that the Lord may yet delight in us, and our land may yet again be married; so that every one may not only call him BAALI, but ISHI \*, Hofea ii. 16.—  
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4. *Suffering and contending times* in the church have been remarkable gathering times. It was in times of persecution and suffering of the church, that such great numbers of people were converted and gathered in to Christ in the primitive ages, as you see, Acts iv. 4.—*Times of contending for the faith*, have been times of conveying to Christ, the glorious object of faith: yea, scattering times have been gathering times, when the Lord hath scattered his servants abroad, that by the preaching of the word in every airth to which they were scattered, there might be a gathering of the people to Shiloh, as you see it was, Acts viii. 4. and particularly, Acts xi. 19, 20, 21. Thus the Jewish persecution first, and then the primitive Pagan persecution next; especially the second under Domitian, which was about the sixty-ninth year of Christ; and the ninth and tenth under Aurelius and Dioclesian, as historians relate, were the very means of bringing the gospel first to Scotland, while eminent men fled from these dreadful tempests unto this land, and so planted the gospel here. *Suffering times, persecuting times, and hiding times*, have been gathering times in the church. Some old persons here, perhaps, have been witnesses to days of power in the time of persecution, in the late

\* LO-AMMI; i. e. *Not my people*. LO-RUHAMAH; i. e. *Not having obtained mercy*.—AMMI; i. e. *My people*. RUHAMAH; i. e. *Having obtained mercy*.—HEPHZI-BAH; i. e. *My delight is in her*. BEULAH; i. e. *Married*.—BAALI; i. e. *My Lord*. ISHI; i. e. *My husband*.

suffering times in Scotland. Our fathers have told us, how the Lord appeared for them and with them, when men were appearing most bloodily against them: they have heard the best news from heaven, when they heard the worst from earth. God many times smiles most upon his church, when the world frowns most against them; when the cause and truths of Christ are most opposed by men, God usually puts the most remarkable seal to them upon the hearts of many. Some can say, When they were contending most for the truth, then the Lord hath made the truth most sweet and refreshful to themselves, and most powerful and efficacious to others. Even a time of bonds hath been a time of begetting children to God: *Mind Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds*, says Paul, in the 10th verse of his epistle to Philemon. Indeed, the Lord's gathering time is not confined to suffering periods of the church; for, *Glorious things are spoken of Zion the city of God*, even at other times, *that this man and that man was born there*; and that it can be said of our Zion, without looking many years back, that this man and that man, this woman and that woman was born there. But I speak of remarkable gatherings, where it can be said, not only *this man and that man*, but *this multitude and that multitude* was born there; and O for a time of the gathering of multitudes to Christ! Perhaps sad and suffering days must come again before we have such gathering days; and there may be terrible sufferings before there be remarkable gatherings; for, *he whose fan is in his hand, does usually purge his floor, before he gather in his wheat*, Mat. iii. 12.

But as the day of calamity in itself is not to be desired; so, that we may not be hopeless in the mean time, I would further tell you, that the church's backsliding times have been God's gathering times, according to Jer. iii. 14. *Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord! for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and bring you to Zion*. There is a call in a backsliding time; but see ver. 22. where there is not only a gathering call, but a gathering power accompanying the call, even at a time wherein they had

had *perverted their ways, and forgotten the Lord their God : Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings ;* and then it follows, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* Behold a gathering of the people unto Shiloh in a backsliding time ! O then, let backsliding Scotland say, *Behold we come !* O that the hearts of hearers were saying, *Behold we come !* Oh ! there is no national reformation can take place, till there be a personal reformation : if personal returning to the Lord were general and universal, then there would be a national returning.—Therefore, if you would wish to see a national reviving, let every person put in for a share of gathering power and grace, saying, *Turn me, and I shall be turned ; draw me, and I shall run ;* and, under the conduct of drawing power, let us say, *Behold we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* Hath your personal backsliding, man, woman, been great and grievous ? Hath this been your disease all your days, a backsliding heart, a backsliding nature, a backsliding practice, a bentness to backsliding in thought, word, and action ! Is that your disease, that you are a backsliding heifer, a backsliding devil, that, it may be, thinks the disease is desperate and incurable ? O let me assure you, that there is a Healer come here to day, that says, *I will heal your backslidings ;* and he will not say the thing that he cannot do. And while his mercy is saying, *I will heal your backslidings,* let your heart be saying, *Lord, I will come to thee* for that healing, for that is my disease, and there is none in the world needs it so much as I : the church and nation need to have their backslidings healed ; but I am the particular person that needs it most of all ; heal me, and I shall be healed ; behold, I come to thee for that end. Is your heart saying so ? Then welcome be all comers ; welcome, welcome, welcome ! *Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out :* nay, he will in no wise cast up your former backslidings, but heal you, without upbraiding you ; for *he gives liberally, and upbraids not.* *I will heal your backslidings :* it is spoken without limitation, either of former or future backslidings ; and therefore the fear of backsliding again, needs not discourage you  
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from coming to him; your former backslidings will not cast you out: and though you backslide again, he will not cast you off; *He may visit your iniquity with the rod, but his loving-kindness will he not take away*: No; he will in no wise cast you out. Backslidings shall never part him and you, for he will heal your backslidings; *I will heal your backslidings*. It hath respect to the future, as well as the present time; not to encourage your sinning for the future, no, no; but to encourage sinners to come, notwithstanding of their fears of future failings: this shall be my office and employment, so long as you labour under that disease of backsliding, which will be till you come to *that land, where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick*: now, till you come there, I will constantly and perpetually be a physician and healer to you, to give you my healing word, my healing blood, my healing visits, from time to time, and to arise like the Sun of righteousness with healing under my wings from day to day: therefore come, backsliding soul, and let me have all your employment from day to day. O! is your heart saying, *Behold we come!* then, blessed be the comers, though they have been backsliders. The people that must be gathered to Shiloh, are a backsliding people; and if it were not such, it would be none of Adam's race, for all are smitten with the same disease; therefore all the backsliders here are invited to be comers. Come and welcome in the name of Shiloh, to whom the gathering must be: and in his blessed Father's name, come and welcome. And if there be any comers here, then glory, glory to God, that, notwithstanding all that is amiss in the church of Scotland, yet it is a gathering time; notwithstanding all your backslidings, yet it is a gathering season.——Thus I have considered the gathering seasons with relation to the remarkable gathering of the church in general.

2dly, The gathering seasons may be considered, with relation to the *initial* gathering of *sinners* in particular; when he begins to gather in sinners to himself, O the freedom and sovereignty of his grace, that shines in the seasons and times of gathering! for some he gathers at  
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the *third hour*, Mat. xx. 3. some at the *sixth hour*, and some at the *ninth hour*, ver. 5. yea, some at the *eleventh hour*, ver. 6. These are four periods and seasons mentioned; for he gathers some in the morning, some in the evening, some at mid-day, and some at mid-night; whatever be the hour, it is an happy hour; *The hour comes when the dead shall hear*: and, O may this be the happy hour, with respect to some here? More particularly,

1. The *morning* is the gathering season, with respect to some; I mean, the morning of their youth, the Lord hath gathered some very early in the morning, before break of day, before ever they saw the light of day; for some are gathered before they be born, sealed and sanctified from the womb, as well as foreknown from eternity: Jer. i. 5. *Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee*: which some have applied to regeneration, that some are spiritually born, before ever they are naturally so. We are sure that infants are as capable of all the essentials of regeneration, as adult persons are. The essential part thereof, is, *God's putting his Spirit within them*; and infants are as capable of this as aged persons, if not more, while natural enmity is not strengthened by actual rebellions. But this I pass, as more rare, and what cannot be known, but by some remarkable effects thereof. It is not so rarely that some are gathered in the morning of their younger years; so was it with Josias, who was called at *eight years old*, 2 Kings xxii. 1, 2. so was it with Timothy, who *knew the holy scriptures from a child*, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And, if the morning of youth be a gathering season unto Shiloh, let this encourage young children, that are here, to *remember their Creator and Redeemer, in the days of their youth*: O remember to seek him early; *I love them that love me*, says God; *and they that seek me early shall find me*. See also, Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power: in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth*.

2. The *evening* is the gathering season, with respect to some : God gathers some in the evening of their old age. Thus we find Abraham was gathered in his old age ; he was *seventy-five years old*, when God first called him, Gen. xii. 4. : and it is probable, that Nicodemus was an old man, before he was *born again*, as appears from John iii. 4.—Is there any old sinner here, that hath been a transgressor from the womb, and been living without Christ all your days ? Oh ! it is more than time you were gathered in to Shiloh. Oh ! hath the devil got the morning, and the noontide of your day, and will you give him the evening too ? Alas ! Sirs, he hath got too much of your time already ; let Christ have the rest, if he can have no more. I dare not say, that he will not take what the devil hath left ; for I have no warrant from the word, to say, that old age cannot be God's gathering time : I am sure my text excludes neither old nor young, *To him shall the gathering of the people be* ; therefore let even old and dying people gather in to the new and living way, which is consecrated for us, through the veil of the Mediator's flesh ; sure it is the best way, that you can take, before you be gathered into a grave.

3. The *mid-day* is God's gathering season, with respect to some ; I mean, the middle time of their age : and, whom God gathers, he most ordinarily gathers about the midst of their days. Some have judged, that God's remnant are most ordinarily gathered in, betwixt the years of fifteen and twenty-five, others, between fourteen and forty. But I dare not *limit the holy One of Israel* : only, seeing the most part here are, perhaps, such as are about the midst of their day, O look to God, to hallow the middle of your days, as Solomon hallowed the middle of the court, 2 Chron. vii. 7. And when God says of the Messias, *To him shall the gathering of the people be* ; let all the people say, AMEN. Ye that are young, ye that are old, and ye that are betwixt the two, O say, AMEN ; let gathering power come.

4. The *midnight* is a gathering season, with respect to some ; I mean, not only a *midnight* time of *death* and approaching *eternity*, at which season God hath gathered

ed some, as he did the thief on the cross, though it is not his ordinary time; but also a midnight state of *security*, when the soul is in a dead sleep; even such a time hath been a gathering time. I need not insist here on Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, and others: when did the day of grace dawn upon Saul, afterwards called Paul? even when it was the darkest hour in the night; when he was sleeping most sound in the bed of security. It is true, his body was not sleeping, for he was riding furiously to Damascus; but his soul was so far asleep, that he was snorting and breathing very high in his sleep, Acts ix. 1. He was *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*; behold, even at midnight there came a cry from heaven, that awakened him, and roused him to seek Jesus. Now, it is, perhaps, a midnight-time with some here; they are sleeping and breathing in their sleep; breathing out enmity against God, and the people of God, and the way of God; but a midnight time may be a gathering time, as it is said, Mat. xxv. 6. when all the virgins, wise and foolish, that at midnight there came a cry, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him*: so, though it be midnight, with the church, and midnight with poor miserable secure souls; yet at midnight there is a cry in this gospel, behold Shiloh is come, and let the gathering of the people be to him; go forth and meet him; for, behold he comes with salvation.—There is the initial gathering.

3dly, The gathering seasons may be considered, with relation to the *progressive* gathering of *believers*, in whom the good work is begun, and who have either now, or at some former time, been engaged to come to Shiloh; yet they need to be still coming to him, and still gathering under his wings. Now, many are the gathering seasons, that relate to the believer's *progressive* gathering, and advances in nearness to, and communion with the Lord. I shall consider them, for distinction and memory's sake, in these four periods; namely, of summer, winter, spring, and harvest.—

And,

1. There are *summer times of refreshment*, that believers sometimes have immediately after the gathering harvest of conversion; and these summer times are further gathering times, and contribute to their progressive gathering. When the soul hath been long under guilt and wrath, and under the frowns and displeasure of God, and had long seen the gates of heaven barred against them, and the mouth of hell open to receive him; then readily the Lord comes in, and speaks peace to the soul, saying, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, for mine own name's sake.*—Hearken soul, my thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace; here is mercy, to pardon thee; merit, to justify thee; blood, to wash thee; balm, to heal thee; bread, to nourish thee; wine, to cherish thee; raiment, to cloath thee.—Thus after Paul was awakened, and converted, and gathered, then God takes him up to the third heaven, and makes such manifestations of his love and favour, beauty and glory, as he is not able to utter.—Thus, after the prodigal's return, the fatted calf is killed, the best robe is put upon his back, and the ring is put upon his hand, and shoes on his feet; shewing us, that upon the sinner's conversion, and gathering in to Shiloh, God is graciously pleased to give him some choice and signal manifestation of his love and favour, grace and glory; and these contribute to his progressive gathering; *He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him*, John ii. 11. Hence, Psalm cii. 16. when he *builds up Zion*, he *appears in his glory*; when the stones that are already gathered, and laid upon the foundation, are to be built up a spiritual house, in a progressive work, he discovers his glory; that *beholding his glory, they may be changed from glory to glory*. But the summer-time of spiritual prosperity may be but a short time, as David's, Psalm xxx. 6, 7. though it ordinarily recurs to them in some measure, even as measure does year by year; yet it is frequently followed with a winter. Therefore,

2. There are *winter-times of adversity*, which believers have, which yet may be God's gathering times,  
for



for making way for their progressive gathering to Shiloh. And thus,

(1.) A winter time of *personal affliction* does sometimes make way, for their further gathering; *It was good for me that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have learned thy law*: he had been straying, but now a gathering again was the fruit of his affliction, according to Hosea v. 15. *In their affliction they shall seek me early*: their afflicting times shall be a gathering time, for bringing them nearer to the Lord; hence they have been made to *rejoice in the Lord, though the fig-tree should blossom, and to glory in tribulation*. As the ark was lifted up nearer and nearer heaven, by the rising of the waves; so, by affliction, believers are raised nearer and nearer to God in Christ.

(2.) The winter-time of *fore trial* hath sometimes been a gathering time to them: gathering mercy *prevents* them sometimes before an eminent trial, to prepare them for it. Thus it was with Elijah; *Arise and eat, for thou hast a journey before thee, and the journey is too great*:—*And he went in the strength of that meal forty days and forty nights, till he came to Horeb the mount of God*, 1 Kings xix. 7, 8. Sometimes gathering mercy *supports* them in the trial, and under it, saying, *Fear not, for I am with thee; I will strengthen thee: when thou goest through the fire, I will be with thee that the flames kindle not upon thee*. Thus many times the Son of man is with them in the furnace, gathering them in his arms, as he was with John in the isle of Patmos; with Ezekiel, by the river Chebar; with David, in the wilderness of Judea; and with the three children, in the furnace of fire. Again.

(3.) The winter-time of *temptation* is sometimes a gathering time unto them; as, after Paul was buffeted by Satan, he heard that sweet word, *My grace shall be sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness*. Yea, after the sharpest conflict he usually gives the strongest cordial, for gathering their spirits again; *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul*, Psalm xciv. 19.

(4.) The winter-time of *desertion* and hiding, hath been sometimes a gathering season : let not the deserted soul be too much disquieted, the valley of Achor may be a door of hope ; you may have occasion to say, as Psalm cxiv. 6. *I was brought low, and he helped me ;* you may be brought to the brink of despair, that you may have occasion to say, as Psalm xl. 2, 3. *He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings : and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.* When Jacob was in great distress, God met with him at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. ; and when he was in great fear that God would not accomplish his promise, he was prevented by another visit, Gen. xxxii. ; and it was the most remarkable night that ever he had : he calls the place PENIEL ; for he saw God *face to face* ; and he had told him before what he had been, and would be to him, saying, *I am the God of Bethel.*

(5.) The winter of *downcasting* hath been a time of reviving ; O my God, *my soul is cast down within me ; therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* And, *Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts ; all thy waves and billows have gone over me : yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his songs shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life,* Psalm x'ii. 6, 7, 8. Thus he gives songs *in the night*, insomuch that the darkest night hath ushered in the clearest light, according to that promise, Zech. xiv. 7. *It shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light.* Again,

(6.) The winter-time of *outcasting* hath been a gathering time ; for, *He gathers the outcasts of Israel,* Isa. lvi. 8. *I said, I am cast out of thy sight ; yet will I look again to thy holy temple,* Jonah ii. 4. There, you see, was a gathering time by faith unto Christ, when he was cast out into the very *belly of hell*, as it is called, verse 2. You, whose name is a CAST-OUT, may then expect that your name may be turned to a SOUGHT-OUT, Isaiah lxii. 12.

(7.) The

(7.) The winter time of fears ; *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee : fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness.* The time of hopelessness and helplessness hath been a time of spiritual gathering to the people of God ; *I looked on my right-hand, and beheld ; but there was no man that would know me ; all refuge failed me : then I cried to thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living,* Psal. cxliv. 4, 5. When their hope is perished, and nothing but the sentence of death passing, then the Lord hath been gathering ; *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead,* 2 Cor. i. 9. Yea, when the soul hath not only been sentenced, but slain in a manner, and laid in the grave, then hath it been a time of gathering ; *Our bones are dried,* says the church ; *our hope is lost ; we are cut off for our parts :* but, *Behold, saith the Lord, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up : and I will put my Spirit in you, and you shall live,* Ezekiel xxxvii. 11, 12.

(8.) Yea, a winter-time of *sinning*, and declining, and departing from the Lord, hath been a time of gathering of his people ; and this is most wonderful of all, as I said before of a backsliding time : O ! that is a strange word, Isa. xliii. 23, 24, 25. *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquity : yet I, even I am he, that blotteth out thine iniquities for my name's sake.* There is one of the bitterest challenges for sin, and that backed with one of the sweetest promises of pardon and pity, and of gathering and restoring mercy : will this encourage a believer to sin, because the time of your falling down may be a time of God's gathering-up ? Oh ! no ; nothing will humble and melt the believer's heart for sin more, than to think of the riches of divine mercy, and sovereign grace : when he stoops down to gather you out of the mire that you fall into, and recovers your soul and your graces. Some tell us that musk, when it hath lost its smell and sweetness, if it be put into a sink among filth,

filth, it recovers it; so when the believer's graces have lost their flavour and favouring exercise, the Lord, in a manner, lets them fall into the mire, that their decaying graces may be recovered and revived. Thus Peter was suffered to fall into the mire of dreadful sinning, and then his graces were revived; his humility revived, he was humbled to the dust; his repentance was revived, *He went out and wept bitterly*; his spiritual remembrance was revived, for he remembered the words of Christ to him; and all flowed from this, that it was even Christ's gathering time; for while he was yet among the dung, into which he fell, Christ looks upon Peter, with a gracious gathering eye, Luke xxii. 61, 62. Let the believer then, for the up-stirring and encouragement of his faith, know, that his saddest winter-time may be God's gathering time to Shiloh.—Your halting time may be his gathering time: when your decrepid feet make you go halting in the way of the Lord; *I will assemble her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out*, Micah iv. 6.—Your falling time may be his raising and up gathering time; your perishing time may be his saving time; for his *thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways*.—And his taking such a time, makes his interposal at such a juncture the more wonderful, and the more welcome. But now, as, in these instances, God is pleased to glorify his sovereignty, and shew that he does not confine himself to means, in these progressive gatherings of believers, any more than he did in the initial gatherings of unbelievers to himself; so to glorify his holiness, and to put honour upon the means of his own appointment, you would know also, that,

3. There are *spring-times* of *spiritual duty* and *gospel-diligence*, which believers have, which are also God's gathering times, with respect to their progressive gathering to Shiloh. (By the bye, neglect not means, on pretence that grace must do all; it were an ill argument, water only refreshes, therefore cut off all cocks and pipes.) But to return; such a spring-time as this you read of, Song ii. 10,—13. *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Arise my love, my fair one, and come away:*  
for

for, lo ! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone : the flowers appear.—Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. Why, it is a gathering time, therefore come away. Now, what are these fruits and flowers that appear in the spiritual spring-time which prognosticates a gathering-time to be at hand ; yea, that it is a gathering time at present ? There are several fruits of the Spirit, that appear in the gospel spring-time, which betoken a gathering time : As,

(1.) A believing time is a gathering time : faith is one of the fruits and flowers that appear in this spring. A believing time is so much a gathering time, that God's gathering, is his giving faith ; and our gathering, is our exercising faith. But a believing time is also a prognosticating time, betokening a further progressive gathering, so as to be brought to more and more nearness to the Lord Jesus : hence believing times are glorious times ; *Said I not unto thee, If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?* John xi. 40. When God's children are in the exercise of faith, then the Lord is pleased to make known his goodness. Believing times are sealing times ; *In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise,* Eph. ii. 13. Believing times are rejoicing times ; *In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,* 1 Pet. i. 8. There is joy and peace in believing. Faith ordinarily brings in sense ; spiritual sense and feeling is the fruit of faith ; though, by the bye, I must tell you, what is the fault and folly of the most part even of believers themselves, from whence it flows that they feel so little of the sweet fruits and advantages of faith, they make sense and feeling the root and ground of faith ; whereas it is only the fruit and effect of faith. But know, that when sense is made the support of faith, it frequently leaves faith in the mire ; for when sense, which they made the ground of their faith, fails, then their faith fails with it. The only sure ground of faith is God's word, his truth, his faithfulness, which is an unchangeable ground.—Now, if you make God's work upon you, such as spiritual sense, graces, experience, or the like, the ground

of your faith, you will find these to be such changeable grounds, so much up and down, that your faith must be up and down with them, and you will totter sooner than you are aware : or, if you build your faith partly upon sense, feelings, *etc.* and partly upon God's truth, you are then like a man that sets one foot upon a firm ground, and the other upon a floating board : when the loose floating board fails or slips, you will hardly stand fast, however firm the other foot stands. Who among all ordinary believers knows not the ebbings and flowing, the ups and downs of frames and spiritual feelings ? They may rise and fall ten times in an hour, as the wind blows. Now, if your faith be built upon these love-tokens, and depend upon them ; then, as your faith must be very wavering, so God, seeing himself robbed of the dependence due to him, may purposely withhold these things from you, that you may learn not to trust in uncertain experiences, but on the living God. Why, say you, when I get these love-tokens, it is not upon these that I trust, but on the God that sent them. Well done, if it be true : but I fear it is otherwise ; for if Christ himself and his truths be the ground of your faith, when you get these love-tokens, then how comes it, that when these love-tokens are gone, and when sense and feeling is gone, your faith is to seek ? I suppose, when feeling is up, then your faith is up ; and when feeling is down, your faith is down. Now, if the whole building of your faith were upon the unchangeable Rock, you would see no more cause of doubting, when the changeable feeling is gone, than when it is present ; and therefore, I fear it be your fault, believer, as well as mine, that many times we lay too much weight upon that thawing ice, and make sense and feeling the ground of our faith. But if God make you a believer at all, man, he will bring you off gradually from this evil : and if you never believe till you get spiritual sense, you will never be a believer ; for feeling follows believing, and therefore believing must be before feeling. To build faith upon sense then, is like a man setting up the couples of a house, and then beginning at the rigging or roof of the house,

house, and building it downward; such a house can never be built.—This is one lesson by the bye, which though we should tell you it twenty times, we will need to tell it over again; however, I say, it is a believing time that is a gathering time, for faith hath influence upon all other graces: it is like a silver thread, that runs through a chain of pearls: it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues: it applies and appropriates all to itself, even God, and Christ, and the promises, and all: it is like the spring of the watch, that sets all the golden wheels of love, joy, comfort, and peace agoing; for it sees in Christ's righteousness a fulness, a glory that fills the heart with glorious joy. Christ is the centre of faith, and therefore a believing time is a time of gathering to Shiloh.—But lest any say, Oh! I do not find it a believing time with me: therefore,

(2.) A *repenting* time is a gathering time; and repentance is one of the fruits that appears in this spring-time that I speak of: and gospel-repentance natively springs from faith; for, in short, "It is a turning from sin to God, through Christ by faith;" and surely, where there is no such turning from sin, there is no gathering to Shiloh; Isa. lv. 7. There you see this gospel repentance described, in the several parts that I have mentioned. 1. It is a *turning from sin*; therefore it is said, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*; all sins of heart and way, thought, word, or action. 2. It is a turning from sin to God; therefore it is said, *Let him return to the Lord*: there is the end. 3. It is a returning from sin to God through Christ; therefore it is said, *Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*: and so it is a merciful sin-pardoning God, that is, a God in Christ, in whom alone God is reconciled, and well-pleased: and without this apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, there can be no kindly repentance. Therefore, 4. It is a returning from sin to God through Christ, by *faith*; hence it is said, *Let him return,—FOR he will abundantly pardon*. Faith looks to this FOR, this motive of return-

ing: faith views the motive, and so influences the return. As it is a good FOR, so it is a good TURN that is influenced thereby; and as the motive to an action is viewed, before the act be elicited; so here, the motive though the last thing in the expression, yet is the first thing viewed by faith. O! is there mercy with him for the like of me, and pardon, yea, abundant pardon, great pardon for my great sins, multiplied pardon for my multiplied sins! O this kindness of God melts the heart! this goodness of God leads to repentance! and so the faith of God's favour and mercy in Christ influences this gospel-repentance. And indeed the whole progress of the believer, in this continued progressive gathering to Shiloh, is intermixed with this penitent disposition: he cannot cease repenting, till he hath ceased sinning, and consequently till he hath ceased living: and his most joyful days of communion with God, on earth, are still attended with the joyful tears of repentance; and he *sows in tears*, till he *reap in joy*. He never comes to Christ, by any lively act of faith, but, at the same time, with Mary, he washes his feet with his tears, in a manner, and wipes them with the hair of his head. But in case any should think their faith and repentance is to seek, therefore it is no gathering time with them: Why then,

(3.) A *praying* time is and indicates a gathering time; I speak of the prayer of faith: while Daniel was praying, and *confessing his own sins*, and the *sins of his people*, the Lord appeared to him, and gives him a divine touch, and tells him, that he is a *man greatly beloved*, Dan. ix. 20, 23. Of this we have the instance of Cornelius also, Acts x. 1,—4. God loves to load the wings of prayer with the choicest and chiefest blessings, the best and sweetest flowers of paradise. God gives liberally many times to his people, when they are upon their knees. Thus many have found praying times to be sealing times, wherein the Lord hath been pleased graciously to lift up the light of his countenance upon them. After much praying, weeping, and wrestling, God usually comes, with his hand and his heart full of mercy to his people; he loves not to come  
empty



empty handed to these that have tarried long begging at mercy's door.—But because some poor soul may think, either they cannot pray, or they have been long praying, and yet have not come speed:—Therefore,

(4.) A waiting time speaks forth a gathering time; *The vision is for an appointed time, at the end it will speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry, Hab. iii. 3.* God never did nor will fail the praying and waiting soul; for, they that wait on him shall not be ashamed, *If. xlix 23. They shall not be ashamed that wait for me: yea, Isa. xl. 31. 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.* Therefore we are to wait for him, *as the husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and latter rain, James v. 7.* Though you do not reap the very day you sow, yet, *in due time you shall reap, if you faint not, Gal. vi. 9.* David found his waiting time to usher in a gathering time, *Psalms xl. 1, 2, 3. I waited patiently on the Lord, and he inclined to me, and heard my cry, he brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay; and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings: and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God.* Old Simeon had waited for the consolation of Israel, and behold the Holy Ghost led him to a sight of Christ in the temple, *Luke ii. 25,—30.* And this made the old man sing, and say, *Now, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;—for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* O I have lived long enough, for now I have got Christ in my heart, and Christ in my hands, who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my glory, my all. O believer, have you not found, when you have been, weeping and waiting at the door of mercy, how the Lord hath sometimes caused his love and goodness to beam forth upon you, so as to make your heart rejoice, and your tongue to sing; yea, so as to gather your soul

to Shiloh, and to gather all the lines of your affections to meet in him, as the centre of your rest, and so as you could have wished the valley of vision had been your burial-place, and that your eyes might never see another sight than the glorious Jesus, that was discovered to you, when you was waiting on him in public ordinances, or in a certain secret corner?—But in case any poor soul may be saying, Oh! I have been waiting, and yet find so little success, that I fear, I am a stranger to the right way of waiting.—Therefore,

(5.) A *longing* time may be a gathering time, and hath been so; for, Psalm cvii. 9. *He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things.* Are you at David's four *how-longs*? Psal. xiii. 1, 2. *How LONG, Lord, wilt thou forget me for ever? How LONG wilt thou hide thy face from me? How LONG shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How LONG shall mine enemies be exalted over me?* It seems his longing was soon backed with gathering influences, drawing out his whole soul towards the Lord, and filling his heart with joy, and his tongue with singing, ver. 5, 6. *I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation; yea, I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.* O believer, when you are longing, he is waiting, and *waiting to be gracious*, Isa. xxx. 18. Surely you have found it in your experience, that your longing time hath been his gathering time: but lest you mistake, know that I speak of gathering, in the whole of my progress here, both in an active and passive sense; both *passively*, that is, God's gathering his people to Shiloh, and to more and more nearness to him; and *actively*, that is, their active gathering to him, through his grace. Now, I say, a longing time is, and presages a further gathering time; for, *He fills the hungry with good things.*—Some have found that promise of *satisfying the longing soul*, as clearly made out, as it is evident, that the light of the day shines at present.—But some poor soul may say, I fear it is no gathering time with respect to me; for I find no such disposition as you have been speak-

speaking of ; it is neither a believing nor a repenting time with me, neither a praying, waiting, nor longing time with me. Therefore,

(6.) An *attending* time, O believer, may be a gathering time ; your attending time, I say, O soul, may be God's gathering time. It is true, bodily attendance, like *bodily exercise in religion*, profits little ; when people come to duties and ordinances with their bodies only, to see and hear, and hardly that, while their eyes and ears are sometimes shut with sleep and heaviness ; but because preventing grace hath laid hold upon sinners many times, and taken them napping, and gathered them to Shiloh ; therefore I shall not discourage peoples giving their bodily attendance on gospel-means and ordinance, even though they have neither an outward ear, or inward disposition towards a regular attendance : because, though, in such a case, justice might take advantage against them righteously ; yet none knows, but mercy may catch them at a disadvantage graciously ; as it did the man, who coming to church, yet hating to hear, set his elbows on the desk, and put his fingers into his ears ; but while he was napping, one of his elbows falls down, and as his finger went out of his ear, a word of the sermon came in to it, by which the Lord caught him, converted him, and gathered him to Shiloh. But the subject I am upon, at present, relates to believers, and their progressive gathering ; and it may be their case sometimes, that an outward attendance is all that they can attain unto : they can find neither any believing, repenting, praying, waiting, or longing disposition ; but on the contrary, much darkness, deadness, dulness, despondency, hardness, heaviness, and all spiritual indisposition : only this is all they can say, Some secret hair of hope hath brought them to attend, and give their bodily presence, that they may hear what God will say to them, and see what God will do them. Well, poor soul, even such an attending time as this may be a gathering time, as you may see it was with these spoken of, Acts x. 33. *We are all here present, say they, before God, to hear all things commanded thee of God :* what they

they were to get, or receive from God, they knew not as yet; but all they could say, at present, was, that they had brought their souls and bodies before God, to attend upon him in his ordinances. It seems they had some secret hope, that they might get some good by Peter's preaching; and behold it was a remarkable gathering time, as you see, verse 44. For *while he spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all that heard the word.* Therefore, if any poor creature be here, saying, It does not look like a gathering time, with respect to me; for it is not a believing time, but a doubting time; it is not a repenting time, but rather a rebelling time; it is not a praying time, but rather a perplexing time; not a waiting, but a wearying time; not a longing, but a languishing time; I cannot so much as pray, nor pant, nor long, nor look up; I can hardly give an hearty sigh, or a groan upwards.—Well, but poor creature, can you say, *Lord, I am here present before thee,* thou knowest this is all I can do; I have no more, under heaven, about me, of disposition to any duty or ordinance, but a secret *may-be the Lord will pity,* and may-be not; I am just at the footstool of sovereignty.—Well, such a time may be a gathering time; when they were all present before the Lord hearing, a gathering wind came, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. This is one of the lowest flowers that appear in the believer's spring-time, when no grace is appearing in his view at all, but only he is presenting himself before the God of all grace; and does not the believer find this to be even a gathering time, now and then in secret, as well as public, when all he can do is just to cast himself *down on his knees, before the Lord his Maker,* as it is, Psal. xcv. 6. with a *who knows but the Lord may pity?* This attendance on the Lord, even in this manner, hath been blessed with a mighty gathering wind about their souls, that hath blown them nearer to the Lord, their harbour of rest, than ever they were before. Therefore, believer, however low your circumstances may be, when you can do no more but attend, as it were, at  
a secret

a secret duty or public ordinance, never draw back your attendance on the Lord, and presenting yourselves before him; seeing your attending time may be his gathering time.—Thus I have mentioned to you some of the believer's spring-times of duty, and some of the fruits and flowers that appear therein, which speak forth a gathering time, and presage an harvest. And this leads me to speak of another gathering season, with respect to the believer's progressive approach to Christ, or gathering to Shiloh.

4. There are *harvest-times* of *solemn ordinances*, or *gospel-solemnities*, not only teaching but sealing ordinances, which his people sometimes have, and which are God's gathering times, and the believer's gathering times, with respect to their progressive gathering unto Shiloh. And though the Lord of the harvest, who sends forth labourers thereunto, and takes them away when he pleases; as he hath lately removed one\*, that used to be an eminent labourer at solemnities, in Airth; on which occasion, if we cannot say in point of paucity, that though the harvest be great, the labourers are few; yet sure I am, we may with grief of heart say, in point of quality, that the harvest is great, and the honest evangelical labourers are the fewer that he is gone: and the only thing that makes such an heavy loss to be supportable, is, that the Lord of the harvest still remains, who can send forth labourers, qualified for whatsoever work he hath ado: But what I was saying, is, that though the Lord of the harvest makes these gospel-solemnities, frequently to be the gathering times for sinners, in respect of their initial gathering, of which I spoke before; yet the special design of these communion-solemnities, is, for advancing the progressive gathering of believers: and, though the most remarkable progress of the believer may be upon his knees in secret duties, and in secret prayer, and secret intercourse betwixt God and him; yet public or-

\* It is supposed, and with a great degree of probability too, that our Author, both here, and page 115. has his eye upon that shining light, and able servant of Christ, the Rev. Mr. Brisbane, minister of the gospel at Stirling.

dinances are the means of these private intercourses ; though the secret may be most comfortable and refreshing, yet the public ordinances lay the foundation of that secret comfort and refreshment. It is in this, as it is with the public well of a city, from whence people go and fetch water to their private houses ; for ordinary, there is not so much use made of the water at the public well itself, till once they bring it home in their vessel to the private house or family, and there it is more freely made use of for several necessary purposes ; such as for drink, and refreshing meals, the liquid part whereof is mostly made up of the water, that was fetched home from the well. Public ordinances are the wells ; but, for ordinary, the children of God are not so much refreshed with the water thereof, till once they get home to some secret corner with it, and there they get a more hearty draught, and refreshing drink of the water of life, than they got at the public well ; but still it is from thence it was fetched ; and so the foundation of these private and secret refreshing meals, is ordinarily laid in the public ordinances. It is true, some that go to fetch home water from the well, may, according to their need, get an hearty drink of water, even at the side of the well, before they bring any water home ; and so the Lord's people may, and sometimes do, get a very heartsome and refreshing draught of living water, even at the well-side of public ordinances, while they are hearing the word, or receiving the sacrament of the supper. Now, the harvest-time of gospel-solemnities, for the believer's progressive gathering unto Shiloh, is twofold, *teaching* and *sealing*.

(1.) The harvest-time of *teaching* solemnities is his hearing season, which frequently is God's gathering season ; the gathering of the people to Shiloh is ordinarily made up in the time of hearing the word ; for, *faith comes by hearing* : and the progressive gathering of believers is ordinarily made up also in the time of hearing the word : for, the *increase of faith* comes by hearing ; *As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,* 1 Pet. ii. 2. And hence, the doctrine of the gospel is the ordinary means  
of

of working and increasing faith ; because it is the *ministration of the Spirit* ; Gal. iii. 2. *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?* This gospel is the power of God to salvation, both for working faith, and for advancing it ; *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 17. By this means we advance, *if so be we have heard of him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21. The gospel is like a ladder, by which we climb up to a God in Christ, when he is gathering us to him ; and every truth of the gospel is like so many steps or rounds of the ladder, and every one of them should be maintained and contended for : if any of the rounds of the ladder be broken off, you are in danger of falling down, and your climbing up is rendered more difficult or impossible. Every truth denied, or error maintained, is like a cutting out, or breaking off a round of the ladder ; and whenever a breath is made in it, the climbing up by it is rendered impracticable, if it be a fundamental error ; or greatly obstructed, if it nearly concern the fundamentals of religion : we need therefore to be concerned, that every truth be maintained by us, and transmitted to our posterity pure and entire. It is our mercy, that we have pure Standards : and if any latter acts \* of this church seem to clash therewith, we hope they have not the deliberate approbation, even of those that framed them ; however all gospel-truths ought to be sacred to us, as well as the purchased liberties and privileges in God's house ; the loss of the least whereof, is the loss of a jewel out of the Mediator's crown. Christ is the Head, and centre of all gospel-truth, and we ought to hold by the Head ; and so we shall hold by the truth, as it is in Jesus the Head. The apostle complains of some, their *not holding the Head*, Colos. ii. 19. Some instead of holding the Head, they hold by the feet : it is enough to them, that such a good man, or such a learned man says so and so, concerning this or that truth ; and so let the Head go, and hold by the feet, not regarding

\* What these Acts are may be seen, Vol. I. pag. 238. Vol. II. pag. 304, 305.

the truth, as it is in Jesus ; but the truth, as it is delivered by such a man, whom they esteem, or such another man that hath this or that good character : but we ought to hang and hold by the Head, and not to hang our faith at the belt of any man or angel : *For, if we, or an angel from heaven, preach another doctrine, let him be accursed*, Gal. i. 8. Now, I say, that the gospel-season is the gathering season : while gospel-truths are published, they are the Standard of the Captain of salvation, to which the gathering of his soldiers should be, and will be, when the *gospel comes not in word only, but in power*. But again,

(2.) The harvest-time of *sealing* solemnities, that is, the believer's receiving season, which frequently is God's gathering season, when he forwards their progressive gathering to Shiloh. This ordinance of the supper, being, in a special manner, appointed, not for begetting spiritual life, where there is none, but for increasing it where begun : it is in this ordinance, that the Lord is pleased sometimes to seal up the promise, to seal up the covenant, to seal up his love, and seal up their pardon sensibly to their souls ; and to *make himself known to them in the breaking of bread*, Luke xxiv. 35. He brings them under the shadow of a sacrament, and *his fruit is sweet unto their taste*, and his glory bright in their eye ; whereas they came stark blind, they have got their eyes opened : yea, sometimes they get here a breathing of glory, an holy perfume of the sweet embalming love of Christ ; sometimes a young heaven, a green glory, a taste of the grapes of the good land beyond Jordan, to keep the taste in their mouth, till they come to drink of the new wine in their Father's kingdom. Many a fainting soul hath been refreshed, and revived with the wine upon the lees in this ordinance ; while he hath come, and pardoned all their sins, healed all their sores, supplied all their wants, cleared all their cloudy skies, and driven the bottom out of all their doubts and fears ; and thus gathered them, and brought them to more nearness and conformity to him : for, as when a man makes a timber vessel for holding food, or the like, the first cast may be very rough, and therefore.



fore he smooths, and fits it more and more for use ; so the souls of saints are, at first conversion, but rough casten, as it were ; therefore the Lord, by visiting of them, and manifesting himself to them in his ordinances, does more and more fit the vessel of mercy for a fill of the liquor of glory : hence these divine incomes now and then, that make them cry out, *O my soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God ?* Pfal. xlii. 2. As the tossed mariner longs for the haven, the harbour ; so does the soul, that hath met with God in ordinances, long to meet with him in heaven. As one tells us, “ That when once the Gauls “ of old had tasted of the sweet wine that was made of “ the grapes of Italy, nothing would satisfy them but “ Italy, Italy :” so, the soul that once tasted of the goodness of God, and sweetness of Christ, and the grapes of Paradise, nothing satisfies that soul at such a time, but, O Paradise, Paradise ! O to be in glory’s land, in Immanuel’s land ! O to be for ever with the Lord ! It is true, as the Lord is sovereign, and sometimes hides his face from his children in these ordinances, and sacramental solemnities, insomuch, that *they go mourning without the sun* : so the measures of his communications are various ; sometimes more bright and glorious, and sometimes more dark and cloudy : but as we enjoy the light and benefit of the sun, even when we cannot see it, because of the clouds ; so believers do sometimes enjoy much of the light, and heat, and warmth of the sun of righteousness, even when, by reason of many clouds, they cannot see him so clearly as at other times ; however, every glance of his glory, in these galleries of ordinances, hath such a soul-gathering influence, such an heart-drawing virtue, that this harvest-time may be called a gathering-season ; while all the faculties of the soul, all the affections of the heart are gathered to, and centered on Christ, and longing to be gathered about the throne, to see him face to face. And this leads me to the fourth and last period, with respect to the season of this gathering of the people to Shiloh.

4thly, The gathering seasons may be considered, with relation to the *consummate* gathering of the saints :

and of this final gathering there are two seasons, namely, the *day of death*, and the *day of judgment*.

1. The day of *death* is a gathering day to the saints: for then Christ gathers his lilies to himself; *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to gather lilies*, Cant. vi. 2. When the lilies are ripe; he gathers them into his bosom; he picks up one here, and another there; and indeed some of the sweetest smelling lilies in all the garden of his church, particularly in this and some neighbouring presbyteries, hath the Lord been lately gathering; and among the rest, that lily that used to cast such a favourable gospel-smell, at former solemnities here; you cannot but know what I mean; but, O Sirs, if God shall gather up all the fairest and sweetest of his lilies from among us, our garden will become but unbeautiful and unfavoury; the beauty and favour is gone, when the lilies are gathered; unless the Lord himself shall make other such lilies to grow up in their room. I remember that one of the last favourable smells that that lily cast among us, at the last year's solemnity, was in the pleasant opening of that word, *Now, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face*: and, no doubt, it was in the prospect of being gathered to the place of *immediate vision*, and full enjoyment of God and the Lamb. And indeed a time of death is a time of gathering of the saints to glory, where their dark, and partial, and transient enjoyment of God here, is turned to a clear, full, perfect, permanent, and uninterrupted enjoyment: for then, they know him, as they are known; *And there is no temple there; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it*, Rev. xxi. 12.—And therefore, to him, as the temple in heaven, shall the gathering of the people be. Hence, death to the godly is called a gathering, Gen. xlix. 33. It is said of Jacob, when he died. *He was gathered unto his people*: why, one would think, he was rather taken away from his people; for he was dying, and all his children and grand-children about him; yea, but he had people elsewhere, and better company, that he was going to, even *the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect, and all the saints*

faints that had gone before him. O Sirs, see what company ye choofe now ; if ye be of the wicked and ungodly, your death will be but a gathering to the devil and reprobates in hell ; if you lose heaven at the first shot of death, you are gone for ever : when a man shoots at a mark in his life-time, if he miss at one shot, he may shoot another, and shoot again and again, till he hit ; but if you miss heaven at the first shot of death, you are not to live again to shoot another shot for it : therefore, let your life now be a *pressing towards the mark* ; a shooting at the right mark, a gathering to Shiloh : for these that are gathered to him graciously in life, will be gathered gloriously to him at death ; for then, *the souls of believers do immediately pass into glory* ; when their bodies are laid in the dust, their souls are gathered to their people in heaven, where Christ is the centre of the assembly ; *And so shall we be ever with the Lord*, 1 Theff. iv. 17. There are angels and arch-angels in heaven, there are faints and seraphims there ; but all will not make a heaven without Christ ; he is the light of the place, and the heart of the company for ever, and to him shall the gathering of the people be. But then ;

2. The day of *judgment* will be a most remarkable season of the consummate gathering of his people to him : the text indeed speaks mainly of Christ's first coming in the flesh, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be* ; but it will be also true of his second coming in the clouds of heaven ; for then will he *gather his faints together unto him, these that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice*, Psalm l. 5. Therefore the apostle joins his second coming, and his glorious gathering together ; *We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him*, 2 Theff ii. 1. *Then will he send his angels, with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another*, Matth. xxiv. 31. ; wherever the wind of providence hath driven their dust. Tho' the dust of the believer's body may be scattered to all corners

corners of the earth and sea, and resolved to the original elements, of which it was at first compounded; yet God will gather it all together again, when he makes the earth to give up its dead, and the sea to give up its dead, Rev. xx. 13. And therefore, *Though worms destroy this body, yet in their flesh shall they see God*, according to the words of Job, wherein he expresseth his faith of the happy resurrection, Job xix. 25. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; for then, as God will gather together their scattered bones and dust, so he will bring their glorified souls along with him; Them which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*, 1 Thess. iv. 14. and he will reunite these two intimate friends, soul and body; they shall meet with one another, and *meet the Lord in the air*.

O my brethren, let none of us think it incredible, that God should raise the dead; for, in that day when Shiloh comes again, he will gather together and make up *all his jewels*, Mal. iii. 17. Though his jewels be lying among the dust, yet he will separate his jewel-dust from the rest of the dust; for, as Christ is the Loadstone, that draws the hearts of people to him, that are gathered to him by his grace now, according to his own word, *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me*; so, at his second coming, he will be the glorious Loadstone, that will draw all the precious dust of his saints together to him. Any of you who know the virtue of the loadstone will know this, (which I have sometimes tried with a loadstone in my hand) let the filings of steel, never so small, be mixed with dust, so as it is impossible, you would think, to separate the dust of the steel from the dust of the other earth; yet, if you bring near the loadstone, all the filings of the steel will separate from the rest, and fly up to the loadstone, in the tenth part of the twinkling of an eye. Well, if the loadstone have such a virtue, what must be the virtue of him who gave virtue to it? Whenever Shiloh comes in the clouds of heaven, behold, in the twinkling of an eye, all the redeemed that sleep in the dust will be gathered; the glorious Loadstone will put forth its virtue,

tue, and they will be all drawn to him in a moment, 1 Cor. xv. 52. 1 Thes. iv. 16, 17. There is the consummate gathering of the people to Shiloh.

It is true, the day of judgment will be a separating day, the *sheep will be separate from the goats*, and the *wheat from the tares*, Mat. xiii. 20. But however terrible that day will be to the Christless world, that could never be gathered to Shiloh, when they shall be gathered together in bundels, and cast into the fire of God's everlasting wrath? yet glorious, glorious will the gathering be of all the redeemed! As they will be gathered to him, so they will be assessors with him in judgment; *Know ye not that saints shall judge the world*, yea, *they shall judge angels*, 1 Cor. 2, 3. They shall sit upon the bench of judgment with Christ, and applaud him in all his judicial procedure against wicked men and devils. These, who formerly trampled them like dirt under their feet, will then stand, like so many guilty pannels before them; and when the irreversible doom goes forth, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, the gathered saints will joyfully adore the equity of the Judge, and will not so much as give a sigh or a sob at the terror of the sentence pronounced against the wicked, but clap their hands, and send them to hell with a shout. Oh! that wicked and Christless souls would fear and tremble, and *flee from the wrath to come*, in the awful apprehension of this glorious day? Devils quake at the apprehension of this day; *they believe, and tremble*: and yet sinful men are fearless. But when the great Judge will erect his fiery tribunal in the air, see if you shall be able to bear up, be as stout-hearted as you can.

O man, death is insensibly stealing away your breath; and after death, comes the judgment; and then comes the doleful gathering of the wicked to be the fuel of eternal flames: because *oft he would have gathered you, as a hen does her chickens under her wings*, but *ye would not be gathered*, therefore you will be separated from him for ever: you would not come for his blessing, therefore you must depart with his curse; *Depart*  
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*from me, ye cursed ; Then shall they be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. Oh ! sinner, flee, flee to Shiloh : let the gathering of the people be to him now, that you may share of the glory of the consummate gathering of the faints. After judgment, the gathered faints, will return, and come to Zion with songs. God having in that day gathered together, and made up all his jewels, what a bright constellation will these jewels make, when they shall be all gathered together in the firmament of glory ! Yea, they will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3. Then, says Christ, shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, Mat. xiii. 23 ; that is, even all these poor creatures that have been gathered to Shiloh, as the Lord their righteousness and strength.*

O Sirs, this glorious gathering day will be upon you, before we be all gathered together on earth again. Some that were at the last years gathering here, are now gone to eternity ; and you will never see them again, till you and they be gathered together before the awful tribunal of God : and, without all peradventure, there are here that will never see another sacrament at Airth : it may be you, man ; it may be you, woman ; it may be such a minister, or such a private person ; it may be such a gentleman, or such a lady, such a youth or such a girl, as have little thoughts of death at present. O Sirs I am looking to you, and you to me ; but we will never all see one another, till we see the Son of man, the Son of God, coming in the clouds of heaven, and gathering all the world before him : and therefore, in the view of that gathering day, O let not this gathering of people here part from one another and dismiss, till once there be a gathering unto Shiloh. *Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, at the great day of his appearance, that you consent to be gathered, and that this present gathering be not dissolved, till your hearts and affections be gathered to Shiloh, and centered in him. Oh ! choose rather to die upon the spot, than not be gathered unto him this day*

day. Many a gathering word and call you have got these days bygone, and Christ is saying, *How oft would I have gathered you, yet ye would not!* O! is he saying, I would gather you, man, woman? then, what would you? Have you no will to be gathered out of the stinking prison of your lusts and idols, your self and self-righteousness, your worldly mindedness, and covetousness, your pride and vanity! Whatever be the filthy stinking prison that you are like to perish in, he is saying, I would gather you out of it: And, O man, woman, would you rather be gathered unto the devil, than be gathered unto Shiloh? Would you rather be gathered to a tavern of drunkenness, lewdness and carnality, than gathered to the temple of grace and glory? Would you be gathered to Shiloh, or not? It is come just to this, man, *What would you that I should do unto you!* Would you that I should gather you? Behold he is declaring his will in this gospel. Is he saying, *The gathering of the people shall be to him?* Does he say, *It shall be?* then, O say, AMEN, Lord; *So let it be.*

The strength of unbelief lies in your unwillingness to be gathered: and if the will were once broken, it would be a day of power; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,* Psal. cx. 3. O! has there any power been here to make you willing: willing to be gathered to him as a Priest, and a Prince both? willing to be gathered out of the prison of sin, as well as out of the prison of hell and wrath? willing to be gathered to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption: and to be indebted to him for all and every part of his salvation? willing to have all from him for nothing, so as the praise and glory of all may redound to himself? O Sirs, are you thus willing to be gathered under his wings of grace and glory? Then, glory to God for the power that hath made you willing: or, if you cannot say, that that power is what you have felt, yet is it that will-breaking power you would be at, saying, O let this gathering power be exerted? *There is hope in Israel concerning you.*

O may sinners be gathered to and close with him!

This is God's design by the gospel ; and we hope, it is our design in preaching it, to get sinners gathered. And, O let me tell you, that there is such a glorious gathering of excellent things in him, as may engage the hearts of all the sinners here to gather unto him, and all the believers here to be still gathering to him more and more.

Well, what for a gathering is there in him ? O ! there is a gathering of all *glories* in him ; the glory of saints, the glory of angels, the glory of God is in him : so that *he is altogether lovely*.—The gathering of all *perfection* is in him, and all divine attributes and fulness ; for, *it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell* : so that he hath all fulness of ability and authority to save.—The gathering of all *righteousness* and *strength* is in him ; therefore, *to him should men come*, Isa. xlv. 24.—The gathering of all the *promises* is in him ; for, *all the promises are Yea and Amen in him* : there is no promise out of him.—The gathering of all *graces* is in him, that *out of his fulness we may come and receive grace for grace* : and to whom should the gathering of the people be, but to him that hath all grace for them ?—The gathering of all  *blessings*  is in him ; for, *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are only in Christ Jesus*, Eph. i. 3. And to whom should the gathering of the people be, but to him, of whom it is said, that *men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed* ? Psal. lxxii. 17. : and no blessing is to be had out of him.—The gathering of all *mercy* is in him ; and therefore all the mercies of the everlasting covenant are called, *the sure mercies of David*. All the mercy of God is in Christ ; and there is no mercy in God, out of Christ, towards any sinner.—The gathering of all *gifts* is in him ; *He hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them* ; the gift of the Spirit especially ; for he hath *received the Spirit above measure* ; and so hath all the influences of the Spirit to give. *He received gifts for men* : all is for *men*, and for *the people* : all the promised righteousness, graces, blessings, mercies, and gifts that he hath received, as Mediator, and that are gathered in him, is for



*the people*, that the gathering of the people may be to him.—There is a gathering of all things in him ; for he is *all in all* ; and *and all things are yours*, if once you be gathered to him ; whereas you have nothing at all but sin, death, and misery out of him.—In a word, there is a gathering of all the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, and *all unsearchable riches* in him, for making you up, and making you happy for ever : and to whom should the gathering of poor ignorant people be, but to him ?—What shall I say ? There is a gathering of all *saving offices* in him ; he is a Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator, Redeemer, Surety, and all offices in one : whatever be your want, he hath an office for supplying it ; whatever be your debt, he hath an office for paying it ; whatever be your disease, he hath an office for curing it : for diseases in the mind, he is a Prophet ; for diseases of the conscience, he is a Priest : for diseases of the will, he is a King. And for all other maladies that can be named, he hath all other *healing offices*, that can be named : yea, for wonderful maladies, he hath wonderful offices ; for wonderful sins, he hath wonderful pardons ; for wonderful plagues, he hath wonderful balsams and plaisters.

O Sirs, is there such a gathering of all good things in him for the people ! and shall there be no gathering of the people to him ? Christ hath no other use for these things that are thus gathered in him, but for the behoof of the people that are gathered to him ; and they would all be useless, if there were no gathering of the people to him. Alas ! shall he be an useless Shiloh for you ? And have you no need of him, no use for him ? Oh ? dole and misery ! Will you stand at a distance from him, as if he were an useless Christ ? But if you have any use for him then, all that he wants is to have your employment : to believe, is to employ him to do all your work in you and for you. Doing and believing are very different things : if you be for doing all yourself, in order to your own salvation and justification, then you make Christ useless, and his death vain ; *If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain*, Gal. ii. 21. But if you be for believing,

then know what believing or faith is. Faith doth nothing, but gives Christ all to do, and lets him have the glory of doing all that belongs to his office, saying, Lord work ; work for me, and work in me. And hence, though believing be not doing, yet the best believer is the best doer ; in regard the work that is put in Christ's hand is best done ; and because, while faith does nothing, but only employs the strength of Christ to do all, then, *through Christ's strengthening, it can do all things.*

Now, O Sirs, shall Christ get no employment here ? Will there be no gathering to him for righteousness and strength ? I hope some have been gathered and drawn to him, and can say, *The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us*, and made a soul-gathering influence run through, yea, thoroughly through our hearts. O Sirs, let the whole of your life be a gathering to Shiloh, and a living upon him. And, now the great gathering of the people here may be joyfully dismissed, though they shall never all meet together again in time, if this promise of Christ hath taken effect, *To him shall the gathering of the people be.* †

VI. The *sixth* general head was, To give you the *reasons* of the doctrine. And here I am to show you, 1. Why there must be a *gathering* of the *people*, the *Gentiles* ? 2. Why to *SHILOH* must the gathering be ? Why to him ?

*1st*, Why are the *people*, the *Gentiles*, to be gathered ? For this part of the text concerns the *Gentiles*, in contradistinction from the *Jews* ; *To him shall the gathering of the people be*, the *Gentile* people. It was in pursuance of this design that the apostle Paul was called *the apostle of the Gentiles* : and he magnifies his office, and boasts of it, saying, *To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, Eph. iii. 8. This is a question of the greatest concern to us *Gentiles* : Why, is our name put in Christ's commission ? O Sirs,

† What follows, to the end, was delivered in two discourses, at a sacramental occasion at Carnock, July 4th and 5th, 1715.

it should be good news to us : and for confirming our faith herein, take these six grounds and reasons for it.

1. There must be a gathering of Gentile people to him, for *filling up the room which the Jews left* : Christ came to his own, and his own received him not.—And since the Jews rejected him, and cast out themselves by unbelief, the Gentiles are taken in, to succeed to them in their church privileges ; *Through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles*, Romans ix. 11. And ver. 19. *These branches were taken off, that the Gentiles might be grafted in.* The room which the Jews left vacant must be filled up with Gentiles, Luke xiv. 15,—24. where the gospel-entertainment is compared to a *great man's supper*, to which many are invited ; some reject the invitation, particularly the Jews, that had the first honour of being invited to the banqueting-house ; that is, to partake of Christ and his gospel blessings : others embraced the gracious offer, particularly the poor, despised, out-cast Gentiles, even these who *were without the law*. Hence see and read ver. 21, 22, 23. : there you see the Gentiles called, to fill up the room that the Jews left vacant.

2. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to *reprove and punish the unbelief of the Jews*, from whom the sceptre is departed, and to *provoke them to jealousy*, Rom. xi. 11. ; for, as *because of unbelief they were broken off*, ver. 20. : so for the punishment of their unbelief. See what God says to them, Deut. xxxii. 21. compared with Rom. x. 19. *I will provoke them to jealousy, by them that are no people.* The Jews had the first offer, Acts iii. 26. ; and the Gentiles had but their leavings. But what a provocation it was to the Jews, to see the Gentiles taken into favour, is represented in the parable, Luke xv. 11,—32. where the elder brother envied the reception and entertainment of the prodigal Gentiles ; and more plainly, Acts xiii. 49. where you see how the Gentiles were received, ver. 46, 47, 48. Thus, whenever the Jews heard that the apostle Paul had a commission to go to the Gentiles, see how they were provoked, Acts xxii. 21, 22. It was their sin that they were thus enraged ; and God makes oftentimes

times peoples sin their punishment: a man needs no greater plague, than to be left to the impetuous rage of his own lusts. However, in gathering of the Gentiles, God shews his anger and displeasure at the unbelief of the Jews; and, to this day, their posterity, scattered up and down the earth, are under the dismal effects of this anger; for, ever since Shiloh came, the Jews had been set to the door, and the Gentiles gathered in. Yea,

3. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to *pave a way for the glorious gathering of the Jews again*, Rom. xi. 23,—26. Here is a twofold mystery, namely, that the gathering of the Gentiles will make way for the renewed gathering and conversion of the Jews. I shall read you some promises you have thereof, Isaiah xi. 10,—12. Jer. xxii. 3,—6.—These, you may see, have evidently a further look than their deliverance from Babylon, Zech. xii. 10 and xiii. 1. As we have encouragement to pray for the conversion of the Jews; so if there were a Spirit of prayer to a God in Christ among us, in their behalf, who were his ancient people, we might then think, the happy day were hastening, wherein it is promised, that the Gentiles shall further the gathering of the Jews, Isa. xlix. 22. and lx, 9, 10. and lxvi. 18,—23. See Zech ii. 10,—12. and viii. 21,—23. Again,

4. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to shew the *sovereignty* of his grace, and *freedom* of his mercy, Rom. ix. 15. *That he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.* The Jews expected to monopolize this privilege, of being God's people and church, continually to themselves; and few thought, that the Gentiles should become *fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God*: but *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; he shews his sovereignty, in pitching upon what nation of the earth it pleases him: *The potter hath power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour.* The great Creator of the ends of the earth does thus shew his power and authority, in  
making

making *these a people that were no people, and these his people that were not his people*, Rom. ix. 25, 26. This therefore was one of the *great mysteries of godliness*, *Christ preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. This was a great mystery, that with great difficulty could be received, and believed by the apostles; for when Peter was persuaded, by the vision of a sheet knit at the four corners, wherein was all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, not to despise the Gentiles as common and unclean, and accordingly had preached the gospel with success to them, he was accused by the rest of the apostles, Acts xi. 2, 3. till Peter making his defence *They held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life*, ver. 18. And in all this the Lord acted in a suitableness to his ancient promise, concerning the calling and in-bringing of the Gentiles. It is long since God promised by Noah, saying, *God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem*, Gen. ix. 27. Now, of Japhet came the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5. and of Shem came the Jews; so that by this prophecy, there is a clear prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles, and their inheriting the privileges of the Jews, to the praise of sovereign grace.

5. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to shew the *extent and sufficiency* of his grace, as well as the sovereignty and freedom of it: how extensive is his grace and goodness, in gathering in the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, under the wings of his favour and mercy; while he sets open his entertaining room doors to sinners, out of *every tongue, and nation, and kindred*, where *neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free*, are excluded; but all are one and alike in Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 28. Col. iii. 18. Herein he appears to act with a greatness like himself, becoming his boundless infinity, and not after the manner of men, but like a God; and so to signalize his goodness beyond the compass of man; *For he is God, and not man*, Hosea xi. 9. It were a diminution of the glory of his grace, if it were said, This is nothing but what a man might do.

—It is his glory, to act in such a manner, as is proper to none but a God, a God of boundless grace and unparalleled goodness; that when poor dogs, Pagans, Gentiles find his goodness, even extending to them cast-aways, that were rejected of men, they may have it to say, *Is this the manner of men, O Lord?*

6. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to show the *glory and greatness of Christ's kingdom*; *That his dominion reacheth from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*, see Psal. lxxii. 8, 10. As it is the glory of a king, to have many subjects, a numerous train, and a great retinue; so it is the glory of our Shiloh, that the gathering of the people is unto him, even Gentiles as well as Jews; and so many the more to celebrate the praises of free grace, and to adorn the triumph of his glorious throne above, with loud acclamations of *Grace, grace*. Solomon tells us, Prov. xiv. 23. *That the glory of a king is in the multitude of his subjects*; so it is the glory of King Jesus, to have a multitude of people gathered to him: and, O that he may get honour here this day, by gathering a multitude of souls, that they may come and set the crown upon the head of an exalted Jesus!

2dly, Why to SHILOH must the gathering of the people be? Why,

1. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him the *headship and government* of the people does belong. All the people, that come of Adam, have lost their head since Adam's fall: or, if they have no other head than the first Adam, they are no better than an headless company, yea, and worse; for, from Adam their first head, there is nothing but sin and death conveyed, Rom. v. 12. But now, the second Adam, the promised Shiloh, is constitute the Head of the people, the Head of the body the church, *That in all things he might have the pre-eminence*, Col. i. 22. And to whom should the gathering of the people be, but to him, who is the Head of the people, and *the Head over all thing, to the church?* Eph. i. 22. He is the Head influential and political; the Head of influences; for all the influences of light, and life, and strength, and comfort, come from

from him : the Head of government ; for, Isa. ix. 6. *The government is laid upon his shoulders,—and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end : upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice for ever,* ver. 7. The sceptre is departed from Judah ; but it shall never depart from Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah : the sceptre is fallen into his hand ; and to whom should the gathering of the people be, but under the sceptre of this glorious King ? O that there were a flocking to touch the sceptre of King Jesus ! For, *God hath made this Jesus, who was crucified, to be both Lord and Christ,* Acts ii. 36. *He hath set his King upon his holy hill of Zion,* Psalm ii. 6. *He hath exalted him, by his right hand, to be a Prince and Saviour,* Acts v. 31. The sceptre, and the law-giver is departed from Judah, from the Jews, since Shiloh came ; but the sceptre and the Law-giver is come to the Gentiles ; for, *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King, he will save us,* Isa. xxx. 22.—There needs no other reason, why the gathering of the people must be to him ; for he being the Head and King of the people, by God the Father's appointment, all divine honours are owing to him : he must be the object of our faith, love, trust, obedience, and worship, as he is God-man, Mediator : and *it is the will of the Father, that all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ;* and to him must the glory of the gathering be : *Upon him must be hung all the glory of his Father's house,—even all the vessels of small quantity, as well as great, from the vessels of cups to the vessels of flagons,* Isaiah xxii. 24. All the vessels of mercy, that are gathered together to God's house, they must be gathered to him, and *fastened on him, as the glorious Nail in a sure place,* verse 23. ; *For it is he that builds the temple of the Lord, and shall bear the glory : for he shall sit and rule upon his throne,* Zech. vi. 13. People may gather about the throne of a king ; and, O ! should not the gathering of the people be about the throne of grace, to see the glory, and touch the sceptre of him that sits

upon the throne? To him the *headsip* and *government* of the people does belong; therefore to him must the gathering of the people be.

2. To him must the gathering of the people be; because to him does the *work of the people belong*: as he is appointed to be an *Head* to them, so a *worker* for them. Ever since the covenant of works was broken, and so our working arm broken, *we being by nature without strength*, it is he that *works all our work in us, and for us*, *Isaiah xxvi. 12.* Hence says the psalmist David, *Psal. lvii. 2. I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performs all things for me.* There is a twofold work that we need to have performed, namely, work *satisfying* to the law, as a *covenant*; and work *suitable* to the law, as a *rule*. Now, the performing of both these works belongs to Christ, as *he is made of God to us, both righteousness and sanctification.* The work *satisfying* to the law, as a *covenant*, is performed by him as our *righteousness*, while he *fulfils the righteousness of the law for*, and in his people, *Rom. viii. 4.* The work *suitable* to the law as a *rule*, is performed in and through him, as our *sanctification*; while he *puts his Spirit within us, and causes us to walk in his statutes*, *Ezek. xxxvi. 22.* And hence, says Christ, *John xv. 5. Without me ye can do nothing*: the word is, *χωρίς ἐμῆς*, SEVERED from me, OR SEPARATE from me, *ye can do nothing.*—Why then, we must not remain separate from him; but gather to him, as he is the *Mediator*, and the *All* of the covenant. The whole weight and work of the covenant belongs to him, and this makes it a covenant of grace to us, and not of works; because all the work falls to his share. There is his *doing* work, for the people; for he came to *fulfil all righteousness*, that so the people might say, *In the Lord have I righteousness*, *Isaiah xlv. 24.* Therefore it follows, *To him shall men come.*—Again, there is his *suffering* work for the people, on which account, the gathering of the people should be to him; *Heb. xiii. 13. That he might sanctify the people with his own blood, he suffered without the gate; therefore let us go forth to him.*—There is his *dying*



*dying* work ; for he suffered unto death ; and his death was an act of obedience ; he *being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* This is the gospel delivered unto us, to be preached unto the people, *How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,* 1 Cor. xv. 3. And shall he die for the people, and yet there be no gathering of the people to him?—There is his *repairing* work, for the behoof of the people ; and in the works just now mentioned, this repairing work is accomplished ; for he repairs the breaches of the law, that our sin made : and not only is the law *magnified and made honourable*, by his doing and dying ; while his doing answers the precept, and his dying the threatening thereof, and that to infinite advantage ; but the glory of the Law-giver is repaired. The people had come short of the glory of God ; but he, to whom the gathering of the people must be, did repair the honour and glory of his holiness, by a perfect obedience ; and the glory and honour of his justice, by a condign satisfaction : and thus brought in *glory to God in the highest* ; yea, and made all the other glorious attributes of God shine forth gloriously and harmoniously, in the work of our redemption. And hence, when Christ was about this work, he says, *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him,* John xiii 31.—There is his *purchasing* work, for the behoof of the people ; *He hath bought the people with a price,* 1 Corinth. vi. 20. And shall not the gathering of the people be to him, whose blood was the price of the peoples souls, and the purchase-money for buying grace and glory to them?—There is his *pleading* work for the people ; for, *he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them,* Heb. viii. 25. And this is the reason for their coming and gathering to him ; for, in so doing, they shall have an evidence, that his pleading for them hath been, and will be for ever effectual.—There is also a *conquering* work, that belongs to him, according to Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power* : therefore the gathering of the people shall be

to him, because the conquering of the people belongs to him; and how he conquers them, by the sword of his powerful grace, you see, Psalm xlv. 3, 4, 5. Indeed there will be no gathering to him, till this conquering power come: and therefore, if you would be gathered, cry to him to *gird this sword upon his thigh*, and to *send the rod of his strength out of Zion*, that it may be *mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin*. O that his voice in the gospel were powerful! Some tell us that the lion's whelps are born dead at first, till by the roaring of the old lion over them, they are quickened; whatever be in this, it is true enough in the case of the people that are gathered to Shiloh; they are born dead, and remain so, till the Lion of the tribe of Judah roar so loudly, as to quicken them with his powerful voice, according to John v. 25. *The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live*: his voice quickens, conquers, and captivates them — And as it is his work to conquer them; so to conquer all their enemies for them; whether it be sin, Satan, death, hell, or the world, that they may be *more than conquerors thro' him*; and all this conquering work belongs to him, that the gathering of the people may be to him. And, in a word, there is a *strengthening* work, that belongs to him, as well as a *leading, guiding, comforting, and counselling* work, that I might mention, together with all the other parts of his saving work; *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me*, says Paul. And it is upon this footing, that all the fruits of faith come in, even all the works of spiritual gospel obedience. When we go forth to any work, we are to *go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only*; being *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; *strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*; and *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*; his *strength being made perfect in our weakness*; and he *working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. Thus he is the *strength of Israel, the strength of his people*: for which cause, the gathering of the people must be to him; and because,

in this manner, the *work* of the people belongs to him, to work all their works in them, and for them. But then again,

3. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him does the *INSTRUCTION* of the people belong; for as the *purchase* of the people belongs to him, as a *Priest*, and the *conquest* of the people belongs to him, as a *King*; so the *instruction* of the people belongs to him, as a *Prophet*. And indeed, though I mention it here in the third place, yet this is the first part of his gathering work, to instruct, and teach, and enlighten; and may we not say with Elihu, Job xxxvi. 22. *Who teacheth like him?* He is the none-such Teacher of the people; and therefore, must the gathering of the people be to him. In vain is the gathering of people about tents and pulpits, if their eyes look no higher than towards poor ministers, mortal worms like themselves, that can only speak to their ears, but cannot make one beam of divine light to break in upon their understandings. This is the peculiar work of him who is the *Sun of righteousness*, the *Light of the world*, the *Light to lighten the Gentiles*: it is he only, by his Spirit, that can make us to know God, and the things of God; *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*, John i. 18. He is the blessed and only Teacher and Instructor; and therefore the gathering of the people should be to his school, that they may be all taught of God: John vi. 45. *And every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, comes to me*, says Christ; where it is pleasant to observe, comparing this and the former scripture together, that as God and Christ both are teachers here, so the Father and the Son both are the lesson taught, in the light of the eternal Spirit: and, that as there is no coming to Christ, nor gathering to him, but under the influence of the Father's teaching; nor is there any coming to the Father, but by the Son, who is the way: so the great lesson that the Father teaches is the Son, and the great lesson that the Son teaches is the Father; and so the whole teaching comes to this, a knowing the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost.

**Ghost.** Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, in a peculiar manner, is the great Prophet, and Teacher, being anointed with a super-eminent unction of the Spirit of wisdom for this end; *Isaiah lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach; O glorious preacher and teacher! I have put my Spirit upon him, says the Father, that he might bring forth judgment to the Gentiles: that is, light and instruction to the people: and therefore should the gathering of the people be to him. O then, let all the people say, To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

4. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him does the **SALVATION** of the people belong. Salvation from sin belongs to him; therefore *his name is called JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins, Mat. i. 21.* Salvation from wrath belongs to him, therefore his name is also called, *even JESUS, which delivered us from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. i. 10.* And not only the privative, but the positive salvation of the people belongs to him: hence, whom he saves, he adopts; whom he saves he adorns: whom he saves, he anoints; whom he saves, he justifies, and glorifies. O then, to whom should the gathering of sinners be, but to him who is the Saviour of sinners? *1 Tim. i. 5. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom, [viz. of saved sinners] I am the chief.* O let every man, and woman here say it with application! say it, man, woman; say it, old and young, high and low, rich, and poor; and I will say it with you through grace, *of whom I am the chief; even the chief of sinners, whom he came to save.* Let not unbelief say, It may be he came not to save me: for this gospel declares that your name is in his sealed commission, if you be a sinner; there is the gospel-charter let down from heaven, and it is a letter directed on the back, *For you sinners? Jesus Christ came to save SINNERS:* and if you open the charter, and read it with application to yourself, you will find that it is all for you, both within and without. O! hath Christ a commission to save the people! and shall not the people gather

gather to him for salvation ! Hath he a commission to save sinners, and shall he return with his commission in his hand, saying, Father, thou gavest me a commission to *seek and to save that which was lost*, and yet wretched lost sinners will not have me, nor my salvation either ? They love their lusts better than me ; they love their own proud fancy better than my righteousness ; and they will not believe that I have so much good-will to them as to save them : they will not be persuaded but I am cheating them with some goodly words : I would gather them, but they will not be gathered ; and save them, but *they will not come to me that they might have life*, though I have a commission from the Father to give life to dead sinners. Why, may one think or say, if Christ hath such a commission to save sinners, then let him execute his commission, I shall not hinder him. What is that you are saying, man ? Let me hear that again : if he hath a commission to save sinners, let him come and save me, I shall not hinder him. Is it jest or earnest that you are saying ? If your heart be jesting while you are speaking thus in your heart, and despising a Saviour notwithstanding ; then it is a dreadful jest : *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ; How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great a salvation ?* But are you in earnest, O sinner, saying, Since it is his office to save sinners, O let him do it for God's sake ! let him execute his saving office on me the chief of sinners ; for, the Lord knows, I would not desire to hinder him ? Why, poor soul, I will tell you good news, he seeks no more at your hand than what you are saying, namely, that you do not resist nor refuse his grace by unbelief ; but that your heart say, Content, Lord ; content to have salvation from all my sins and lusts, content to have all the salvation that Christ came to give : why, *he came to give life, and to give it more abundantly* : and when he is content to give, and you content to receive, there is little more ado, than to bless him that it is a bargain ; for he is profering himself, and all his salvation upon you this day. To him does the *salvation* of the people belong ; therefore let the gathering of the people be to him.

5. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him is the *GIFT of the people made*. God the Father hath made a gift of the people to him; therefore the people must be gathered to him. The Father desires him to ask the people and he should have them; *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession*, Psal. ii. 8. There is indeed a select number that were given to him from eternity, John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me*; that is, all that were given to him shall be gathered to him: and, that none of all the people that hear the gospel may exclude themselves, as if they were not given; therefore it follows, *Him that comes I will in no wise cast out*; all comers are welcome. It is as if Christ had said to these final rejecters of him, *I would have gathered you, but ye would not*; you never had so much as a will to be gathered; you would not: but be it known, to your confusion, that though you reject and despise me, yet I will have a gathering of the people to me; *All that the Father hath given me shall be gathered to me*: and though none will be gathered, but these that were given, yet this giving is not put in as a bar to your coming, but rather as an encouragement thereto; therefore it is remarkable, he does not add, *Him that WAS GIVEN I will in no wise cast out*; but *him THAT COMES I will in no wise cast out*; intimating, That as this giving is not the primary object of faith, so it cannot be seen or known, but in the way of coming: and they may have this encouragement to come, that in coming they may know they were given to me. They that have no will to be gathered, cannot know they were given: but all that would be gathered, may be sure they were given: therefore let this be a ground for the gathering of people to him, that as the people to be gathered were given to him from eternity, so they that would be gathered may know and be assured, that they were given to him; *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6. They were thine by election, and thou gavest them me, to be redeemed by me. O happy people, whom

whom a day of power hath made so willing, that indeed they would be gathered to Shiloh ! They may know that they were in God's hand from eternity, and out of God's hand they were put as a compliment into Christ's hand, if I may so express it ; and indeed he is infinitely well-pleas'd with the compliment ; he takes an armsful of them, as it were, out of God's everlasting arms ; and he hugs them in his bosom ; for *his delights were with the sons of men* ; and whenever he *sees the travel of his soul, he is satisfied* : and when he hath hugged them in his redeeming arms, till he hath justified, sanctified, and completely saved them, then he will give them back to the Father's hand again, presenting them blameless to him, saying, *Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me.* There must then be a gathering of the people to him, because there was a giving of the people to him. A poor compliment, you may think with wonder, of the like of me, to pass betwixt the hands of the eternal Father, and his eternal Son, in concurrence with the eternal Spirit, one God in three Persons : but little matter how poor and mean the compliment seem to be, and really it in itself, if God be glorified, and Shiloh magnified, and you saved. O ? let the consideration of what a large dominion *from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,* is given to Christ : yea, a numberless number, that *no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people, that shall stand before the throne of the Lamb, with white robes, and palms in their hands,* Rev. vii. 9. saying, *Salvation to our God, that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever* : Let the view of that innumerable multitude of people that are given to him, stir up and provoke the gathering of the people to him ; he is come to demand what was given him.—

But then again,

6. To him must the gathering of the people be, because as the people are given to him, so he is GIVEN *to the people for this end,* that the gathering of the people may be to him : and hence, to all the people of the visible church, it is said, *To us a child is born, to us a son is given, whose name is called Wonderful, Coun-*

seller, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, Isaiah vi. 9. I speak not here of his being given in actual possession to believers ; they that take the gift of God are possessed of it : but I speak even of a giving in the gospel-dispensation and offer ; for, no man can receive what is not given : receiving is not giving ; and Christ is so far given to all the hearers of the gospel, that they are obliged to receive him, and believe in him, upon peril of damnation ; *He that believes not shall be damned.* Thus he is given to many that reject him ; hence, says Christ, to these that were rejecting him, John vi. 32. *My Father gives you the true bread from heaven ;* that is, in order to be received by you ; for, in rejecting of this bread that my Father gives you, your souls will starve. This will aggravate the damnation of the damned, that Christ was given to them in the gospel-offer, and they rejected the gift of God. However, the good news of the gospel is, John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him, or gathers in to him, may not perish, but have everlasting life.* This reason for the giving of the people to Shiloh, is imported in the very bosom of the text ; Shiloh is come to you, that you may come to him ; he is come in the flesh, he is come in the gospel, and may we hope he is come in the Spirit ? He is come to the people, that the people may be gathered to him ; and he is come as a Shiloh ; that is, the Messias, the Sent of God, that the people may welcome God's Send, saying, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. To you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ;* this is indeed good tidings to all people, Luke ii. 10. *To you is the word of this salvation sent,* Acts xiii. 26. Christ the Shiloh is the promised Seed, the leading promise ; *and the promise is to you, and to your children,* Acts ii. 39. that you may receive him in the promise. He is the Sent of God to you, that you may gather to him ; he is sent to be the Saviour of the people, the Helper of the people ; and sent by way of free gift and donation, Isaiah xli. 27. *I will give to Jerusalem One that brings good tidings ;* and for what is he gi-



ven to the people? See *Iſaiah* lv. 4. *He is given to be a Witneſs to the people, and a Leader and Commander to the people: yea Iſa. xlii. 6. He is given for a Covenant of the people.* And why is he thus given to the people, but that the gathering of the people may be to him? The people then are promiſed to him, and he is promiſed to the people; and there muſt be a gathering of the people to him. *Shiloh* is come to ſeek the people that were promiſed and given to him: let the people ſeek that *Shiloh*, that is promiſed and given to them. In a word, he is the true temple, to which the gathering muſt be; he is the mercy-ſeat, at which God and the people may meet together; and you cannot meet with God but in him, for in him alone God is well-pleaſed: and when you gather in to him, you get in to the heart of God; for he lies in the Father's boſom, being *his Elect, in whom his ſoul delights.*—So much for the reaſons.

VII. The *laſt* thing propoſed in the general method, was the *application* of the ſubject.

I have endeavoured in the doctrinal part, all along to deliver the matter in a practical and applicatory ſtrain, and alſo enlarged it ſo much, that I need the leſs to inſiſt upon many inferences, wherein I have already anticipated myſelf. The main uſes I deſign are for *information* of ſome truths, and *exhortation* to ſome duties.

*Fiſt, For information.* Is it ſo, that the Council of Heaven hath determined concerning Chriſt the Meſſias, that *to him ſhall the gathering of the people be?* Hence ſee,

1. The *doleful ſtate of the Jews at preſent*, and the lamentable circumſtances they have been in ever ſince the coming of *Shiloh* their promiſed Meſſias. While a multitude of Gentiles, that were but dogs, are gathered to God's houſe, and they, in the mean time, unchurched and caſt out, tho' to them *pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God, and the promiſes*; and though of them, as concerning *the fleſh, SHILOH came, even CHRIST, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* Rom.

ix. 4, 5. Though they were the people of his first love, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom so many precious promises were made in behalf of their seed: behold their Shiloh comes to them, and they will not have him; *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* They owned the sceptre was departed from Judah, when they said, *We have no king but Cæsar;* and so by their own confession, Shiloh is come, since the scepter was departed from Judah. And, because they would not submit to the spiritual sceptre of the promised Messias, they have been without a king, without a prince, without a sceptre, or lawgiver, without a governor and government, for 1700 years and more, even since Shiloh came, to whom there is a gathering of other people in their room, Oh! shall we not lament their long continued rejection? Their seventy years captivity in Babylon was nothing to this; yea their four hundred and thirty years bondage in Egypt was nothing to this! Alas! how long, how long shall his anger last against that people! how long shall they be under the guilt of the blood of Christ, which they imprecated upon themselves and their posterity, saying, *His blood be upon us, and our children!* Oh! pray, pray for that antient people of God, and that the blood of Shiloh may cleanse them from that blood-guiltiness! When they were in favour with God, the believers among them had mind of us poor Gentiles, when we were the *little sister that had not breasts*, Song viii. 8.; and now, when we are sucking at the breasts of gospel ordinances and sacramental solemnities, Oh! shall we not mind them when their *breasts are cut off*, when they that were the *natural branches are broken off*, and we that were the *wild olive-tree, are grafted in to partake of the root and fatness of the good olive-tree?* Rom. xi. 17, 24. Oh! let us not boast against the branches; *For if thou boastest, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.* See ver. 18, 19, 20, 21. Let us not boast, but let us beg, that they may be again grafted in; *For if the casting away of them be the reconciliation into the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?*

ver. 15. The day of the return and conversion of the Jews will be a day of greater gathering to Shiloh, even among the Gentiles, than we have yet seen; and it would fare better with us, if we were more employed in praying for them. Mean time, this dark and doleful dispensation, that as yet they are under, was not darkly foretold in the words of our text, that, upon the sceptre's departing from Judah, Shiloh the Messias should come, *And to him should the gathering of the people be*, that is, the Gentiles; plainly intimating, a wonderful mystery of providence, that the *King of the Jews* should come to the Gentiles, and be crowned king among them, that so the Jews might have it to say at length, That the King of the Gentiles is become the King of the Jews; as well as the Gentiles have it to say, That the King of the Jews is become the King of the Gentiles.

2. Hence see the *sovereign mercy* of God in Christ towards the *poor Gentile nations*, and the isles of the Gentiles not forgotten; for he particularly promises, that *the isles shall wait for his law*, Isa. xlii. 4. And, O wonder, that we, in this remote island, were in his view, when he promised, that *to him should the gathering of the people be*. Jacob, by inspiration of the Spirit of God, said it on his death-bed, and it is now more than three thousand years ago; that is indeed to him not so much as three days; for, *to him a thousand years are as one day*. Thousands of years interveening cannot make him forget his promise; and, so far as there is, or shall be a gathering of the people to Shiloh, so far does this promise take effect. There was a promise of this, more antient yet, Gen. ix. 27. *God shall enlarge, [OR PERSUADE] Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem*: there is a promise that the Gentiles should be gathered in to partake of the privileges of the Jews; for of Japhet came the Gentiles, and among his posterity were the isles of the Gentiles divided: see Gen. x. 1, 2, 5.; and probably this island among the rest. For confirming whereof, I shall not be positive in averring what some alledge, that as Gomer was the eldest son of Japhet, and of him came the people called *Gomeri* or *Cymbri*; so the first inhabitants of this island

of

of Britain came of the posterity of Japhet, one of the sons of Noah, namely, of the said Japhet's eldest son Gomer; and hence, from GOMERI came CAMBRIA, which is the Latin name of Wales in this island to this day, to which place the antient Britons retired at the coming in of the Saxons: hence they suppose, that the isle of Britain is particularly intended here. But I shall not found any certain conclusion upon a doubtful supposition, though it be generally agreed to by some good historians. We may see it plain from the event, that God had a particular design that there should be a gathering of people to Shiloh in these lands, and even in Scotland. I have shewed formerly, how early the Lord visited us with the gospel; and that we were among the first of the Gentile nations that ever were enlightened therewith, after Christ's ascension by which we were delivered from gross paganism.— And when I spoke of the remarkable gathering seasons, I took notice of our reformation-days from Popery, and afterwards from Prelacy, our covenanting-days, and the like; and therefore I am not here to insist thereupon: only, as there have been remarkable gathering times in Scotland, and as the Lord countenances yet the gathering means and ordinances among us: so we ought to bless him that ever gospel light shined upon us, and wait on him for more of that gathering power of his Spirit, that Scotland's barrenness now, and unfruitfulness under the means of grace, may not provoke him wholly to leave us, and make our name LO-AMMI: i. e. *Not my people.*

3. Hence see the *excellency* of the *gospel*, and the *reason* of the *efficacy* thereof. Behold the excellency of the gospel, which brings the glad tidings of a Saviour to the people, and of a gathering place for the poor Gentiles, as well as the Jews; a God-man, in whom God and man might meet together, that scattered sinners separated from God might be gathered to him. Behold the condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed in this gospel, that he stoops so low as to be the gathering room for poor sinful people, to which they resort for shelter and salvation, Shiloh is come; he

he is come in our nature, and with human nature he puts on human bowels, that into his very bosom, the gathering of the people may be, that all the good they have lost, may be found in Christ: yea, that the God, whom they have lost, may be found in him: for, *God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself.*—But as herein we see the excellency, so also behold the *efficacy* of the gospel, and the power thereof. What was the reason of the wonderful spreading and influence of the gospel of Christ, especially in the first ages? It is a matter for which no human policy can account, that the gospel, preached in simplicity, by men of the meanest character, should make its way through forces of devils and men, should gain so many profelytes, subdue so many kingdoms. Had this doctrine been suited to flesh and blood, and, like Mahomet's, indulged men in sensual enjoyments, and promised afterwards the highest degrees of sensual pleasures; had the gospel been designed for encreasing the stock of earthly treasure, it were no wonder that it should have gained so much ground; for all carnal men would readily receive this doctrine, and tenaciously retain it. Nay, had it proceeded upon mere rational grounds and foundations, some philosophers, at least, would have embraced it. But that a doctrine, that teaches to *deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts*; a doctrine, that teaches to *crucify the old man, with his affections and lusts; the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life*; a doctrine, that enjoins us to *look to things that are not seen*; a doctrine, that commands us to *leave all things, deny ourselves, and count all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*: that this doctrine, however highly rational, yet hath no foundation in reason, and admits consequences of no rational demonstration, many thereof being above the reach of reason; that this doctrine, that owes nothing to the character of its preachers, and owes as little to human force; that this doctrine should have gained so great a ground, obtained so vast success, in a time, wherein the profession thereof did make the professors of it, to run the risque of poverty, death, and disgrace; this, I say, is a mystery, that

that none shall be able to unfold, but these who plow with this gospel-hieffer, that the gospel is the very instrument of divine power, whereby he gathers the people to Shiloh. The reason of this marvellous dispensation is, that the omnipotent God, who can give a being to his word, hath past his word, that to Christ shall the gathering of the people be: and divine power, for effectuating this design, is put forth in the gospel; which, therefore, is called *the power of God to salvation*, while therein is *revealed the righteousness God, from faith to faith*. And this *treasure is put in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man*: And, O that this power were put forth on this occasion for gathering the people to Shiloh!

4. Hence see what ought to be the *great design of peoples gathering to gospel-ordinances*; the leading end is, what the prophet expresses, Jer. l. 5. *They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord*: that is, let us gather together unto Shiloh; let us lay ourselves under the influence of his gathering power, and cast ourselves into his gathering arms, while he is stretching forth the arms of his free grace, in a preached gospel. O Sirs! What is the design of these gatherings of people together, if there be no gathering to Shiloh? If we look to the views and designs of the most part, we will find, that the gathering to Shiloh, is least of all in their view. As there were wise virgins and foolish; so there are wise hearers and foolish: some come to ordinances, only for a name, because they would not be thought any worse than their neighbours: some come for diversion, to spend an hour or two in hearing, because they have little else to do; some come for attendance' sake, because they are waiting on their master or mistress; some come for company's sake, their fellows saying, Let us go to sermon; Content, says the other, and so they go for company; some come for curiosity's sake, they have heard people speak to the praise, or dispraise of such and such a man, and they will see whether it be as they say; some come for carping and cavilling, not to be judged by the word, but to judge it, and censure it,

it, being content to find some word, that they reckon may be to the minister's prejudice, or reproach? and though they should forget all the rest of the word, yet this they will mind, to report it to their confederates, either out of malice, because *they receive not the truth in the love thereof*, or out of pride, because they would have others, that hear their censorious remarks, to esteem them to be judicious persons, and competent judges, while, in the mean time, they are but bewraying their own ignorance, malice, and pride. Hence some come to watch, if any thing can be wrested, that is uttered, that they may act the devil, in accusing the brethren; some gape for remarkable phrases, that, when they come to their ordinary company, they may have something to grace and adorn their tales; some never come to hear what shall be said to themselves, and therefore never prick up their ears, till they suppose they hear the minister exposing the crimes of others; some come to gaze, and look about them, to see who are there, and what is their dress and behaviour; some come to muse and dream, and rove, and if they notice any word that is said it will perhaps occasion a hundred impertinent thoughts to keep out the rest of the sermon, and the mind will run a thousand ways before it can get another word noticed, and perhaps the sermon is done before they can gather their thoughts together again. Many such accidental hearers there are, that gather to ordinances, but not to Shiloh. They come to meet with their friends, that, it may be, convene at such a sermon, but not to meet with Christ. They are like children that gather to a market, and sit in the market-place, but neither to buy nor sell. But, as many foxes have been taken, when they came to take; so, some that have come only to spy novelties, yea, to scoff and scorn, have changed their minds before they went home. And, Oh that grace would come and catch some that are here, and yet are seeking nothing here, but like babes, to catch butterflies! Oh that Christ, the greatest treasure in the world, should be most despised, and that the gospel-star, which should lead you to

the place where he is, that you may be gathered to him, that this star should not be marked!

5. Hence see what is the *great Mark*, at which ministers of the gospel should shoot, in dispersing thereof; why, it is just the *gathering of souls to Christ: To him shall the gathering of the people be.* Wo! wo to the minister, whose great design is only to gather a multitude of people to himself, and enhance their applause! It hath been indeed the lot of some of the most faithful ministers of Christ, to be thus reproached and calumniated, as if all their design were to recommend themselves to the populace, and gather a multitude to their faction; they have been branded as self-seekers, instead of being soul-fishers; and why? Because providence hath commonly ordered that those who have been most denied and mortified to self, have been most followed; but the more they were followed, the more they were envied by those that truly sought themselves: hence, as none was more followed than Christ, so none was more envied by the self-seeking Pharisees; *Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after him,* John xii. 19. And, as we read not that Christ reprov'd any for following him, though he reprov'd them for their false ends in doing so, John vi. 26.: so, tho' no gospel minister will be displeas'd, that he hath many fishes before the net, in hopes that some may be gathered; yet it is, and will be the character of all faithful ministers, which the apostle relates, 2 Cor. iv. 5. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.* And 1 Corinth. ii. 2. *I determined to know, [or, MAKE KNOWN,] nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* The great gospel-design then is, to gather souls to Christ, seeing they can never be happy or holy, but in him. And while you find that to be your ministers great scope, you ought to regard and hear them, as you would do a voice from heaven; yea, and more, while they speak the mind of God, from the word of God, which is the *more sure word of prophecy*; for it is the same as if you heard Christ himself: therefore he says, *He that hears you, hears me;*  
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*and he that despises you, despises me.* If you truly regarded that word of Christ, you would hear the voice of the preacher, as you would hear the voice of God. If Samuel had thought it was God that spoke to him, he would not have slept; but because he thought it was not God, but Eli, therefore he slept on; so, while people do not think it is God that speaks to them, but only a man, they will never regard it; and never will there be a gathering to Shiloh, till the word be received, *Not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually works in you that believe,* 1 Thess. ii. 13. Where also that question is obviate, *How shall we know when the minister speaks his own words, or God's word?* Why, let the word of God be received, and it will speak for itself; for it will *effectually work in you that believe.* And when the words of one preacher seem to clash with the words of another, this effectual working of the word will teach you how to judge things that differ really, and how to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.* The great mark then, I say, that the gospel-minister aims at, is the gathering of the people to Shiloh; and the pointing out of Christ to them, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Surely, my friends, we know no other way to save you, nor ourselves; if we did, how wretched were we to keep it from you, since we have no other calling, but to shew you the way of salvation.

6. Hence we may also see what is the *centre of all gospel-truth*; Christ is the centre, wherein all the lines of evangelical doctrine are gathered together, and do meet. It would not be the duty of people, to believe in him, or gather to him by faith, if he were not the *truth*, as well as the *way*; yea, the centre and substance of all truth: and that is not the truth, that does not lead to him. Here is the most sure test of orthodoxy; whatever pretends to be the truth, and yet tends only to lead a man in to himself, and not out of himself to Christ; whatever doctrine tends to make you think, you must produce some holiness or good qualifications from within yourself, without gathering

first to Shiloh, to get it, you may know it is not orthodox doctrine : whatever doctrine tends to the disparagement of Christ, or to the robbing him of any part of the glory of salvation-work, is to be rejected, as erroneous ; for, *to him alone must the gathering of the people be* : and to him only shall the glory of our whole salvation, from first to last, belong. Christ is much robbed of his glory in Britain at this day ; damnable Arian doctrine is spreading, whereby Christ is robbed of the glory of his supreme Deity, denying his being the eternal Son of God, co-equal, and co-essential with the Father \*. The devil himself was more orthodox than our Arian doctors, when he owned, Matt. viii. 29. that Christ was the Son of God ; *What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God ?* The devil spake more honourably of him, than they do, when he said, Mark i. 24. *I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God.* My text leads me to what I am saying ; for, if Christ were not the supreme God, equal with the Father, the gathering of the people to him, to believe in him, to worship and adore him would be unlawful ; it would be idolatry. For, *as the Lord our God is one Lord ; so we must worship the Lord our God, and him only must we serve* : and it is idolatry to worship any other. Yea, to the Son, he says, *Let all the angels of God worship him* : and for this end, must all the people be gathered to him. My present work allows me not to trace the other doctrines, that rob him of his glory, and tend to lead people elsewhere than to Shiloh : only, whatever mask of truth, or holiness, any doctrine shall put on, if it tend to gather

\* About this time the Arian heresy was not only revived, but had gained considerable footing in our neighbouring kingdom of England, under the patronage of Mr Whiston and others ; but also diffused its baleful and pernicious influence upon Scotland, befriended by many, adopted and publicly taught in one of our principal Seminaries of learning ; for which a process was commenced by the presbytery of Glasgow, against professor Simson, Anno 1726, and carried on, before the respective judicatories, till concluded by the Assembly Anno, 1729. the charge being found clearly proven ; and he, in consequence thereof, got but a very inadequate sentence, being only suspended from teaching and preaching, instead of deposition and excommunication. See Vol. II. pag. 466, 467.

people to Moses, and not to Shiloh; or to lead them to the law, and not to Christ, who is the *end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, it favours not of the *truth as it is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21.—But the main inference I designed at present, was for exhortation; and therefore, passing all other inferences that might be drawn, I come to apply it,

*Secondly, For exhortation.* And I design, as the Lord may pity and assist, to direct it to three sorts of persons, with relation to this gathering of the people to Shiloh.

1. Some may be *doubtful* whether they were ever gathered to Shiloh, or not; therefore I would exhort them to try. 2. Some may be sure they were *never* yet gathered to Shiloh; therefore I would exhort them to gather under his wings. 3. Some are believers, that have, through grace, *been gathered* by him, and made to gather to him, and I would exhort them to their duty, with respect to their *further gathering* to him.

*1st,* Some may be *doubtful*, whether they were ever gathered to Shiloh, or not; and therefore my exhortation to such, is, that they would try and examine, whether it be so or not. Examination is a necessary duty at all times, as well after, as before a communion. He that says, with reference to the sacrament, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat*; says also, with reference to any season, *Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith, prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Oh! poor dying mortal! will you try if you have been gathered to Shiloh, or not? Whether you have gone in to him by a faith of his own operation? For according as this takes place, so will it fare with you through all eternity. If you die out of Christ, or in unbelief, you *die in your sins*, John viii. 24. And better die in a ditch, and die like a dog, than die in your sins. If you die in your sins, you will rise in your sins, and stand before the tribunal of God in your sins, and so be condemned. If you be gathered in Christ, you will be found in him, and so found happy,  
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when death, judgment, and eternity appear ; therefore I exhort you solemnly to reflect upon this matter whether you be gathered, or not. If all that you are worth in a world, as I noticed on a former occasion, lay in one precious stone, and that stone were to be tried by a skilful jeweller, whether it were true or false, whether it would fly, or endure under the smart stroak of his hammer ; surely, your thoughts would not be unconcerned about the issue of such a trial. Why, man, woman, all that you are worth in this world, and the world to come, depends upon this matter, whether you be of the people that are gathered to Shiloh, or not. Try whether your faith in the promised Shiloh, will fly, or endure the stroak of the hammer of God's word : have you no concern in this matter ? You would be loath to put to sea, tho' it were but to cross a narrow ferry, in a rotten leaky vessel ; and will you dare to venture on the ocean of eternity, in a false rotten bark ? Whatever profession you have, whatever blaze you make, whatever esteem others may have of you, whatever opinion you may have of yourself, and of your faith, you will be drowned for ever in the deluge of God's wrath, if you be not gathered into the ark, Jesus Christ : I would therefore offer you some helps to make this trial. And here all that I said upon the fourth general head, concerning the *means* and *manner* of this gathering ; how God acts in gathering, and how he makes the soul to act, might be brought in ; but, passing all these, I offer these few following marks, by which you may try whether or not, you have ever been gathered to Shiloh.

1. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then Shiloh hath *come to you*, before ever you was gathered to him. The text makes the *coming of Shiloh* to be the very *cause of the gathering of the people to him* : as his coming in the flesh did usher in the gathering of the Gentiles ; so it is his coming in the Spirit that makes the spiritual gathering to him. Try then, if ever he hath come to you. Surely, if you be gathered to him, you can say, I would never have come to him, unless he had come to me : now, if Christ never came to you by his Spirit,

as a Spirit of conviction, convincing you of sin and misery, and discovering your need of Christ, and that you was lost for ever without him, surely you have not yet been gathered to him.—You have never yet had a sorrowful hour for want of Christ, and was never brought to a *woman's me, for I want Christ and salvation!* nor to a *what shall I do to be saved?* you have reason to conclude that you was never yet gathered to him: for, when he comes by his Spirit, he *convinces the world of sin*; when he gathers the people to him, he comes and *convinces them of sin, because they believe not in him*, John xvi. 8. Some never wanted faith, which declares they never had it: they never missed Christ, which says they never matched with him. As he that was never a real wanter, was never a real and true suiter; so it is the needy wanter that is the steady suiter. Thus here, man, woman, if you had never a want of Christ, you was never in suit of him, never gathered to him: though he hath been in suit of you by the gospel-offer may be a thousand times, yet you being pleased with your old match, your sins, lusts, idols, self-righteousness, or the world; his suit was never regarded, because you was never a wanter; and being never a true wanter, you was never a true seeker or receiver of him; and so never gathered to him; for you was never convinced of your want of Christ, and want of faith in him. Deceive not yourself, O sinner; you was never a believer, if you was never a wanter; if the Spirit of conviction never came, and made you say, Oh! I want grace, I want holiness, I want faith, love, repentance, and all good; yea, I want God, I want Christ, I want the Spirit! Hence it is the property of a believer, notwithstanding all he gets, yet he is still a wanter; always poor and needy, and nothing in himself: and it is the property of an unbeliever, notwithstanding all that he wants, yet he is always *rich, and increased with goods, and wants nothing*; hence we find some ignorant people expressing what others that pretend to more knowledge do conceal; ask them, Do you want faith? Oh! no; we always trusted in God. Do you want hope? No; we hope in his mercy. Do  
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you want love? No; I had ever a love to God and his people all my days. Do you want grace? Nay, God forbid, that I should be altogether graceless. Do you want Christ? Oh! no; my sweet Saviour, what would come of me if I wanted Christ? Why, man, woman, I know nothing that you want; you are not a wantor: the Lord pity you; for, what you dream you never wanted, you never had to this day. The Spirit of conviction hath never come; and, instead of being gathered to Shiloh, you was never yet gathered to the porch-door of true Christianity; for the Spirit's coming to convince of the want of Christ, and of faith in him, is the very beginning of all true religion. But if Shiloh hath come by his Spirit, and shewed you your want of all things, but sin, it is a good beginning; for thus he gathers you out of your false hopes and lying refuges. —But next, if Shiloh hath come to you for gathering you to himself, then he hath come not only as a Spirit of conviction, but also as a Spirit of *powerful illumination*, discovering the glory of Shiloh to you, even the glory of his person, offices, righteousness, fulness, and other things of Christ, so as to glorify Christ in your view, John xvi. 14. *He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.* Now, if Shiloh ever came by his Spirit in the gospel, to shew something of the glory of Christ to you, and the glory of God's perfections in him, so as to make him appear more glorious to you than all the world, it seems you have not yet been gathered; *For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.* But if ever you was gathered, then *the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, verse 6.* For as, when the Lord builds up Zion, he appears in his glory; so, when he gathers souls, he appears in his glory, and brings them from darkness to his marvellous light. I do not speak of  
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the highest degree of spiritual light, nor yet of any extraordinary manifestations; all that I mean is, the Spirit's coming to enlighten your minds in the knowledge of Christ, whereby you have *seen his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*; and have seen a fulness of all grace in him. These are not enthusiastic delusions, but spiritual expressions: for, perhaps some person may think or say, What is that the man is speaking, of beholding such a glory? I never saw any greater glory in all the world than that of the sun, moon, and stars in the firmament. What say you, man? Saw you never any greater glory than that which your bodily eyes have seen betwixt earth and heaven? Then I may say to you, that you was never yet gathered to Shiloh; for he never came in his Spirit to shew you his glory.—I speak not of weak powerless fancies and imaginations that some may have of Christ's glory, but I call it a powerful illumination, conquering the will, and captivating the heart, and carrying in all the affections to the embracing of Christ; for, when the *Sun of righteousness arises*, it is with *healing under his wings*; healing the resistence of the will, and the hardness of the heart, and melting down the whole soul in the warm arms of his gathering grace and love, while he draws with loving-kindness.—And indeed, *No man can come to me*, says Christ, *except the Father which hath sent me draw him*; and saving discoveries are of a drawing nature. The true Sun hath not only light, but heat, whereby the heart is warmed; and the true Light is the light of life, whereby the soul is quickened. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then know it, that Shiloh hath *come to you* before ever there could be a gathering to him.

2. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then as Shiloh hath come to you, so you have been made *particularly to come to him*, under the drawing power and influence of that Spirit I have been speaking of. And indeed, as none can come unless he draw them, so none can stay away when he is drawing them: and hence every believer finds, that as it is impossible to

believe till power come, so it is impossible not to believe when divine power comes: it is as easy then, as it was difficult before. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then as the coming of Shiloh to you hath prevented your coming to him, so your coming to him hath been effectuate by his coming to you, and making the general call of the gospel effectual, in enabling you to a particular application, so as to give a particular answer to the general call. If you have been but hearers of the word all your days, without ever applying it to your own use; and hearers of the general offer and promise of Christ, without ever seeing yourselves involved, inclosed, and included in the general promise and offer, and without ever making a *particular, personal application* thereof, you are not yet gathered to Shiloh; for, when souls are gathered, the general call gets a particular answer; *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek, Psa. xxvii. 8.* The gospel-call is general, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*; but the answer must be particular, *Lord, I believe: help thou my unbelief.* When people suffer gospel-truths to hover in the brain, without application, or learn things as children do their catechism by rote, never reflecting, what am I doing? where am I going? what will be come of me? and what effect hath this word upon me? Unbelief remains undisturbed; the word comes and goes; and there is no good done, no gathering to Shiloh, because no particular application. It is the very design of the Spirit's convincing and enlightening work, to bring the soul to this particular application of Christ; and therefore this mark may clear the former. If you think, how shall I know if I have such a measure of conviction and illumination as is sufficient to evidence that I am gathered to Shiloh? Why, any measure that God pleases to give is enough, if it issue in the soul's particular reception and application of Christ.—When is it that the metal is melted, enough in the fire? Why, it is melted enough when it runs easily into the mould. Now, there may be natural meltings, under the common influences of the Spirit: but, when is the soul melted enough with  
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the beams of the Sun of righteousness, or with the fire of the Spirit? Why, it is melted enough when it runs into the gospel-mould. There are some, as I have noticed on a former occasion, that have, as it were, too much of the fire; these are they that apprehend themselves such great sinners, that they *dare* not come to Christ: There are others that have, as it were, too little of the fire; these are they that only think they are not so good as they ought to be, and therefore they *should* not come to Christ: there are others that have nothing of the fire at all, and these are they that think they are good enough already, and they *need* not come to Christ: but then only is the soul sufficiently melted, when it runs into the mould. What is the gospel-mould? It is even Christ; and when the melted soul runs into this mould, there does it get the right shape and form, and there only. As it is not the melting of the metal that gives it a shape, fashion, or form, but the mould that gives it the form; so never expect to have any good form, any good shape, any good qualifications, till your souls run into this mould. It is the very design of the Spirit's coming to induce people to relinquish their own fancied goodness, and oblige them to come to Christ for all. Try then, if ever you was gathered to Shiloh, by this, namely, whether your soul, in a day of divine power, was made to run in to him like melted lead into a mould, closing with, and cleaving to him by a particular application. But how the soul acts here, by a *particular appropriation* and *fiducial persuasion*, upon the divine word, under divine conduct, I have formerly described\*; therefore I proceed to another mark.

3. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then the *gathering place* will be very *precious to you*; I mean the promised Shiloh, Christ himself, 1 Peter ii. 6, 7 — There he is held forth as the *chief corner-stone*, to which all the stones of the Spiritual building are gathered together, and unite; and to all such as are gathered to

\* See this interesting point of doctrine copiously handled, Vol. III. pag. 29, — 35, 109, 110, 119. 120.

him, it is declared, *He is precious* : and the word signifies, *He is HONOURABLE* ; he is an *honour* to them, and they put honour upon him, and entertain him honourably, in a suitableness to his high quality, as he is God-man ; and particularly, as he is the Shiloh, that is, the Messias, the Sent of God, the Father's extraordinary Ambassador. Some esteem Christ, but not according to his grandeur and glory ; and therefore, it is evident, they are not gathered to him as the Shiloh, the Sent of God ; but they that are gathered to him, they receive, esteem, and entertain him, according to his dignity. If a subject shall receive, or entertain his prince, or the king's extraordinary ambassador, no otherwise than he would do his country neighbour, this would be interpreted a contempt : so, if Christ be not received, esteemed, and entertained according to his grandeur, dignity, and state, he counts it a contempt, rather than a due reception or estimation of him. If Christ be not esteemed as a King, he is but disregarded ; if he be not honoured as the Father's Ambassador-extraordinary, he is but despised ; for, as Shiloh, he hath Heaven's sealed commission ; *Him hath God the Father sealed*. The unbelieving Jews were content to receive and esteem Christ as a great prophet, as the Mahometans do ; but they would not receive and entertain him according to his greatness, grandeur, and glory, which he was invested with ; therefore they were challenged as rejecters and despisers of him, Acts xiii. 41. *He came to his own, but his own received him not* ; for they did not receive him, as the Son of God, and the Sent of God ; whereas, it is said of the believing Jews, who received Christ, That they *beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father* ; that is, they so received him in all his glory, grandeur, majesty, and splendour, that they esteemed honourably of him.—Hence, says Christ, John xvii. 8. *They have known that I came out from thee, and have believed that thou didst send me*. If you be gathered unto Shiloh, then you esteem honourably of him, as he is the glorious Shiloh, the Sent of God. Is Christ thus precious to you, and honourable ?

4. If you be gathered unto Shiloh, then you will be *cloathed with him*, for he is sent to be a *robe of righteousness*; and all that are gathered to him, do put on that mantle, and gather in under that cover; and in that cloathing do they stand *perfectly righteous* in the sight of God; being *accepted as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ*. Hence, it is given as a mark of the true church and children of God, that are gathered to Christ, that they are *cloathed with the Sun*, Rev. xii. 1. It is indeed called a *great wonder*; for the mystery of free and perfect justification, and of being cloathed with a perfect righteousness, is such a mystery, that natural men cannot conceive it, nor believe it, though a man should *declare it to them*, as the apostle speaks, Acts xiii. 41. Yea, the believer himself cannot believe it, without *holy wondring*, and *joyful trembling*, Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9. This wonder is said to be of a *woman in heaven*; that is, the church militant, and every particular believer under a gospel dispensation, wherein there is a full revelation of this righteousness. Now, here it is said also, *she was cloathed with the Sun*; that is, with Christ, the Sun of righteousness; the woman being married to Christ, as the Lord her righteousness, she is, as it were, gathered in to the Sun in the firmament, and so cloathed with the perfect righteousness of Christ; that however black and dark she is in herself; yet, in point of justification, this Sun, wherewith she is cloathed, makes her shine in a perfect righteousness, as gloriously in God's eyes, as the bodily sun shines gloriously in our eyes, when it shines in its meridian splendour.—The believer is not only *fair as the moon*, in the sight of men, in point of *sanctification*; which moon, may be indeed, and is full of spots, and very changeable; but *clear as the sun*, in the sight of God, in point of *justification*; the Sun of righteousness with which he is clothed, being perfectly glorious. But, perhaps, some may say, If this be an evidence of one that he is cloathed with the Sun of righteousness, how shall I examine myself by this, or know that I am thus cloathed? Why, you may examine it by what follows. If you be *cloathed with the Sun*, then you have  
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got the moon under your feet, and upon your head a crown of twelve stars. Have you got the moon under your feet? What is that, may you say? I find some understand two things by it; the one is, the moon of your own *righteousness*, and the other is the moon of the *world*. As to the former then, if you be gathered to Christ, and cloathed with the Sun of righteousness, then you have got the moon of your own *righteousness* under your feet; that is, you will make no account of your own righteousness of sanctification before God, in comparison of the garment of Christ's righteousness, which is the Sun that you are so gloriously cloathed with. Nay, when your own righteousness, or graces, put in for any share of justification before God, you will in this respect, trample them under your feet as a *menstruous cloth*, as the prophet Isaiah did, chap. lxiv. 6. *All our righteousness are as filthy rags.* Yea, when it claims to be a righteousness, before an infinitely holy and just God, you will trample it under your feet as *dung*, as the apostle Paul did, Phil. iii. 8. *Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; yea, I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, that is after the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith.* This he speaks not only of his pharisaical righteousness before his conversion, but his righteousness of sanctification after his conversion. The man that is cloathed with the Sun of righteousness, accounts his own righteousness a contemptible nothing, in comparison of Christ's righteousness. It is not gain, but loss, because, as Chrysostom, one of the Father's says, "When the sun shines, it is but loss to sit by a candle-light:" Why? because his righteousness is God's righteousness. God is the worker of it; and, in comparison thereof, our best righteousness, whereof we are the workers, even with divine assistance, is but dung, to be trampled upon, when it competes with the other, or would have any share in the matter of our justification before God. If you be cloathed with the Sun then, and be thus gathered to Shiloh, you have got this

this moon under your feet; and whatever light of sanctification you have, it will flow from your justification, as the light of the moon does come from the sun; and as the moon gives light in the dark night, so will the moon of your sanctification give light to other men, walking in the dark night of this world: *Your light will so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify God.* And here is a mystery in the believer's life; he shines like the moon, in point of sanctification, doing all the good works he can, that he may glorify God, and edify his neighbour in the world; and yet he keeps this moon of his own works and righteousness under his feet, and tramples upon it, in the matter of justification, because, in that respect, his only cloathing is the Sun of righteousness.—Again, as to the other sense, if you be cloathed with the Sun, and gathered to Shiloh, then you will have the moon of this world under your feet; the profits, honours, and pleasures of the world, which being changeable and unconstant, as the moon, the believer hath it under his feet; because, being cloathed with the glorious Sun of righteousness, and thereby discerning the glory of God and Christ, and heavenly things, he cannot but despise and undervalue all earthly things, when coming in competition with heavenly; as Moses did, Heb. ix. 25, 26. when he vilified all the glory and grandeur of Pharaoh's court, *Choosing rather to suffer affliction, with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.* You that had never the moon of this world under your feet, but have the world in your heart, and nothing but the world, surely you are not gathered unto Shiloh; for they that are gathered to him, they are gathered out of the world, and set apart from the rest of the world; *They are not of the world, but chosen out of the world.* Hence, they that are gathered to Shiloh, are brought off from their old worldly companions: there are sinful gatherings, wicked clubs and cabals, that will be hateful to them; of which their heart will say, as Jacob said of Simeon and Levi, Gen. xlix. 6. *O my soul, come not thou into their secret; to their*

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*assembly, mine honour, be thou not united; and with David, Pl. xxvi. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners.* If you belong to these drunken, tippling, idle, and debauched gatherings ; you may be sure, that you are not gathered unto Shiloh. The godly may indeed fall into such company, but it is not their element to embrace their society : nay, fellowship with *the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, is their delight* : and fellowship with the wicked, is so far from being their delight, that their society is rather a burden, and brings them to a *wo is me, wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesbech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar ! I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* Now, see to it, if you be not gathered out of the world, you are not yet gathered to Shiloh : for if you be clothed with the Sun, then you have the moon of this world under your feet, and upon *your head a crown of twelve stars* : that is, the doctrine of the gospel, delivered by the twelve apostles, and preached by gospel-ministers, which are called *stars in his right-hand*, will be your crown, a golden crown to you : yea, his word will be to you, as more to be *desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold.* And this leads me to another mark of those that are gathered to Shiloh.

5. If you be gathered to Shiloh, then *gathering means and ordinances* will be always desirable to you ; for they that are gathered, will be always a gathering to him, till they be for ever with him, in the full and immediate enjoyment of him : now try yourself by this mark. I enlarge a little upon each, because I design not to multiply particulars.—If you be gathered to Shiloh, then the *gathering means* will be desirable to you. Now, what conscience do you make of the means ? For, there is a generation, that boldly say, they have religion, yet they use not duly, either public, private, or secret means. If ever you be gathered to Christ, all the *gathering means, all his ordinances*, will be sweet to you : you will seek him where he is to be found ; not in the *city, about the streets and broadways*, among the *watch-men*, but a little further, Song iii. 2, 3, 4. They that never used means, were never gathered ;

ed ; they that are gathered, are still endeavouring to improve them, because they are always gathering to him : therefore try yourselves here further, on this score, and see where you are, in Shiloh, or not. If you be gathered to Shiloh, you will be constantly gathering to him, and living on him ; for such are not of *those that draw back to perdition*, but of *those that believe, to the saving of their souls*. They that go out from him, were never of him ; therefore says Christ to his disciples, *Will ye also go away?* John vi. 67. To which, the true believer's answer is, *Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life?* ver. 68. Let me therefore ask you, whether or not you intend to abide with Christ? Surely, if you be gathered to him, you resolve, through grace to remain with him, and to be still *coming to him*, 1 Pet. ii. 4. ; and *as newborn babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*, ver. 2. Indeed, they that abide with Christ cannot but grow ; and this, I say, to find out hypocrites, that perhaps use the outward means, and resolve, in their fashion, they will abide with Christ ; that is, they will not turn papists or malignants, turn who will, and yet know not what it is to be ever gathering to, and growing in the Lord Jesus. I know that saints have their winter-blasts, that set them back ; but they have also their summer-refreshings, to set them forward again, and make them grow in knowledge, faith, love, experience ; or else, for want of this growth, they are always quarrelling themselves : but, for other professors, that never were rooted in Christ, they keep still their old footing and disposition. Men would blush for shame, to have it said to them, they are as foolish this day, as they were this day twenty years ; or, that they are as bad in their callings, and as ill at their trade, as when they began ; and yet, in Christianity, many are as ill as they were thirty, forty, fifty years since ; as ignorant of Christ and the gospel, as great strangers to communion with God in Christ. Surely, they that are gathered to Christ, they will strive to get forward, they cannot get enough of him, but *press toward the mark*. They that have got enough

of Christ, have got nothing as yet; and they that have got him, they may think they have got nothing to what they see to be in him; and therefore they press forward, whenever they are themselves. And, indeed, when you are not going forward, you are going backward. When a man rows against the stream, he holds up the boat; but let him lay aside the oars, he will go further down than he came up. Hence, gathered souls are assiduously for making use of the oars of gathering means, that they may reach forward: and hence, as God's gathering means will be delightful, so the devil's scattering means will be hateful to him that is gathered; every thing that tends to make a separation betwixt Christ and him, will be uneasy, especially when he hath made any progress at ordinances.—Oh! to think of a separation again, will be sad and sorrowful! Wo is me, that I am going back to a world of sin, and finners, and temptation again! Being gathered to him, he cannot think of being separated from him.

6. If you be gathered to Shiloh, then it will be your desire and endeavour to gather *others* to him; the soul that comes to Christ, will seek to draw others after him, John i. 45, 46. Whenever Christ found Philip, Philip found Nathanael, and says, *We have found the Messias; O come and see him.* When Christ manifested himself to the woman of Samaria, she invites the men of the city to come to him; *O come see a man that told me all things that ever I did,* John iv. 29. Never a soul was gathered to Christ, but desired to gather others, especially its friends and relations. The parent that is in Christ, will be careful to gather his children to Christ; the master his servant, Genesis xviii. 19. *I know,* says God of Abraham, *that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.* It is not possible, but that soul that comes to Christ, and hath got a draught of his free love, if it could command ten thousand, it would command them to come to Christ. If you never had a care or concern this way, to know the Lord, you declare you was never gathered to him. But, you whose soul's desire is, to gather others to Christ, you may be sure,



sure, concerning yourself, that you are gathered to Shiloh.—Now, if you try yourselves impartially by these marks, you may come to find whether you have been gathered to Shiloh, yea, or not.

2dly, The second sort then, that I would speak to, are some that may be *sure*, that they were NEVER gathered to Shiloh; and it is to be feared, that unbelievers make up the greatest part of this assembly: and therefore I must be allowed to speak, especially to them; and if believers themselves give ear, and the Lord concur with the word of general exhortation, they may get a new grip and a firm hold of Shiloh, by the bye. My exhortation to the people in general, then, especially those that were never gathered unto Christ, is in the words of the prophet, Zeph. ii. 1. *Gather yourselves together; yea, gather together, O nation not desired; that is, either not desiring, even you that have no desire towards God and Christ, and his grace and favour, but are very indifferent about it; or, nation not desirable, having nothing lovely or amiable about you, to recommend you to God; yet, O gather together, before the decree bring forth, and before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; for, if once his wrath begin to burn, blessed are all they that trust in him, and gather to him.* Also, in the words of the prophet, Isaiah xlv. 20, 22. *Assemble yourselves, and come; why? what is that? it follows, Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.* Shiloh is come, and he is come for the salvation of the people. O let all the people say, AMEN; *even so, come Lord Jesus: here is the feast of fat things, that the Lord of hosts hath made on this mountain, for all people, Isaiah xxv. 6. Therefore let all the people assemble themselves and come, that they may eat and drink.* I allude to Ezekiel xxxix. 17. where God speaks to every feathered fowl, and every beast of the field, saying, *Assemble yourselves and come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice, that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh, and drink blood.* Indeed, *except you eat the flesh, and drink the*

*blood of the Son of God, you have no life in you,* John vi. 53. Therefore, assemble yourselves and come, gather to this sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel for you; a *sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God.*—Here is the *carcase*; O let the *eagles be gathered together.* We must *preach this gospel to every creature,* every rational creature; yea, to men that have lost their reason, and turned to beasts: every beast of the field, tame or wild, clean or unclean, Acts x. 12. What means the *opening of the heavens there,* and the *descending of the sheet,* the *great sheet knit at four corners,* containing *all manner of wild beasts,* and *creeping things,* and *fowls of the air?* Why, the meaning was, Go call all, and every one of the people. The Gentiles, some of them are creeping in the dust, and wallowing in the mire of sinful lusts and worldly-mindedness; others are flying in the air of pride, vanity, and selfishness: but, go you and call the poor sinful creatures within your reach, whether they be creeping on the earth, or flying in the air: all the sinful house of Adam, are made up of such a sort of people; but go, and tell them, that now Shiloh is come; and, *to him must the gathering of the people be.* Therefore, in the name of the great Shiloh, and in his Father's name, we invite and exhort all the people that have hitherto been gathering to the devil, and gathering to their lusts, and gathering to the world, and gathering to their idle cabals, and drunken gossipings, sinful diversions, and damnable debaucheries, now to think in earnest of gathering unto Shiloh; for, *Shiloh is come,* and let *the gathering of the people be to him.*

Now, seeing nothing but divine almighty power can gather souls unto Christ; therefore, O man, woman; every individual who is just now hearing me, whether old or young, look to God for power to accompany the call: for the gospel call uses to be the channel, in which divine power runs, for conquering souls. And because, I know not, but this power may accompany this call, for making out the promise in the text, that *to him shall the gathering of the people be;* therefore,  
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I shall offer some considerations, for pressing home this exhortation upon the people.

1. Consider, that Shiloh is *come* to the people, that the people may come to him ; for this is what I mean, by gathering to him, namely, a coming to him by faith : and this faith, you know, is a *receiving and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel*. Now, since he cannot be received, but in and by the gospel-offer, the word of grace, the word of promise in the gospel ; therefore to receive him, is to *believe in him*, John i. 12. As it is by *unbelief that we depart from him*, Heb. iii. 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God* : so it is by *believing in him*, that we gather to him : and to believe in him, is to credit the record, that God hath given of his Son ; *And this is the record that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son : he that does not thus believe, hath made God a liar*, 1 John v. 10, 11. To come to him by faith, then, is to close with him in the gospel-record, and upon the divine testimony ; to have a divine persuasion of the truth and goodness of the gospel-message, with particular application to yourself, saying, O here is a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the chief*, 1 Tim. i. 15. and so it is just a taking him at his word, and taking his word of grace, his word of honour for your salvation, according to the gospel offer of him. If you be saying, then, that you cannot come to him by faith ; it may be very true, for indeed you cannot come, till he *draw you*, John vi. 44. You cannot believe, till the Spirit of grace mix in with this word of grace ; but do you know what you are saying, when you say you cannot come to him by faith, though the word of grace came to you in particular, to be believed by you ! You are saying, in effect, that God is a liar ; I cannot take his word for it : I cannot believe that he is speaking to me : or that he means any good to me. *To you is the word of this salvation sent*, says the gospel : “ No, says “ unbelief, never a word of that is true, with respect “ to me : let them apply it to whom it is sent, but I “ cannot

“cannot think it is to the like of me.” Wretch! you are calling the God of truth a liar: Oh! blasphemy! If it were not to you, your unbelief would not be your sin; but of all sins it is the most damning, as well as the prolific womb that genders other sins. However, Shiloh is come to you, that you may come to him; *He came to his own, and his own* [*viz. the Jews,*] *received him not*; intimating, that the design of the work, and design of his coming, was that they might come to him, receive him, and gather to him. And now he is come to you, Gentiles; he is come to *the people*: and shall the people reject him too? He is come to us in the flesh, by taking on our nature; he is come to us in the gospel, the gospel-offer, the gospel-promise, the gospel-invitation; and tho’ he should never come any other way, yet it states your obligation, and lays a foundation for your coming to him; and if you reject him, you are as inexcusable, as the Jews that rejected him were.

2. Consider *whom* it is you will be gathered to, when gathered unto Shiloh: surely, *They that know his name will put their trust in him*, and so gather to him. Psal. xxiv. 9, 10. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, that the King of glory may come in*: Oh! who would not cast open the gates of their hearts to receive such an honourable guest! Oh! if you knew what a glorious one Christ is, you could not find in you heart to reject and despise him: he is not a man simply, or an angel, but a God-man, the Lord of men and angels. It is not possible to tell what glory is in him, for God is in him; *Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. A God-head dwelling in our flesh is the world’s wonder: it is such a mystery, that the world cannot receive it; but this is the gospel that we preach, *That God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself*, 2 Cor. v. 19. O think, what of God is in Christ! (1.) The *authority* of God is in him; *My name is in him*, Exodus xxiii. 21. this is the proper name, Shiloh, the Sent, the Authorised, and Sealed of the Father, John vi. 27. He came in his Father’s name, as well as his own, *To seek and save lost sinners*.

As the authority of God, so, (2.) The *wisdom* and *power* of God is in him ; *We preach Christ crucified,—the wisdom of God, and the power of God,* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. All the treasures of divine wisdom, and all the magazine of divine power are in him. And not only so, but again, (3.) The *Spirit* of God is in him ; *I have put my Spirit upon him, that he may bring forth judgment to the Gentiles,* Isa. lxii. 1. He hath not only the Spirit of wisdom, to contrive for the best ; and the Spirit of power, to save to the uttermost ; but also the Spirit of grace, to confer upon the people : and shall not the gathering of the people be to him ? O ! what of God is in him ! (4.) The *righteousness* of God is in him ; and his righteousness is the *righteousness of God*, which is revealed to you in this gospel, *from faith to faith,* Rom. i. 17. (5.) The *love* of God is in him, for divine love is wrapt up in this garment of flesh and blood ; *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,* 1 John iv. 9. (6.) The *mercy* of God is in him. Oh ! poor sinner, when you come to your dying moments, readily *God's mercy* will be your cry ; but in vain will you seek God's mercy, to the prejudice of God's justice ; and behold, justice and mercy meet together, and kiss one another, only in Christ : mercy will vent no otherwise, but in Christ, in whom alone God is well-pleased, and by whom his justice is satisfied. What shall I say ? (7.) The *salvation* of God is in him, Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is no name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus.* Yea, (8.) The *fulness* of God is in him : *For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell,* Col. i. 19. and accordingly, Col. ii. 9. *In him dwells all the fulness of the God-head bodily.*—None of God's attributes or excellencies are out of him ; *He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person\**. There is enough here to provoke all the world to gather to him.

\* The above particulars may be seen somewhat more fully illustrated, Vol. III. pag. 167, 168, 169.

3. Consider *what* you must be gathered to, if you be not gathered to Shiloh.

(1.) If you be not gathered to Christ, you will be gathered to your *idols* and *lusts*: and have you not provoked God too much already, by gathering towards that airth! May not *the time past suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles?* Will you prefer a base lust to blessed Jesus? a lust that would damn you, to a Jesus that would save you! Again,

(2.) If you be not gathered to Christ, the best airth you can pretend to go to, is to be gathered to the *law* as your husband: and, Oh! is a broken covenant of works a better bargain, think you, than Christ? Nay, nay; *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse*, Gal. iii. 10.; that is, as many as think to be justified and accepted of God by their obedience to the command of the law, they are under the threatening and curse of the law; for, *Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*: and hereby, you are a *debtor to the whole law*, Gal. v. 3.; and, because you cannot pay the debt of obedience to the command, you must ly under the debt of satisfaction to the curse: and therefore under the heavy curse and condemnation of the law is your soul gathered, while you are out of Christ. Yea,

(3.) If you be not gathered to Christ, you must be gathered to the *devil*: for there is do medium, either Christ or the devil must be your master: if Christ be not entertained, you entertain the devil in his room. And do you consider what sort of guest he is? He is a guest that will *blind* you; for, he is *the god of this world that blinds the minds of them that believe not*.—He is a guest that will *blast* you, and blast every word to you that you hear, or else run away with it, that you may never get good of it; for he *catches away the very seed that is sown in the heart*, Mat. xiii. 19.—He is a guest that will *deceive* you, by persuading you that you have either been gathered to Christ already, and that you are a good enough believer, or else that it is time enough for you to be gathered to Christ.—And so he is, in a word, a guest that will *destroy* you, and devour  
you

you, as well as delude you; for, *The devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* And as now he is your tempter, so afterwards he will be your tormentor. Therefore, again,

(4.) Let me tell you, if you be not gathered to Shiloh, you must be gathered to *hell*: for, *He that believeth not shall be damned,* Mark xvi. 16. And it is not the minister that says it, it is the *say* and *affirmation* of the God of truth; and if his *say* be not enough, know he hath sworn, as well as said it, Hebrews iii. 18. *He swears in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest.* And to whom does he swear, thus in his wrath? Even to them that believe not. Alas! there is no little wrath abiding that soul against whom God swears in his wrath; it will be wrath proportioned to the worth of that blood of Christ which you do trample under your feet. Oh! *How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?* Let not the devil persuade you, that all these things are but fancies; for, when death's cold sweat begins to break upon you, you will find them to be sad realities, if you be not gathered unto Shiloh.—And therefore, again,

4. Consider *what things* are a-gathering, that should hasten your gathering in to Shiloh. *Clouds* are gathering fast in our iky; a cloud of wickedness, a cloud of error, a cloud of wrath, a cloud of death.

(1.) A cloud of *wickedness* is gathering; nay, this cloud is already gathered to such a blackness, that we cannot say, *The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full*; or that the iniquity of Britain and Ireland is not yet full; nay, our covenant-breaking, covenant-burning, covenant-burying, sin and defection, beside all other evils, have made our cup full, some time ago: but it seems God hath a mind our cup should run over, that so his cup of judgments may run also: for a cloud of wickedness is gathering more and more.

(2.) Clouds of *error* are gathering also; a black cloud especially of Arianism, which threatens the destruction of the very foundation of Christianity; *And if the foundation shake, what shall the righteous do?* Of

this I spoke formerly \* ; therefore, I shall only say, when these clouds of wickedness and error are gathering to a prodigious blackness of darkness, it is a time to be gathering to Shiloh, who is *the way and the truth* : the way to walk in, in opposition to the way of wickedness ; and the truth to be believed, in opposition to all the paths of error. But, moreover, these black clouds bode more a-coming.

(3.) There is a cloud of *wrath* gathering over Britain ; a cloud of judgment and calamity is gathering over Scotland, and hath been gathering these many years bygone, especially since the time that Scotland was incorporate with her neighbour : a cloud of wrath hath been gathering over us, both as a church and nation ; what drops have fallen out of that cloud, to the rending and dividing of our church, and to the sinking and impoverishing of our state ; what clouds of disorder and confusion are hovering over our head, is too well known : but the Lord knows what will be the end of these things, more dreadful showers of temporal judgments are in all appearance hastening on : and, Oh ! is it not time to be gathering to Shiloh, the only place of foul-safety ? They that are in him have the lee-side of the bush, and are in absolute safety, whatever way the wind blows. But though you should escape the cloud of national judgments, yet there is a cloud of personal affliction gathering, be it sickness on your body, or the like : is it not best to be under covert before the shower comes on ? Or, if you should escape that, yet,

(4.) Certainly there is a cloud of *death* gathering and coming upon you, as fast as days, and hours, and moments fly away ; and if your bodies be gathered to the grave before your souls be gathered to Shiloh, you will be miserable as long as God shall be blessed, that is for ever and ever. You may make a shift to live as merrily as you can now ; but, *What will you do in the day of visitation ?* Isa. x. 3. What will you do when the king of terrors is gathering his forces against you,

\* See above, page 148.



and when you shall be gathered before God's awful tribunal to hear and receive that direful and alarming sentence pronounced against you, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!*

5. Consider *how long* he hath been offering to gather you. And *how oft*, O sinner, *would he have gathered you, as a hen does her chickens under her wings, but ye would not?* How long? Even all day long; Rom. x. 21. *All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people.* God hath been stretching out his arm to take hold of you, even the arm of his grace in the gospel-offer and invitation, and you are not laid hold upon to this day. All the day long that the gospel-gun hath been shining have I been stretching out my arms, says God; for God counts the time how long he waits upon you; he reckons up the time how long you let him stand knocking at the door of your heart: he counts every hour's refusal, and every year's refusal, tho' it be forty years; *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* God hath been calling on some of you, ten, twenty, thirty, forty years; and, it may be, to gray hairs, but he counts the time how long: he hath been pursuing you with his grace, while you have been catching feathers in the wind; delighting yourselves in nothing but vanity; yea, lying vanity, forsaking your own mercy; as persons that have neither care for heaven, nor a fear of hell. What if the time be now come, wherein he is saying, *I will wait no longer; Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;* if this very call be slighted, *My Spirit shall strive no more with you;* I have long sought your kindness, and you refused it; I offered my kindness, and you thought nothing of it; *I would have gathered you, and ye would not?* The cause of your damnation then, if you perish, is not in God, but in you: it is not in his act of reprobation, but in your act of rebellion and wicked will. You are a gain-saying and rebellious people against the God that stretched forth his hands towards you: say not then, what ails God at me? but rather, what ails your wicked nature at God?

Oh! may conquering grace at length come!—But again,

6. Consider what *relation* Christ stands in to the people, that the gathering of the people may be to him: not only is Shiloh come in our nature, but he is come in the capacity of a Shiloh; that is, the *Sent of God*, under such manifold relations to the people as may engage the hearts of the people. Since the text makes him the *Sent of God*, let us see what he is sent for, and whether the people have any concern therein.—He is sent to be the *Saviour* of the people; *To you is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, Luke ii. 11. *This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*, John iv. 24. Is he sent to be the Saviour of the people; and shall not the gathering of the people be to him?—He is sent to be the *Deliverer* of the people; *There is come out of Zion the Deliverer, that shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Romans xi. 26. Oh! shall he come to deliver the people, and none of the people come to be delivered by him?—He is sent to be the *Helper* of the people; yea, all the help of the people is laid upon him; *I have laid help upon one that is mighty*, Psalm lxxxix. 17. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help*, Hos. xiii. 9. Is he the helper of the people, and the help itself; and shall not the people come to him, to seek his help, and take his help?—He is sent to be the *Prophet* of the people; *The Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary*, Isaiah l. 4. He is the only powerful preacher and teacher of the people; *Never man spake like this man*: and should not the people hear him? *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him*.—He is sent to be the *Priest*, and the *Sacrifice* of the people. As he is a *Priest for ever*, Psalm cx. 4.; so *he gave himself to be an offering, and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God*, Ephes. v. 2. And all was, that the people may gather under the covert of the blood of the sacrifice.—Again, he is sent to be the *King* of the people; *I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*, Psal. ii. 6. Shall he have no subjects for your part? Will none in all this large

large audience be influenced to become willing and loyal subjects of this glorious and immortal King? Will none match with him?—He is sent to be the *Friend and Favourer* of the people: hence called a *Friend of publicans and sinners*; not a friend to their sins, but such a friend to their souls, as *to save them from their sins*.—He is sent to be the *Justifier* of the people; the *Justifier of them that believe in Jesus*: yea, hence, he is said to *justify the ungodly*; for he came not to be a condemner, but a justifier; *God sent not his Son to the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*, John iii. 17. Oh! shall not guilty people come to him to be *justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*?—He is sent to be the *Shepherd and Bishop* of the people, that the people may return unto him, as *the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25.—He is sent to be the *Physician* of the people; hence, his name is *JEHOVAH-ROPHI*; *The Lord that healeth thee*: And as many as touched him were healed. *The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*. And, who are they that need not his healing? Therefore, let the gathering of the people that need healing be to him.—He is sent to be the *Witness, the Leader, and Commander* of the people; *Behold, I have given him for a Witness, a Leader, and Commander of the people*, Isaiah lv. 4.; and all that the gathering of the people may be to him.—He is sent to be a *Counsellor, a Father, and a Prince* of the people; *To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace*; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, Isa. ix. 6.—He is sent to be the *Builder* of the people, and the *Foundation-stone*, upon which the people should build; *Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory*, Zech. vi. 13. *Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation*, Isaiah xxviii. 16.; and all that the gathering of the people may be to him.—He is sent to be the *Blessor* of the people, that the people may gather

gather to him for a blessing; *God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities, Acts iii. 26.*—He hath sent him to *bless* the people; and God's blessing will light on all them that gather to him for a blessing; *Men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed, Psalm lxxii. 17.*—He is sent to be the *Standard-bearer* of the people; *He is the Chief, the Standard-bearer among ten thousand, Song v. 10.*; hence he is called *the Ensign of the people, and to it shall the Gentiles seek, Isa. xi. 10.* Ought not then the gathering of the people to be to their Standard-bearer and Ensign?—He is sent to be the *Burden-bearer* of the people: behold the burden of your *sins* is laid upon him; *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all, Isaiah liii. 6, 8.* [or, *made them to MEET on him,*] he hath gathered together all the sins of the people, and laid them on his back, that the gathering of the people may be to him, as *the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world.* As the burden of our sins, so the burden of our *sorrows* is laid upon him; *Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, Isaiah liii. 4.* The burden of our *wounds, and bruises, and stripes,* was laid upon him; *He was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed, verse 5.*—All the wounds that we should have got with the sword of God's wrath, and all the stripes that should have been laid upon our backs to eternity, were gathered together, and laid upon Christ's back. And why was the burden of all the sins and sorrows of the people laid upon him, but that the gathering of the people might be to him, as the Burden-bearer of the people?—What shall I say? He is sent, not only to be *all relations,* but *all things* to the people?—He is sent to be the *Covenant* of the people; *I will give thee for a covenant of the people, Isa. lxvi. 6.*—He is sent to be the *Glory* of the people; *a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of his people Israel.*—He is sent to be the *Hope* of the people; *He is our Hope,* says the apostle; and, *The Lord shall be the Hope of his people, Joel iii. 16.*—

He is sent to be the *Desire* of the people ; therefore it is said of him, *The Desire of all nations shall come.*—He is sent to be the *Propitiation* of the people ; *He is the Propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 2.—He is sent to be the *Salvation* and *Consolation* of the people : *Behold thy Salvation comes* ; and he is called the *Consolation of Israel*.—He is sent to be the *Door* of the people ; *I am the Door, by me if any enter in, he shall be saved*, John x. 9.—Again, he is sent to be the *Way* of the people ; *I am the Way : no man comes to the Father but by me.*—He is sent to be the *Ladder* of the people : he is the true Jacob's ladder, that reaches from earth to heaven, by which alone we can ascend up to glory. And, O should not the gathering of the people be to him ! And because they cannot of themselves enter in at this door, nor walk in this way, nor climb this ladder, therefore he is sent to be the *Leader* of the people ; *I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known* : Yea, and to be the *Strength* of the people, that the people may gather to him, and trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength.—He is sent to be the *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* of the people, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is made of God unto us, all these things ; even he who is the Lord our righteousness.—And, that he might be a perfect law-biding righteousness of the people, behold with wonder, he sent him to be the *Sin* of the people, and the *Curse* of the people ; *He hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. *To redeem us from the curse of the law, he was made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13.—What shall I say ! He is the *Redeemer* of the people, the *Surety* of the people, the *Advocate* of the people, and the *Ransom* of the people.—Shiloh is come, and he is sent of God, to be all relations, and all things to the people, that the gathering of the people may be to him.—God hath put all the *privileges* of the people into his hands, that he may be the *Light* and *Life* of the people ; who is therefore called, the *Light of the world*, and the *Life of the world*.—He hath put all *gifts*, and *graces*, and *fulness* in his hand, for the peoples use and behoof ; *He hath*

received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them.—And is there nothing in all this to be a motive or argument for gathering the people unto him? Is he sent for all these ends to the people, and shall not the people be gathered to him? O! may the people come to him, who is the All of the people!

7. Consider what *house-room* there is in him, for the people to gather unto: And,

(1.) He is a *hiding-house* for the people to gather to; *A man shall be as a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*, Isa. xxxii. 2. Behold, he is a hiding-house, a shelter-house, a refuge for the people, a sanctuary for the people, that the people may flee to him, saying, with the psalmist, *I flee to thee to hide me.*

(2.) He is a *dwelling-house* for the people to gather to; *He that dwells in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*, Psal. xci. 1. And, O they that dwell in him, they *dwell on high*, and *the place of their defence is the munition of rocks*. They that are once gathered to him, he and they do mutually inhabit one another, in the communion of the Holy Ghost; *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, by his Spirit which he hath given us*, 1 John iv. 13.

(3.) He is a *working-house* for the gathering of the people to: not one spiritually good work can be performed out of him; for, *without him we can do nothing*, John xv. 5. But when one gets in to this house, then he is like a man in his working-house, that hath all his working instruments and tools at his hand, without which he could not work at his trade: yea, then he hath Christ himself for his working hand; *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me*. He performs all my work for me, *his strength being made perfect in my weakness*.

(4.) He is the *bathing-house* for the gathering of the people to; *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*, 1 John i. 7.; *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me*. He himself is the *fountain open to the house of David for sin*

*sin and for uncleanness*: Here alone it is, that the filthy leprous people can get their souls bathed and purged, and mult gather to him for that end, saying, *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow,* Psal. li. 7.

(5.) He is the *treasure-house* for the people to gather unto. Where must the gathering of the people be, but to the only store-house? Poor people may be here supplied, out of his unsearchable riches; for, *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,* Col. ii. 3. *It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, that out of his fulness we might receive grace for grace.*

(6.) He is the *pleasure-house* for the gathering of the people to. He is a pleasure-house, both for God, and for the people of God; such a pleasure-house for God to dwell in, that as God is *well-pleased in him*, reconciled and satisfied in him, *in whom his soul delights*: so he is infinitely well-pleased with all that gather in to him, they are *accepted in him*, and that with pleasure: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.* And when once sinners are gathered in to him, O they are well-pleased also; yea, *abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house,* Psal. xxxvi. 8. *In whom believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. In his presence there is fulness of joy.* There is no house of pleasure in the world like this.

(7.) He is the *magazine-house* for the gathering of the people to. All our magazines for military provision are in him: he indeed is *like the tower of David, built for an armoury, where there hangs a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men,* Song iv. 4.; for all the believer's spiritual armour, whereby he must fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh, is hanging in this house; and therefore, whenever he is for fighting, he is to *put on the whole armour of God*; and to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Never will a soul get a happy stroak given to the devil, or corruption, without armour got out of this magazine-house. Here lies all the powder and ammunition,

whereby the most subtle engines of hell may be blown up, and broken.

(8.) He is the *banqueting-house* for the gathering of the people to; *He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love*, Cant. ii. 4. It is remarkable and strange, that there should be need of a banner in a banqueting-house. A banner is for war; and indeed his people, when they are fed in his house, they are fitted for war: but, O a banner of love is good provision for war; the manifestation of the love of God in Christ, encourages and strengthens the soul, both for work and warfare. He fights best, when he feeds best upon the love and favour of God in Christ, who himself is both the banqueting-house, the banner, and the feast; he is the food, *His flesh is meet indeed, and his blood is drink indeed*.—There he feeds them with his pardon and peace; he feeds them with his righteousness and fulness; yea, there he *supps with them, and they with him*: and *this feast of fat things is provided for all people*, Isaiah xxv. 6. that they may gather in to the banqueting-house.—He only is the victual-house, the true Bethlehem, the house of bread.

(9.) He is the *praying-house* for the gathering of the people to; the *true temple, and house of prayer for all people*, Isaiah lvi. 7.—Would you have a house for praying acceptably in, so as to be always heard and answered, whenever you pray? Here it is; there is no house of prayer like it: and where-ever you go; be it to a corner or a closet, this house is at hand for you to run in to, that you may be *accepted in the Beloved*: and when you go in to this house of prayer, you shall have *whatever you ask, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*, John xiv. 13.

(10.) He is the *praising-house* for the gathering of the people to; *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee*, Psalm lxxxiv 4. And, indeed, the farther you go into the house of prayer, the more will you find it to be the house of praise. Much *praise, and honour, and glory in the highest*, does God get in this house; whereas, people out of this house, do nothing but dishonour and affront him.—

But



But, O may *all the people praise him*, by gathering in to this house! O what notable housing is there here for the people! Therefore, *let the gathering of the people be to him.*

(11.) In a word, he is the *meeting-house* with God; *There will I meet with thee, even on the mercy-seat, between the cherubims*, Exodus xxv. 22. Here is house-room for all the people. There is a sign hung up over the door of the house, with this inscription, *Whosoever will, let him come*, Rev. xxii. 17.

8. Consider there is a *gathering-place* for the people in the Lord Jesus, with a WHAT THOUGH written below the inscription.

(1.) *What though* you have *never come* in to this day, yet now you are welcome to come in, though you have been standing without all your days till now; it is come to the eleventh and last hour; *Why stand ye here all the day idle?* Matth. xx. 6. He calls you in to his working-house.

(2.) *What though* you have *played the harlot with many lovers*, yet there is place in him for your gathering to; Jer. iii. 1. *Yet return unto me, saith the Lord: yea, Isa. i. 18. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool.* Have you been a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean person, &c.? Why, *Such were some of you, but you are washed, justified, and sanctified, &c.* Read 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

(3.) *What though* you have been *untoward and untractable* hitherto, yet there is place in him for your gathering to; *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart; yet I have seen his ways, and will heal him*, Isa. lvii. 17.

(4.) *What though* you have been making God to *serve with your sins*, and *wearying him with your iniquity*, yet there is place in him for your gathering to him; for, behold what he says, even with respect unto such, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance*, Isa. xliii. 25, 26.

(5.) *What though* you have been guilty of the *most provoking and grievous backsliding*, yet there is place in him for your gathering unto; *Return, ye backsliding children, for I will heal your backslidings; yea, I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely*, Jeremiah iii. 14, 22.

(6.) *What though* your *outward circumstances* in the world be never so *mean and contemptible*, so as no person cares for you, more than the mire of the street, and you are cast out at all hands; yet there is place in him for your gathering to; for, *he gathers the outcasts of Israel*. And, James ii. 5. *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, to be rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom?*

(7.) *What though* MANY have gathered in to Shiloh already, yet there is room enough, and place enough for you to gather in also; for, as it is said in the parable, Luke xiv. 22. *Though many were gathered in to the supper, yet there was room*; so here, tho' thousands, and ten thousands have been gathered to Shiloh, since he came, and before he came, yet there is room; there is place for you: as he says, *In his Father's house are many mansions*; so say I of Shiloh's house, that there are many mansions therein; with him there are multitudes of mercies for multitudes of finners. O! who can reckon the multitudes of his tender mercies? Who can comprehend the vastness of this gathering-place? It would hold thousands of worlds, let be one world: therefore let not that stand in the way of your gathering unto Shiloh.

(8.) *What though* you could never think that there was *any place* in him for you, nor *any mercy* for the like of you; yet nevertheless there is a gathering-place in him for you, Isaiah lv. 8. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts;—for, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts*.

(9.) *What though* you be *unworthy* to come to him, yet there is place in him for unworthy finners to gather in to. Are you unworthy of him? Sure I am that is true; as true a word as ever you spake: but the more unworthy you are, the more welcome to him, who

who hath worth enough for you and himself both : he expects no worth to be in you, till once you come to him. What is it that makes you unworthy? Is it, that you are *poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked?* Or, is it, that you are stupid and senseless, and know not that you are in these circumstances? Why, he makes that the very reason of his inviting you to gather in to him ; *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, &c.* Rev. iii. 17, 18. Unworthy sinners, gather in to that well-furnished house, where all that you need to make you happy and holy is to be had : and say not you are unfit to come ; for there you see, that even impotent and unsensible sinners, whom we are ready to shut out, grace is ready to take in. Yea,

(10.) *What though* you be *unable* to come to him, and gather in to Shiloh, yet there is place in him for your gathering in to him ; *Isaiah xl. 29. For he gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.* If you would be gathered, he stands ready to reach you his helping hand, and enjoins you to *take hold of his strength, that you may make peace with him, and you shall make peace with him,* *Isaiah xxv. 3.*—Yea, what tho' you have been *unwilling* all your days till this very moment, unwilling to be gathered? Yet he who says, *How oft would I have gathered you, and you would not?* is now saying, If you would be gathered, I am here, and my power and grace is at your service, for drawing you nearer.—Yea, what though you find much *unwillingness* and *enmity* this moment in your hearts against him ; yet if you would be content that he break your enmity, and make you willing, O there is place, there is place in him for you to gather in to. Yea, what shall I say? Though you be as unwilling as ever you was, and your ill-will against him is ready to land you in the burning lake ; yet know, O wretched enemy to God and Christ ! he is calling you to come to him, saying, *Whosoever will, let him come.* Oh ! will you not be gathered? *Why will*

*will you die? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death; I have infinitely greater pleasure in your gathering to Shiloh, in whom all my attributes are glorified and well-pleas'd. And if this call do at last kindle a secret wish and desire in your soul, saying, that he would come and gather me! Behold his gathering arms are stretch'd out towards you, and you shall be as welcome to him, as ever any soul was, since the world began.—* Well, is there is such a gathering-place for the people here, such a gathering-house, with so many *What though's* written on the sign of the house, or the face of the door, to invite all passengers that are travelling to eternity, to come in, and be happy for ever? And shall there be no gathering of the people to Shiloh? May we hope, that divine power hath made some to be willing, and that they are either saying, *Behold we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God; or else, Lord, come and draw; come and gather, and get the glory to thy name for ever.*

Having offer'd these motives and considerations; I should next offer some *directions*. It is divine power only that does the business; and therefore, I shall only give you those two directions, in case you would know how to manage, so as you may not be deceiv'd in this matter. If I could help you to heaven, I think, I would desire to do it; and, for your help and direction, in order to your right gathering to Shiloh, I would say to you.

1. Never satisfy yourselves, with gathering *about him* and *his ordinances*, without gathering to *himself*. Many, like the multitude in the gospel, may gather about him, yea, so near as to *press upon him*, while there was but one poor woman, that was gathered to him, and *touched him*, *Some body hath touch'd me*, says Christ: why says the disciples, *the multitude press upon you*; and what mean you, Lord, by that, *Some-body hath touch'd me*; Nay, but as one of the Father's said, *Turba premit; fides tangit*; "The multitude press, but faith touch-eth." Satisfy not yourselves then, I say, with a gathering about him, unless you be gathered to him.

People

People may gather about a tree to pluck the fruit thereof, but it is another thing to be gathered to it, so as either to become a branch, or have an interest in it; even so, may some people eat of the fruit of the tree of life, in respect of common providence, common graces, common influences; but it is another thing to have an interest in the tree, and union to it: so here, many may be gathered to ordinances, and even to solemn ordinances, and partake of the external privileges thereof; and yet, not first gathered to the God of ordinances, nor having any interest in him, or union unto him, have no right consequently to intermeddle with the children's bread. O Sir! say you, that is a hard note that casts me all down again. Why, may the Lord himself bring down all false refuges: but in case it perplex any poor soul, that hath been *sitting under Christ's shadow* at this occasion, and *his fruit hath been sweet to their taste*, and they may think, that all they got, is but only the fruit, while they have no union to, or interest in the tree: Well then, say you, *How shall one know if he only eats of the fruit, and hath no interest in the tree?* In answer to which, I will endeavour to illustrate by this plain simile; You know, when a man hath no interest in the tree of a garden, if he gets the fruit, he cares not what come of the tree, though the branches of it were all broken down: he loves the fruit, and takes it; but the tree is not his own, and therefore he hath no concern about it: but, the man that hath an interest in the tree, though he loves the fruit, yet he loves the tree better than the fruit; and therefore he would rather that people should take away all the fruit from him, than break and destroy the branches of the tree; for he esteems the tree better than all the fruit that grows upon it. The application thereof is easy; for, even so the hypocrite that eats of the fruit of the tree of life, as it were, but hath no interest in the tree; the fruit, *viz.* the frame, the enlargement, or the like, is all that he wants; the gifts and common graces he gets, is what he solaces himself withal; he rests there, and sits down satisfied, without Christ himself, or any true love to him, and unfeigned concern for his glory and interest:

self is upmost with him, and therefore he pleases himself with the fruit, and loves it more than the tree. But the true believer, that is gathered to Christ, he loves the fruit indeed, and takes pleasure in the communication : but the tree itself is above all things to him ; and the fruit he tasted still the more recommends the tree to him. O Christ's gifts are sweet, but himself sweetest of all ! The believer's frame is like the frame of a picture ; he is not taken up with the frame, but with the picture that is within the frame, even Christ, who is the picture of God, the image of the invisible God. See, I say, that it be Christ himself that you are gathered to.

2. *Be still about his hand, in the use of appointed means, but with a constant eye to divine power.* Let means and ordinances be still used : for, though, as they are your performances, they cannot be profitable : yet, as they are his ordinance, he may put a blessing in them. Therefore be still in the King's high-way, in the use of means ; for, though the natural use of means, and God's saving grace, have no connexion ; yet there is far less a connexion betwixt that grace, and the neglect of means. The poor beggar, that needs an alms from the king, goes to the king's high-way, where he passes : and surely he is nearer his purpose, than if he should go to the top of a mountain ; where the king never comes : so, be you still in the use of means in the Lord's way ; but rest not there, lest you be like one, that, upon pretence of seeking a treasure on the other side of the river, should come to the boat, which is the mean, and rest there, without going further ; why, he may thus lose the treasure for ever. In your use of the means, look beyond the means, and cry for almighty drawing power, without which it is simply impossible you can make one step towards Shiloh. God knows you can do nothing this way yourself, and he does not expect it of you, that you should come to him in your own strength : nay, if you essay to do so, you but affront him, who is the *Strength of Israel* ; and ye disparage his power, as if a creature, far less a filthy sinful creature, dead in trespasses and sins, would act inde-

independently of him. O then, cast yourself always into his almighty gathering arms, crying, O power, power, of the eternal Spirit of God, come!—Cry for a powerful *conviction* of the Spirit, whereby you may see how far off you are from God and Christ: they that are gathered to him, are made to see how far they are separate from him, and to say, “Lord, I am lying in the arms of the devil, and I know not how soon I may be in hell: O pity, pity, of thy sovereign mercy!”—Cry also for the powerful *illumination* of the Spirit, that you may see a God in Christ; not an absolute God, sitting in the throne of flaming justice, but on the mercy-seat, sprinkled over with the justice-satisfying blood of the Lamb, from whence mercy does vent itself, to the highest honour, and greatest glory of infinite justice.—Cry, in a word, for the powerful *operation* of the Spirit, the irresistible efficacious pull of his omnipotent arm: O long for a day of power, a gathering day! Many a black powerful hinderance and drawback you have: every lust says, upon the matter, If I can get my will, he shall never be gathered to Shiloh; the devil says, If I can get my will, he shall never win to Christ; the world, and the cares of it, say the same; your graceless neighbours, and wicked companions, say the same; there is a strong hellish combination to hinder your coming to Shiloh, Yet, nevertheless, tho’ all the intanglements of the world, all the corruptions of the heart, and all the devils in hell, should join counsel together, to keep your soul back from Christ, one divine draught of the cord of love will make them all yield. These are potent enemies, but here is an omnipotent God; they are mighty, but he is almighty.

O Sirs, cry, and continue to cry for his gathering power! and though you have been long seeking an omnipotent pull of divine grace, and, to your sense, have not got it; yet, if you wait for it, cry for it, and be earnestly solicitous to obtain it, it is a thousand to one, if you miss it: nay, it cannot be; for, *he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18.* Judgment here, is not judgment in opposition to mercy, but judgment in opposition to folly: that

is, he is an infinitely wise God, who knows the best time of coming and paying his visit; and because *he is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him.* He hath long waited for you; O wait for him in his own way! And when he is stretching forth his arms towards you in this gospel, offering to gather you; let your heart cry to him, saying, "Lord, thou who gatherest the lambs with thine arm, O do thou not only stretch for thine arms towards me, but clasp thine arms about me; gather me, and I shall be gathered." If you be brought to this, I would hope the good work were begun.

3dly, The *third* sort, to whom I proposed to direct my exhortation, was to *believers*, who ARE gathered to Shiloh. My exhortation to you is, that, through grace, you would gather *more closely to Shiloh*, than ever you have done, so as to be *rooted in him*, and *abide in him*, Col. ii. 7. John xv. 5. O cry for more and more of his gathering power and grace, to bring you nearer and nearer to him. More particularly,

1. Hath Shiloh come and gathered you to himself? Then, O *live UPON him*; for that is the end, for which you are gathered to him, Gal. ii. 20. that the *life you live may be a life of faith upon the Son of God*, who not only *loved you*, and *gave himself for you*, but gathered you also out of the stinking grave of sin and misery, wherein you was. You have need to live a life of dependance upon him; for all other things may soon fail you, and nothing in all the world may be left you, but himself. But, when the spider's web is swept down, yet you may see the house standing sure; even so, when the cob-webs of creature-confidences fail, faith will see a sure foundation to rely upon; *Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be found in the vine, &c.* yet faith in exercise will induce a person to *rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of salvation.* You will every day need to be living on him; for, as I noticed upon another occasion, the vessel that is full to-day, needs a new filling to morrow; and the stomach that seemed to be satisfied just now, within a few hours will be empty and craving again: so here, your vessel may



may soon be empty; but though the vessel be empty, the fountain is full; and his power to help is creating power, whereby he can command nothing in to a being.

2. Not only live on him, but *live WITH him*; let it appear, that you are gathered out of the world, by your living above the world, in the place where Shiloh is; *If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ sits at the right-hand of God, Col. iii. 1.* Oh! how unsuitable is it for them who are gathered to Shiloh in heaven, not to have their conversation in heaven? What a pity is it, that they should so much resemble the bird, they call the lapwing, that hath a crown upon her head, and yet lives upon excrements? Hath the Lord *crowned you with his loving-kindness*, and yet you live upon the dung of this world? Hath he made you an heir to a kingdom, and yet you ly tumbling in the ashes? Surely the believer that does not live above the world, he lives below himself.

3. Are you gathered unto Shiloh? Then, not only live on him, and live with him, but *live to him*. For this cause also, did he gather you to him, that you might live to him, and to his glory and honour; *You are not to live to yourselves, but to him that died for you, and rose again, 2 Cor. v. 15.* In him there is a gathering of all gifts, and graces, and fulness, and all mediatorial offices, and divine qualifications for your use and behoof; and, to him, O believer, should be the gathering of all the powers and faculties of your soul, that you may glorify and honour him.—O let the gathering of your desires and delights be to him, who is *the Desire of all nations*, and the Delight of all the saints and angels in heaven!—Let the gathering of your thoughts and meditations be to him, and the meditation of his name will be sweet!—O let the gathering of your hearts and affections be to him; for, *he is altogether lovely*.—Let the gathering of your prayers and praises be to him. Begging and blessing should go together; for you will have occasion to beg from him as long as you are out of heaven; and you will have reason to bless him as long as you are out of hell. Tho'

you that are gathered to him have no reason to fear hell, *For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ* ; yet you have always reason to bless, that you have escaped it.—In a word, let the gathering of your words and actions be to him, so as you may put honour upon him, before the world, by the whole tenor of your talk and walk, that your neighbours may take notice of it, that you have been with Jesus, and that you are gathered to him : and let the gathering of your services and sacrifice be to him, saying, *What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits towards me ?* O render your humble service to him, saying, *Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bands.* Render him the love of your hearts, the calves of your lips, and the obedience of your life.—Thus are you to live to him.

4. Are you gathered to Shiloh ? O then, endeavour to *gather OTHERS to him !* See if you can get all that are in your family to come to Shiloh with you ; saying with Joshua, *As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord, whatever others do,* Josh. xxiv. 15. O have you been gathered to Christ ? And will you be careless though your friends, your children, be gathered to the devil ? O hath Christ brought you to himself, and will he bring you to glory, and gather you to heaven ? and will you be easy, though all about you be gathered unto hell ? No, no ; that cannot be your disposition, if you be a believer indeed. If you be content in your lifetime to serve him, you will study to your power, that others may do the like. And, this is the way to make the love of Christ continue in the world ; for, when you teach your neighbours, your servants, your children, the way of the Lord, they, following your example, may teach their children too ; and this will go from generation to generation, so as *generations to come may praise the Lord* ; or, at least, it will not fail on your part. Oh ! how is it to be regretted, that few come to Christ ! and of the few that come, how few do shew their love, in endeavouring to bring others to him ? Therefore, O let this be amended, and endeavour, in the place where you dwell,  
and

and the station you are in providence placed into, that, by your holy conversation, others may be gathered unto Shiloh too.

5. Are you gathered? O let not believers, that are gathered to Shiloh, forget their gathering together for *Christian-fellowship* and *prayer*: Heb. x. 24, 25. *Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works; not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.* The wicked, that are to be gathered to the burning Tophet, are making speed in sinful ways, and gathering in clubs and cabals, to hearten and harden one another: and, O shall not the godly gather together, to exhort and excite one another in the way to heaven; as iron sharpens iron, so does the holy gathering of saints use to sharpen the edge of their spirits in the Lord's way.—But since fellowship-meetings have been deserted many professors are blunted and rusted; several Christian societies are broken and evanished, even at a time, when *they that fear the Lord should speak often one to another* in spiritual conferences. O! if you be gathered unto Shiloh, let your zeal for him appear in restoring and reviving these Christian gatherings in a regular manner; and pray, that the devil's scattering wind that he hath raised in our day, for separating and dividing ministers and Christians from one another, may be laid.

6. To add no more, and to encourage you in the whole of your Christian course, O you, that through grace have been gathered to Shiloh, take home the *comfort* that belongs to your gathered state.—As to these that are yet in a distant state, separate from the Lord Jesus, we have little comfort to offer, if you abide there; for, in the Lord's time, you will be gathered to the grave, and after that, you will be gathered before the tribunal of God, to receive the dreadful sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed*; and, in all appearance, some here will be gathered before that awful tribunal, before they be gathered together here again: it is more than  
pro

probable, we are not all to meet again in this manner, till we meet before the fiery bench of the glorious Judge; and if you be not gathered to him, as an amiable Jesus now, you must be gathered to him as a terrible Judge then.—And, Oh! that the thoughts of this would excite poor souls to think of gathering to Shiloh before they part, that they may part with God's blessing, and not under his heavy curse!—But as to you that have been gathered unto Christ, I would have you know, that God allows you *strong consolation*. You having *fled for refuge to the hope set before you*, you may rejoice, in the hope of the glory of God, that the *joy of the Lord may be your strength*, in the whole of your work and warfare, as you go through the wilderness. You may rejoice in this, that as your hearts are gathered unto Shiloh now, so your happiest gathering-time is but coming; for he that hath begun to gather you as stones for the spiritual building, will never leave the work, till the building be completed, with shoutings of, *Grace, grace unto it*. He will never give over gathering you, till you be completely happy; from time to time the work will be advanced, by the means of his word and ordinances, till the consummation of the work in glory; for he hath appointed a gospel-ministry *for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying the body of Christ till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv. 12, 13. He hath appointed these three fearful things, death, judgment, and eternity, to be three happy gatherings for you; the initial gathering being over, by your getting in to Christ, after your progressive gathering is come to a close, in your having *finished your course*, and *fought the good fight of faith*, your glorious and consummate gathering will take place: the day of death will be the glorious commencement of it. The first coming of Shiloh hath ushered in a gracious gathering; his second coming will produce a glorious gathering; but of these gathering seasons, I formerly spoke at large\*;

\* See the gathering season treated of above, pag. 85—118.

I only say therefore, that then, O believer, then shall you be *for ever with the Lord*; and it is for this reason you are now gathered to him, that there you may be for ever with him: and so sure as you are gathered to him in time, so sure shall you be with him through eternity; not only for ever with the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles; not only for ever with angels and archangels; not only for ever with saints and seraphims; but *for ever with the Lord*; for none of these can make a heaven without him. Christ himself will be the centre of the assembly, and heart of the meeting; and though now you are but with him for a start, and he is with you but for a moment, and so your communion with him is but in transient glances of his glory; it may be just now you are with him in the banquetting-house, but instantly you are, as it were, at the back of the door: it is only for a little, but then for ever; and it is but a *little of him* that you have for a *little while*; yet then, O then, shall you be for ever with the Lord; *wherefore comfort one another with these words*, 1 Thess. iv. 18. Know, that being gathered to him on earth, you shall be gathered to him in heaven; and being gathered in grace, you shall be gathered in glory: for all the promises of grace and glory are gathered in him, and you being gathered to him, are in him also, *in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.*

And now this gathering of the people here is to part: but, O happy parting, to these who can date their first or farther gathering to Shiloh from their gathering to Carnock! For, part with whom you will, Christ and you shall never part again; whatever clouds may be in your sky, yet your sun is risen, and will never set. But the most part of you here were never yet gathered to Shiloh: and, oh! how can you find it in your heart to go away without him, and without so much as a desire after him, who is *the Desire of all nations*! For my own part, I cannot think of your going away in such a case. Alas! shall he have it to say, *I would have gathered you, as a hen does her chickens under her wings, but you would not!* Oh! wherefore did you gather to  
this

this place, if you would not be gathered to Shiloh! And if you be more willing to be gone, than willing to be gathered, wo is me, that my text will be no more but a witness against you upon Carnock green, that you would not; and, that the devil, and the world, and your lusts were more desirable to you; and you had more heart to be gathered to them, than to be gathered to Shiloh. Oh then, Sirs, heartless parting, while you are content to part with Shiloh for ever, rather than to part with a base lust, or a black devil! If that be not your choice, then let your heart say, in the sight of the living God if you can, Lord, I think I would be gathered, and would rather choofe to die upon the spot, than not to be gathered unto Shiloh; and, my soul could wish, that all my dearest lusts were buried in this green, never to rise again, and that Christ might have my heart for ever, in room of them all. Why, man, can you say that to the heart-searching God! Then, poor soul, let me desire you to take the first convenient closet or corner you can get, and there tell him this over again more solemnly; and at the same time, bless him that ever Shiloh came to you, and that ever you felt the virtue of this promise, that, *That to him should the gathering of the people be.*

SERMON

## S E R M O N L X V , --- L X X I .

The PREGNANT PROMISE with her Issue ;  
or, the CHILDREN of PROMISE brought forth, and  
described \*.

G A L A T I A N S iv. 28.

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of  
promise.*

**T**HIS text presents a subject that concerns all  
here present, and particularly believing commu-  
nicants. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is a seal  
of the covenant of grace ; the covenant of grace is a  
covenant of promise ; the promise of the covenant is  
the prolific womb that bears and brings forth all God's  
children, and so the children of God are the children  
of promise. As it concerns us all therefore to enquire  
to what family we belong, and whose children we are ;  
so believers in particular, or believing communicants,  
upon this subject may, in order to the increase of their  
faith, love, and holy evangelical obedience, find them-  
selves distinguished from the rest of the world, by that  
sovereign grace that is manifested in the covenant of  
promise. And upon the back of such a great solem-

\* This subject was discussed in seven sermons, mostly preached  
on sacramental occasions. The first two were delivered at the sacra-  
ment of the Lord's supper at Torphichen, on the Sabbath evening  
and Monday, June 19th and 20th. The third at the sacrament at  
Portmoak, on Monday, July 17th. The fourth probably at Dun-  
fermline, July 23d. The three last at the sacramental solemnity of  
Glendovan, July 31st, all in the year 1726. This piece hath under-  
gone seven editions.

nity, it may not be unfuitable to point them out with a *now*, or give them their proper name and character in the words of our text ; *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

As the law and the gospel differ especially in this, as well as in other things, that whereas in short the law is a word of precept, the gospel is a word of promise ; so the covenant of works and of grace differ in this, that whereas in the covenant of works, all the benefits thereof depend upon man's fulfilling of a precept ; in the covenant of grace, all depend upon God's fulfilling of a promise in Christ. Hence the covenant of works is called the *law*, and the covenant of grace the *promise*, particularly in this epistle, chap. iii. 18. Hence also, in opposition to all these that are under the covenant of works, believers in Christ, who are brought within the bond of the covenant of grace, are called the children of promise ; *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.* Concerning these two covenants of works and grace, the apostle elegantly discourses in the preceding verses, particularly from ver. 21. and downward ; where having upbraided the Galatians for desiring to be under the law, and so for discovering their folly and weakness in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the gospel-doctrine of justification, and to be deprived of their freedom from the bondage of the law, he asks them a question, *Do you not hear the law?* q. d. How ignorantly do you hold yourselves bound to fulfil the law, and look for eternal life thereby ; while, though you hear, you do not understand the law, but mistake the end and design of it, not considering Christ to be the *end of the law*, but supposing that the very observance of it, even since the fall of Adam, does give life, and justify ? This ignorance was, to the Jews, as a *vail before their eyes in the reading of the law*, 2 Cor. iii. 14. ; yea, this ignorance is the vail by which thousands, that are called Christians, are blinded. Now, from ver. 22. the apostle shews how their liberty from the law was pre-figured in the family of Abraham ; where notice the



narration, the explication, the confirmation, and the application.

1. The *narration* of the history, ver. 22, 23. Here Ishmael is said to be *born after the flesh*; that is, by the strength of nature, and according to the fleshly counsel of Sarah, when she substitute Hagar into her own room: but Isaac was *by promise*; that is, though according to the order of nature, yet not by the strength of nature, but by virtue of the promise of God.

2. The *explication* of this history, ver. 24,——27. *Which things are an allegory*, says the apostle, *for these are the two covenants*; that is, not merely the two different dispensations of the covenant of grace, the old legal, and the new evangelical dispensation; but the two covenants themselves, namely, that of works made with the first Adam, and all his seed in him, promising life upon condition of man's own perfect obedience to the will of God, Gen. ii. 17. and that of grace, made with the second Adam, and with his seed in him, promising eternal life, and all spiritual blessings, upon condition and consideration of his undergoing the curse, and yielding perfect obedience to the law in their room, Isa. liii. 10, 11. Rom. v. 6, 21.——Hence the apostle expressly calls them *two covenants*. Though Israel, even at Sinai, was under a dispensation of the covenant of grace, however dark, as is evident from the preface to the ten commands, and many other arguments; yet, that there was also an addition, repetition, and promulgation of the covenant of works at Sinai, is not only plain from the concurring testimony of many orthodox writers, but from manifold scriptural accounts thereof. The apostle here tells us, Gal. iii. 18, 19. that the law, or covenant of works, *was added because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made*; it was added to be subservient to the other, and for furthering the ends thereof. This is plain also from the context here, where the apostle is shewing, that the children of the Sinai covenant are excluded from the eternal inheritance, as Ishmael was from Canaan, the type of it, ver. 30. *Cast out the bond-woman, and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall*

not be heir with the son of the free-woman. But this could never be said of the children of the covenant of grace, whether under the old or new dispensation thereof; whereas the children of the legal covenant, or covenant of works, whereof there was a repetition at Sinai, have been always under a sentence of exclusion ever since Adam fell, and under bondage to death and the curse: therefore it is the two covenants, that of *works* and of *grace*, that the apostle is here setting in opposition to one another; the one is prefigured by Hagar, and the other by Sarah. The covenant of works is here compared to Ishmael, that was *born after the flesh*; the covenant of grace to Isaac, who was a *child of promise*, produced by the Spirit of God working mightily in Abraham and Sarah, and breathing in the promise. Here is an allegory, a great mystery, that people think not of, when they read of Ishmael and Isaac. Now Hagar, which is the law, or covenant of works, is said to *gender into bondage*; because it makes them bond-men that look to be saved and justified thereby; and so it is called *the ministration of death*, 2 Cor. iii. 6.: whereas the gospel, and the new covenant, is a dispensation of life and liberty, being the channel in which the Spirit of life does run, chap. iii. 2. And while *Jerusalem that now is*, is said to be *in bondage with her children*; it shews the misery of the Jewish church, by refusing Christ, and establishing their own righteousness, seeking to be saved by the deeds of the law, and so being in bondage, and depriving herself of the heavenly inheritance. As Hagar then signifies the law, so does Ishmael all legalists, and self-justiciaries, who look to be saved by the law: they that have not fled to Christ for refuge and righteousness, but remain under the law, they are Ishmaelites, and in spiritual bondage to sin, and legal bondage unto death and wrath, according to the tenor of the law they are under. But now, *Jerusalem, which is above*, says the apostle, *is free, which is the mother of us all*, ver. 26. Here Paul shews what was figured by Sarah, namely, the *new Jerusalem*; that is, the catholic church, Heb. xii. 22, 23. and Rev. xxi. 2. By the  
*new*

*new Jerusalem*, then understand all the invisible church, whereof Jerusalem was a type in many respects : hence said to be *above* ; because all that are within the bond of the new covenant are from above ; their election, redemption, effectual vocation, justification, sanctification, and all is from above ; and they dwell above in heaven by faith, according to the measure of the Spirit of faith. This Jerusalem that is above is *free*, says the apostle, in opposition to the bondage that the Ishmaelites and unbelievers are under ; they are freed from the bondage of sin, death, and the curse of the law. Now, this Jerusalem, or the church, is said to be *the mother of us all* ; because the ministry of the word, which is committed to the church's keeping, and which is compared to *seed* and *milk*, 1 Peter i. 23. and ii. 2. is that by which children are brought forth to God in her : hence of Zion it is said, *This man and that man was born there*, Psalm lxxxvii. 4, 5, 6.

3. The *confirmation* is next, by the apostles adducing the testimony of the prophets ; *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child : for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord*, Isa. liv. 1. The Christian church is called *barren* ; because, by the virtue and strength of nature, it bears no children to God, no more than Sarah did to Abraham : but when the Spirit of Christ comes to impregnate the word and ordinances with almighty efficacy, then a numerous seed is brought forth to the Lord Jesus, by virtue of the new-covenant promise. And so,

4. The *application* of it follows in the words of the text ; where the apostle shews, that as Sarah was a figure of the church catholic, so Isaac was a figure of all true believers, and children of God ; *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

In which words you may notice the *transition*, the *compellation*, and the *description*.

1. A *transition* in the particle *now*, or therefore ; importing, the apostle's proceeding next to make an application of what he had been saying to the case in  
hand

hand, and adapting of it to their present circumstances, *Now*, q. d. After what hath been said, let it be considered, that this is a matter that concerns you, and me, therefore let us bring it home to ourselves.

2. A *compellation*, BRETHREN; intimating, that there is a spiritual fraternity and brother-hood betwixt all true believers: they are all brethren by the Father's side; for, they have all one Father, even *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. They are also all brethren by the mother's side; for, they all ly in the same womb of the church. And they are all brethren by Christ's side; for they have all the self-same elder Brother, Jesus Christ; begotten with the same incorruptible seed of the word; and fed at the same table, with the same spiritual food. This spiritual brotherhood far exceeds the natural, even as far as God's Fatherhood, towards us, exceeds the natural fatherhood among men.

3. A *description*, particularly of believers, in a suitability to the former doctrine; *We, as Isaac was, are the children of promise*. Here they are described in relation to the promise, and in allusion unto Isaac.

(1.) In *relation* to the *promise*; *We are the children of promise*. By the promise here you may understand the covenant of grace, called the *covenant of promise*; and so you may take it either for the promise made to Christ, such as that, *He shall see his seed*; or the promise made to Abraham, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*: or the promise made to the church, that *being barren, she should bear many children*, as it is in the preceding verse. Now believers are called the children of promise, not only because they believe the promise, but because they are made the children of God by virtue of God's promise.

(2.) In *allusion* to ISAAC; or they are described to be the children of the promise in the manner that Isaac was, in that he was born to Abraham, not by the strength of nature, but by the virtue of God's promise: as Isaac was not born by natural power, but by the mere promise and power of God; so believers are children of the promise; being born, as Isaac, not by the  
power

power of flesh and blood, but by the power of God putting virtue in the promise. The further explication I refer to the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. *That all the children of God, or true believers are, like Isaac, the children of promise.*

I shall not enlarge the proof of so clear a point. You may read what our apostle says, to this same purpose, Rom. ix. 7, 8. where the children of the promise, such as Isaac was, are opposed to the children of the flesh. The promise is the believer's parent, by which he is *begotten to a lively hope, and made a partaker of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. When a poor soul is converted, it is the promise that does the business; the power and efficacy of the promise, in its performance, does change and renew the heart; James i. 18. *Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth*; that is, by the word of promise.

The method we lay down, for illustrating this doctrinal observation, through divine assistance, shall be the following.

- I. I would open up the *promise*, whereof believers are the children.
- II. Open up this *character* of their being the children of promise; and enquire how they are so.
- III. I would state the *comparison*, or run the *parallel* betwixt them and Isaac; and so show, that as Isaac was, so they are the children of promise.
- IV. I would offer some *grounds* of the doctrine, both with reference to the prolific virtue of the promise for begetting children to God, and also with reference to the blest will and pleasure of the Promiser, why he will have all his children to be the children of promise.
- V. Deduce *inferences* for application.

I. The *first* head proposed, is, to open up the *promise* whereof believers are the children. Before I proceed

to this, there are two things I would mention, which this doctrine doth presuppose,

1. In that some are the children of promise by grace, it supposes that all are *children of wrath by nature*, Eph. ii. 3. Because of the breach and violation of the law of works in Adam, we forfeited the promise of life, and incurred the threatening of death, according to the tenor of the covenant, *Do and live, and if thou do not, thou shalt die*: and being children of disobedience, we are children of the curse, and not of the promise; for, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. There is the sad state wherein all Adam's natural offspring are since the fall: we are Ishmaelites; *children of the bond-woman*; *born after the flesh*; *under the curse*; and in bondage to sin, Satan, death, and hell; *aliens to the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise*, Eph. ii. 12. It is true, there was a promise of life in the covenant of works, under which we are by nature; but it being upon condition of our perfect and personal obedience, now impossible, it can give no relief to the awakened conscience, but leaves all, whose eyes are open, to everlasting despair, if they get not a view of the covenant, and better promise. Therefore,

2. In that some are the children of promise, it supposes that surely there is *another promise*, according to which God proposes to deal with some of the children of men; a promise, not built upon the silly foundation of any mere man's personal obedience, but a promise established on a better foundation, and standing fast in another Head; and it is called a *promise of life in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 1. And that *not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*, ver. 9. compared with Tit. i. 2. Not according to the tenor of the covenant of works; for, while sinners look to that covenant, nothing is to be seen there but consuming fire; nothing to be heard but thunder and threatenings; nothing to be expected but death and vengeance; therefore man is under no dispensation

but

but that of a terrible threatening, till the promise in Christ appear. There is a fourfold capacity wherein man hath had to do with God.

(1.) As a *commanding* God ; men, even as creatures, being obliged to yield obedience to the great Creator's law and commandment, which was engraven on their hearts, in the original make and constitution of our first parents, when they dropt out of his creating hand.

(2.) As a *covenanting* God ; I mean, in the covenant of works, which God entered into with man, as a covenant of life and death, upon his doing or not doing what God commanded.

(3.) As a *threatening* God, upon the violation of that covenant ; and this is the capacity wherein all mankind have to do with God ; they that see God out of Christ with their eyes open, while they are in a natural state, can see him no other ways than arrayed with threatenings and wrath, until he please to discover himself.

(4.) As a *promising* God, upon a better foundation than the first covenant, even his promise in Jesus Christ before the world began.—Now, there is no dealing with God for eternal life and salvation, unless he shew himself to be God in a promise.

Having premised these things, I come now to speak a little concerning the promise, whereof believers are the children. And, in general, the promise is the same with the covenant of grace, in opposition to the covenant of works : or, the promise is the same with the gospel, in opposition to the law ; hence the promise and the gospel are made one and the same thing in this epistle, Galat. iii. 8. ; and hence the promise and the law are set in opposition to one another, verse 18. But more particularly, for opening up the promise, whereof believers are children ; we may consider, concerning the promise, 1. The *Subject*, or *Author* of it. 2. The *matter* of it. 3. The *nature* of it. 4. The *object* of it.

1<sup>st</sup>, The *Subject* of this promise, or whose promise it is. And,

1. It is the promise of GOD, even God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; therefore called *the promise of God*, Galat. iii. 21. Indeed all the divine perfections are engaged for the accomplishment thereof, that our faith and hope might be in God. God the Father is the great author, the grand contriver, and original fountain of the covenant; *In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began*, Titus i. 2. And the great promise of the covenant is called *the promise of the Father*, Acts i. 4. And hence *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* is said to *blefs us with all spiritual blessings*, Eph. i. 3.

2. It is the promise of CHRIST; he also is the promiser; and therefore, when he left his people, and went out of this world, he opened his mouth to them in manifold promises, John xv, xvi, xvii. chapters.—And hence also he invites sinners to himself, by the encouragement of a promise; *Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matth. xi. 28.

3. It is the promise of the SPIRIT; hence he is called *the Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 13. both because he is promised, and because he is the promiser: and what are all the promises of the new covenant, but the language of the Holy Ghost, the voice of the Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, and of the Son, whose voice we are called to hear? And hence in the epilogue of all the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. ii, and iii. chapters.; the conclusory promises are all backed with this advertisement, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches*. And again,

4. It is the promise of GOD in CHRIST, by the HOLY GHOST. That it is the promise of God in Christ, is plain from Galat. iii. 17. where it is called *the covenant confirmed of God in Christ*; and 2 Tim. i. 1. *The promise of life which is Christ Jesus*; and given us in Christ, verse 9.; yea, 2 Cor. i. 20. *All the promises of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen*; they have all their establishment and ratification in his blood: hence that joyful sound and glad tidings, 2 Corinth. v. 19.



*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation, bearing that he hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Again, that it is the promise of God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost, is plain, not only from his being the third person existing in the Godhead, and proceeding from the Father and the Son; but also from his office in the work of redemption, which is to make the powerful application thereof, as the great Teacher and Remembrancer, for bringing home the promise to the hearts of his people appointed unto life; *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,* John xiv. 26. Again, *He shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you,* John xvi. 8, 14.—So much for the subject, the Author of the promise, or whose promise it is.

2dly, Let us consider a little the *matter* of the promise, whereof believers are the children; what is the good contained in God's promise. And,

1. GOD himself is the great matter of the promise, as well as the author of it; as he is the promiser, so he is the thing promised, Ezek. xxxvi. 28. compared with Jer. xxxi. 33. and Heb. viii. 10. *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: I will be your God, and you shall be my people.* It is the greatest promise in all the Bible, and contains the most inestimable and invaluable treasure in heaven and earth. O what a great matter is here! God himself giving over himself, and a true propriety in himself, to every soul that will receive him, and say AMEN, by a faith of divine operation: even as the husband gives himself up to his wife in marriage, so does God to the believer; *I will betrothe thee to me for ever, in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness.* Where-ever the covenant of grace, the covenant of promise is repeated in scripture, that is always the burden of the song,

*I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* O what excellent matter is here! Eternity diving into this deep, will never reach the bottom of it. Again,

2. CHRIST himself is the great matter of the promise: as God promises himself, so he promises his Son; Christ is the great promise, the great sum, centre, and substance of the covenant; yea, the all, the sum total of it: *I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth,* Isa. xlii. 6. and xlix. 9. It is he, that is *made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,* 1 Cor. i. 30. He is called *the mercy promised,* Luke i. 72. The gospel-promises are nothing else but that opening up of the unsearchable riches of Christ, where there is more precious treasure than ever can be told by all the arithmetic of men and angels to eternity. The first promise that ever was made after the fall, was a promise of Christ, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;* and all the rest of the promises of the new covenant are streams flowing from that spring. God never designed to save any man by a covenant of works, but he designed to take occasion by man's fall to glorify his grace; therefore, no sooner does sin come, and a curse with it, than grace comes in, and a promise with it: so soon as Adam is arraigned before God for sin, the womb of the promise is open, and it is a promise of Christ, which, in all the after-promises, is made always gradually more and more clear; and ever since God drew up the sluice of the promise, it hath been running to this day; and it is flowing to this day, while the promise of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness and strength, is set before us as the ground of our faith and hope.

3. The SPIRIT himself is also the great matter of the promise, or the good things promised; *I will put my Spirit within you,* says God, Ezekiel xxxvi. 27. *I will send the Comforter,* says Christ, John xvi. 7. So that, as God promises himself, and promises his Christ; so God and Christ promise the Spirit: the Spirit in his mission and motions is here promised, in his influences

ences and operations, graces and fruits ; the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of repentance, the Spirit of grace and supplication, the Spirit of glory and sanctification, the Spirit of conviction and consolation, the Spirit of light, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of liberty, the Spirit of power and a sound mind : whatever be the hopeless and helpless, the dead, drooping, and desperate-like case that the soul can be in, there is a promise of the Spirit suitable thereto, if I might enlarge. And, indeed, the promise of the Spirit is the first promise that is accomplished in begetting children to God ; all the children of promise are made so by the promise of the Spirit taking effect upon them, as a *Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*, testifying of Christ, and giving the soul Paul's experiences, *He revealed his Son in me*. It is not the promised blessing of the Spirit, that quickens dead souls, and begets children unto God ; *The wind blows where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit*, John iii. 8. *Awake, O north wind ; come thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out*, Song iv. 16. It is the promised flowing of the Spirit, that alone can make happy communion-days. O for that flood promised ! *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; even my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring*, Isaiah xlv. 3. Yea, he is promised, not only as an overflowing flood, but as an everflowing spring ; *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14.

4. *All things else, in and with these three, are matter of the promise ; He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?* Rom. viii. 32. And, indeed, where there is a promise of God, a promise of Christ, a promise of the Spirit, there must be a promise of all things : *All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*. She that hath the husband, hath all things

things that are the husband's ; and seeing Christ is the *Heir of all things*, his bride cannot but *inherit all things*, Rev. xxi. 7. I have read of an antient deed of gift made by one of the first kings of England, giving all that is from heaven to the centre of the earth ; so that if there be minerals in the bowels of the earth, they are comprehended in the gift : so God, in promising and giving himself, and his Son, and his Spirit, does in and with him give all that he hath, and all that he is worth ; all the mines in the bowels of God, all the mines in the bowels of Christ, and all the mines of the bowels of the Spirit, are promised : and, O consider with yourself, what unfearchable riches, what unfathomable treasures of grace and glory, are in these mines ! and what sweet and blessed fruits grow upon this tree of the new-covenant promise ! and what a blessed thing it is to be the children of promise ! And here the matter of the promise might be enlarged into innumerable particulars. Why, they are the children of that promise, *A new heart 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.* They are the children of that promise ; *They shall be all taught of God.* They are the children of these promises, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.* Children of that promise, *I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. I will subdue your iniquities ; and, sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. When thou passest thro' the fire, I will be with thee, that the flames kindle not upon thee : and when thou passest thro' the waters, I will be with thee, that the floods do not overflow thee.*—There is a promise of peace with God, they are children of ; *This man shall be the Peacc.* There is a promise of pardon they are the children of ; *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, for mine own name's sake, and will remember thy sins no more.* There is a promise of protection they are children

dren of; *A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* There is a promise of *provision* they are children of; *Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be made sure.* There is a promise of *healing* they are children of; *I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely.* There is a promise of *knowledge and illumination* they are children of; *They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.* There is a promise of *faith* they are children of; *I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord,* Zeph. iii. 12. There is a promise of *love* they are children of; *I will circumcise their heart to love.* There is a promise of *repentance* they are children of; *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.* There is a promise of *holiness*; *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.* It is true, that it is a part of Christ's prayer to his Father, John xvii. 17.; but his prayer is as good as any promise in all the Bible. There is a promise of *perseverance* that they are the children of: *I will make an everlasting covenant with thee; I will not depart from thee to do thee good; yea, I will put my fear in thy heart, and thou shalt not depart from me.* In a word, there is the promise of *victory over death*; *Death shall be swallowed up in victory.* Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a promise of *everlasting enjoyment of him*; *So shall we be ever with the Lord.*—It were endless to tell of all the promises they are the children of; not that all and every one of the promises are in the same manner clearly applied to every believer; but if they be the children of one new-covenant promise, they are the children of all: even as all the curses of the law are linked together like an iron chain, insomuch when a man is under one curse, he is under all the curses of the Bible; so all the promises of the gospel are linked together like a golden chain, insomuch that he that gets one promise, gets all: though perhaps it is but one link of the chain that he finds his heart fastened to, or one promise that is applied, yet the application of that infers an interest in all the rest.

————Thus

—Thus you see what is the matter of the promise, and surely you may see much matter here for faith to feed and work upon.

3dly, Let us consider the *nature* and *quality* of the promise. And,

1. It is a *great* and *precious* promise ; *Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature,* 2 Peter i. 4. And, indeed, the matter of the promise, as already described, declares that it is exceeding great and precious ; and the effect of it, as here described, making the believer a partaker of the divine nature, O how does it discover the greatness and preciousness thereof ! And the relation of the promise to God as the author, to Christ as the purchaser, and to the Spirit as the applier thereof ; the relation of it, I say, to this great God, shews what a great promise it is : besides that, it is the price of precious blood, and the object of precious faith, and the channel of the communication of great and precious blessings. But of these, perhaps, more afterwards.

2. It is a *new* promise ; hence so frequently called the *new covenant*, as Heb. viii. 8. It is a new promise, in opposition to the old promise of life to man's perfect personal obedience in the covenant of works. The old promise was a promise of life, upon condition of perfect obedience of our own ; but there was no promise of grace to do : but the new promise is a promise upon the perfect obedience of another, and of grace to do also ; not to obtain life and salvation again by our doing, but to glorify the God of our life, by whom we have *obtained salvation*, 1 Thess. v. 9. The old promise of life stood upon the changeable righteousness of man ; and so was forfeited : the new promise stands upon the unchangeable righteousness of a God-man ; and so cannot be forfeited by these that, through grace, take hold of it ; or rather on whom it takes hold. Therefore,

3. It is a *sure* promise, sure to all the seed ; *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed,* Rom. iv. 16.—Hence it is called, *The sure mercies of David*, Isa. lv. 3.  
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*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot nor tittle of God's word, nor of God's promise.* See Isa. liv. 13. *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.* It is an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, 2 Sam. xxxiii. 5. Indeed, the better ordered it is, the more sure and unchangeable it is: and so well is it ordered of infinite wisdom, that there is nothing in it, that should be out; and nothing out of it, that should be in; nothing wanting for God's glory, and the sinner's welfare.—What can be wanting therein, when he, who is *All in all*, is in it? And so well is it ordered, that both the first grace, the last grace, and all grace, is promised therein; beginning grace, advancing grace, and crowning grace, is promised in it; therefore it must be sure. O may faith be set a-work, when we are speaking of these things!

4. It was a *dear-bought* and *conditional* promise to Christ; to Christ, I say, the Mediator of the covenant, it was a dear-bought and conditional promise; it was upon the condition of his obedience unto death: and here is the great ground and foundation of the promise, next to the sovereign grace and good will of God to poor miserable sinners; it is Christ coming *under the law, to redeem them that were under it*, Gal. iv. 4, 5. Hence the covenant of promise is called *the new testament in his blood*; his blood is called *the blood of the covenant*: this is what makes all sure, that Christ's obedience and satisfaction was the condition of the promise; and the condition is fulfilled by his bringing in everlasting righteousness, and giving his life a ransom for many. All the promises here are dypt in his blood; and the great condition of all the promises of the gospel, is, Christ fulfilling, in our room and stead, the condition of the violated covenant of works; that is, perfect obedience to the precept of it, which we had broken; and complete satisfaction to the penalty, threatening, and curse of it, which we had incurred. Though Christ, indeed, hath not believed, repented,

and performed the law for us, as a law simply, or a rule of holiness and righteousness, as if these were not duties incumbent upon us; no doubt they are our duty, as well as there are promises of them in the gospel to bring them forth. I know none that can assert any such Antinomian positions, as thus dissolve the obligation of the moral law; yet I assert, that Christ hath even freed us from these, as the proper pleadable condition for justification and eternal life before God †; and that his sanctification, righteousness, and merit is the only proper pleadable condition, and ground of all that grace and salvation that lies in the promise, and upon which it is made sure and fast to his people the children of promise; *My covenant shall stand fast with him*, Psalm lxxix. 28. This is that foundation of faith laid in Zion, as sufficient for all the hearers of the gospel to build their hope and confidence upon for salvation, Isa. xxviii. 16. Rom. ix. 33. 1 Pet. ii. 6. 1 Cor. iii. 11. *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Hence, as Christ is promised for a *covenant of the people*, so the promises are said to be made *to him*, Gal. iii. 16.: and to be *all yea and amen in him*, 2 Cor. i. 20.: and the whole covenant of grace is called a *promise of grace in Christ*, 2 Tim. i. 1.; and thus given to us. Hence, of consequence.

5. It is a *free and absolute* promise to us, and unconditional: it is freely given; *Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises*, 2 Peter i. 4. All the great things of the promise are freely given, and these are, Christ, and *all things with him freely*, Rom. viii. 32. Though the use of means is required both of sinners and faints, and though we be under a command and obligation to faith, repentance, and all other duties and graces; yet the covenant of grace is such a free, absolute, and unconditional promise, wherein the Spirit of grace is promised so freely, that no act or deed of ours is the condition thereof. There is a con-

† This subject is largely treated of, and set in a clear light, Vol. II. Sermon. XXXIII.



dition of order and connexion betwixt one covenant-bleſſing and another, they being like ſo many links of a chain cloſed within each other: and hence many promiſes are expreſſed, as it were, in a conditional way, in the diſpenſation of the goſpel; whereupon many miſtake this matter, while they diſtinguiſh not betwixt the diſpenſation of the covenant, and the tenor of the covenant itſelf, wherein grace and glory, and all, is promiſed freely. The covenant of promiſe cannot be properly conditional to us; otherwiſe, we would be to us, whoſe condition is nothing but ſin and miſery by nature: this covenant ſtands upon abſolute foundations; ſuch as the electing grace of the Father, the redeeming grace of the Son, and the applying grace of the Holy Ghoſt. They are all abſolutely free and unconditional; there is no ſpiritual act of ours previous to the application of the covenant of promiſe. The Spirit coming to work faith, by his creating power, is promiſed abſolutely in the covenant; *Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power; They ſhall look to him whom they have pierced:* faith is caſt out of the womb of the abſolute promiſe, and begotten by it.— And, indeed, there is not a conditional promiſe in all the Bible, but what is reductively abſolute; becauſe both the thing promiſed, and the condition of it, is contained in the womb of the abſolute promiſe. Some worthy divines make *faith* the condition of the covenant; but their ſound explication of what they mean, ſhews they dare not make it the proper condition. If any that pretend to ſoundneſs do ſo, they but expoſe their darkneſs, and diſcover their miſtake concerning the covenant of grace, which is a free promiſe in Chriſt Jeſus: faith itſelf, and all the bleſſings that attend and follow it, being free and abſolutely promiſed. Indeed, conditions on our part, properly ſo called, would deſtroy the nature of the goſpel, which is a free promiſe. Where is the freedom of grace, if conditional? It would turn the goſpel to the law, and the free covenant of grace to the conditional covenant of works; yea, it would thus deſtroy the peace of the poor humbled ſinner; for when he thinks there is ſuch and ſuch

a condition that must be fulfilled by him before he hath a right to meddle with the promise, then he stands a-back, he dares not believe, because he supposes he wants this and that condition and qualification; and so his legal dream hardens his heart against the gospel, and fosters his unbelief, to the dishonour of God, and to his own ruin.—But if he could see the promise free and absolute, *Without money and without price*, and there is no condition in this covenant, but Christ's obedience unto death, which is performed to God's satisfaction, then a door is open to him to plead for all upon this ground, saying, Lord, give me faith, for Christ's sake; give me repentance, for Christ's sake; give me grace, for Christ's sake; who hath performed the condition of all the grace of the new covenant, and through whom all the promises run out freely. He that clogs the gospel-offer with so many terms and conditions, is like a man, as I noticed in a former occasion, offering a cup of wine to a friend, but he makes it scalding hot upon the fire, that his friend dare not touch it with his lip, lest he be burnt. It is the special property of the promise, that it is free, and absolute, and unconditional to us: and if it were not so, none would believe at all; for, if faith itself were a proper condition, then the grand objection is, Oh! but I cannot believe: why, if faith be not absolutely promised, there is no relief in that strait, the gospel could not be a joyful sound to sinners that are humbled to see their want of faith, but only to them that are believers, and have faith already; and so it were needless to preach the gospel to any but believers: but faith, as well as other blessings, being freely promised, unbelievers may put in for a share of this free-grace; *Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.* And it is this free offer and promise that uses to create faith; *Faith comes by hearing* of it. Therefore,

6. It is a *powerful* and *prolific* promise; hence the gospel, which is the promise of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, is called *the power of God to salvation*; because *therein is revealed the righteousness of God, from faith*

*faith to faith*, Rom. i. 16, 17. It is the gospel-promise that is the *ministratiön of the Spirit*, and so the organ of almighty power and sovereign efficacy for converting souls, and so for saving of sinners: When God comes, he comes in the promise. But here it may be asked, May not the Lord convey himself in a *command*, as well as a *promise*? To which we reply, As the Lord can convey himself graciously to us, in a threatening to the devil, such as that was, Gen. iii. 15.; yet there was a sweet promise to our first parents wrapt up in it, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent*; So the Lord can, and many times does, convey himself powerfully into the soul by a command; such as that, *Look to me and be saved*; or such as that, *Fear not, for I am with thee*: but still it is such a command, as hath the gospel mixed with it, and a promise wrapt up in the bosom of it, and wherein the Lord undertakes to work what he commands, according to his promise in Christ: and no command without a relation to the gospel, or the promise, is the channel of saving power; for there is no salvation to a sinner but in the virtue thereof; so that still it is the promise that is powerful and efficacious for begetting children unto God, who are therefore called *the children of promise*. But more of this afterwards.—In a word, it is an *extensive* promise; and this leads me to the last thing proposed upon this first general head, and that was,

4thly, To consider the *object* of the promise, or to whom it belongs. And here three things belong to this purpose concerning the promise. 1. For whom it is *designed*. 2. By whom it is *possess'd*. 3. To whom it is *presented*.

1. Who are the *objects* of the promise, for whom it is *designed*; I mean, for whom it is appointed of God from eternity, so as they shall reap the saving benefit and obtain all the good that is in it? I answer, *The election shall obtain, tho' the rest be blinded*, Rom. xi. 7. Eph. i. 11. And hence all the elect and chosen of God, such of them, I mean, as are subjects capable of actual believing, they, and they only, are brought, by the power of divine grace, to believe the promise, to the saving

saving their souls ; *As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed,* Acts xiii. 48. ; and, *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me,* John vi. 37. If any think, O ! how can this doctrine of particular election agree with the universal offer of the gospel, and the promise thereof ? And how is it evident that God deals fairly with men in this matter, seeing some only are elected and designed of God to the good of the promise ? Why, Sirs, does not God deal fairly, when he tells us plainly what he is doing, and that he designs to show his mercy towards some, and his justice towards others, Rom. ix. 22, 23. ; that he designs the revelation of Christ for *the falling and rising of many in Israel* ; and the gospel for a favour of life to some, and of death to others ? If a gardiner (as a great divine exemplifies it) watering his garden, where there are many weeds ; yea, more weeds than herbs, declares that he waters the whole garden, both weeds and herbs together, that he may make them both to come up above ground, and appear, what they are, and, after that, that he may pull out the weeds, and foster the herbs for special use ; is not this very right, and fair, and reasonable, inso-much that none needs enquire further, why does he water the weeds ? Even so, the church is God's garden, and many reprobate weeds are therein ; and when God orders the watering of a gospel-dispensation to a mixed multitude of elect and reprobate, declaring that the offer of the gospel is to both, for the conversion of the elect from their natural enmity, and for bringing to light the hatred and enmity of the reprobate against him and the offer of his grace ; is it not fair dealing, and a reasonable answer to the cavils of men against the gospel-offer, God by his word makes it manifest, that all men, elect and reprobate, are under sin and unbelief, and that no man can come to Christ in the gospel-promise, unless the Father draw him ? And none would come, unless he shewed mercy on some. And this manner of proving men, and shewing them to be what they are, by a common offer of grace unto all, and casting in the net of the gospel-promise among them, is a

part of that wonderful prudence, whereby Christ makes all these that are outwardly called to be *without excuse*, and at the same time fishes out the elect from the sea of sin and misery, when the rest perish : of which prudence speaks God by the prophet, Isa. lii. 13. *Behold my Servant shall deal prudently, and prosper, and be extolled.* O but this wisdom of God, then, in converting the elect, for whom the promise is especially designed, without giving cause of stumbling to the rest, is rather to be admired and praised, than disputed against ! Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy : and whom he will he hardeneth. Say not you, why does he yet find fault ? for, who hath resisted his will ? nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ?* Rom. ix. 18, 19, 20. If you be disputing for the devil and the reprobate against God's righteous decree, you must be left, with all such proud and presumptuous unbelieving despisers of plain doctrine, to reckon with your judge, who can well answer for all his decrees and designs ; mean time you cannot answer for your presumption. Withal, know, that God hath discharged all men to meddle with his secret council ; *Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but to us the things that are revealed,* Deut. xxix. 29. Our great inquiry, therefore, should be, not what is God's secret will and promise, but rather who possesses it, and how we may be possessors of it. Therefore,

2. Who are the *objects* of the promise, by whom it is possessed ? Why, even all believers ; for, *He that believeth, hath everlasting life,* says Christ, John vi. 47. Believers are in covenant actually, and the promise of the covenant is in their possession, the begun possession of eternal life is commenced with respect to them, and the charter of the promise is delivered to them, and established in their person, they being actually members of the mystical body of Christ ; *They, as Isaac was, are children of the promise.* Of which more afterwards.

3. Who are the *objects* of the promise, to whom it is presented, that they may take possession, and build their

their faith and hope thereupon? And here, as the first question related to the object of the promise, with respect to God's eternal destination; and the second, to the object of it with respect to the Spirit's internal saving operation; so this third concerns the object thereof with respect to the gospel external dispensation: the first shews us by whom the promise shall be possess'd; the second, by whom it is possess'd; and the third, by whom it may be possess'd. Here, I say, the promise is presented and given in the external gospel dispensation unto sinners; particularly,

(1.) To sinners of *mankind*: not to fallen angels, but to fallen men: these are the only kind of sinners that God designed to save, and for whose behoof, Christ, the promised seed, was sent, came, died, and suffered; 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners*: and so the promise is made, and the call to believe the same is given to them; *To you, O men, do I call and my voice is to the sons of men*; and the minister's commission is, *Go preach the gospel to every creature*.

(2.) To sinners in *Zion*, or the visible church. As the promise of Canaan was made to the whole people of Israel; so the promise of Christ, and all blessings in him, even the everlasting rest above, of which Canaan was a type; that such a promise is given forth to the visible church, see Heb. iv. 1, 2, 3. And hence, whereas these that are without the church are said to be *aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise*, Eph. ii. 12.: so the members of the visible church are these to whom the promises are said to belong, as it was with the Jewish church, and much more with the Christian New-Testament church, where the privileges are not lessened, but enlarged. See Acts ii. 39. *For the promise is to you and to your children; yea, even all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call*, namely, externally call; for the apostle is there using this as a motive to their faith, who were yet only *pricked in their hearts*, and not believers with the heart. Compare ver. 37, 38, 41. This was the common privilege of the Jews; *To them belonged the promise,*

*mise*, Rom. ix. 4.; and so do they belong to us. Here is a *foundation of faith laid in Zion*, Isa. xxviii. 16.; you have all a right of access and warrant to come and take possession. Yea, I will certify you, in respect of the external gospel-dispensation, there is not a soul here but hath as good a right to the promise, as ever any believer had the moment before he believed. Yea,

(3.) It is to *great* sinners that the promise is presented and given forth; *The promise is to you*, Acts ii. 39. To whom was the apostle speaking? Even to the *crucifiers of Christ*; to the *murderers of the Lord of glory*; and to whom he had said immediately before, *Him you have taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain*, ver. 23. It is presented as a ground of faith to enemies, rebels, fools, mockers, and scorers: Prov. i. 22, 23. *The scorers that delight in scorning, fools that hate knowledge, turn ye at my reproof.* And what is the motive? Just a promise, a glorious promise presented to them; *Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you; and will make known my words unto you.*

(4.) It is given not only to humbled and penitent sinners, that see their need, and are convinced of their sin and misery, but even to the *unhumbled and impenitent*: though none indeed will flee to the promise, or to Christ therein, except they be convinced of their need. And though the promise is given forth to such, *preaching good tidings to the meek, for binding up the broken-hearted*, Isa. lxi. 1.; yet, because these that are humbled are ordinarily the persons that complain, saying, Alas! I am neither humbled nor convinced; therefore I must tell you, that the promise is presented, and given out, not only to the humbled and legally penitent but to the most unhumbled, impenitent, unconvinced, and hardened sinner that hears this gospel; even such as see nothing of their need, but think they are well enough without Christ. See Rev. iii. 17, 18. *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched;* where their very want of conviction and knowledge of their own sad state, is made the reason of the gospel-offer by Christ; *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in*

*the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.* See also, Isaiah lv. 1, 2. where these that are thirsting after vanity, are called to look to the free promise of life in Christ; *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye; buy and eat; yea, come; buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.* What sort of thirsters they were, the challenge in the second verse sheweth; *Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Hence the gospel promise is given out to these whose hearts are hardened against God and all good; *Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory,* Isa. xlvi. 12, 13.

Thus you see the promise is given forth to all sinners in the visible church, in a general indefinite way and manner, in the external dispensation of the word, which names no particular person of any sinner, but speaks to all, without distinction of nation, state, or condition, and under such names and characters as are applicable to all alike, in their natural, lost, dead, and undone circumstances. Thus run all the promises of the new covenant, both in the Old and New Testament, Gen. iii. 15. and xxii. 18. Galat. iii. 8. Jerem. xxxvi. 25, 26. and xxxi. 31, 33, 34. compared with Heb. viii. 9, 10, 11, 12.; where you see the promises come directed to all nations that shall hear of them, and to all persons indefinitely, and supposes them to be in a cursed, condemned, dead, and wretched state, to whom they are thus directed, presented, and offered; and this makes it indeed to be the *joyful sound of glad news to all people,* Luke ii. 10.—But here several questions may be propounded, and a solution of them attempted.



QUEST. I. You will perhaps say, *If the free and absolute promise be thus given forth to all in a gospel-dispensation, then, what need the use of means!*

I answer, 1. In favour of the *sovereign grace* of God, which is a thing that is neither furthered, by our good, not hindered by our evil, that God will have his elect saved and brought within the covenant, though they were even living in the contempt and neglect of good means: and therefore, I ask, What was Manasses doing, when God apprehended him in the briars and thorns of Babylon? And what was Paul doing, when God first took hold of him by his converting grace; I suppose he was furiously persecuting all that were using any good means; yea, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church of God, and persecuting the Son of God: yea, no mean will be used rightly by any, till God begin the work, and pour some grace out of the absolute promise, which is indefinitely dispensed; and therefore, not knowing but this same sovereign grace may take hold of some gospel-despisers, who are yet slighting all the means of grace, this doctrine of grace, absolutely free grace, must be preached, though reprobates should break their neck upon it. Yet,

2. In favour of the *holiness* of God, who hath appointed the use of means as the ordinary channel wherein his grace runs. I must tell you, that this doctrine carries no prejudice against the use of means, but rather fortifies the same; for the promises are absolute, in opposition to all conditionality on our part, but not in opposition to the diligent use of means: even as the decree of God in election is free and absolute, and yet does not exclude, but include God's executing and accomplishing his decree by such and such means, and ordering our use of them; even so the promise of God is absolute, yet it does not exclude the use of means, no more than the absolute promise that Paul got, that *none in the ship should die*, did exclude the mean, which was their *abiding in the ship*, Acts xxvii. 24, 31. And therefore, tho' the natural use of means, which is all the use that can be made of them by natural men, is not

connected with the promise necessarily; yet they that wilfully neglect the means of reading, hearing, praying, and the like, they are so far out of God's way, that they are excluding themselves from the benefits of the promise. If a man wilfully refuse to eat and drink, and use the means of natural life, will he not be accounted a self-murderer, notwithstanding of the absolute decree concerning the number of his days? And so, if a man wilfully refuse the word of life, and obstinately neglect the means of grace, will not God judge him for a self-damner, notwithstanding of the absolute promise given forth, generally and indefinitely, for the encouragement and excitement of faith, in the external dispensation of the gospel?

QUEST. 2. Why, but say you, *If the absolute promise be presented to us all, how is it true, if it be not fulfilled in us all?*

ANSW. A man may give his word, his promise, his charter to us; and yet, if we will not take his word, nor make use of his charter, we may reap no good of his word, while yet his word is true: Even so here; God in the external dispensation of the gospel, presents his promise and word of grace to us; but, if we will not take his word, this does not hinder but his word is true, though yet his truth will not be to our advantage, while we will not credit his word, believe his promise, and receive his testimony. There is a great difference betwixt the unbelief of believers, and the incredulity of unbelievers: the unbelief of believers does them much harm; though it shall not make the promise of God of no effect, yet it may breed much wo to them in the mean time: but the incredulity of unbelievers, if they live and die in it, is just the cause of their utter ruin; and yet it makes not the truth of God of no effect: his truth in the promise does not profit us but in a way of believing.—It is the best charter and security for heaven and salvation: but as for these that reject this security, and will not take it, it is what will aggravate their damnation; for, *he that believeth not shall be damned*: but they that, by a faith of God's operation, embrace the promise, and take it

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as their only security, they shall find him faithful to make out every word of promise to them.

QUEST. 3. But, say you, *If God hath given a promise to me, will it not be accomplished whether I believe or not?*

ANSW. If he give you grace to believe, and so give you it in possession, then it infers an obligation on God to accomplish it; because, to the believer, that receives the promise, it is given definitely and particularly, saying, Thou art the man to whom it is given; but when it is given only in the gospel-offer, and external dispensation, as it is to all the hearers of the gospel, this infers no obligation upon God to make good the promise to any or every particular man, because it is made only generally and indefinitely without defining the person in particular, but only pointing at sinners in general; and it remains only general and indefinite in the offer, till, in a way of believing, you make it your own particular good; and therefore God is faithful in denying this offered benefit, so long as you, through unbelief, reject it. If you offer a man your bond for a sum of money, and he reject it, then you are under no obligation, by that bond, to give him the contents of it: if he accept the bond, then you oblige yourself; but if he reject, then you are free, and cannot be accused of unfaithfulness to your promise, or bond. So here, if you truly and believingly take God at his word, then he is bound, by his own promise, to make out all; for then *you, believing, have everlasting life*: but if you will not take God's bond, nor receive his record, but reject it by unbelief, saying, in effect, that it is not good enough security for your salvation and eternal life; then you, through unbelief, make him a liar, and his word a lye, his promise an untruth: in which case, if you live and die there, he is so far from being bound to give you the blessing contained in that charter, that he is bound on the contrary, to execute his threatening upon you; *He that believeth not, shall be damned.* The promise, in the external dispensation, is like a blank bond, or an indefinite obligation

tion to blank persons, that it might be a standing claim to all sinners of mankind to whom it comes : sinners in general are named, no person's name is particularly inserted therein ; but if you, by faith, fill up your name, then the bond gives right to you in particular ; and that which was yours only generally and indefinitely before, becomes yours actually and particularly, upon your receiving it with particular application to yourself.

4. *Then, say you, after all that is said, it seems the promise is still conditional, namely, upon believing.*

ANSW. Faith and believing is also promised absolutely ; and therefore I ask, What is the condition of that promise of faith and the Spirit of faith ? If this be not free and absolute, where is the man that can tell me what is the condition upon which one may have faith, and the Spirit of faith to work it ? Nay, the promise of it is free and absolute, though yet general and indefinite. And as the promise of faith is free, so justification, sanctification, glory, and all that follows faith, is freely promised ; not to it, but on the back of it, in the new-covenant order. So that still the promise is absolute, free, and unconditional to us ; the proper condition of them all is fulfilled by, and to be found in the glorious new-covenant Head, Christ Jesus : and upon this condition of his obedience unto death, you ought to plead them ; for, though they be absolute in point of proper conditionality in us, yet not exclusively of the use of means. Therefore, O pray, pray ; and cry that you may find the power of the promise upon your souls : God allows you to plead for this, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. ; where, after the enumeration of many absolute promises, the Lord says, *For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel.* O cry and wrestle in prayer, and use the means : only take care that you use not the means as a condition, thinking now you have done your part, and therefore God is obliged to do his, and to grant the promised grace : for thus you turn the free covenant of promise to a conditional covenant of works ; and so you turn quite off from the gospel-way of believing, to the old legal way of doing ;  
and

and consequently you will disappoint yourself, and make *Christ of no effect to you*, Gal. v. 4, 5. and iii. 29.

QUEST. 5. But, say you, *What though I cry and groan for the grace of the promise; yet if the absolute promise be not particular to me, I can never be a partaker of it?*

ANSW. In order to clear up this point, and set it in a proper light, let it be considered,

1. That though the promise be *absolute*, yet it is also *indefinite*: though dispensed in general, yet it excludes no particular man; so that no man in the world, living under the gospel, can truly say he is not intended in this promise, as well as others; and seeing, therefore, that God hath not excluded thee by name, and that there is no clause that shuts thee out, it is a grievous sin in thee to exclude thyself: these cavilling thoughts and discouragements then do arise from hell; it is the devil and thy own black heart, and not this doctrine, that discourages thee. You think, if you had a particular promise bearing your name, you would believe: but, is it not all one, when there is a general promise to sinners, and the chief of sinners, with a command to you to come, and receive, and apply the promise particularly to yourself, that thus all may be your own?

2. As the general promise lays an argument to your hand, whereby you may plead, saying, Lord, thou that tenders thy grace to me, do thou powerfully apply it: thou who has left me a promise, O let me not come short through unbelief; thou who gives the outward means, O give the inward grace. So, if thou thus groan after the Lord, it would be a sign that the promise, which belongs to all in general, belongs to you in particular; and that by virtue of the promise, something of spiritual life was begun in you; even as a sigh and a groan, in a man, is a sign of natural life. If you be acquainted with any inward heart-groaning after the grace of the promise, such as, perhaps, you cannot put into words, *groanings that cannot be uttered*, I will tell you for your comfort, it is a sign that the Spirit of grace is already come, Rom. viii. 26.: the foundation is laid; *Christ will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax?* he will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the

*the hungry with good things.* That hunger and thirst, that groaning and longing hath a particular promise of being satisfied ; *Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled,* Mat. v. 6. Let this therefore turn your water into wine presently. Take your food, poor soul, and feast upon it ; and let me speak to others, that are not so far forward as you, since I am opening the net of the gospel to all.

O sinner, the promise is held out to you ; it is tendered to you, and Christ in it : or, Christ, and the promise in him, is presented to you ; for the promise holds out the very remedy for your malady.—Are you dead in sins ? the promise holds out life to you ; *The hour cometh, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and live.* O if power would come along with the promise !—Are you under wrath ! the promise holds out Jesus, *who delivers us from the wrath to come.*—Are you lost and undone ! the promise holds out redemption through his blood, *even the remission of sins.*—Are you unable to save yourself ? the promise holds out Christ as *the Lord our righteousness and strength ; as able to save to the uttermost ; and that help is laid upon one that is mighty.*—Are you unwilling, as well as unable ? the promise holds out a power for breaking that enmity and resistance ; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*—Have you a devilish heart within you ? the promise holds out renewing grace ; *A new heart will I give you.*—Are you poor, blind, and naked ? the promise holds out *tried gold,* to remedy your poverty ; *eye-salve,* to heal your blindness ; and *white raiment,* to cover your nakedness.—Are you a poor, foolish, guilty, filthy, miserable creature ? the promise holds out Christ to you, *as made of God,* for your behoof, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*—Tell me a case that the promise does not reach ; nay, it is just proposed, O sinner, as a remedy for your malady : and therefore say not, Ah ! what shall I do with these promises ? or, what have I ado with them ? Why, man, woman ; *To you is the word of this salvation sent ;* and I will acquaint you, in God's great name, what you are to do with it ; you are just to take him

at his word, saying, AMEN, Lord; even so do, I take thee upon thy promise: O let it take hold of me, for it is good news to me.

What is it to believe the gospel? Why, it is just to hearken to a promising God, and to welcome a promise into the heart. Faith hath relation to the promise, and takes it as *a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance*, saying, O good news to me; for faith makes particular application of the promise held forth in the general dispensation. Take away the promise out of the Bible, and you take away the gospel; all the commands and threatenings of the law will not make one single sentence of gospel of themselves, and yet infinite wisdom makes a good use of them in a subserviency to the gospel; for, though no precept or threatening be properly any part of the gospel, yet they may make preparation for it; they are, like John's rough sermon, to prepare Christ's way: the threatening serves to chase us into God's way, like a flaming sword; and the precept serves to direct us how to keep the way when we are in it. But the gospel itself is God in a promise; it is composed and made up of promises, whereof Christ is the sum total; the *Yea* and *Amen*. God in the gospel says, Notify to me what is the matter with you, and I will certainly help you; tell me what you would have, and I will undoubtedly give it you; signify to me what you are afraid of, and I will really deliver you. I will tell you, in a word, what the law says, what the gospel says, and what faith says: *By the law is the knowledge of sin*; and accordingly the law says, Man, you have a lawless mind, there is no ordering of it, no order in it: the gospel answers, *I will put my law in thy mind*, and bring it to order: and faith says, Welcome the promise; O Lord, I am glad that thou do so; AMEN, *Do as thou hast said*, (to use the words of David, 2 Sam. vii. 25.)—The law says, Man, woman, your mind is ill, but your heart is worse; you have a wicked nature, a stubborn and rebellious heart: the gospel answers, *I will take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh*: then faith says, O welcome, Lord, with such a promise; O! do

*as thou hast said.*—The law says, Man, woman, you have a devil within you, an evil spirit, inclined to every evil: the gospel answers, *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes:* and then faith says, O welcome, sweet promise; Lord, I take thee at thy word; *do as thou hast said.*—The law says, Man, woman, you have committed many grievous sins, and hainous iniquities: the gospel answers, *Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more;* and, *I will blot out your sins as a cloud:* and then faith says, O blessed promise! welcome, welcome; Lord, I take thee at thy word; I embrace thy promise; O! *do as thou hast said.*—Again, the law says, Man, woman, your backslidings are increased; you are but a backsliding hieffer: the gospel says, *I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely:* then faith says, O welcome, Lord, with the promise in thy hand; *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:* O! *do as thou hast said.*—Again, the law says, Man, woman, you are but an ignorant mortal; you know nothing of God as you ought to know; the convinced soul takes with the charge of the law: and the gospel answers, *You shall be all taught of God;* and *then shall you know; you shall follow on to know the Lord,* as that word may be read, Hof. vi. 3.: then says faith, O good is the word of the Lord! welcome a promising God; Lord, I take thee at thy word; *do as thou hast said,* for I will look to thee for the performance of it.—Further, the law says, Man, woman, you deserve to be thrust to the bottom of hell, to the darkest and deepest part of the pit of perdition; and the convinced soul subscribes to the truth of it: but the gospel answers, *Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom:* then says faith, O welcome, welcome word of grace! Lord, I embrace thy promise, and *I will hope in thy word.*—The law says, Man, woman, thy plagues are great, and thy disease incurable: nay, but the gospel answers, *I am the Lord that healeth thee; the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations:* then says faith, Lord, I will take thee at thy word; O! *do as thou hast said.* Yes, says the Lord, but I will take a day of it, and my



my own time of accomplishing my promise; for *the vision is for an appointed time*: then says faith, Lord, I will wait upon thee; *I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will bear me.* Well, *the Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.*

Thus God is setting about his charter among you; who will sign and set to their name? The promises are flying about your heads and ears; is there none of them flying into your hearts? Have you no use, man, woman, for any of these promises? Wo is me, if God, with a promise in his hand, can get no credit among you! But if you be for the promise, then take it, and God's blessing with it, and Christ in the bosom of it; for, the promise is the place where the Lord lies. Say not, *Who will ascend to heaven to bring down Christ, or descend to the deep to bring him up?* Faith may see him lying in the promise; and if you take the promise in your heart, you take Christ in; and if you thus embrace the promise, then may I say, *as Isaac was, you are the children of the promise*\*. This leads to

II. The *second* general head, which was, To open up the *character* of their being the *children of promise*. Now, to open up the nature of this filiation, I would shew, 1. In what *respects* believers, or the children of God, are the children of promise. 2. In what *method* and *order* they come to be actually the children of the promise.

1<sup>st</sup>, In what *respects* they are the children of promise; and, I think, they may be called so, in respect of spiritual conception, generation, nutrition, education, assimilation, and amplexation.

1. Believers are the children of promise in respect of *spiritual conception*: they are conceived in the womb of the promise, before ever they are born again, and long before they were believers; they were conceived, by the gracious purpose and sovereign good pleasure

\* This is probably the end of Serm. LXV, and the beginning of Serm. LXVI.

of God, in the womb of the covenant that was made betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity, which is the promise in its original constitution: the elect, subjects of this promise, are the seed sown in the womb thereof; the seed promised to the Mediator, of which it is said, Isa. liii. 10. *He shall see his seed*; and Psalm cx. 3. that *from the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of his youth*. All that come to be actually, in time, the children of the promise, were virtually so, from all eternity; *According as he hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world*, Ephes. i. 4. *According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 1.: even *eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began*, Titus i. 1. *Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9.—Here is a glorious conception, that can never prove abortive. The children of the promise are the *seed*, Romans ix, 8.; and Christ will want none of the seed which the Father gave him; *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me*: Hence he is brought in, saying, *Behold I, and the children which God hath given me*, Heb. ii. 13. *He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied*, when, in the fulness of time, the pregnant womb of the promise is opened by the power of God; for, whenever the time of love comes, then the promise is come to its full time of bringing forth some child of grace, and heir of mercy, that is in the womb of it. Therefore,

2. Believers are the children of the promise, in respect of *spiritual generation*, and *actual production*: they are begotten and brought forth out of the womb of the promise; *Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth*, James i. 18. Where, as the *efficient* of the new birth is God, he *begets us*; and the *moving cause* is the good pleasure of God, *Of his own WILL he begat us*; so the *instrumental cause*, and the immediate parent is the promise, the *word of truth*, impregnated with the power and Spirit of Christ: and thus believers are brought forth by the virtue of the promise. It is said

of Ephraim, Hosea xiii. 13. that *he should not stay long in the breaking forth of children.* Why? how shall he be brought forth? Behold the promise immediately follows for that end; *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem from death: O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction.* Which promise, whatever other mercy it imports, includes also the spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin, to a spiritual life, in and through Jesus Christ his death and resurrection; on which account, believers are taught to say, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* 1 Peter i. 3.—Christ's death and resurrection is the confirmation of all the promises, by which believers are begotten again to a lively hope: and what is a believer, but a child of hope, brought forth out of the womb of the promise, impregnate with the almighty efficacy of the Holy Ghost, causing him to hope upon that promise, by which he was begotten again to that lively hope? Hence the native cry of the new-born child of the promise, is, *Lord, remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope,* Psalm cxix. 49.—And hence his overword, again and again, is, *I hope in thy word; I hope in thy word,* ver. 74, 81, 114, 147. What is faith, and hope, and other graces, but parts of the new creature cast out of the womb of the promise? yea, the promise, you see, is both the mother and the nurse of hope; the mother brings forth that child of hope, being the instrument of begetting us thereunto; and then hope sucks her mother's breast, saying, *I hope in thy word.* And hence,

3. Believers are the children of promise, in respect of *spiritual nutrition*, or nourishment: as the promise hath a generative virtue, for begetting children; so it hath a nutritive virtue, for maintaining them: it hath both a fertile womb, for begetting children; and a full breast for nourishing of them. The children of God are nourished and suckled at the breast of the promise. Read to this purpose, Isa. lxvi. 8,—11. The children

of God are the children of Zion, or of the church, the spiritual society, where the pure ordinances are dispensed : hence the child of God is taught to say, *It is my mother's house, and the chamber of her that conceived me,* Song iii. 4. And what are the promises, but the mother's breasts for the spiritual nourishment of her children, and of this man, or that man, that is born in her? And hence the word of grace is compared to the milk of the breasts ; *As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,* 1 Pet. ii. 2. I will tell you some properties of this milk that is in the promise.—It is very *free* milk, a very free breast ; *Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.*—It is very *fatning* milk ; it is just the *feast of fat things full of marrow*, that makes the child of promise grow.—It is very *sweet* and *delicious* milk ; *Sweeter than the honey, and the honey comb : How sweet are thy words to my taste? Sweeter than honey to my mouth.*—It is *warm* milk ; the babe's heart is warmed with it when applied by the Spirit ; *Did not our hearts burn within us, when he talked with us by the way?* It is very *medicinal* milk ; were the child of the promise under a spiritual decay and consumption, a new draught of this will cure the child ; *He sent his word and healed them.* Hence they come to ordinances, sometimes all full of plagues and diseases, just pained to death, as it were : but a word comes, and some drop of this milk, that makes them whole and sound, and go away triumphing in the consolations of God.—And why hath it these qualities ? Even because it is *pure* milk ; *The words of the Lord are pure,* Psalm xii. 6. It is the *sincere milk of the word* ; that is, without sophistication, without mixture ; without erroneous mixture, or legal mixture. If we that are ministers should unduly mix any legal qualification with the gospel-milk of the free and absolute promise, it is enough to make the children loath the milk, and so hinder their growth in holiness and comfort : why ? Oh ! says the child, I dare not apply such a promise, for I want such and such a qualification that the minister speaks of. I will tell you, man, it is the law that says, *Hold off, for you are not meet, you are a sinner ;*  
but

but the gospel says, Come, and take freely, be what you will. And therefore, whatever hinders you from applying the promise, and sucking the milk of it, you may suspect it is no gospel.

4. Believers are the children of promise in respect of *education* : they are trained up and educate by the grace and virtue that flows from the divine promise. The children of the promise are but babes at best, and children, while here ; therefore they are never weaned from the breast of the promise, so long as they are in this world, and always till faith and hope, grounded on the promise, be turned to vision and fruition in heaven, where all the promises will have their full accomplishment. And therefore the sons and daughters of Zion, *To whom belong the covenant and the promises*, are said to be *nursed at her side*, Isa. lx. 4. And hence, as children depend upon their parents, and in an ordinary way cannot live without them ; so the life of believers here is a life of dependence upon the promise ; their light, life, liberty, strength, comfort, and all issuing from the promise. As Moses's own mother brought him up for the princess, namely, Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him for a prince in Pharaoh's family ; thus believers are brought by the seed of the promise, and their mother breeds them kings and princes unto their God ; *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth*, Psa. xlv. 16. Hence,

5. Believers are the children of promise in respect of *assimilation* likeness, and conformity ; 2 Cor. iii. 18. *Beholding his glory as in a glass ; [that is, in the glass of the gospel,] we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.* 2 Peter i. 4. *Great and precious promises are given us, that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature.* The law, as it is a rule of holiness, is the transcript of God's holiness in a command ; the gospel is the image of his holiness in a promise : and when power accompanies the promise for begetting children unto God, what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively ;

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The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Titus ii. 11, 12. Indeed, holiness is a child of the promise, it is a daughter of the holy covenant; as children are like their parents, so believers, by virtue of the promise, are brought to a conformity thereunto: Romans vi. 17. *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you; or rather, as it is in the margin, and in the Greek, WHERE TO YE WERE DELIVERED; delivered into it as into a mould, as the wax is cast into the impression of the seal, answering it line for line, stroke for stroke, and wholly representing the shape and figure of it.* Believers are, according to their measure, transformed into the likeness and similitude of the gospel, conformed unto it; understanding, will, affections, aims, principles, actions, and conversation, all becoming the gospel, and the promises thereof: hence the promises are made the springs of gospel holiness; 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 of God.* The promise of Christ is the door of hope; and, *He that hath this hope, purifies himself, even as he is pure,* 1 John iii. 3. The law, as a covenant, makes a man hopeless, and consequently heartless in every duty; it never purified a sinner to this day; it is the gospel that is the *ministration of the Spirit*, even the Spirit of holiness. I imagine, you will know it even to your experience, believer. Let the law, or the legal preaching, press upon you with a hundred commands, and a hundred moral arguments to back it; yet all it does is but to make you dead, till life come out of a promise; and whenever a word of grace or promise is let into the heart, it joyfully conceives there, and brings forth the child, whose name is *Holiness to the Lord*. When are you most holy, but when the promise is most sweetly and powerfully applied, and when the grace of the promise comes and takes you in its arms? Therefore,

6. Believers are the children of promise in respect of *amplectation* (I only use that word, Sirs, as comprehensive of what I have a mind to say upon it; I do not love to express myself in words that you cannot all understand, but what I mean by it is this;) they are children of promise, in respect of the promises coming to embrace, and hug, and dandle them, as a mother does her child. Do you understand that? Yea, perhaps you know the meaning of the word; but happy you, that know the thing itself to your experience, namely, the promise coming and embracing you in its arms. The promise is the joyful mother of all the children she brings forth; and therefore they are *born upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees*, as the expression is, Isa. lxvi. 12. There are some rare folk in the world, Sirs, that are Christ's favourites; all his children are so, but there are some of them in a more special manner that are his darlings: and how does he care for and dandle them? Why, there comes a promise, and in the bosom of it Christ the first-born child of the promise; and Christ by his Spirit, as the Spirit of promise, embraces the soul, and takes hold of it, and hugs it in his arms, and intimates the love and good-will of God, saying, perhaps such a word as that, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with everlasting kindness have I drawn thee. Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* O how sweet is it to be thus within the arms and embraces of a promise! Then is the soul in the very arms of a God in Christ. Believers are said to *embrace* the promise, Heb. xi. 13. But though this be the duty of all, when the question is about the ground and warrant to believe; yet, when the question is about God's method of working faith, none will embrace the promise, till first the promise embrace them: never a soul took hold of the promise, with his whole heart, till first the promise, took hold of his heart. God comes, by his powerful grace, breaking the natural enmity of the man, and killing him with his kindness. This is both the first and the last thing in the import of this designation, *the children of promise*; for still the promise is the mother and maintainer

of faith, repentance, love, and all the graces; they have no being, till they be brought forth out of the womb of the promise: and still the believer is at a loss to believe and embrace the promise, till the promise take a new grip of him, and give him a new embracement.—Thus you see in what respect they are the children of promise.

I have not yet said that believers are the children of promise in an *active sense*, as they are believers of the promise, or improvers of the promise, and the like; for though that be true, and may come in its own proper place, yet it would not be suitable to the scope or meaning of the text, where they are considered as passively, and without their own concurrence, as Isaac was, when born to Abraham by the mere virtue of the promise.—The promise is of the mere grace of God in Christ; and to be a child of the promise, is to be a child of God, by the grace of God in Christ. The question here is not, how believers act as believers? but, how the grace of God makes them believers? and that is by virtue of their being the children of promise, in the respects that I have already named.

2dly, In what *method* and *manner* they become actually the children of promise; *actually*, I say, because there are many, even all the elect of God, not yet converted, who are *virtually* the children of promise; but the womb of the promise is not yet open to bring them forth. Therefore the question is about the method of their being the actual children of promise, and so actually believers. And here you would notice, I am not speaking of the *ground* and *object* of faith, namely, the promise, of which formerly; but the way and method of God's working it; for these two ought not to be confounded, but distinctly considered in their own place. The word of God is the warrant, the Spirit of God is the worker of faith. Now, what hath been said already, may give some light to this inquiry; but there are these four things that I would further say concerning the method, speaking only of God's ordinary way of begetting children to himself.



1. The Lord brings home the *threatening* of the law, and applies it to their conscience, in a work of *conviction*. The conscience is naturally *fear'd as with a hot iron*; like these that have a part of their flesh burnt with an iron, though it be touched, yet they do not feel: this hard skin must be pierced; and therefore God makes the knife of conviction to go to the quick; makes the man see that he is a child of the devil, a child of wrath, puts him in fear of hell, and shews him that there is a standing quarrel betwixt God and him, and that this must be removed: hence a concern will be raised in the heart, *What shall I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. They that are actual children of the promise, have found themselves actually under the dispensation of threatenings from Sinai; for the *law is the schoolmaster*, to awaken the sinner, and let him see his need of Christ.

2. The Lord *imbitters* sin, which gave force to the threatening, in a work of compunction. Both the spirituality of the law, in its command; and the severity of the law, in its threatening, are set before the man; in the consideration whereof, the soul not only cries out, *Oh! unclean, unclean!* but, *Oh! undone, undone!* The infinite majesty of God appears; the infinite malignity of sin appears; and the man *is pricked in his heart*, Acts ii. 37. The *commandment comes, sin revives, and he dies*, who before was *alive without the law*, Rom. vii. 9. Hence,

3. He discovers the absolute need of the promise of the gospel in a work of *humiliation*, and his undone state without it. A holy God stares the man in the face; the unholy soul sees this holy God, and is afraid, and ashamed, and humbled; humbled so far, as to take with the whole charge of God and his law against him. When ministers charge people with sins, they will either deny them, or cast a cloak over them, by manifold excuses; and perhaps say, I was mistaken, or in a passion, or under such and such temptation: but that is a plain evidence they are not humbled before God; for when God humbles the man, he is more exer-

cised in condemning himself, than any minister can be capable to do: he takes with the law-charge, saying, as Nathan to David, *I am the man*, I am the devil, I am the monster. Indeed, this and other steps of humiliation may, perhaps, run along with him in his whole Christian course, after his first believing, as well as before; but I speak now of the common and natural order.—He is humbled, likewise, to a clearing of God's *equity* and *righteousness*, in sentencing him by the law, to the pit of perdition, and is made to clear and justify God, though he should condemn them.—Some will say, We cannot think God will be so cruel, as to damn the most part of the world for their sin: why, that is an evidence your soul was never humbled under a sense of sin. But, Oh! says the humbled soul, death and damnation is the true wages of sin; and if God should send me to hell, he is just; I might preach his righteousness there, and declare that he never wronged me; yea, it is my wonder that I have been so long out of the bottomless pit. Again, he is humbled to see, that as his damnation would be an act of *justice*, infinite justice; so his salvation, if ever he share thereof, will be an act of sovereignty, glorious sovereignty and pure *grace*. He is humbled to see, that he cannot save himself; that he is neither able to save himself, nor worthy that God should save him; and that he is so far from having any righteousness of his own to plead, that his best righteousness is filthy rags; and that God may justly damn him for his duties, as well as for his sins.

4. He discovers to the man, in this case, the *excellency* of the promise, and of the new-covenant way of salvation; the excellency of Christ, and the glory of his righteousness in a work of saving illumination; and now the good work, the saving work begins, when the *Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ is given*, Eph. i. 17.; and Christ is *revealed in the man*, Gal. i. 16.: and this light is the light of life, whereby the soul is quickened to embrace the promise, to believe in Christ and hope in his word.

The promise is opened up and applied to the begetting of faith. As Christ *manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed in him*, John ii. 11.; so, when he manifests his glory in a word of grace or promise, then the soul believes; for then *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 16. Power accompanies the revelation for the working of faith; for the faith of God's elect is the *faith of God's operation*, Colos. ii. 12. Then the man believes, now he credits the truth and goodness of the promise, 1 Tim. i. 15. He cordially accepts, and receives, appropriates, and applies the great and good things promised to himself, with a confident persuasion of the accomplishment of the promise, resting upon the faithfulness, power, and grace of the promiser for the same, according to the measure of the communication of the Spirit of faith, Rom. x. 10. Heb. xi. 13. Rom. iv. 20, 21. Heb. xi. 11. And now, the man is actually a child of the promise; for the promise hath taken hold of him; and he hath, through grace, taken hold of it: the promise hath embraced him, and he hath embraced it; the embracement is mutual: now he is graciously inclined and engaged.

Let me tell you, in order to the further clearing of this method or manner of their becoming actually the children of promise, the ministry of the gospel is a kind of fishery; ministers are called *fishers of men*, and so men and women are the fish. Now, God hath hung a bundle of promises together, as so many hooks upon a line, for taking all sort of fishes, to take them ashore to himself: here are large hooks for taking large fishes, were they as large as a leviathan; here are little hooks for taking little fishes, were they as little as a mennon.—Oh! says one, I am a great sinner, and my sins are mountaneous: well there is a hook for you; *Who art thou, O great mountain, before our Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shooting, crying, Grace, grace unto it*, Zech. iv. 7.—Oh! says another, I am a poor insignificant worm, a worthless, mean, impotent creature: well, there is a hook for you; *Fear not, worm Jacob,*

*Jacob, I will help thee, Isaiah xiv. 14.*—Are you poor and needy? There is a hook for you; *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongues fail for thirst, I the Lord will bear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them, Isaiah xli. 17, 18.*—Are you a poor blind creature, that knows not what way to go? There is a hook for you, *Isaiah xlii. 16. I will bring the blind by a way they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known.*—Are you a piece of parched ground, like a parched wilderness? There is a hook for you, *Isaiah xliv. 3. I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.*—Are your troubled that you cannot get a heart to pray? Well, there is a hook for taking you, *Zech. xii. 10. I will pour out upon the house of David, the Spirit of grace and supplication.* Are you unable to believe and repent? There is a hook for catching you, in the following words, *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;* where both faith and repentance are promised.—Are you a lost and undone creature? There is a hook for you; *Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, Luke xix. 10.*—Are you a plagued wretch, oppressed with the plague of atheism and unbelief, with the plague of blasphemy and enmity, saying, Oh! there are devilish plagues, and hellish diseases in my heart? Well, there is a hook for you, *Rev. xxii. 2. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of all nations;* and *Mal. iv. 2. To you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings.*—Oh! but say you, there is a conditional promise, it is to them *that fear his name:* I will tell you, man, there is no conditional form put upon any promise in the Bible, to keep back a soul from applying and taking hold of the promise, but to draw it in to embrace the condition, either by taking Christ for the condition, or running to an absolute promise, where that condition is promised: for instance, are you apprehensive that you are destitute of that fear of God? Then there is a hook for you to swallow down, that you may be taken by it, *Jer. xxxii. 40. I will put my fear in your hearts, that you shall not depart from me.* And thus you are to do  
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with all the promises that seem to run in a conditional form. Let not the condition fright you from opening your mouth wide to catch the hook of the promise; or, if still you dare not meddle with it, then run to the absolute promise, where the condition itself is promised; if you cannot find out that, then run to Christ himself in whom all fulness is, and *in whom all the promises are yea and amen*: having him, you will have the condition of all the promises. If you stand aback from the promise, and will not open your mouth to receive it, or if you, reject it for want of this condition or qualification, you mistake the nature of the gospel, and are ignorant of the free covenant of promise. There is no evil you would have removed, no want you would have supplied, but you may get a promise for it; and if one cannot make for you (as none of them but will, if rightly understood) go to another: if one hook be too large for you to swallow down, you may get another, more meet for you; therefore, go about, and seek thy meat, and take fast hold of the promise that makes best for thee. And, O happy soul, if you be taken! For the hook will not hurt you, but only hale you to the same happy shore with all the children of promise.

Perhaps there is a secret thought in some body's breast, Alas! Sir, but I do not find the promise taking hold of me; and therefore, how shall I take hold of it? You have been saying, none embraces the promise, till the promise embrace them; now, I do not find, I do not feel the promise taking hold of me.

ANSW. I fear, by this way of speaking, you are making sense and feeling the ground of your faith, and not the promise: this is not believing, but feeling; like Thomas, that would not believe till he felt and saw Christ: but, *Blessed is he that believeth, and hath not seen.*

QUEST. *But, say you, Must I not feel the power of God making me believe, before I can believe?*

ANSW. Yea, it is the power of God only that can make you believe: but make not your feeling of that power to be your warrant to believe; for the word of promise is your warrant, and also the immediate object  
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and ground of faith : therefore, when there is a promise meet for you, and suited of God to your case, stretch out the withered hand to receive it at his call, never stopping for fear that the power of God be not enabling you ; for no sooner will you essay to stretch out your hand, than the power of God will be before-hand with you, though, perhaps, in an insensible manner : whereas, if you wait for a sensible feeling of his power, you are not believing, nor trusting in his word. If you would believe, it must be when you feel him not : for, believing is not feeling ; and feeling is not believing.

OBJECT. But, if I believe his word without feeling his power, I fear, I shall but presume, and take the promise only in my own strength ; or, like the stony-ground hearers, *receive the word with joy*, by a temporary faith, which will fail.

ANSW. People may indeed say they believe, and fancy they believe, and deceive themselves : but fancy is one thing, and faith is another ; true, right, and solid belief, is what you need not fear can be done in your own strength. What ! to take the word of a God for your security ; to quit the law-way of salvation, and flee to the gospel-promise ; and to trust the faithfulness of a God pledged in his promise, for your salvation from sin and corruption, as well as from hell and damnation ; to set to your seal that God is true, and to receive his record with particular application to yourself : if you do this, never fear that you are doing it by your own strength ; for it is not natural, but supernatural power that is dealing, when you are so acting. If you get a heart to embrace the promise, you may be sure the promise is embracing you ; for it is only virtue coming out of it, that enables you to embrace it : before your embracing of it, the virtue may be insensible and invisible ; but after the embracement, you may find sensible virtue. When the woman touched the hem of Christ's garment, sensible virtue came out of him ; but there was some invisible and insensible virtue came first from him to enable her to touch him ; but she never  
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wist of that precedent virtue, till once she touched him. A man may not know, till he believe, that it is the power of God that is dealing with him to make him believe, God's power deals and works so wonderfully in this matter ; *No man can tell whence it comes, and whither it goes*, John iii. 8. What impressions the stamp of his power hath made, and how it makes the impression, cannot be seen till on the back of it, or afterwards, in order of nature at least ; even as the impression that the seal makes upon the melted wax is not seen till the seal be lifted, and there the impression remains. You cannot see yourself in a glass, till you look to it ; but look to it when you will, your image in the glass is before-hand with you : so, look to God in the promise ; but lo, his looking to you therein prevents you. Your embracing the promise will flow from the promise embracing you ; therefore when the promise is set before you, and held out to you to be believed, take it in God's name, without any more ado ; and then say with yourself, now there is a word for me, and it is the word of the God of truth ; therefore that word and I shall never part ; welcome, O blessed word, death shall not separate you and me ; I will hing by this hook, I will rely upon his word, till all be made good to me. And thus you will *receive the ingrafted word, that is able to save your soul*.

III. The *third* head of the method was, To state the *comparison*, and run the *parallel* betwixt believers and Isaac ; and so to shew more particularly, how they are, as Isaac, the children of promise. And here the parallel may be stated in these following particulars.

1. As Isaac was the *child* of Abraham ; so are believers children of Abraham ; *Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham*, Gal. iii. 17. See also ver. 29. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*. As Isaac was a child of Abraham, not by natural power, for both his body and Sarah's were dead ; but by a gracious promise, Gen. xvii. 19. ; even so, believers are the children of Abraham, not by natural

descent, such as the Jews boasted of, when they said, *We have Abraham for our father*; but by virtue of the gracious promise made to Abraham, that *in his seed, [i. e. in Christ,] all nations of the earth shall be blessed,* Gal. iii. 8. compared with Gen. xviii. 18. To *Abraham and his seed was the promise made: He says not, unto seeds, as of many; but as of one; and to thy seed, which is Christ,* Galat. iii. 16. Thus, as Isaac was a child of the promise made to Abraham; so believers are not only children of the promise made to Abraham, but also the children of the promise made to Christ, the seed of Abraham; *In thy seed, [that is, in Christ,] shall they be blessed.* To *Abraham and his seed were the promises made*; and as Abraham trusted God for the accomplishment of the promise of Isaac, Rom. iv. 19, 20, 31.; even so, Christ trusted his Father for the accomplishment of the promise made to him concerning his elect children, Heb. ii. 13.; there he is brought in saying, *I will put my trust in him*; and then, *Behold I, and the children which God hath given me.*—Abraham's confidence was strong, but Christ's confidence in his Father was perfect; it was not possible that the Mediator could distrust his Father.

2. As Isaac was the *special seed* of Abraham, of whom it was said, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called,* Heb. xi. 18. Gen. xxi. 12. Rom. ix. 7.: even so, believers are God's *peculiar people, a chosen generation*; *To you that believe, he is precious*:—You are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness to his marvellous light,* 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. Abraham had another son, namely, Ishmael; but the promise was not to Ishmael, but to Isaac: so God hath other people that are his children, not only by creation, but by general adoption, and church-membership, and whose right to the promises is but general in point of access and warrant to believe, sealed in the sacrament of baptism; which yet is such as renders them inexcusable, when they do not improve that right of access they have: but believers are the children



children of God by a special adoption, having a special interest in, and possession of the promise.

3. Isaac was, *the fruit of prayer*, as well as the child of promise to Abraham. You may see the prayer of Abraham concerning a seed, Gen. xv. 3. *Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* May we not allude to this here? The children of God are not only the children of the promise made to the Mediator, but also the children of prayer made by him; they are the fruit of Christ's prayer, meditation, and intercession, John xvii. 20. He prayed not only for all that are believers, but for *all that should believe on him*; and he prays them all to heaven, ver. 24. *Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou loved me before the foundation of the world.*

4. Isaac was the child of a promise, whereof the accomplishment was *long delayed*; though yet the delay did carry no prejudice to the certainty of the promise as to its accomplishment, which took place in the fulness of time appointed of God, Gen. xvii. 21. and chap. xxi. 2. Thus it is with believers, the children of the promise; there is a set time of their birth, or their being brought forth out of the womb of the promise; and the Lord waits, as it were, for that time which he hath set; *He waits to be gracious*, Isa. xxx. 18. And after they are actually the children of the promise by converting grace, there is a set time for accomplishing particular promises to them, for which they are to wait; *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*, Hab. ii. 3. It was more than twenty years after God promised Abraham a seed, that Isaac was born. Perhaps there is a twenty year old promise, or a ten year old promise, or what you got so many years ago, not yet like to be accomplished. But, believer, the time is drawing near: as a man that is far off, every step he takes in his return, he draws nearer and nearer home; so the fulness of time is coming for the promise to bring forth, and the vision to speak; it does not tar-

ry in the day, nor in the night, though it seems to tarry, but approaches every moment : the longer you live, believer, the nearer you come to the accomplishment of the promise ; *Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.* The promise of Isaac, however long delayed, was as certain as the promise of Christ's coming ; for Christ was to come of him : even so, the children of promise shall all as certainly be brought forth, and the promise as certainly be accomplished to them, as it is certain that Christ the promised seed is come. Indeed, the accomplishment of that promise of his coming is a certain pledge of the accomplishment of all the rest of the promises ; for, they are all chained to that great link : it was the leading promise, though about four thousand years before it was accomplished ; yet, *In the fulness of time, God sent his Son, made of woman,* and so accomplished that promise on which all the rest depended. God will not forget to keep his day, were it never so long betwixt the promise and the day that he hath set, Exod. xii. 41. compared with Gen. xv. 13.

5. Isaac was a child of the promise, born in a very *unlikely, unexpected, and wonderful* manner. Insurmountable difficulties stood in the way ; outward means did fail ; and, by the course of nature, no such thing could be expected as the promised Isaac. Abraham was an hundred years old, and his body was dead and withered ; Sarah was ninety years old, and her womb was dead and barren, Rom. iv. 19. Heb. xi. 11. Even so it is with believers, the children of promise ; when the promise comes to its full time of bringing forth its issue, the birth of any of the children of promise is always surprising, wonderful, and most unlikely to natural sense and carnal reason, when mountains of sin and guilt, and insurmountable difficulties are in the way. Thus we will find the gospel coming in with the sweetest cordial, even when the law is raising the greatest difficulty ; as in Isaiah xliii. 22,—25. *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel ;—thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquities.* Who could expect  
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immediately after this to hear God saying, as it just follows; *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!* So Isa. lvii. 17, 18. *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. O what a wonderful and surprising birth of free grace is that which follows! I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comfort unto him, and to his mourners.* When one would think, now the threatening is big with child, and ready to bring forth vengeance; then, to the praise of free grace, the promise, being big with a blessing, brings forth mercy and salvation. This is what makes Abraham's faith necessary, according to its measure, in all the children of promise; because some resemblance of the difficulties that Abraham's faith had to encounter, does present to them. Why, say you, it was a thing incredible that was promised to Abraham, he being so superannuate and dead, and Sarah likewise so old and barren.— Well, man, woman, but the case is yours in other respects: you have the old man of sin and corruption, and your heart is dead and barren of any spiritual good; and it is as impossible for you to bring forth any spiritual issue, as it was for Abraham and Sarah to have an Isaac, if he had not been a child of promise, brought forth, not by the power of nature, but by the virtue of the promise: Even so it is with you; you need Abraham's faith; and faith of the same nature you will have, if you be a child of Abraham. Sense and reason will oppose and say, It is incredible that spiritual life and fruit can issue out of such a dead and barren soul; but now the language of faith is, What says the promise? As *Abraham considered not the deadness of his own body, or of Sarah's womb, nor the difficulties that stood in the way of the promise; but the truth, faithfulness, and power of the promiser: even so, faith considers not the deadness, hardness, and barrenness of the heart; but the truth and veracity of that God, who is able, of stones, to raise up children to Abraham, according to his promise. And thus the promise brings forth*

forth its happy issue, and the child of promise owns that it is not by the power of nature, but merely by the power of grace, and virtue of the promise, that any spiritual good is brought forth, saying, *By grace I am what I am.*—Thus *we are the children of God by faith* ; and, *as Isaac, the children of the promise.*

6. Isaac's birth was the joy of his parents ; the comfort of Abraham, the laughter of Sarah, Gen. xxi. 6. : Even so, the birth of the promise is the joy of their heavenly relations. It is a day wherein God is evidencing that he is well-pleased in Christ : it is a day of the gladness of Christ's heart ; faints and angels are glad ; the church militant and triumphant rejoice ; *There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*, Luke xv. 7, 10. See how, in the preceeding verse, where our text lies, the barren Christian church is called to rejoice when children are born to God within her, Gal. iv. 27. *Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not ; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not : for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.* Then is the church in joyful circumstances, when, by virtue of the gospel promise, children are brought forth in her, even *this man and that men there.* Such happy days have been in the church of Scotland, when the spirit of reformation was poured out ; but when that spirit is much quenched, and reformation-light obscured, and reformation-zeal cooled, when the edge of it is blunted, when the carved work thereof is burnt, the covenanted work buried much in oblivion, and when old reformation-principles, together with the gospel-doctrine of free grace, which was the great instrument of conversion, is brought under much contempt and reproach ; little wonder, when God is like to give the mother-church a bill of divorce, that she be not the joyful mother of many children to him. The gospel promise, and the free revelation of grace in Christ, is the very womb of the church, that brings forth her children ; but, now-a-days, the doctrine of the gospel is brought under much disparagement, under much suspicion, as if it were some *new dangerous scheme of doctrine* ; as the Athenians said of Paul's, Acts xvii. 19.

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Yea, it was said of Christ's, *What new doctrine is this?* Mark i. 27. Such is the natural bias towards the law, as a covenant, and so natively does a church and people fall into it, even after and under a profession of sound principles, that when evangelical doctrine comes to be revived, in any measure, it is still branded with *novelty* \*. Thus it was with Christ himself; his doctrine was called *new*, when he came to be a minister of the old and antient truths of God, even to *confirm the promises made unto the fathers*, Rom. xv. 8. But it is the free promise, the free grace of God, that begets holy children to God; and therefore an unholy devil will raise up all the calumnies in the world against it, that so when it is brought under an ill report, and universal suspicion, none may receive or get good of it; for all the saving good that is gotten, is by the power of grace, by the virtue of the promise: however, *the election shall obtain*; but, if the devil could get his will, the promise should never be the joyful mother of any children.

7. Isaac was born, not *after the flesh*, but *by the promise*; not of *the bond-woman*, but of *the free*. See the context, Gal. iv. 22, 23. And how this is explained, you see in the following ver. 24, 25, 26.; and how it is applied both in the text, and ver. 31.; where it is in like manner, said of all believers, *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free*. As HAGAR and SARAH here signify the *old* and *new covenant*, as I shewed in the explication; so ISHMAEL and ISAAC hold forth these that are under the *law*, and these that are under *grace*. Now, believers are thus distinguished from all unbelieving Ishmaelites, that *they are not under the law, but under grace*; and hence *sin cannot have dominion over them*, Rom. vi. 14. There is a threefold bondage to the law that unbelievers are under, which the children of the promise and the free-woman are delivered from.

\* See the ground of this charge accounted for, and the unjustness thereof evinced, Vol. I. pag. 238. Vol. II. pag. 304, 305, 395. Vol. III. pag. 42, 46.

(1.) The *commanding* power of the law ; that is, the *precept* of it under this conditional form, *Do and live*. The law of works, that they are under, says, *Do and live*, Rom. x. 5. That law that they are under, says to them, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* ; which, no doubt, is galling to the conscience, as it was to that young man in the gospel, to whom Christ thus speaks for his awakening and conviction. How galling must it be to them that are under the law, to understand that they are under such an imprestable command, *Do perfectly, and live eternally* ; considering the holiness and spirituality of that law, and also the wickedness and inability of the creature ? Therefore,

(2.) They are under the bondage of the *condemning* power of the law, *Cursing every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. The law not only curses its transgressors from heaven, which they have forfeited, but curses them to hell, which they have incurred ; for, *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii. 23 ; yea, *the wages of sin is death* ; and, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, Rom. i. 18.

(3.) They are under the bondage of the *irritating* power of the law ; *The motions of sin, which are by the law work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death*, Rom. vii. 5. The spiritual law mightily irritates the corruption of a man in nature, so as he becomes angry and chafed, and sins more and more ; for, *The carnal mind is enmity against, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. The law inrages his corruption, like a mad horse, that rages the more that he is checked with the bridle : here is a sad bondage, that all unbelievers, Ishmaelites, *children of the bond-woman*, are under. Now believers, the *children of promise*, are, with Isaac, the *children of the free-woman*, being delivered from that bondage : from the first, by Christ's obedience imputed, Rom. v. 19 ; from the second, by his satisfaction imputed, Gal. iii. 13. ; from the third, by his grace imparted, and his Spirit implanted, according to the new covenant, Rom. viii. 2. The believer is not under the law

law of works, because Christ hath done all for him: he is not under the threatening of it, because Christ hath suffered all for him; he is not under the irritation of it, for, *the law, as a rule, is written in his heart*, and Christ, by his Spirit, *works in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. He is not under the law as a covenant of works to be thereby either justified or condemned; hence he is neither under the bondage of doing duty, from hope that he shall be justified by doing it; nor from the fear that he shall be condemned for not doing it, seeing that *as by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified; so, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*. He is freed both from the legal hope of getting to heaven by his doing, and slavish fear of going to hell for not doing; for, as his title to heaven is founded on Christ's obedience only, and his security from hell upon Christ's death and satisfaction only; so his motives to obedience are more evangelical, and suited to the gospel-liberty that he is under, such as love and gratitude towards that God who hath saved him. I speak of believers now, as such, and in so far as freed from the law, and not in so far as unbelief and a legal temper, in the sad remains thereof, may hold them under much bondage: but such is their freedom, as I have expressed, in so far as they *hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free*, Gal. v. 1.—I might here also speak of the freedom of God's children even from the ceremonial law, which may be a part of the apostle's intent; a bondage which the Jews, by their own consent, are still under; this is called, by that famous council, Acts xv. 10. *A yoke, upon the neck of the disciples, which neither we, nor our fathers, were able to bear*. And if instituted ceremonies were such, how much more must uninstituted ones be? This is a yoke which many in our land are wreathing about their own necks, embracing the abjured English popish ceremonies, and new modes of divine service, which have no stamp of divine authority. We should even pity and pray for those who are fond of such a yoke, as cannot but, in the issue, gall their necks; and that this generation may not run wholly back to Rome.

Now, I said, that as Isaac was born of the free-woman, so are believers *free indeed*, because *the Son makes them free*: they are from *Jerusalem which is above, and is free*, ver. 26. They are not under the law, but under grace.

8. Isaac was no sooner born, than he was *mocked and persecuted* by Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman; *As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so it is now*, said the apostle in his day, Gal. iv. 29. ; and so it is now, say I, in our day; and so it will be to the end of the world. Our apostle here designs to prevent the believing Galatians their stumbling at the opposition they might meet with from the Jews, who were so tenacious of their law, as to be ready to persecute these that would not submit to it; he tells them, that this was no more than what was pointed out in the type; and, as it was betwixt Isaac and Ishmael, so will it be betwixt believers and unbelievers, these that *are under the law*, and these that *are under grace*. The seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent cannot agree; *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. ALL, without exception, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must lay their account with persecution; and more especially these that preach and profess the gospel, must look to be hated and reproached; *You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake*, Luke xxi. 17. Mat. x. 22. *Of all men*; that is, of all that do not embrace the gospel, you in particular shall be hated; for, the devil shoots his arrows at the whitest marks. The apostle here seems to point at *secret enemies*, and *false brethren*, that pretend to religion, and are seemingly holy, Gal. ii. 4. compared with chap. i. 6, 7. And here it was a circumcised Ishmael that scoft at Isaac, Gal. vi. 29: compared with Gen. xxi. 9. The most deadly enemies of Christ, were these who stiled themselves *Abraham's seed*, and were so according to the flesh: hence the church complains, Song i. 6. *My mother's children were angry with me*; i. e. my mother's children by external profession. The greatest enemies of the church, for the most part, are these vipers that ly in her own bowels:



els: the children of the promise may look to be *cast out* by their *seeming brethren*, Isa. lxi. 5.; and to be counted as *monsters, signs, and wonders*, and that *even in Israel*, Isa. viii. 18. and *men wondered at*, Zech. iii. 8. If it be so to this very day, think it not strange, for the world will be like itself. “I would be offended,” said Luther, if the world were not offended at me.” There is persecution in reproachful words; Ishmael’s mocking of Isaac is here called persecution. We read of fourteen or fifteen several trials that the Old-Testament martyrs endured, Heb. xi. 35.—38. whereof this was one, *cruel mockings*. To be *smitten with the tongue*, is sometimes a very cruel thing; to be called *mad, drunk, pestilent, turbulent fellows*, as the apostles were, Acts ii. 13. xvii. 18, 19. xxvii. 24. xxviii. 22.; to be *counted the off-scourings of all things: yea, and fire-brands of contention*, are grievous charges, and afflicting to the godly: *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth?* Jer. xv. 10. The best cordial for a child of God in that case, is the like of that word, *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you*, 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. *On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified*, Mat. v. 11, 12.

9. Isaac was the *heir* by promise, though thus persecuted, Gal. iv. 30. compared with Gen. xxi. 10. xv. 3, 4.: Even so, believers, the children of promise, are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; *If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*, Rom. viii. 17. They are born heirs of the crown of glory: as children of the promise, they are *just begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. iii. 4, 5. They that are effectually hooked by the promise, though they may swim for a while in the sea of this sinful and troublesome world, yet the line on which the hook of the promise hings, will draw them at length to the shore of

glory : *Faithful is he that promiseth, who also will do it,* Yea, the gospel-believer only is the heir, Rom. iv. 14.

10. The *trials* and *difficulties* that encountered Isaac in the way of the accomplishment of the promise, were very great; and so may it be with all believers, the children of promise, before they be put in full possession of the promised inheritance. We touched already the trial of Abraham's faith with respect to the birth of Isaac, and the difficulties that stood in the way of that promise, Abraham's body being dead, and Sarah also being of a barren sterile constitution naturally, and now past the prolific age.—But after Isaac was given in this extraordinary manner, and entered heir of the promise, such difficulties presented themselves as seemed, at one blow, to cut off the intail of the promise for ever; Behold, Abraham is ordered to go and sacrifice Isaac, Gen. xxii. 2. compared with Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. A greater trial was never put upon any creature after he had received the promise; what promise! that in *Isaac should his seed be called*; that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messias, and *all nations be blessed in him*: so that, in being called to offer up his Isaac, the hope of his family, his only Son whom he loved; he seemed, at the same time, to be called to go and cut off the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, and so destroy the whole world; to sacrifice his own soul, and his hopes of salvation in Christ, promised to come of Isaac; and to cut off the church of God at one blow: a very terrible trial! Isaac was the only one that he was to have by his wife Sarah, the only one that was to be the child and heir of the promise; the only son that could convey to all nations the promised blessing; a son for whom he waited so long, received in so wonderful a manner, on whom his heart was set; and to offer up his son as a sacrifice, and that by his own hand, which looked like the murder forbidden in the sixth command; it was a trial that would have overset the firmest and strongest mind that ever informed a human body: Yet he offered up Isaac by faith; he did it intentionally, and was ready to have done it actually, and went as far in it as the critical moment, and would have

have gone through with it, if God had not prevented him; for the ground of his faith was, that he *accounted that God was able to raise him up from the dead*; so that it would seem that Abraham had no expectation of being countermanded. Thus the trial went to the last extremity; and then, you know, how the Lord appeared.—Now, in like manner, the children of promise, believers in Christ, after they are entered heirs of the promise, extraordinary difficulties may appear, which their faith will have to struggle with; providences may run so cross to the promise, as that the fatal knife may seem to be at the very throat of the promise, to cut it off for ever from being accomplished. Isaac was given up for dead; and *Abraham received him*, as it were, *from the dead*, Heb. xi. 19.: His return to him was no less than a resurrection. The children and heirs of the promise are not then to *think strange concerning the fiery trial, that is to try them, as though some strange thing happened to them*, 1 Pet. iv. 12.; but are to believe that the promise will make its way thro' fire, and water, and death, and dreadful extremities; *That the trial of faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ Jesus*, 1 Pet. i. 7.—Thus you may observe the parallel, in manifold particulars, betwixt believers and Isaac; and see how, *as Isaac was, they are the children of promise*.

IV. The *fourth* general head, which was, To offer the *grounds* and *reasons* of the doctrine, whence and why it is that the children of God are the children of promise. And here three distinct questions may be accounted for: 1. Whence it is that the promise hath such a *prolific* virtue for begetting children to God? 2. Why God will have his children to be *so* by the promise? 3. Why will he have *them*, and them only, to be the children of the promise? A word to each of these.

*1st*, Whence it is that the *promise* hath such a *prolific* virtue for begetting children to God? or, how is it the mean of bringing forth children? In general, it is by  

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divine destination and appointment made the great instrument of begetting God's children; *Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth*, Jam. i. 18. And more particularly, it hath virtue for producing this effect, in the following respects.

1. As it is the *discovery of divine love, the manifestation of divine grace*, in Christ; *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men*, Tit. ii. 11. and this revelation is the channel of divine power; *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 16, 17. The riches of God's grace and love to sinners are manifested in the gospel-promise, and the freedom thereof, namely, his *loving them because he loves them*, Deut. vii. 6, 7, 8.; and that *he will pity for his own name's sake*, as is often intimate in the promise. And when the Lord offers, in the promise, to break through all the unworthiness and deservings of the creature, this tends to melt the greatest sinner to the greatest self-abasement, and the deepest sense of his own nothingness, saying, *Lord, what am I?* It tends also to make the soul break forth into the highest admiration of God, saying, *O! who is like unto thee?* And to fall in love with that wonderful device of salvation by free grace, through Christ Jesus, as the *Lord our righteousness*; and thus to bring the soul to God, as a child of promise, conquered by the irresistible grace thereof.

2. The promise hath prolific virtue, as it is the *object of faith*, and the mean thereof; Rom. i. 16. It is *revealed to faith*; that is, to be believed: there is the immediate object of faith; and it is this revelation that is appointed of God to be the very mean of faith; therefore it is said, Rom. x. 17. *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*: and when faith comes this way, then persons are the children of God by faith in Christ.

3. The promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the *ground of hope* to the poor perishing sinner; and when  
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he begins to hope upon this ground, then regeneration begins ; 1 Pet. i. 3. *He hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead ;* that is, I suppose, by the revelation of Christ as the sinner's righteousness for justification, confirmed and manifested in his resurrection from the dead : hence Christ speaks of his Spirit *convincing men of righteousness, because he hath ascended to his Father,* after he arose for our justification, John xvi. 10. compared with Rom. iv. 25.

4. And consequently, the promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the *seed of regeneration ; the incorruptible seed,* 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. When the word of grace, the promise, is sown into the heart, then the incorruptible seed is sown there, which hath a generative virtue for begetting the person to a lively hope, and making him a child of promise by regeneration ; *Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.*

5. The promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the *impartation and communication of grace.* In the new covenant there are not only promises of blessings, and of more grace to them that have grace, which may be called conditional promises ; but promises of grace to them that want, which are absolute promises, and necessarily presupposes a total want : and so runs the covenant, Heb. viii. 8,—12. Every dram of grace is the fruit, result, and issue of an absolute promise, they all being so reductively ; every good condition and qualification being promises therein, and no good condition or qualification takes place in the soul till that be accomplished : the instant before the promise of *quickenings* be accomplished, the soul is *dead in trespasses and sins,* Eph. ii. 4. ; the moment before *reconciliation,* it stands in *enmity against the Lord,* Col. i. 21. ; and immediately before the promise of *sanctification* be made good, it is *under sin and pollution.* Hereupon the sinner hath encouragement to come to Christ, and the free promise, notwithstanding of the want of all good qualifications, because all gracious qualifications are derived to the sinner through the promise. The Lord is a free agent,  
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and may work how he pleases ; but hath not warrant-ed any soul to stay one moment from closing with the Lord Jesus Christ, upon the want of any qualification, or upon any account whatsoever ; otherwise he would allow their staying so long in unbelief, whereas that is hateful and abominable to him. Now, seeing grace is here dispensed, to the graceless ; faith, to the faithless ; repentance, to the impenitent ; holiness, to the unholy ; and all good things, to them that have nothing but all evil about them ; thence the prolific virtue of the gospel of grace does proceed : and hence the gospel-dispensation comes with a commission to *open the eyes of the blind ; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus*, Acts xxvi. 18. And, indeed, if grace were not freely imparted and communicated by the gospel unto sinners, that by nature are destitute of all good, and all grace ; none of Adam's sinful race could be the better of the gospel, for they are all graceless, cursed enemies to God : but it hath virtue to beget grace, because it is the channel in which grace runs out towards them freely.

6. The gospel-promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the *chariot of the Spirit*, in which he rides ; hence called the *ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The doctrine of the gospel is that in which the *Spirit is received*, Galat. iii. 2 : yea, the promise is so much the chariot of the Spirit, that it is called *the promise of the Spirit*, Gal. iii. 14. ; and the Spirit is called *the Spirit of promise*, Ephes. i. 13.—This, indeed, is the great thing that is the source and spring of the prolific virtue of the promise, and what all that hath been said, is reducible unto, namely, its being the Spirit's chariot, wherein he rides prosperously, *conquering and to conquer*. The Spirit of faith, mixing in with the doctrine of faith, makes it the *rod of his strength sent out of Zion*, Psalm cx. 2. ; upon which it follows, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*. Now, the word of grace, and the Spirit of grace, joining hand in hand, to beget children unto God, is a promise

promise made to the God-man Mediator, to take place to the end of time; *As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever, Isaiah lix. 21.* And thus the promise, with the Spirit in it, is productive of children to Christ. The Spirit promised was first upon Christ the head, and from the head descends to the members: and all believers are his seed; and the mean by which a seed is perpetuate and keep up for him, is the word and Spirit. The word is said to be first in Christ's mouth, he is our Prophet; and then in the mouth of this seed, the church; for there the promise shall be published: and thus, by the word and Spirit going together, the seed is maintained, and the children brought forth. O cry for the Spirit, then, to put virtue in the promise! Happy they that know the promise, given by the Father, sealed by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost!—So much for the question here, how the promise is a mean of begetting children to God?

2dly, Why will God have his children to be so by the promise? Believers are the children of God, by being the children of promise, for these following reasons, briefly touched at.

1. Because there is no *life* or *salvation* any other way. There are but two ways to eternal life supposable; the one is by the law, and the other by promise: by the law it is impossible, Gal. iii. 16.; therefore it must be by promise. These two ways you see set in opposition to each other, Rom. iv. 14. Gal. iii. 18. *If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise; and why? Even because it was not possible to have it by the law, verie 21. For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, then verily righteousness should have been by the law: but so it is, that no law was given, which could give life to any sinner; therefore righteousness and justification must be by promise in Christ.* This

argument stands confirmed by the very death of Christ, Gal. ii. 21. *If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*: but now, to assert that Christ is dead in vain, were blasphemy; why then, righteousness and life come not by the law, but by the promise in Christ.

2. God will have his children to be so by promise, that their *salvation may be sure*. What surer than the promise of God, confirmed by the oath of God, and sealed by the blood of God? It is therefore called the *sure mercies of David*, Isaiah lv. 3. This covenant of promise stands first in Christ. The promise of the covenant of works, which promised life upon our doing, is forfeited by our disobedience, insomuch that nothing remains to these that are under that covenant, but a precept that is unperformable, every way unperformable, by sinful creatures; and a penalty that is intolerable by finite creatures; a command that cannot be obeyed; and a threatening that cannot be endured: hence, as life eternal is impossible to be obtained by them, and death eternal is inevitable while they remain there out of Christ; so, even to Adam in innocence, the promise of life, by that covenant, was very unsure, as the effect shewed; but now, the children of God, being the children of promise, have eternal life insured upon a law-biding righteousness, which is everlasting and immutable; through which righteousness, *Grace reigns to eternal life*, Rom. v. 21. Therefore,

3. God will have his children to be the children of promise, that their salvation may be *free*, as well as sure. See these two joined, Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed*. Indeed, if the promise were not free, salvation could not be sure: for, a properly conditional promise were a covenant of works; and if we failed in the condition of such a covenant even in a state of innocency, what would we do now in a state of sin and misery? Could that be sure? No, no; therefore, that it may be sure, it is of *grace*, Rom. xi. 6. I dare say, believer, you will put your seal to it, that your salvation could not be sure, if it  
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were not of grace, of free grace manifested in the free promise.

4. God will have his children to be so by promise, that their salvation may be *full* and *complete*; for the children of promise are the heirs: and, what are they heirs of? Why, they *inherit all things*, Revel. xxi. 4. for they are *heirs of God*, Rom. viii. 17. Gal. iii. 29. The children of the promise in Christ, are *complete in him, in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead*; and *who is made of God to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. The law of works did not hold forth a full and complete salvation; for though it promised life upon doing, yet it did not promise grace to do and persevere: but here is a covenant of better promises, wherein Christ, and all grace in him, is held forth; and not only eternal life, comprehending grace and glory, salvation from sin and from hell: all upon the condition fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, even his everlasting righteousness; but eternal life to the greatest advantage, both with respect to God's greater glory, and man's greater happiness; for, he came to *give life, and to give it more abundantly*, John x. 11.

5. God will have his children to be so by promise, that their salvation may be *surprising* and *wonderful*.—To be saved by a free promise, is to be saved in a way that is the world's wonder. It crosses and confounds the wisdom of the world; it is *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence* to them, Rom. ix. 33. They cannot think it possible that God will save us for nothing; that he will save us without our cost, without our charge, without our assistance, without our desert, without our desire: yet so it is, that none, by nature, have so much as a desire after Christ; nay, they say, *There is no beauty in him that we should desire him; he is despised and rejected of men*, Isa. liii. 2, 3. Men will not take with it, that they are downright enemies to Christ, and his gospel of free grace: but yet they are miserable enough, if they be but, *as it were*, enemies to it.—There are two sad and ominous *AS IT WERES*, in scripture, to this purpose; one is, Isaiah liii. 3. *We hid* *AS IT WERE* *our faces from him*; that is, they dis-

esteemed Christ: another is, Romans ix. 32. *They sought righteousness and life AS IT WERE by the works of the law*, and that is explained to be a stumbling at Christ. Well, these that sought life in this manner, lost it; who then found it? Even these that were not seeking it at all, were not desiring it; in consequence to this word, *I am found of them that sought me not.*—This the apostle expresses, with wonder at the free grace of God, Rom. ix. 30, 31. This doctrine is so wonderful and mysterious, so opposite to the legal bias of the children of men, that the world cannot admit of it. The children of promise themselves can hardly believe the promise, it is so free. What! will God save me, upon no consideration in me, but that of sin and misery, and upon no other terms but as I am a sinner, and he a Saviour? Indeed, one of the great things that makes believing to be difficult, is, because we cannot admit it into our thoughts that salvation is to be had at such an easy rate: the old conditional covenant of works is so ingrained in our nature; *Do and live*, is so stamped on our hearts, that God will give us heaven, while yet we do nothing for it: yet so it is, that if we *seek life even AS IT WERE by the works of the law*, we stumble at the grace of God. O how wonderfully is this grace of God in Christ displayed in the promise!

6. God will have his children to be children of promise, that their salvation may be in a way *exclusive of boasting*; Rom. iii. 27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded: By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.* He will have them saved in a way that is most for his exaltation, and their humiliation; *That he that glories, may glory in the Lord; and that no flesh may glory in his presence: that the haughtiness of man may be humbled, and the Lord exalted*, Isa. ii. 11. The works of the law, and the faith of the promise, differ extremely; in that the former encourages boasting, and the latter excludes it. The promise of life, by the law, is to him that *works* for his life; this fosters pride and boasting, therefore it is out of doors: but the promise of life, by the

the gospel, is *to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. This excludes boasting; it brings down the pride of man, and exalts the grace of God: therefore it is God's way. Man's way is quite contrary to God's; through their natural pride, they cannot submit to the righteousness of God, without their own legal righteousness mixt with it, Rom. x. 3.; even when, by the gospel, *the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested*, Romans iii. 21. Now, it is the property of faith to come empty-handed, without the law, or any expectation by the works thereof; and being empty-handed of its own works and righteousness, it is fit for taking in the righteousness of another: whereas the full-handed legalist hath no room, cannot take Christ and a promise in his hand; the law fills both his hands: or, if he takes the promise in one hand, and the law in another, Christ's righteousness in one hand, and his own righteousness in another, and think to make up a perfect righteousness of both together; how does he thus bewray his proud boasting of a personal righteousness, to the reproach of the personal righteousness of Christ, as if it were not perfect? Faith excludes boasting, because it lives on a promise of free grace; and whatever we have, or seem to have of our own, whether it be work or worthiness, faith casts it wholly to the ground, and itself also, that Christ may be *All in all, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*.——Thus you see some of the reasons why God will have his children to be the children of promise.

3dly, The *third* question was, why will he have *them*, and *them only*, to be the actual children of promise? Why will he have his children thus distinguished from the rest of the world?

1. Because they are the children of his *purpose*, they are the fruit of his eternal predestination; *Having predestinate us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*, Eph. i. 4, 5. He had a purpose of grace concerning them; therefore they are effectually called according to his purpose. See Rom. viii. 28, 29, 30.

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2. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his *donation*. How many times does Christ speak of the blessed number that was given him of the Father? John xvii. and thereupon he gives this as a reason why he made known his word of grace to them, ver. 8, 14. *I have given them thy word*. And again, *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*. Hence also the connexion betwixt their being given to him from eternity, and coming to him in time, is declared, John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me*.

3. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his *affection*, and of his *everlasting loving-kindness*: this follows upon the former; and this is given as a reason why the Lord draws them by his grace in time; *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness will I draw thee*, Jer. xiii. 3. —His love of complacence must be manifested in time to these whom he hath loved with a love of destination from eternity; *His delights were with the sons of men*.

4. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his *purchase*.——They are dearly bought; and therefore shall not be easily lost: redeemed by the price of his blood upon the cross; and therefore shall be redeemed by the power of his Spirit, in the application of the promise, which is *Yea* and *Amen* in Christ, ratified by his blood. The promise shall take hold of them, and bring them forth: hence, Isa. liii. 10, 11. upon his *making his soul an offering for sin*, it is said, *He shall see his seed; the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: he shall see the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities*.

5. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his *prayers*, Isa. liii. 12. *He made intercession for the transgressors*. John xvii. 8. *I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine*. And what Christ prays for, you see, John xiv. 16, 17, 26. *Even the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of promise, to teach them all things,*  
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and make application of the promise in its prolific virtue.

6. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his *praise*; Isa. xliii. 21. *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*: upon which follows that free promise, ver. 25. *I, even I, am he that blotteih out thine iniquities, for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins.* They are the children of promise, that they may shew forth the praise of a promising God, 1 Pet. ii. 9. God says of one and all his children, that are so by the promise, as it is, Isa. lxix. 3. *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* I will have all my perfections glorified in thee, by virtue of thy being a child of promise in Christ, in whom, as the centre of all the promises, *Glory to God in the highest* does accrue: I will glorify my mercy, in making the promise: I will glorify my truth, in fulfilling the promise; as it is said, Micah vii. 20. *Thou wilt perform the truth unto Jacob, and the mercy unto Abraham.* It is *MERCY to Abraham*, because to him it was made; and *TRUTH to Jacob*, because to him it was fulfilled: even so, God is upon a design of glorifying his mercy in promising, his truth in performing the promise.—How does he glorify his *wisdom*? In ordering it to run through so many intricacies; and his *power*, in guarding it against so many difficulties and oppositions.—How does he glorify his *holiness* and *justice*? Herein also, and that both in respect of the *Surety*, by whom it is sealed; and the *sinner*, to whom it is applied.—In respect of the *Surety* by whom it is sealed, how does he glorify his holiness? Seeing Christ's perfect obedience makes it stand good, without prejudice to the precept of the law. And then, with respect to the *sinner*, to whom it is applied, how does he glorify his holiness? In making the promise the very means of sanctification, 2 Pet. i. 4. For thereby the soul is *made a partaker of the divine nature*—And, how does he glorify his justice? In sprinkling the promise of mercy with the justice-satisfying blood of Christ, that so the soul to whom it is applied may not doubt of his mercy for fear of his justice

tice, and that the promise in Christ may appear *white and ruddy* like himself; *white*, with the marvellous mercy that it brings; and *ruddy*, with the justice-satisfying blood in which it is conveyed. And hence the child of promise may see, to his unspeakable joy, that God is not only merciful, but just also, in giving the promise of grace and glory to him, however vile and unworthy in himself: that he is not only merciful, but *just*, in forgiving of sin; Rom. iii. 24, 25. *He hath set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin,—that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus*: not only to declare his mercy, but to declare his justice. O Sirs, his great design is to glorify himself in this matter; and indeed his glorifying himself thus, in saving us by the new-covenant promise, is ground of everlasting praise; Isa. xlv. 23. *Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.* Here will be the sweetest part of the song of heaven to eternity, that God had so redeemed and saved his people, as to glorify himself in all his glorious perfections; mercy and justice, and all his other attributes, gloriously and harmoniously embracing each other. Oh! what poor, base, legal, selfish, mean, pitiful, and unworthy notions and dreams have we about the gospel, if our thoughts concerning it be not sunk into this ocean of divine glory! A sovereign God, who *shows mercy on whom he will*, hath this as his main view in creating any the children of his promise, even that they may be *children of his praise*.—So much for the grounds of the doctrine, with reference to the virtue of the promise, and the children thereof. I now proceed,

V. To the *fifth* general head of the method, which was to make *application* of the whole. Manifold uses may be made of this doctrine: I shall comprise what I have to say in these four, *viz.* an use of information, examination, caution, and exhortation. I begin,  
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1st, With an use of *information*. Is it so, that all the children of God, or true believers, are like Isaac, the *children of promise*, in the manner that I have explained this text and doctrine? Then hence see,

1. What is the *nature of the gospel* properly taken: it is a promise, a free promise of life and salvation, through Christ; as declares our apostle here, Galat. iii. 8. *The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen thro' faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* What makes he the gospel to be then? Even a free promise, such as that given to Abraham, *In thy seed, [that is, in Christ,] shall all nations of the earth be blessed.* It is true, if we take the gospel largely for the manner of the dispensation of it, we find commands and threatenings both intermixed with this dispensation, to be a fence to the gospel, that people may know both their *duty* as to the improving of it; hence such commands as that, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved:* and also their *danger* in abusing and misimproving it; hence such threatenings as that, *He that believeth not, shall be damned.*—These, and the like commands and threatenings, intermixed with the gospel-dispensation, are a fence to the gospel; the law is thus subservient to it: but the gospel, strictly taken, is neither the command nor the threatening, with relation to believing; but it is the thing itself to be believed, namely, the good news of salvation to sinners through Christ; or, which is all one, the promise of life to be had in him. And the reason why we assert this, is, not only because the scripture is plain herein, but also for the honour of God's law, which is perfect, containing every duty incumbent on us; which it could not be, if the gospel taught us some new duty which was not contained in the law; and also for the security of the gospel, that it may not be adulterated and abused with legal mixtures, to the subversion of the glorious end and design thereof, which is *to manifest the righteousness of God without the law*, Rom. iii. 21. If the gospel were a new law, with new precepts and sanction, beside that law which Christ came under to

fulfil in our room; then it behoved to be a new covenant of works, and there behoved to be a new righteousness corresponding to that law, beside the righteousness of Christ, for our justification: and how dangerous and destructive this is to the nature of the gospel, is evident from the delusions of some, that hereupon make the act of *believing*, in obedience to the new command, to be our justifying righteousness before God: in opposition to which, our excellent Standards, the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, exclude the very act of *believing*, as well as the *fruits* of faith, from the matter of our justification before God; and that for a good reason, because we are not justified by the *works of the law*, among which faith itself is, as it is our act, even through grace: yea, they who make the gospel properly a new law, cannot evite the darkening and perverting of the gospel, even though they would seem to befriend it, Gal. i. 6, 7\*. This doctrine shews that the gospel properly is a promise.

2. Hence see the *power and efficacy of the gospel*, under the influence of the eternal Spirit accompanying it; seeing it, being a divine promise, hath virtue for bringing forth children to God, who are therefore called the *children of promise*: hence says the apostle, Rom. i. 16, 17. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, while therein is revealed the righteousness of God, from faith to faith.* They that are the children of God, are *begotten by the word of truth*, by the virtue of the promise, as Isaac was. O Sirs, the gospel should be valued and prized; for, all the saving good that is done to the soul, is by the gospel. The law, rightly used, is the mean of conviction, Rom. iii. 20. *By the law is the knowledge of sin*, so as a man may see his need of Christ; also the law, as a rule, rightly applied is for the direction of our paths in the way of holiness, when once we are got in to Christ: but it is the gospel only, that converts a man, and brings him to fellowship with God in Christ; it is the preaching of Christ and the promise, the

\* The difference between the law and the gospel is clearly stated, and largely treated of, Vol. II. Sermon XXIII.



preaching of the gospel, that hath converted all the converts that ever were to this day? for that only is the *ministration of the Spirit*; and it hath the same effect to this day, when it comes *not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*, 1 Theff. i. 5. It is true, the preaching that is all gospel, may yet do no good, if it come in word only; but yet so it is, that when converting power comes at all, it comes by the gospel.—It is true also, that a preaching that hath much dross, a legal mixture, and but little gospel in it, may perhaps be the instrument of conversion; but so it is, that it is only the gospel-part of it that does the saving good. O Sirs, let the gospel-promise be prized; for it is that which hath the virtue to draw out the soul to Christ.

3. Hence see the *freedom of grace* in the *new covenant*. Seeing all the parts of salvation are the fruit and offspring of the promise sealed by the blood of Christ, believers being children of promise, whatever constitutes their character and privilege, must be the offspring of the promise; all the graces they possess, and benefits they enjoy in time, or shall enjoy to eternity, are children of promise.—Thus all the new-covenant *graces* are children of promise, and free born children.—*Faith* is a child of promise; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*.—*Repentance*, as a fruit of faith, is a child of promise; *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn*.—*Love* is a child of promise; *I will circumcise their hearts to love me*.—The *Spirit of prayer* is a child of promise; *I will pour out upon the house of David the Spirit of grace and supplication*.—*Holy fear* is a child of promise; *I will put my fear in your heart*.—The *Spirit of praise* is a child of promise; *They shall sing in the ways of the Lord; for great is the glory of the Lord*. Tell me a grace that is not the offspring of the promise.—Again, all the *benefits and blessings* of the new covenant are the children of promise in Christ; of whom, in general, it is said, *Men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed*.—*Implantation and union* unto Christ the foundation of all spiritual blessings, is a child of promise;

*They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified, Isaiah lxi. 3. compared with chap. lxii. 21. This planting of the Lord is also a planting in the Lord; Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: and again, In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, Isaiah xlv. 17, 24, 25.—Hence justification is a child of promise; In the Lord shall they be justified; By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many.—Pardon is a child of promise; Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.—Sanctification is a child of promise; I am the Lord that sanctifies you; I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.—Adoption is a child of promise; I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 12.—Peace with God is a child of promise; This man shall be the peace.—Growth in grace and holiness is a child of promise; I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.—Recovery after falls is a child of promise; I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely.—Reverting after decays is a child of promise; They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn: I am a green fig-tree, from me is thy fruit found.—Renewed visits after desertion is a child of promise; For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great 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, Isaiah liv. 7, 8.—Continuation of divine favour amidst all changes is a child of promise; I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow: 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, Isaiah liv. 10. Even the mountains of myrrh and of sensible presence may depart, these of which you are apt to say, My mountain stands strong, and I shall never*

*be moved.* Mountains of myrrh, and hills of frankincense; mountains of sensible enjoyments, and hills of sweet frames, may depart, *but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.*—In a word, *heaven, and eternal life, and victory over death,* are all children of promise; *Death shall be swallowed up in victory: and so shall we be ever with the Lord.*—I might go through all the covenant of promise here, and tell you how every blessing of the covenant that can be named is a free-born child of promise. O see the freedom of the grace of the new covenant, and take fast hold of this grace, for it is your life!

4. Hence see the *freedom of God's children from the law,* and their security from the power of a covenant of works, because they are the children of promise. As to the *precept* of the law, they do not owe it a cup of cold water, as it is a covenant of works; Christ's obedience discharges them from that debt. As to the *threatening* of the law, they do not owe it a drop of warm blood; Christ's satisfaction discharges them from that debt; the person of the believer in Christ, is so far from being liable to death, and hell, and everlasting wrath, whatever be his sins and infirmities that in their own nature deserve it, that he is not liable to the smallest stroke of vindictive wrath; that stroke hath gone by him, and lighted upon his Surety with a vengeance, and got all the satisfaction upon him that infinite justice can demand: *There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ;* they are discharged from all the law-debt; and, therefore, *Who will lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*

5. Hence see the *miserable state of all unbelievers;* they are not actually children of promise: what then, O ye that are without Christ? Ye are the *children of wrath by nature; the children of disobedience,* by practice; the children of the devil; the children of the bond-woman; and not of the free; under bondage to the law, as a covenant of works; cursed children; bond-men, and bond-women; in bondage, as Ishmael; under bondage to the *mandatory* part of the law in its utmost

utmost rigour, Gal. v. 3. being *debtors to do the whole law*; under bondage to the *minatory* part of the law, under the curse thereof; for, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. Why? *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse*; that is, as many as are under the command, are under the penalty and threatening also: and so you are exposed to everlasting wrath and indignation. Oh! know and be concerned about this sad state that you are under, who have never yet fled for refuge to the hope set before you: you are not yet *as Isaac, the children of promise*, and of *the free-woman*; but, *as Ishmael, the children of the bond-woman*: and being under the bondage of the law, you are under the bondage of death, hell, and wrath; cursed in your basket and in your store: cursed in your soul and in your body: and, if you continue there, you are cursed in your life and in your death; cursed in time, and will be so through eternity. Oh! consider where you are, and how you shall escape the wrath you are under; otherwise wo to you for ever, as sure as God lives; for your name is ANATHEMA MARAN-ATHA, *cursed here, and cursed at the coming of Christ*.—And, to provoke you to flee for refuge to this Jesus, and to take hold of a promise, consider the following inferences;

6. Hence, from this doctrine, see the *happy state of all believers in Christ*: they are actually, *as Isaac, the children of promise*, and so they are the children of all the grace, all the glory promised in the new covenant; being the children of promise, they are the children of God, the children of light, the children of liberty, the children of the free-woman; free from the bondage, rigour, and malediction of the law; free from the guilt and power of sin; free from the sting and horror of death; free from the tyranny and dominion of the devil; free from the wrath and displeasure of God; free from hell and eternal damnation; free-born children, and heirs of the promise; children of the kingdom, in the strictest sense, that can never be cast out; for, *it is their Father's good-pleasure to give them the kingdom,*

dom, and to give them all the contents of the covenant of promise, whereof they are children, and whereof they have evidence by their being believers; that is, such as have, through grace, embraced the promise as their only security, having no hope or expectation from the law; no hope or expectation from themselves, or their own best endeavours, but all their hope and expectation from the promise of God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel freely and absolutely.

7. Hence see the *duty of all gospel-bearers in general*, namely, to plead the gospel-promise, and lay hold upon it, that they may have evidence of their being the children of promise, and so be *the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, Gal. iii. 26. *Let us therefore fear*, says the apostle, Heb. iv. 1. *lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*; for, though the gospel of promises be preached to us, yet *the word preached does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it*. We do not profit by the promise, if it be not believed, or received by faith, with application to ourselves. It is true, faith itself is a child of the promise; and the mother must bring forth the child out of her prolific womb, before the child can have a breath in the gospel-air: and therefore do not dream of drawing faith out of your own bowels, or of believing in your own strength or power; for, believing includes rather a renouncing of your own power and strength, and trusting in the Lord JEHOVAH, in whom there is *everlasting strength*: it is a laying hold of his strength exhibit to you in a free promise. Neither is it a laying hold on his strength by your own strength; but even the poor feeble soul laying hold on his strength for grace to lay hold on his strength. If the promise were only the object of faith, on which faith depends; then, where shall we look for grace to depend upon it? But it being also the mother, or prolific womb, that brings it forth under the influence of heaven; then it is not only an embracing of the promise, but a drawing power from the promise to embrace the promise. Faith, in some respect, is the weakest thing in all the world, though it *can do all things*: why?

why ? it is weak in itself, but strong in the Lord ; for faith's acting on a promise, speaks to this purpose, saying, " O JEHOVAH, thou knowest that I have no strength to make use of that word, that promise, no more than I can make a world : but, O there is the promise of the God of truth, who is also a God of power, able to give a being to his promise ; therefore my heart says AMEN to that word ; be it to me according to thy word ; and even so I take it, thro' thy grace." Is that the way of your believing, man, woman ? However weak in the degree of it, yet I will tell you, for your encouragement, that it is as good believing in the kind of it, as ever was in a believer in this world.

Now, I say, it is the duty of all that hear this gospel, to believe the gospel, by *setting to their seal that God is true* ; and by *receiving the record of God, that he hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. The law and the promise differ in this, that the law cannot be satisfied but by doing, but the promise cannot be profitably received but by believing ; and believing in contradistinction from doing, yea, in contradiction to it ; for legal doing and work, into whatever evangelical shape the world may cast it, is the very reverse of believing. Expect not the promised mercies and blessings, then, in a way of doing and working ; for that is the law-way ; but in a way of believing the promise. It is true, there may be abusers of the promise, and abusers of grace, that may say, " God be thanked, we have nothing ado for heaven but believe ; and therefore we will live as we list in the pursuit of our lusts, and yet believe all will be well." What, man ! believe, and yet resolve to live in your lusts and sins ! You do not know what believing is in that case, otherwise you could not speak or think a thing so contradictory to common sense ; so blasphemous to our holy Jesus, as if he that were the object of faith, were the minister of sin. To believe in Christ, beside what I have said, is to employ him as a Saviour to save you from sin ; and, therefore, to say you will believe in Christ, and yet

yet live in sin, is both nonsense and blasphemy. You may fancy you believe in such a case, but that sort of believing is not believing, but blaspheming; and it is not a saving, but a damning faith: and the object of that faith is not God's word, but the devil's delusion. The true and glorious object of genuine and saving faith, is CHRIST, as *made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, and so for complete salvation from sin and wrath: and the immediate object, wherein this Christ is presented to us, is the promise.—God, in the law, deals with sinners merely by commands and threatenings; and if that were all the dispensation we were under, wo would be to us for ever! But God, in the gospel, strictly considered, deals with us sinners by promises; and, therefore, we are called to deal with him by believing in him, and relying on his word of grace, for all the salvation that we, as poor miserable sinners stand in need of. The promise comes to sinners as sinners; and there would be no promise of mercy, if there were no sinners. The promise is God's letter from heaven, signed with the hand of Christ, and sealed with the blood of Christ; and if you be a sinner, the letter is backed for you, saying, *To you is the word of this salvation sent, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners.* Your duty then, O sinner, is to open the letter, read it, and apply it as all to you; and then bless God for such a dispensation of grace.

8. Hence see the *duty* of EVERY believer in particular. If believers are the children of promise, then, as it is the duty of sinners to believe the promise; so it is the duty of believers to live by faith upon the promise: as children live upon their mother, and babes upon the breast, so ye that are the children of promise, live upon the promise, and suck the milk that is in the breast thereof; for it is your life, it is your food, it is your provision and maintainance, in every case, till you come to live at the fountain-head in glory, where the promising God will be enjoyed for ever, as the performing God. This was Paul's life; *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ*

liveth in me ; and the life that I live is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me, Gal. ii. 20. What is it to live by the faith of the Son of God? Why, it is even to live upon Christ, as held forth in a promise ; for faith's immediate object is the word. To live upon Christ, abstract from the word, would be the life of vision and fruition, which only takes place in heaven : but to live on Christ by faith, is to live upon him in a word of grace, a gospel-promise ; and seeing there are promises suited unto every case, therefore live upon the promise in every case.—In case of *darkness*, live upon the promise of *enlightening* grace ; *I will lead the blind in a way they know not, in paths that they have not known : I will make darkness light before thee, and crooked things straight.*—In case of *deadness*, live upon the promise of *life*, and *reviving* grace ; such as that, *I am the resurrection and the life ; and, because I live, ye shall live also.*—In case of *desertion*, live upon the promise of *never-leaving* nor *forsaking* grace ; such as that, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. In the Greek it is, Οὐ μὴ σε ἀνῶ, ἐδ' ἔ μὴ σε ἑγκαταλίπω ; that is, *I will never, never, never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*—In case of *weakness*, live upon the promise of *strengthening* grace ; *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness.*—In case of *desertion*, live upon the promise of *comforting* grace ; *I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will also restore comforts to him, and to his mourners.*—In case of *fainting* and *affliction*, live upon the promise of *supporting* and *upholding* grace ; such as that, *Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness.*—In case of *temptation*, live upon the promise of *devil-conquering* grace ; *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*—In case of the *power* and *prevalency* of sin, look to the promise of *sin-conquering* grace ; *Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace.*—In case of the *fear of death*, look to the promise of *death-conquering* grace ;  
*O death,*



*O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction.*—In whatever case you are, look to, and live upon the promise. And seeing you are called to glorify God before the world, by obeying him in your life, as well as to glorify him by believing him with your heart ; therefore see that your faith be a working faith, *Faith working by love* ; this will evidence to the world, and to yourself also, that your faith is unfeigned. If a man would have an evidence that the sun is just risen within our hemisphere, though it be not within his view as yet, he will see it better, as I noticed on another occasion, by looking west, than by looking east ; for, before he can see the body of the sun, he may see the light of it shining upon some high tower or mountain ; and so by looking west, he will see the sun is risen, or rising in the east ; so, when the world would have an evidence of your being a believer, they will not look to your faith, but to your works, and the rays and beams that flow from faith ; and to look towards your works, is to look a way quite contrary to your faith ; for, as faith and works are contrary in the matter of justification, so faith renounces all works in point of dependence, though it produces them in point of performance. Therefore, seeing the world will not look to your heart, which they cannot see, but to your life ; and will not look to your faith which God only sees, but to your works which the world may see ; O take care that it be a working faith ; *Shew me thy faith by thy works.* And if you would have faith work to good purpose, see that faith be fixed upon Christ in the promise, wherein he engages to *work in you both to will and to do* ; otherwise the fruits of your faith will be very unconstant and uneven : for faith hath two feet, as I observed elsewhere, the one a fixed, and the other a running foot ; like the feet of a pair of compasses, the one is fixed in the centre, and the other turns about to make the circle ; but if the foot that is in the centre do not remain fixed, but waver hither and thither, then the other foot will make a very uneven and excentrical motion.—So it is here, one foot of faith is fixed upon

Christ the centre, and the other runs a course of holy, spiritual, gospel-obedience; but if that foot that should be kept fixed upon Christ and the promise, shall waver hither and thither, then your motion will be very uneven in obedience. Therefore, as you would glorify God your heavenly Father, O look to him for grace to live by faith on the promise, and so evidence yourselves to be the children of promise. \*

THE sacrament of the Lord's supper is a seal either of a *curse*, or of a  *blessing* ; either of a  *threatening* , or a  *promise* : to the  *unbeliever*  it seals a  *curse*  and a  *threatening* ;  *He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation, [OR, JUDGMENT] to himself.*  To the  *believer*  it seals a  *blessing*  and a  *promise* , being the seal of the covenant of promise. This is the very tenor of the institution,  *This cup is the new testament in my blood* : it is the new covenant, and all the promises thereof sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ; therefore these that have right to it, are the children of promise: consequently the text is fitted for the day.

Among the manifold characters given to the children of God in scripture, here is one of the most sweet and significant, that they are  *the children of promise* . It is a great privilege and dignity to be a child of promise; for such a relation to the promise, will argue a near relation to Christ; Christ is the nearest relation to the promise; it is  *Yea and Amen in him* :  *YEA* , in point of  *affirmation* ; and  *AMEN* , in point of  *confirmation* . All the promises are affirmed and confirmed by him; affirmed by his word, confirmed by his blood; and so, to be a child of promise, is to be Christ's near relation; Christ himself is the first-born child of the promise, and next to him are all believers the children of promise.

\* The following sermon, which is the third on this text, was preached at Portmoak, on Monday, July 17th, 1726. after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, — The two first paragraphs are introductory,

Having formerly discoursed the doctrinal part of the subject, we entered upon the application, and deduced eight inferences for information; I come now to offer some further lessons from this doctrine, by way of *information*.

1. Hence see the NATURE of *faith*. If all believers, as believers, are the children of promise, then faith itself is a child of promise, as well as all the rest of the graces, blessings, benefits, and privileges, in time, and through eternity, that believers do and shall enjoy; they are all children of promise, or promised mercies. Particularly, faith is a child of promise, in two respects; the one is breeding, and the other is feeding: the promise is the womb that breeds faith, and the promise is the breast that feeds it. Faith is first brought forth out of the womb of the promise, it is *begotten by the word of truth*; James i. 18. *Of his own will begat he us* thereby. Indeed, the faith of God's elect, is the faith of God's operation; and God works it by the means of the word: *faith comes by hearing*. While the power of the Spirit of faith comes along with the doctrine of grace, then the womb of the promise is impregnate with almighty efficacy, and comes to its full time of bringing forth the grace of faith in the heart: and then faith, when it is brought forth, or cast out of the promise into the heart of the sinner, he becomes a believer; and when that child that is called *Faith* is born, how does it actually exert itself? Why, being a daughter of the promise, she sucks her mother's breast, by embracing the promise; as a child embracing the parent that bore her, and cleaving close to her breast; and, according to the measure of its strength, drawing in, and applying to itself the milk. The metaphor agrees here with respect to the application and appropriation that is in the nature of faith: only the child's taking the breast, is a natural act of the body; but faith's taking the promise, is the spiritual act of the soul, and particularly of the understanding; for, to embrace the promise, is to believe it; to believe it, is to give a cordial assent thereunto, with particular application. It is a taking God's  
word

word as a sufficient security to me for life and salvation. Therefore, if any ask, whether assurance be in the nature of faith; I would ask how the particular faith of a promise can be, without assurance in the nature of it. To believe, is to take the promise to yourself; and to take the promise to yourself, is to believe, or be sure of it with respect to yourself. If one promise some good thing to you, what do you, when you take his word, or take his promise? If you be not assured and persuaded of it with respect to yourself, then you do not take it; but if you take it, then, upon the fidelity of the promiser, you are assured and persuaded of it with respect to yourself: even so it is here, faith is a taking God's word, a resting on God's promise, and trusting to the fidelity of the Promiser, Romans iv. 20, 21. It is the nature of unbelief to *stagger* at the promise: and, indeed, the believer may have many doubtings and staggerings, because he hath much unbelief; and the most part of believers, in our day, are unbelieving believers; staggering believers: but it is not faith that staggers, it is unbelief. The question is, What he does when he believes? Why, it is the nature of faith, to be persuaded of the promise, and to take God at his word; and it is by the virtue and power of the promise, to believe the truth and accomplishment of the promise, saying, *Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.*

2 Hence see the difference betwixt *faith* and *spiritual sense*; or the *assurance of faith*, and the *assurance of sense*. Faith is a taking possession of the promise, but sense is a begun possession of the thing promised; faith is a believing the promise, sense is an enjoying what is promised; faith is a taking of his word, sense is a feeling of his work in conformity to his word. The assurance, that is ordinarily so called, is not faith as all, but sense; for it is not grounded upon God's word without, but upon his work within; it is the fruit and effect of faith, and not in the direct act of it; it is the man's reflecting upon his faith, and other graces, and seeing, in the light of the Spirit of God, that he hath faith: faith lives upon the promise, sense lives upon the performance

formance of the promise : by faith the believer credits the truth of the promise, by sense he tastes the sweetness of it : the assurance of faith says, *I am sure, because God says it* ; and the assurance of sense says, *I am sure, because I feel it*. To rid marches thus distinctly betwixt these two, would be of great use : for, when you hear one assert, that there can be no faith without assurance : why, it is true, when it is meant of the assurance of faith. If another assert, that there may be faith where there is no assurance ; why, that is true also, if he speak of the assurance of sense. But if this distinction be not observed, then a man cannot but speak confusedly on this head ; nor can he reconcile himself either with the doctrine of the word, or the doctrine of our Reformers, and the doctrine of our received Standards, which we are solemnly bound to maintain. But, by stating the matter fairly, we will be in case to show the consistency betwixt our faith, and the faith of our believing forefathers, who placed assurance in the nature of it ; and also the consistency betwixt our older and later Standards, which differ not at all in this matter, when it is distinctly explained.

3. Hence see the difference betwixt *faith* and *hope*, with relation to the promise, whereof believers are the children.—Why, faith respects the promise itself, and hope respects the thing promised ; faith respects the truth of the promise, hope respects the good of the promise ; like a king sending his messenger to acquaint his favourite that he is to come to his house ; the favourite receives the messenger, and then goes out to meet the prince : so faith receives the messenger, the promise : and then hope goes out to meet the King, and waits for the thing promised. The object of faith, then, is the truth of God ; for it looks to the word of promise : the object of hope is the goodness of God ; it looks out towards the good thing promised.

4. Hence see the difference betwixt the *law* and the *gospel*. See here how they differ in their *nature* : the law is a precept, and the gospel a promise : hence the law

law and the promise are set in opposition to each other, Gal. iii. 18, 21. *For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid.* The gospel is not a new law, otherwise it would be a new covenant of works; if there were new commands in it, that were not imported in the law, either directly or indirectly, then these new commands behoved to have a new righteousness answering them, in order to our justification, besides the righteousness of Christ; and so we would need another righteousness to justify us, than Christ's righteousness fulfilling the law in our room.

QUEST. What say you? *Is not faith and repentance new gospel commands, that were not in the law?*

ANSW. They may be called gospel-commands, as they are brought in to the gospel-dispensation; but, strictly as commands, they belong to the law. Faith and repentance, and the like, may be considered three ways, 1. As they are *conditions*. 2. As they are *duties*. 3. As they are *graces*.

(1.) As they are *conditions*; I mean, made so by men, they belong to the covenant of works, which is the conditional covenant: and though the covenant of works, required nothing less than perfection as its condition, nor accepts of repentance, yet men make a new covenant of works to themselves, when they make faith and repentance the conditions of life. Now, as conditions we have nothing ado with them: for the only condition of our eternal life is Christ's obedience unto death.

(2.) Consider them as *duties*, and thus they belong to the moral law in the hand of Christ, and the general dispensation of the gospel; or to the gospel largely taken, which comprehends all the duties of the moral law: and, in this sense, we are still under obligation to do these duties; for Christ came not under the law as a rule, to dissolve our obligation to obedience to it as a rule; though he came under the law as a covenant, to dissolve our obligation to obedience to it as a condition of life.

(3.) If

(3.) If you consider them as *graces*, then they belong to the gospel strictly so called; for they are both promises thereof, even as all grace and glory is promised therein. Now, it is necessary that we consider the gospel strictly taken as a promise, even as the scripture calls it, that so we may not confound the law and the promise together, and so confound the old and new covenant, namely, the covenant of works and grace. Thus the apostle, Rom. xi. 6. *And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.* The law and the promise cannot be mixt together, no more than fire and water: the law joined with the free promise disannuls that promise; *If life come by the law, then it comes not by the promise,* says Paul, Rom. iv. 14. *If they which are of the law be heirs, then the promise is of none effect.* The law promises life upon condition of our doing; the gospel promises life only upon the condition of Christ's doing.

QUEST. *Does not the gospel promise life upon condition of our faith?*

ANSW. *As faith is the free gift of God, as well as eternal life; so it is to be considered, not as a work done by us, but as an instrument to receive the promise, and the things promised; and true faith never looked upon itself as a proper condition, but disclaimed itself always, and took on with Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all.* The difference betwixt the law and the gospel must be kept as a treasure, for it is the ground of many other gospel truths; and ignorance of this point, hath been the decay of religion in all ages of the church. When faith and works, in the matter of justification, are confounded, gospel-holiness and sanctification itself is marred; because no holiness comes by the law, but by grace. Therefore the gospel considers not faith in itself as a work; for it does not cause, effect, or procure our salvation or justification; but, as the beggar's hand, it receives them, being wholly wrought and given of God. Hence, the law, being a word of precept to be done; the gospel, a word of promise to be believed: believing

and doing, faith and works, are, by the apostle, set in direct opposition to each other; and the mistaking of this distinction betwixt the law and the gospel, hath been the ruin of the gospel. “Men dangerously fail, says Luther, if they do not heedfully distinguish betwixt the voice of the law, and the voice of the gospel, in this essential difference, that the law only teaches what we ought to do, but the gospel teaches what we ought to receive.”

5. Hence see the difference betwixt the *law* and *gospel*, not only in their *nature*, but in their *effects*. Why, the law is a *killing letter*: the *ministration of death and condemnation*, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. But the gospel is the *ministration of the Spirit, and life, and righteousness*, ver. 8, 9. It is the gospel promise that is the prolific womb for bringing forth children to God; therefore they are called, *the children of promise*. Here law and gospel differ as much as life and death. Since the law was broken, it was never able to quicken the soul, or to bring it from death to life; nay it is *weak through the flesh*, Rom. viii. 3. The law may convince and awaken, but it cannot convert and quicken: God hath reserved that honour for the gospel-promise, to beget children to him, because it is the channel in which the Spirit runs, Gal. iii. 2. Hence, take a man who understands the gospel, and let the law come home upon him with a thousand precepts, and a thousand moral arguments to back them; yet all its urging is good for nothing, but to make him dead and stupid, till once the promise be presented, by the Spirit of God, and then life comes in, and the soul is quickened: Why? because then relief is presented, and so his heart and hope rise out of the depths, in which they were sunk.

6. Hence also see the difference betwixt these things that may be called *legal*, and these that are *evangelical*; such as,

(1.) Here you may see the difference betwixt a *gospel* and a *legal hypocrite*. Why? the *gospel-hypocrite* is indeed all for the *promise*, but he is an abuser thereof, and a mangler of the promise; he is not for the whole promise; he hugs the promise of *indemnity*, but he hates the



the promise of *sanctity* : he takes the promise of pardon, but he rejects the promise of purity ; he likes the promise of happiness, but dislikes the promise of holiness : and so he is a injurer and mangler of the gospel, and of the promise.—On the other hand, the *legal hypocrite*, he is all for the *law* ; but he is an unaccountable abuser and mangler of the law : instead of satisfying the law, by the perfect obedience of Christ, he thinks to satisfy the law by his own imperfect, silly, trifling duties. Paul calls all his own righteousness *dung* : and what better is your obedience, man ? and, think you to satisfy God's holy law with a piece of dung ? Oh ! what an affront does that man cast upon the law, who does not come to Christ for righteousness ! Nay, say you, It is my obedience and Christ's together, by which I hope to satisfy the law. Nay, but, man, if you think to be justified by the law, in part or in whole, to the neglect of the free promise of life and justification thro' Christ only ; the apostle tells you, that Christ is of *no effect to you* ; and that, if you will pay any of the debt to the law, you must pay all, and art a *debtor to do the whole law*, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. Besides, as the law requires a perfect, so it requires a personal obedience ; that is, the obedience of one person only : you must not think to join the obedience of two persons, to make up one perfect obedience ; for, in that case, the obedience both of the one and of the other is imperfect, and so not conform to the law, therefore it cannot be accepted for righteousness : but the soul that has it must die, because it is a *sinful soul*, Ezek. xviii. 4.

(2.) Here you may see the difference betwixt a *legal* and a *gospel-believer*. There may be some true believers that are more legal than others that are more evangelical : the *gospel-believer* deals most with *promises*, in a way of believing, and living by faith ; and hence he is the most holy, the most joyful, and the most cheerful Christian ; whereas the *legal believer*, though, so far as he is a believer, he is not under the law ; yet thro' unbelief, he keeps himself much under it, and deals more with the *precept* than with the promise : hence, upon every short-coming and defect in his obedience,

he is discouraged and heartless; and filled with doubts and fears. Some people are like these the apostle speaks of, Gal. iv. 21. that *desire to be under the law.*

QUEST. *When may a person, even a believer, DESIRE to be under the law?*

ANSW. When, according to the legal temper in them, they incline to ground their acceptance with God upon their own duties and performances, instead of grounding it upon Christ's obedience; and more upon grace within inherent, than upon the imputed righteousness of Christ.—Also, when he is more influenced in obedience by the terror of the law, and the curse thereof, than by the allurements of grace in the free promise; and when there is a looking what is promised only in a conditional way, then there is a keeping up of the old covenant, which did run upon a conditional promise, *Do so and so, and live.*—When they have been helped to duty, and think the Lord engaged to give out mercy upon their performing thereof; when they look for nothing but upon their performing of some condition, like these, Isa. lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?*—And when their hope of mercy rises and falls with their own performances, rather than by the rule of free grace and faithfulness of God: then is a man a legal believer with a witness, if he can be called a believer at all. Little wonder than he be a staggering one. Happy is the believer that is more enlightened in the mystery of the gospel! Surely he is more in case to glorify God.

(3.) Here you may see the difference between a *legal* and a *gospel-strain of doctrine.* Why, the legal strain sets forth God more especially as a *commanding* and a *threatening* God; the gospel-strain sets him forth more especially as a *promising* God: the legal strain makes God, as it were, nothing but a commander; but the gospel exhibits him as a promiser. Why, the law is God in a command; but the gospel is God in a promise, God in Christ. The legal strain *humours* the *natural pride* of man, as if life were to be fought, *as it were, by the works of the law*; but the gospel-strain *humbles* the pride of men, while it  
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shews life to be had only by the free promise. Hence the gospel is such a strange thing to carnal reason : learning cannot reach it : worldly wisdom is offended at it ; nature is astonished at it : what ! life and salvation for nothing ! life and salvation in a free promise ! This gospel is foolishness to the world ; it is hard to believe it : why, the world cannot think that God will give salvation at such a low rate.—In a word, the legal strain gives men *more to do for salvation*, than they are able to do ; the gospel-strain gives men *less* ado for salvation than they are willing to do ; for no man is willing to be saved by absolutely free grace, till God make them willing in a day of power.—A legal strain speaks as if all depended upon our *obeying* a command ; a gospel-strain speaks on the contrary, as if all depended upon God's *fulfilling* of a promise.—As the law gives man all the work, and the gospel gives grace all the work, that it may get all the glory ; so the legal strain leads a man *to himself*, the gospel-strain leads a man *out of himself* to Christ for all.—Hence also the legal strain *genders unto fear and bondage* ; but the gospel-strain to *hope and liberty*.

(4.) Here you may see the difference betwixt *legal* and *gospel-repentance*, and betwixt *legal* and *gospel-obedience*.—Repentance is a fruit of faith, whatever kind it be of : *legal repentance* is influenced by the *faith of the law*, and its *threatenings* ; hence it hath a mixture of dreadful horror and terror in it : *gospel-repentance* is influenced by the *faith of the gospel*, and its *promises* ; hence it hath a mixture of joy and gladness, the man reads the promise of pardon with tears of joy. To speak of gospel-repentance before faith, is a strange dream : No gospel-repentance can take place till faith apprehend the mercy of God in Christ through the glass of a gospel-promise.—Again, for obedience ; *legal obedience* is influenced by the *legal hope of heaven*, or the *slavish fear of hell*, according to the tenor of the law, *Do, and live* ; or, *If not, thou shalt die* : but *gospel-obedience* is influenced by the *faith of God's free love and favour in Christ*, manifested in the promise—

Thus,

Thus, this doctrine shews us the difference betwixt legal and evangelical matters.

7. Hence see the difference betwixt *believers* and *unbelievers*. Believers of the promise are *the children of the promise*; and they are distinguished from others that pretend to faith, even by their faith. Believers credit the promise, and apply what they believe to themselves; the wicked may believe like the devil, that knows all to be true, but cannot apply. The faith of many is like the gadding hen, that carries her eggs to another, but never lays them at home: so they believe that others shall be saved but not themselves; they believe the promise with reference to others, but not with reference to themselves. How believers and unbelievers differ in point of *quality* and *disposition*, may appear afterwards, in the use of *examination*: but how they differ in point of *privilege*, the text and doctrine declare to us; particularly they are free-born children of the promise; children of the *free-woman*, as the context says; whereas unbelievers are the children of the *bond-woman*; that is, believers are freed from the law, as a covenant of works, and unbelievers are in bondage to it: and being in bondage to the law, they are in bondage to their lusts, Rom. vi. 12. It is only the privilege of the believer, that however sin may domineer some time, yet *sin shall not have dominion over him, because he is not under the law, but under grace*: but, on the contrary, it is the misery of the wicked and unbelievers, that sin must have dominion over them, because they are not under grace, but under the law. And the law hath no promise of sanctity to the sinner: the law that he is under, curses and condemns him to hell for his sin, but cannot save him from sin or hell either. But believers are free from the law, as a covenant of works, and consequently free from the guilt and power of sin both, being not under the law, but under grace: grace makes him free; justifying grace frees from the guilt, and sanctifying grace from the power of sin. Hence, does the doctrine of the believer's freedom from the law, as a covenant, open a door to him for looseness and licentiousness? Oh! gross ignorance! It is the  
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only thing that liberates him from sin, according to the apostle's experience, *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God: do we then make void the law, through faith? God forbid; nay, we establish the law.*

8. Hence see the difference betwixt the *security* of the *covenant of works*, and the *security* of the *covenant of grace*, with reference to eternal life: the former depended upon a promise made to man's changeable righteousness, and so it failed; the latter depends upon a promise made in Christ Jesus, upon his everlasting righteousness; and now the believer's title to eternal life stands upon the sure bottom of Christ's perfect obedience to the precept of the law, not upon the sandy foundation of any personal obedience of his own: and as his security for eternal life stands upon Christ's obedience to the precept of the law, so his security from eternal death stands upon Christ's satisfaction given to the threatening of the law; he cannot any more be under the threatening of eternal death, because he is a child of promise. How false is it then to assert, That believers, by their new sins, become liable to death and hell? Their sins deserve hell, but they can never be liable to it, so long as they are children of a promise, ratified by the oath of God, and the blood of Christ. God hath other ways of correcting his children, than by casting them out of his family, or turning them off from being children of promise to be children of wrath again, as they were by nature: nay, as they cannot again incur the forfeiture of eternal life, because Christ's active obedience does confirm the promise of life to them; so they cannot incur a liability to eternal death, because Christ's passive obedience and suffering to death, hath confirmed the promise of their freedom from it; *There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ:* and to make them liable to it, were to invalidate both the virtue of Christ's death, and the truth of God's promise at once. We are so far from being ashamed or afraid to preach these truths, Sirs, however opposed by some, that we look upon them as a most sacred treasure,

treasure, worthy to be contended for, were it even unto blood.

9. Hence see where it is that both the *hope of a sinner*, and the *portion of a saint*, doth ly; namely, in the free promise of God in Christ, whereof believers are the children. I said, both the hope of a sinner, and treasure of a saint, ly in the promise; that is, in the mercy of God in Christ, that gives forth the promise unto sinners; and the truth of God in Christ, that is engaged to make out the promise to the saints or believers: therefore, the giving a promise, is called *mercy*; and the accomplishing, *truth*. Micah vii. 20. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham.* It is *MERCY to Abraham*, because God glorified his mercy in giving the promise to him; and *TRUTH to Jacob*, because God glorified his faithfulness, which was now concerned to make out the promise which he had made: and it teaches us this, that the hope of a sinner lies no where but in the promise, which God, as a merciful God in Christ, gives forth to him, to be received and applied by him; and that the treasure of a saint lies no-where but in the promise, which God, as a true and faithful God in Christ, is concerned to accomplish to him, as being actually a child of promise.

O then, sinner, see a door of hope open to you: that very promise, which is the saint's treasure, comprehending God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and grace, and glory; that very promise is presented to you, in this gospel, by a merciful God in Christ, that you may take it for your treasure, even all *the unsearchable riches of Christ*. It is not your own peculiar treasure indeed, till, through grace, you take it for your own: but, be who you will, you are as welcome to take it for your own, as the offer of the gospel, and the command of the God of heaven can make you. I speak even to you, O graceless, Christless, and hitherto impenitent and unbelieving sinner! you have as good a right to come and take the promise, and Christ in it, as ever a believer had the day or hour before he believed. It is true, none will come, unless the Lord draw them

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by his powerful grace : yet *the foundation of God stands sure, and the Lord knows them that are his*, and whom he hath a mind to draw. But since he draws by such means as these, namely, the gospel-offer, and universal call to all sinners to whom the gospel comes ; and hence hath ordered us to *preach the gospel to every creature*, that he may take whom he hath a mind, and leave the rest inexcusable in their wilful enmity, to shew how justly he will proceed against them in judgment : and since he hath a mind to glorify his mercy on the vessels of mercy, therefore, like a merciful God, he holds forth himself as a promising God, opening his treasures to you in free promises ; and he hath *put his treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man*. What are poor ministers sent here for, but as earthen vessels presenting to you all the divine treasures in the gospel-promise ? Whether you will take the treasure or not, yet be it known to you, O sinner, that there is no other door of hope, no other ground of hope to you, with reference to eternal life and salvation, but this promise of life in Christ Jesus, which the mercy of God is holding out to you, as a treasure to enrich you to eternity, and holding out to you in the like of his earthen vessel that is now presenting it to you in God's name.

O *miserable* sinner, that hath lost God, and all good by the loss of him, here is a treasure for you to come to, in that promise, *I will be thy God*.—O *bewildered* sinner, that hath lost your way to God, and knows not where to find him, here is a treasure for you, in that promise, *I will lead the blind in a way they know not ; that is, in Christ, who says, I am the way*.—O *stupid ignorant* sinner, that cannot see this way, nor know Christ, unless you have a guide and instructor, here is a treasure for you, in that promise that Christ hath made of his Spirit, *I will send the Comforter, and he shall testify of me ; he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you*.—O *guilty* sinner, whose sins are of a scarlet colour, and of a deep dye, there is a treasure of pardoning mercy held out to you, in that promise,

Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson; they shall be as wool: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.—O filthy, filthy sinner, whose heart is nothing but a nest of unclean devils, and whose life hath been nothing but a mass of unclean practices, here is a treasure of purifying mercy; if you will not wilfully reject it, you may have it for the taking, in that free promise, *There shall be a fountain open for the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness both*; that is, not only for sin and guilt, but for pollution and defilement: the fountain that is open to you, is just the fountain of the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Christ, that cleanses from all sin.—O prodigious sinner, whose sins are of such a nature, that may be you are thinking God cannot be calling me by that offer of grace; for there are some secret abominations about me, that are about none of the world; there is some thing horrid, some thing monstrous, that none but God and my conscience knows of, and that would make the hair of a man's head to stand to hear tell of it; and if it were known what I am, I would be a disgrace to all living, I would be the reproach of men, and the sport of devils; I think my neighbours would either stone me to death, or cause burn me alive, if they knew what I were: even to you, man, I say, there is a treasure of welcoming mercy for you, held out in the offer and promise of the gospel; *Whosoever will, let him come*; and, *Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out*; that is, I will by no means cast out; I will on no account cast him out; and for no fault, or folly, or blasphemy that ever he was guilty of, will I cast him out. If you welcome the grace that is welcoming you, you shall find, in the Lord's time, that you shall be made as kindly welcome as ever a sinner was since Adam's fall, and as ever any sinners were that are now glorified saints.—Again, O plentiful sinner; I mean, whose  
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sins are more numerous and plentiful than the piles of grafs upon the ground ; here is a treasure of plentiful mercy for you, in that promise, *With the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plentiful redemption* ; therefore will he *redeem Israel from all his iniquity*. His mercies are more plentiful than drops in the ocean ; the cloud of mercy breaks in plentiful showers.—O *hard-hearted* sinner, that cannot be wrought upon by the grace and kindness of God manifested in the gospel, here is a treasure of heart-melting grace presented to you, in the promise ; *I will take away the heart of stone* : and again, *Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry*.—O *rebellious* sinner, whose heart and nature is nothing but a hoord of rebellion and enmity against God and Christ, here is a treasure of conquering grace for you, held out in the promise, *He hath ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them* : he hath received the Spirit above measure, and it is for rebels, such as you and I are by nature. O let your heart clasp about the promise, take hold of it, and take him at his word.—O *curfed* sinner ; curfed in the first Adam, and for ever under the curse of God, if you die without taking hold of the promise ; here is a treasure of blessings, spiritual and eternal blessings, held out to you, in the promise, saying, *In him shall all nations of the earth be blessed ; men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed*.

Christ is here knocking at the door of your hearts ; Oh can you find in your hearts to hold him out, and his blessing too ? or, will you let him in with a hearty AMEN to the word of promise, saying, *Even so come, Lord Jesus* ; and, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord* ?—Are you a *powerless* sinner, that finds you cannot take what God is offering you ? Here is a treasure of strengthening grace laid to your hand, in the promise, *He gives power to the faint ; and to him that hath no might, he increaseth strength : Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*. There is power

promised, and there would be hope in Israel concerning you, if, under a sense of your own weakness, you were crying, O for power, divine power, to enable me to apply the promise! Faith is never acted in the sense of strength, but in the sense of weakness: faith never hath any language like this, Lo, now I have power, now I have strength in myself; and therefore, in the strength that I have received, I will do so and so: no; that is never faith's way of speaking: but it says, Oh! I have no power, no strength in myself, nor ever had; therefore I will go quite out of myself, saying, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, according to the promise, *Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.*—Are you a wretched sinner, perhaps, fearing that you mismanage in the way of believing and applying of the promise? Here is a treasure of conducting and instructing grace for you to take hold of, in the promise, *They shall be all taught of God; every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me*, John vi. 45.—Christ, who is the sum total of the treasure held forth to you in the promise, is both the *power of God*, and the *wisdom of God*; and *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Treasures of instruction are laid to your hand, in the promise; and if you take God's word of promise for it, as it is yours in the offer to warrant your taking it, so it shall be yours in possession. All the treasures you need to enrich you, O poor sinner, are hid in the field of the gospel-promise; yea, it is God's treasure-house, and the door is open, that you may go in and take what promise soever you need; and if you come in and take, you are a child of promise, as well as the best.

Say not, I am a sinner, and I must stay till I *turn from sin*, before I venture to meddle with a promise: indeed, if you think you can turn from sin, before you come to Christ to turn you, you do not know the power of sin, nor the office of Christ as a Saviour to save from sin. Beware of ignorant misinterpretations of scripture-texts concerning turning to the Lord; for example, that text, Isaiah lix. 20. *The Redeemer shall come*

come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord. I own, Sirs, I have sometimes been kept in bondage by such scriptures as that, while misunderstood ; and, perhaps, some mistake them the same way, saying, O there is no benefit to be expected from Christ, till I turn from my transgressions ; and yet I can no more turn aright from sin, that I can turn the sun in the firmament that is going west, and make it turn back and go east. And what shall I do ? Indeed, Sirs, if I were of their opinion that make gospel-repentance, and turning from sin to be before faith, I could preach no relief to you in that case ; but, I know and believe otherwise from God's word : therefore I only desire you to remember to take that text, and such like, in the gospel sense of it. Why, say you, what is the gospel-sense of it ? Indeed I shall not gloss it to you out of my own head, for then you needed little regard it ; but see the gospel-gloss that the apostle, or rather the Spirit of God, gives it, Rom. xi. 26. *There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Why, then the meaning of the prophets words, *He will come to them that turn,* is this, he will come and turn them, and turn away ungodliness from them. O sinner, how like you that gloss ? Is there not a door of hope open here ? Cannot the Lord Jesus, by virtue of his office, turn you, and according to his promise, which you are called to plead, saying, *Lord, turn me, and I shall be turned ?* This is his covenant, his promise, that he will turn sinners. Rom. xi. 27. *For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sin.* Why, then, for the Lord's sake, do not think, poor brat of old Adam by nature, without strength, able to do nothing ; do not think to take Christ's work out of his hand. Expect not salvation from him under the notion of faints, but of sinners : he will not save you upon any other terms ; but as you are a sinner, and he a Saviour. The promise comes to you as a sinner ; and Christ in the promise comes to you as sinners ; and there would be no need of such a person as Christ, if there were no sinners ;  
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there would be no need of any of his saving offices. If there were no blind sinners, there would be no need of Christ as a prophet : if there were no sinners, there would be no need of Christ as a Priest : if there were no bound and enslaved sinners, under captivity to the devil and lusts, there would be no need of Christ as a King. He hath no office as Redeemer, but what concerns sinners : and he would get no glory as a Saviour, if there were no sinners : therefore sinners, as sinners, and nothing but sinners, are the only persons that God calls to come to Christ in the promise. In all the world I know no use you have for Christ, if you have no sin to be pardoned, no lusts to be conquered, no plagues to be healed, no hard heart to be softened, no broken bones to be helped, no dead and drybones to be quickened, no devil to be cast out of you, no unbelief, atheism, enmity, stupidity, carnality, or any such like diseases, to be cured. If there were nothing ado to this purpose among sinners, why then, Christ, and the gospel, and the promise, would be the most useles things in all the world.

Therefore, O my dear fellow-creatures, he that enjoins me to preach the gospel to every creature ; even that gospel, that *Jesus Christ came to save sinners*, commands me to warn you that you stand not at a distance from Christ because you are sinners, but rather come to Christ because you are sinners ; and the more work of this nature you have for Christ, the more glory will he get in saving you. He looks on it as his honour to save sinners ; and of all the sins that ever you was guilty of, here is the greatest, if you will not let Christ have the credit of saving you according to the gospel-promise.

But, should I not be so *humbled* and *convinced* before I come to Christ as held out to me in the gospel-promise, and before I apply the promise to myself? Why, man, if you have been so far humbled as to see that Christ would be of any use to you, and that you would be the better of him if you had him ; then, for the Lord's sake, stay not away from Christ, waiting for other sort of preparation ; for otherwise the law will get such hold of  
you

you by the way, that it will not suffer you to apply the promise at all. The law says, You must have this and that qualification, before you come to Christ, or apply the promise; and if they were obtained, it will say, Stand back yet, for you are a sinner, and must have perfection before you come; and so there will be no end of it. Never will you come to Christ at all, if you will hear nothing but the voice of the law, and the legal bias, and the legal conscience that is by nature within you: but the voice of the gospel is, *Whosoever will, let him come*; be what you will, come: whatever qualification you want, it is lying within the bosom of the promise; therefore come and take freely, without fear of presuming.

Indeed, man, if you come to Christ, or the promise, with any conditions or qualifications, and fancy that you must do so, it is presumption, and not faith; you are presuming to deal with God in the old conditional way of the covenant of works, and so you will make no hand of it, and have no success: but if you come to Christ as held out in the promise, in order to get all, and all freely, and all for nothing, except it be for God's own name's sake, and for his Christ's sake; then you may come boldly, there is no fear of presuming. This the law says, Give, and give all, even to perfection; the gospel says, Take all, for you have nothing to give: and since God is here dealing with you by the gospel, and not by the law, it is presumption for you to pretend to come and give, when God is saying, Come and take.

The legal heart, and the legal strain of doctrine, would make it presumption for you to come to Christ, or apply the promise, without some good qualification before-hand; but I will tell you, in God's name, that it is not only impossible for you to bring, but presumptuous for you to pretend to bring any good qualification with you. It is nothing but a proud treating with God upon the old-covenant footing, and that even when God is treating with you, as a promising God upon the ground of the free, absolute, unconditional promise of the new covenant, whereof Christ hath fulfilled

filled the condition by his death, to God's full satisfaction. If ever the second Adam find you, it will be where the first Adam left you; that is, plunged into the gulf of a sinful, miserable, guilty, and condemned state, destitute of all good qualification, except hell and enmity, death and confusion, can be so called; and it is just in these doleful circumstances, that you are called to come, and embrace the gospel-promise, for your complete relief. Hence, whenever the Spirit of faith is sent, it makes the man come under the notion of a lost sinner to a Saviour, and as a bankrupt to a Surety; and as a filthy vessel, empty of all good, to an immense ocean of all fulness, where all good is to be had.

Now, I have insisted the longer upon this, because it is of the greatest concernment to all Christless sinners, to all sorts of sinners that hear the gospel, to know what door of hope there is for them to enter in at; and that is, Christ presented to you in the promise, to be received and applied by you.—I know no other door; and, if you do not think yourself concerned in this matter, poor sinner, know that the day is coming, when judgment and eternity will stare you in the face, and it may be sooner than you are aware of, when you shall find no relief for you under heaven, if you have never treated with God in Christ as held out in the gospel-promise. If you find not God clothed with a promise, a gracious promise in Christ, you will find him arrayed in a terrible threatening; yea, if you meet not with God in a promise, you will meet him in a flame of fire and vengeance. God in a promise, is God as a Redeemer, a God in Christ, a Father, a friend, all love and mercy; but God out of a promise, is God out of Christ, a consuming fire, according to the tenor of the violated covenant of works, commanding, threatening, judging, condemning, and avenging himself upon his enemies: there is no hope then, but through the promise; and if, by the virtue of the promise, you were *begotten again to a new and lively hope*, then you would be *with Isaac, the children of promise*.

But now, as hence we see where the *hope of a sinner* lies, so hence you see where the *portion of the saint* lies.

By

By the saints, I mean, they who, though they still look upon themselves as sinners, and nothing but sinners in themselves, yet have fled out of themselves to Christ as held forth in the gospel-promise, and who are brought forth from the prolific womb of the promise, like Isaac, and by the generative virtue thereof are *begotten again to a lively hope*, and so are actually *children of promise*. Your portion lies in the promise; for God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and all things else, are conveyed to you by promise; and it is secure enough; it is God's band of provision for you, in time and through eternity: hence the children of promise only are the *heirs*, Gal. iv. 30. Rom. iv. 13, 14. As Isaac was the heir, so are believers heirs of all the promises; having not only a right of access thereto, as other sinners have, this being a door of hope to them, as I was saying; but also a right of possession, as children *begotten by the word of truth*, born and bred up by the side of the promise, insomuch that now the promise is their portion, their inheritance, their bond of provision, till they come to the full possession of all the inheritance therein secured to them by the word and oath of God, the *two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lye, that they may have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them*, Heb. vi. 18. Christ, in the promise, is the hope set before sinners; but believers are these who have fled for refuge thereto; and so, being actually children of promise, they are *inest* (may I so express it) into their Father's estate; *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*. Your name, believer, is filled up in the bond: and so the promise is no more given forth generally and indefinitely to you, as to the rest that hear the gospel, but particularly and definitely your portion is secured there, and it is your bond of provision by name. How many *items* soever you have to give in, by way of charge, for your daily supply, till you get to heaven, so many articles there are, by way of discharge, to be found in the bond of provision for you, among the rest of the children of promise. What items, and what articles answering

them are here, cannot be all mentioned; I only name a few of them.

*Item*, So much of a charge for *bread and water*, for daily necessaries: the article for discharging thereof, is, *Isaiah xxxiii. 16. Bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure.*—*Item*, So much necessary for *wine and milk* to maintain the children: well, the article for answering that, is, *Joel iii. 18. The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk; and it is wine and milk without money and without price; a feast of fat things, and wines on the lees.*—

*Item*, For clearing of all *bygone accounts*, and *discharging all debts* that were owing to the law: the article is, *Jerem. xxiii. 6. His name shall be called, The Lord our righteousness; therefore will I be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*—*Item*,

For clearing all the *debts* that may be afterwards contracted, through the power of corruption, and daily infirmities: the article is, *Jer. l. 20. The iniquities of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: Why? what will become of them? He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, Micah vii. 19. What sea? even that of Christ's blood; The Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world; when he takes them away, they shall not be found any more.*—*Item*, For *cloathing* to the children of promise: the article is, *Isaiah lxi. 3. I will give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; hence, ver. 10. I will rejoice in the Lord, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness.*—*Item*, For *washing the childrens garments*, or rather of their feet, when they are ready to puddle and defile themselves: the article is, *Isa. liv. 4. where the Lord is said to wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me,* said Christ to Peter. Indeed the

child-



children need daily washing. Though the garment of imputed righteousness they have, needs no washing; it is the perfect, spotless righteousness of God: yet the garment of their imparted righteousness, their graces and duties, need constant washing.—*Item*, For *teaching and schooling* of the children in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel: the article is, *Isaiah liv. 11.—13. O thou afflicted, &c. All thy children shall be taught of God.*—*Item*, For *correcting* the children for their faults, yet so as they shall never incur any liability to the forfeiture of the promise: the article is, *Psalms lxxxix. 30. If his children break my law, and walk not in my judgments: if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*—*Item*, For *cordials* to the corrected child, lest he should faint under affliction: the article is, *Isaiah lvii. 16. I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, lest the Spirit should fail before me, and the soul which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart: therefore I have seen his ways, and will heal him.* O wonder! as if a God of infinite grace should say, Simple correction will not do with my children, and therefore I must even go and caress and dandle them again; *I will restore comforts to him and to his mourners.*—*Item*, For *reviving* of the child, when under deadness of frame and indisposition: the article is, *I am the resurrection and the life; and because I live, ye shall live also.*—*Item*, For *strengthening* of the child, when under weakness, ready to be overcome with corruption, or to succumb in duty: the article is, *My grace shall be sufficient for thee; my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness.*—*Item*, So much for *light and candle*; I mean, the candle of the Lord to enlighten them, when they are in the dark, and ready to mistake their way: the article is, *They shall hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it: I will lead the blind in a way they know not.*—

*Item*, So much necessary for bearing the *charges*, both of their *work* and *warfare*, in the wilderness: the article is, *He will send none a warfare on their own charges; He will perform all our works in us and for us; I will strengthen, I will uphold with the right-hand of my righteousness.*—*Item*, For *medicine* to cure the falling-sickness of the child, and for raising him up when he falls and hurts himself: the article is, *I will heal thy backslidings, I will love thee freely.*—*Item*, For *antidotes* and *preventives*, to hinder the child's falling totally and utterly away: the article is, Psal. xxxvii. 24. *He shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with his hand: I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.*—*Item*, For *sanatives* to heal some desperate diseases, and dreadful hardness of heart: the article is, *I am JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord that healeth thee: the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations, even of their deadly wound.*—*Item*, For *corrosives*, to eat out sin and corruption, and all these noxious humours that distemper the child: the article is, *I will subdue your iniquity; and, sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.*—*Item*, For *purgatives* to make the child of grace to grow in grace, and the planting of the Lord to flourish: the article is, *Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit: and, I will be as the dew to Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.*—*Item*, For *restoratives*, to make the child recover and revert after decays of grace: the article is, *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon: I am like a green fir-tree, and from me is thy fruit found.*—What shall I say? tell me the *item*, and I will tell you the *article* or the *promise* that will answer it.—*Item*, For *antidotes* against the *temptations* of the devil: the article is, *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly; the seed of the wo-*

man shall bruise the head of the serpent.—Item, For securing of renewed visits after desertion : the article is, *For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great 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.*—Item, For securing the continuation of divine favour amidst all the changes, either of frames or providences : the article is, *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow unto me. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, [even mountains of myrrh, and hills of frankincense, of which you are ready sometimes to say, My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved, even these mountains of sensible enjoyments, and hills of sweet frames may depart ;] but my kindness shall not depart from thee.*—Item, For victory over the world, not only over the god of this world, the devil ; but over the things of this world, *The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life ;* also the losses and crosses, the allurements or entanglements of the world : the article is, *Though in the world ye shall have tribulation ; yet, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,* that my victory may be yours.—Item, For a blessing upon all providences, and for sanctifying of all crosses and calamities they meet with : the article is, *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.*—Item, For the want of love to God, or the weakness of it ; for the want or weakness of faith, repentance, zeal, and other graces : the article is, *In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead ; and, Ye are complete in him ; and, It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, that out of his fulness ye might receive grace for grace : He is the author and finisher of faith ; the author and finisher of love ; the ALPHA and OMEGA of all grace.*  
 —Are there any more *items* in the charge, for which there is no article in the bond of provision to discharge it? Nay, nay ; sit down and devise items ; the child of promise may find articles in the bond to answer them.—Item, For conduct through all snares and difficulties in your way : the article is, *I will guide thee with mine*

mine eye; *I will guide thee by my counsel.*—*Item*, For victory over death, and a happy entrance to eternal life: the article is, *Death shall be swallowed up in victory; and, The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come unto Zion with songs; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; and so shall we be ever with the Lord.* What think you, believing child, of the promise? What think you of your bond of provision? Come read over the charge and discharge, compare them together, and see if there be any thing wanting in the covenant of promise, and see if it hath not all your salvation in it. If I have passed by or forgot any thing, I shall make it up in one word; *Item*, For defraying the charge of the want of all things: the article for answering it is, Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? All things are yours, and ye are Christ's: yea, ten thousand times more than all things is in the bond of the promise; God himself is in it, I will be thy God; Christ himself is in it, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.; The Spirit himself is in the bond, to be the Spirit of faith, love, light, life, and liberty, grace, and glory; I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; even my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring.* And if God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be in the bond of provision; pray, what is wanting, when he who is *all in all* is in the bond? What want you, believer, that is not here? If you converse only with the law, you will find all wanting; *item*, all spent; but when you come to the promise, you will find a stock that can never be exhausted.

Now, believer, you see where your portion lies; rejoice in your heirship: being a child of promise, you have Christ in it, and you are called to live upon your winning; being a child of the promise, you should live upon the promise in every case; suck the breasts of the promise, as the child does the mother's breast, for that is to live by faith. As you would be holy, as you would be happy, as you would be grateful and fruitful, as you would glorify God, and edify your neighbour

hour, make more use of the promise, by pleading the promise by prayer, and feeding on the promise by faith, and applying the promise for answering all charges of the law : for in the law you will never find any thing, either for paying your debt, or performing your duty ; but the discharge that is in the gospel-promise, and that only, can answer it.

I will tell you my friends, what would make notable religion among us ; if the charge of the law were duly known, and conscience taking home that : therefore consider what the law-charge is, and what conscience says to it ; also what the gospel-discharge is, and what faith says to that.

(1.) The law-charge is Man, you have a *wicked, devilish, hard* heart ; you are nothing but a mass of sin ; for, *by the law is the knowledge of sin.* What says conscience to that ? does it take with the charge ? Then hear how the gospel-discharge runs, *I will take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh.* What says faith to that ? O welcome promise ! Lord, I take thee at thy word ; *Be it to me according to thy word.*

(2.) Again, the law-charge is, Man, you are a *grievous, heinous* sinner, that justly should be thrust down to the bottom of hell, to be burnt in the fire of God's wrath for ever. What says conscience to that charge ? does it take with the charge, saying, True, true ? Then hear how the gospel-discharge runs, *Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.* What says faith to that ? O welcome sweet word of grace ! Lord, I take hold of thy promise, and *I will hope in thy word.*

(3.) Again, the law-charge and challenge is, Man, woman, you are *destitute of all holiness*, and *unable to serve God*, or honour him, by walking in his way. What says conscience to that ? Why, if it be not feared, it takes with the charge. Well, the gospel-discharge answers, *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* What says faith to that ? Why, if you have any, it will say, O welcome, welcome blessed promise ! Lord, I will take thee at thy word ; AMEN, even so be it unto me according to it.

(4.) Again,

(4.) Again, the law-charge runs thus, Man, woman, you are an *ignorant* creature, you know nothing of God as you ought to know. What says conscience to that? if it be not sleeping, it will say, Oh! a true charge, a true challenge; I take with it. Well, the gospel-discharge answers, *They shall be all taught of God: I will send the Comforter, and he shall teach you all things: He shall open the eyes of the blind, and bring them from darkness to light.* What says faith to that? Even, O welcome, good tidings! welcome sweet promise! Lord, I know no other school but thine, where I can be savingly instructed: therefore, I will take thee at thy word, *Do as thou hast said.*

(5.) Again, the law-charge runs thus, Man, woman, you are *curst* and *condemned*; for, *Curst is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* What says conscience? If it be not dumb, it will say, then, according to the tenor of the law, I am the man, the curst man, that hath broken God's law; the charge is just and true. Well, the gospel-discharge answers, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* What says faith to this? O it will say, Welcome, sweet gospel-promise! Lord, I take thee at thy word, I embrace the promise with application to myself, for there is *all my salvation.*

(6.) In a word, the law-charge is, Man, woman, you are in every respect a *broken bankrupt*: your debt of obedience to the precept of the law is impossible, you cannot do it; your debt of satisfaction to the penalty of the law is intolerable, you cannot bear it: and as your debt of obedience and satisfaction to the law, as a covenant, is insolvable, so your duty of obedience and observance of the law, as a rule, is impracticable by you. What says conscience to this? If it be awakened, it takes with the charge, saying, O true, true; I am every way indeed, broken, and insolvent. Well, the gospel-discharge runs thus, *Christ is a Surety of a better testament: the Lord our righteousness and strength; our righteousness,* for paying all the debt we owe to the law, as a covenant, by his justifying merit; our *strength,*  
for

for defraying the charge of all the duty we owe in point of gratitude to the law, as a rule, and that by his sanctifying Spirit.—Now, what says faith to this? Why, if it speak, it will now say, O welcome promise! O welcome Surety! welcome debt-payer and burden-bearer! It takes God at his word, and says, *Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength.* \*

Now, then, does a man act like a child of promise, when conscience takes with the law-charge, and owns it; and when, at the same time, faith takes the gospel-discharge, and answers the law with it, by a particular application: for, as it is with conscience in applying the threatening of the law for conviction, it is with particular application; so it is with faith in applying the promise of the gospel, it is with a particular close application. I am concerned with that charge of the law, says conscience; I take it to myself; I am the sinful guilty man: well, so says faith, I am concerned with this discharge of the gospel-promise, I take it to myself, and believe, through grace, I am the absolved man. Something of this particular appropriation, more or less, must be in faith; otherwise there is no relief comes in by the gospel. As it is with the law, if there were no close application of the threatening, with some assurance that the threatening is to me, I would have no conviction by the law; so it is with the gospel, if there were no close application of the promise, with some assurance that it is to me, I would have no relief or consolation by the gospel. Let this be marked, I pray you; if a man hear the law-charge, without reckoning himself much concerned, he may think he believes it, and yet be but an atheist; his conscience was never wounded by it: and if a man hear the gospel-discharge, or promise, without reckoning himself much concerned in the matter, he may think he believes the gospel, but he deceives himself, his heart was never healed by it: why? there is no

\* See more particulars of the law-charge, and gospel-discharge, with faith's reply, pag. 216,—217.

application. If any think that it is easy to believe with application, let it be considered, that this application, in the nature of faith, is the best way to find out whether your faith be but a fancy or not: for, if you say you believe, and yet it is with no particular concern and application to yourself; it is not faith, but a strong fancy, a strong imagination, yea, a strong delusion; if it can be called faith, yet it is not the faith of God's elect. If you should hear that there is a great man in America, that hath so many thousands a year; why, if a man of ordinary credit tell you this, you readily believe it, because you are not much concerned about it: but if at the same time you are made to understand that you will turn to beggary, and have nothing in the world but what you must receive from that great man, and that you must be supplied out of his store, and that he is heartily content to impart it for your use; why, if you find yourself so much concerned, you would begin to be a little more scrupulous in believing the point, and entertain a thousand suspicions about it; or, if you got his bond, I suppose you would receive it with application, and see if you could draw any bills of exchange upon it: even so it is here; while you hear that there is a great Saviour in heaven, that hath unsearchable riches, and all the fulness of the Godhead, perhaps you never saw what concern you had in him; you are able, you think, to do your own business without him, and so you think you believe well enough, and never doubted of your faith; you have any easy credulity about that in which you have little or no concern: but did you once know, that as you are poor and needy, so you will die a bankrupt, and be sent for ever to the prison of hell for the debt that you owe to God's justice, unless Christ be your Surety for paying your debt; then it is another matter to believe, when it comes to a believing with application. While men are still sleeping in their natural security, and see no need of Christ, they think they can easily believe all that the gospel reports to them, and so never doubt. What! would you have us to be such  
atheists



atheists and infidels, as not to believe the Bible? Yea, but when God awakens the conscience, to see how much depends upon it, with respect to their own particular concern, then they find believing is another thing than they imagined.

Therefore, you that think you have been good enough believers all your days, and never doubted of your faith, you may suspect your faith is but a fancy. O man, do not hazard your soul upon a strong imagination; yet withal, faith in its nature does not consist in doubting, for it is just the opposite of it. Do not think you believe, because you doubt; for doubting is unbelief; and unbelief is neither a negative nor a positive mark of faith: I mean, doubting of God's word of promise, so as not to receive it with application; which differs vastly from doubting about your faith. When the object of a man's doubting is about his own faith, there is good reason for his doubting of that, until once he believe God's word of promise with application; which, when, through grace he does, then he hath no more reason to doubt of his faith: but when the object of a man's doubting is God's word of promise, which God commands him to believe with application, there is no reason in the world for his doubting of that; nay, his doubting of it will be still his sin, as long as unbelief is his sin: and while he doubts of that word of grace, and does not receive the promise with application to himself, he hath good reason to doubt of his faith; for application and appropriation of the promise, and of Christ in it, is the very heart and soul of faith, and the most vital act of the child of promise, whereby he takes it as God's bond to himself, and thereupon draws bills of exchange upon Christ, as *made of God to him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; and looks to him as a promising God in Christ; pleads the promise for all necessary supply that is held forth there; and lives upon the promise, like a child upon the breast, till the full performance come.

May the Lord give you understanding in all things, and help you thus to believe to the saving of your souls.

and to the evidencing that you are *the children of the promise*. \*

HAVING thus given you a succinct view of what we had formerly offered upon this subject elsewhere, in the brief recapitulation of some of the principal topics insisted upon, I proceed now to some further inferences.

10. Hence see what is the reason that all men, by nature, are not only under the *curse of the law*, but also, at the same time, under a *curfed byass* and *inclination to the law-way of justification*. Why? because they are, with Ishmael, *children of the bond-woman*; and not, like Isaac, *children of the promise*. We are all by nature cursed Ishmaelites; born under bondage to the law as a covenant of works. Hence sinners, that remain in that state, though the law curse them, yet they desire to be under the law; that is, to be saved by their doing, or in some conditional way, and cannot think it possible to be saved by a free and absolute promise; yea, they will run down and persecute all these that would vilify their works, and represent them as dung in point of justification before God. What, say they, these men are certainly ill men, enemies to the law and good works, that would have us cast away all our hope built upon our religious duties, and would have us building upon a quite contrary foundation.—Hence persecution arises, as it is said in the verse following our text. The children of the promise, like Isaac, need not think it strange though they be persecuted in the world by the Ishmaelites, the children of the bond-woman, and that particularly by mocking tongues; for so was Isaac by Ishmael.—The scripture foresaw this, and God therein forewarned us, that

\* Where this sermon, which is the fourth upon the text, was delivered, cannot be positively ascertained, in regard the Author omitted to mark it in his notes; but it is probable it was preached at Dunfermline, July 23d, 1726. his ordinary place of preaching; for, by noticing the place and date of the preceding one, viz. Fortmoak, July 17th, and the date and place of the following ones, viz. Glendovan, July 31st. there is just one free Sabbath between these two sacramental solemnities; and therefore the more likely he was at home.

when such a dispensation takes place, we may not be surprized at it. However, the main ground of the difference is the same that the text and context does, speak of, namely, the law and the promise. The one is ignorantly zealous for the law; and the other is spiritually zealous for the promise; the one is for salvation, as it were, by the law; the other is for salvation merely by the promise: the one cries up sanctity and holiness, and that in a conformity to the law; the other is for sanctity and holiness also, but not by the law, but by the promise, and as the fruit of the faith of free justification, without the deeds of the law, knowing that this faith, and this only, *works by love*. Hence Papists and ignorant Protestants also declare themselves to be Ishmaelites, and children of the bond-woman, even though they pretend to be zealous for the gospel, while they turn the gospel to a new law, a conditional covenant betwixt God and man, with so much on his part, and so much on ours. But all the children of promise, that have any tolerable insight into the gospel, will own it to be a “free and absolute promise, “unconditional to us; and that, ever since the covenant of works was broken, God never made any “covenant with us, for life and salvation, but that covenant that he made with Christ, and in him with “all the elect as his seed,” as our Larger Catechism declares. Mean time, think not strange, when either you find in yourself, or others, a strange propensity towards the old-covenant way of salvation and justification; for, we are all by nature the children of the bond-woman.—And, O believer, bless God, if he hath opened your eyes to know the *gospel-liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free*: happy are they that are the children of the free-woman! they are the *children of promise*.

11. Hence see the *freedom and sovereignty of the grace of God*, in the adoption of any child to himself. Why, all his children are children of promise, as Isaac, who was not born by the strength of nature; for Abraham and Sarah were both old, and his body was dead, and her womb was barren; and, besides natural barrenness,

renness, she was past the prolific age; so that Isaac was not born by the strength of nature, but merely by the virtue of the promise: so believers are made the *children of God*, not by the power of nature, but by the virtue of the promise, when the Spirit of God puts a generative virtue therein. It is the promise of God in Christ, that makes us children; and the promise is of the mere free grace of God; therefore they that are God's children, are so by the mere free grace of God; *Having predestinate us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved*, Ephes. i. 5. How dishonourable then to the doctrine of God's free grace and sovereignty is it, for any to assert, "That election and adoption is according to God's fore-knowledge of our faith and obedience?" For, thus would we elect ourselves, and be children, not by divine promise, but of our own free-will and faith. God foresaw the faith of his elect, indeed, because he first decreed to give the grace of faith to them; for the foreknowledge of things to come to pass, depends upon a precedent will in God; nothing comes to pass without his will. The friends and favourites of the free-will of man, in converting themselves, are enemies to the free grace of God in begetting children to himself, by virtue of his promise in Christ, and by the means thereof. Neither does this abolish the freedom of the will; for, as the generative promise is just the absolute will of God, so the determination of man's will by the will of God, is the liberty of the will, and not the bondage of it: when he works powerfully on the will of man, he gives *both to will and to do*, he makes the man willing; and this is the perfection of liberty, when man's will is made conform to the will of God.—Thus all the children of God are the children of promise.

12. Hence see what is the *great business of ministers*, if they would be the happy instruments of begetting children to God. If all that are his children, are the children of promise, then his ministers had need to be  
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the heralds of the promise, ministers of the New Testament, which is *the covenant of promise, not of the letter, but of the Spirit*. It is the gospel, in contradistinction from the law, that is the *ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7, 8. The law is to be preached, indeed, but it is only in a subserviency to the gospel. The sinner must hear what the law hath to charge upon him, that so, when he takes with the charge of the law, he may haste to flee to the discharge that is presented in the gospel-promise, or to Christ *as the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth*. None can lawfully preach the law as a covenant, unless they preach Christ as the end of it; nay, nor can any rightly preach the law as a rule, unless they preach Christ as the beginning of it; I mean, Christ for our *righteousness*, is the end of the law as a covenant; and Christ for our *strength*, is the spring of our obedience to the law as a rule. Think not strange that we harp so much upon this string, especially in a day wherein the gospel is brought under so much contempt, reproach and suspicion, as if it were a door of *licentiousness* †. As the express words of our commission are, *Go preach the gospel to every creature*, to every rational creature; so it is the gospel only that saves all that are saved, and that sanctifies all that are sanctified; for it is the *ministration of the Spirit*, and the *power of God to salvation*; and it is the gospel-promise, and that alone, that is the prolific womb from whence all the children of God have their new birth, for they are the children of the promise.—O then, Sirs, let us then put honour and respect upon the promise. A throne without a promise, is but the devil's dungeon; wealth, without a promise, is but fuel for hell; temporal enjoyments, without a promise, are but dreadful curses; life, and health, and merriment, without a promise, are nothing but a silk thread, by which you are hinging over the gulf of death and eternal damnation: therefore, O intreat God to manifest himself to you in the promise,

† See this matter fully handled, Vol. II. Serm. XXIII. Consult also, Vol. I. pag. 238. Vol. II. pag. 304, 305, 395. Vol. III, pag. 42, 46.

and to make you know the mystery of the gospel ! —Religious duties themselves, without a promise, are nothing but a building of your habitation about the old ruinous walls of a covenant of works, which will tumble down and fall upon you with a vengeance : therefore, O seek to know God in Christ, God in a promise, where alone you can find him reconciled !—God in a promise, is all love ; Christ, in a promise, is all heaven ; the Spirit, in a promise, is all holiness and comfort ; and every thing, with a promise, is sweet.—Outward blessings, with a promise, are blessings indeed ; a cup of cold water, with a promise, is a feast ; yea, a cross, with a promise, is a cordial ; a dungeon, a prison, with a promise, is a paradise ; a bloody scaffold, with a promise, is a place of honour ; death, with a promise, is a door of life : O then, seek to know God in a promise !—God as a lawgiver and commander, is no mystery to the world, for nature's light shows something of that ; but God in a promise, is indeed a mystery. Hence more errors have arisen about the gospel than about the law, because the principles of the law are written in man's nature. Heathens have made laws against all manner of outward vices forbidden by the moral law ; but the gospel is supernatural, and the gospel-promise, of *writing the law in the heart*, by a new creation in Christ unto good works.—It is the greatest honour of any nation to be the seat of the gospel : as the ark was the glory of Israel ; so is Christ, in the promise, the glory of the church of God. And what is it that makes a flourishing church, but the gospel-promise, impregnated with the power of the Spirit for bringing forth children unto God ? As you see in the verse preceding our text, *Rejoice thou barren, that bearest not ; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not : for the desolate hath many more children, than she which hath an husband.*—What made our reformation-days and Scotland's covenanting-days to be such joyful and heart-som days of the church, in bringing forth many children unto God ? Why, the matter was, a gospel-spirit was poured out, in opposition to the old Popish legal strain ;

and

and when the free promise, the free grace of God in Christ took a vent, then was the church a *joyful mother of many children unto God, a nation*, as it were, *born at once*; a multitude of converts was born in her.—But, alas! whence is the barren womb of the church of Scotland in these covenant-breaking days, wherein our solemn covenants are much buried in oblivion; yea, the obligation thereof impunged and denied by many, who consequently justify the burning and burial of our covenant, and condemn the principles of our covenanting reformers, and purest assemblies, that laid the foundation of the Lord's house among us; and travelled night and day, to get the work of reformation brought to the scripture-pattern; and transmitted gospel-truths down to us at the expence of their blood, some sealing it by their martyrdom; while we, their ungrateful posterity, are either forgetting their labours, or casting a reproach upon them, as if they had been more led by phrenzy than true zeal; notwithstanding all their prayers, and tears, and wrestling with God in behalf of our Zion? But as their remarkable success, shewed how much they were honoured of God; so our remarkable barrenness shews how much we are left of God.—The glorious gospel is brought under much contempt, and the gospel-preaching marked out with notes of ignominy and calumny, whereby God is dishonoured, Christ is despised, the Spirit is grieved, the gospel is slighted, and the edification of souls marred, and many led to suspect the truth as if it were error, and few or none honoured to do any good to souls. The legal preacher is not honoured, because the law is not the *ministration of the Spirit*; the gospel-preacher is not honoured, because God is angry at his mother church, and she, and all her children, are under a cloud. Oh! seek that the Lord may pity us, and return with a day of power, that he may appear in his glory, and build up Zion.—Mean time, you may see what our great business should be in preaching the word to you; particularly, rightly to rid marches betwixt the law and the promise: for, when law and gospel are mixed and confounded together, neither true law nor true gospel can

be preached, but a hotch-potch of both, to the marring of both : just like the mingling together of water and wine, which makes flash matter of both, and is rejected of God, Isa. i. 22. And how miserable are you that are gospel-hearers, if you can never come to understand what is the gospel, and what is the law, and whether your salvation be in this or that ? My text leads me to no more of the difference betwixt the law and the gospel at present, than to tell you that the gospel is a promise, or a revelation of God's grace and good-will to sinners in Christ ; and that it is the gospel-promise only, under the influence of the Spirit, that begets children unto God. And if this one point were observed, it might be of use to you all your lifetime, in hearing the word preached : you all your lifetime, in hearing the word preached, for making you understand what is the voice of the law, and what is the voice of the gospel : for the law runs always in a mandatory or minatory strain ; that is, in commands and threatenings : but the gospel runs in a promissory strain : the former begets fear and dread, and the latter begets hope : and happy they, who, being terrified by the law, are made to flee away to the gospel, and thereby are begotten to a lively hope : but wo will be to you, if you can never distinguish betwixt God in a threatening, and God in a promise, so as to flee from a threatening to a promising God ; that is, from a God out of Christ, clothed with threatenings and wrath, to a God in Christ, clothed with promises, and mercy, and grace ; for there lies all your salvation. Oh ! Sirs, seek that the dispensation of the gospel may be powerful towards you ! \*

HAVING elsewhere finished the doctrinal part of this subject, and prosecuted an use of information at considerable length, the *second* use, I propose, is by way of *examination* and *trial* ; namely, for resolving this inquiry, Whether or not you be *children of promise* ? Much depends upon this inquiry : for, if you be a child

\* What follows of this subject was delivered in three sermons, at dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Glendovan, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1726. on the Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday.



of promise, you are a child of God, and an heir of glory; if you be not a child of promise, you are yet under the curse of the law, and upon the very brink of hell and damnation, and under the power of sin and Satan; a servant unto sin, and a slave to the devil. Try then, whether you be a child of promise or not; I mean, an actual child of promise, for the Lord only knows who are the children of promise virtually. Isaac was a child of promise virtually, before ever he was born by the power of the promise; he was lying in the womb of the promise, till the promise came to the full time of bringing him forth: so, I hope, there may be some here that are the children of promise virtually, but they are not yet brought forth, they are lying in the womb of God's gracious purpose and promise, and such will be brought forth in the fulness of time; for, *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me*, says Christ: but as to themselves, and their natural state, they are in the same common mass of sin and misery with the rest of the world, and may be worse than their neighbours, and are yet strangers to the covenant of promise. The question and inquiry is not concerning these; no marks can be given of these, but such as will find them out to be children of the devil, enemies to God, aliens and strangers to Christ: understand the question then to be meant of these that are the actual children of promise, adopted, regenerated, and begotten by the word of truth.

Now, I might here offer *negative* marks, to shew who are not the *children of the promise*; particularly,

1. None that are *mocking* Ishmaelites, that hate and oppose, mock and ridicule the free gospel-dispensation, and the close followers thereof; for here the children of promise, as Isaac, are set in opposition to mocking Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman. These, then, that mock, persecute, and malign the freedom of the gospel, when it is set forth in contradistinction to the law, and reproach the believers and professors thereof, as if it were a new invention, to expect salvation by a free promise, and not by the law. Mockers of the free grace of God had need to take care what they are do-

ing: for, if that same grace do not marvellously prevent, they shall be cast out of God's family; though for a time they may bear sway therein, as Ishmael did in Abraham's family, till it came to this, *Cast forth the bond-woman and her son*, Mockers of the gospel then, are not the children of promise.

2. None that live in the *practice*, and under the power of any known sin whatsoever, secret or open, are the children of promise; for, the faith of the promise purifies the heart. The children of the promise are begotten again to a lively hope, by the promise; and, *He that hath this hope, purifieth himself*. It is true, the children of promise may feel the power of sin, and sometimes fear they be under the power of it, because of the strength of corruption hurrying them oft down the stream; but yet their pleading of the promise of God against the power of sin, and their secret wrestling with God on that head, declares that they are not under the power of sin, and that *sin shall not have dominion over them*, because *they are not under the law, but under grace*: but as for these that sin with a high hand, that live in drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, sabbath-breaking, and in the neglect of secret and family-prayer, or in any other sin without controul; it is evident they are not under the power of the gospel-promise; sin hath dominion over them, because they are not under grace, but under the law. Therefore,

3. None that are *self-justiciaries*, people looking to be saved and justified by the law, and the works of the law, either in whole or in part; none of these are the children of promise: nay, such can have no part in the kingdom of heaven, they are to be cast out of the church and family of God, as you see in the context; *Cast out the bond-woman and her son*. There is the voice of God, casting down from heaven to hell the greatest part of the earth, the Turk, the Jew, the Pagan, and the Papist, together with all the grossly ignorant protestants and professors, that know no other way of salvation and justification but by their works, or, *seek salvation, as it were, by the works of the law*. Oh! how

how is the world perishing in a legal dream, imagining to deal with God in the law, not knowing God in Christ, or in the promise! And some that hear of Christ, and that there is no salvation but in him, how do they dream of salvation partly by the law, and partly by the promise! and so they divide salvation betwixt themselves and Christ; and, in doing so, they take all the honour to themselves, and Christ hath but the name by way of compliment. How expect you to be saved, man? Why, say you, it is only by Christ? Well said: but, why expect you to be saved by Christ? Why, say you, because I do as well as I can, and am a good honest neighbour, that never wronged any body; I am just in my dealings, and frugal in my calling, and sober in my conversation; yea, I read, and pray, and communicate: and though I be not perfect, for none are without faults; yet I am sincere, and have a good meaning. Very well, man; but what of all that? Why, say you, therefore I hope Christ will save me, or God will save me for Christ's sake, because I do my best. Nay, man, I tell you, therefore God will cast you out, because you give Christ but the compliment of being your Saviour, and you take the honour to yourself; your hope is not built upon God's promise, but upon your own practice.—What, Sir, would you have us giving up with all good works and good practice, and running in to Antinomian laxness? Oh! gross ignorance of the grace of God! Do you think that your giving up with your dead works, will be the ruin of good works.—All your works before faith in the free promise, are dead works; and you are lost for ever, if you get not the blood of Christ to *purge your conscience from these dead works, to serve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14.—And there is no serving of the living God acceptably, till the old dead works be purged out. You cannot be too much occupied in reading, and praying, and hearing, and using the means; but your turning the means to conditions, as if you were to deal with God upon the terms of the old covenant, this is a siding with the conditional law, against the free absolute promise.

4. None are the children of the promise, who are *strangers to the power and virtue of it*; for all the true-born children thereof, are brought forth by the virtue thereof. If your religion spring only from education, from custom, from example, from your own free-will, and the refinement and improvement of natural parts, not from the virtue and efficacy of the promise, under the influence of the powerful Spirit of God, you are but still-born, or a bastard, like Ishmael; not a free-born child, like Isaac. The promise bears all the expences of her own children; they cannot do without a promise and power in it, or without Christ and virtue from him, for bearing the charges of their religion, and of all their religious actions. As Christ hath said, *Without me ye can do nothing*; so they find and know, to their experience, that they are *not sufficient of themselves, to think any thing of themselves*; therefore, their dependence is upon, and their succour is from the free promise, the free grace of God in Christ. Whereas, these that are not born by the virtue of the promise, as Isaac, but by the power of nature, as Ishmael, they can do all by their own natural power: indeed they may learn to say, O without Christ we can do nothing; but they lye, for they have a rooted persuasion in their heart, that they can defray their own charges well enough; they can hear, they can read, they can pray, they can believe, they can communicate, and all, with the greatest ease, and without any difficulty; and may be think strange to hear some of God's people complaining of difficulties, and making it impossible kind of work to them, for they never found any difficulty; it was always possible and practicable enough for them. Why, what is the matter? Indeed, it is just here, they were never acted by the the strength and virtue of the promise, but merely by the power of nature, and common influences; for they are not the children of promise.

But now I proceed to offer some *positive* marks of the children of promise. And 1. I would offer some *antecedent* marks. 2. Lay down some conclusive and determining evidences of them.

I would,

I would, *first*, offer some *antecedent* marks of the children of promise. Such as,

1. These that are actually by grace the children of promise, have well known and understood that by nature they are the *children of disobedience*, and by practice also, Eph. ii. 2. They have been convinced of sin in breaking the commands of the law, which makes them value that salvation from sin, that is held forth in the promise of the gospel. They that have not known God in the command, as offended and dishonoured by them: surely they have not yet known God in a promise, as reconciled to them. Till the commandment come, the man is *alive to the law*, Rom. vii. 9. : or, *alive without the law* ; but when the command comes, and the man sees the spirituality of the precept, then *sin revives, and he dies*. Some look only to the letter of the law, and so think they are very innocent ; but if the Spirit of God had once discovered the spirit of the law, then the soul will cry out, *Unclean, unclean!* I have broken every command. If you will believe some people, I mean, ignorant legalists, they speak as if they had never broken none of the ten commands : why, I was never given to idolatry, superstition, profaning of God's name, nor his Sabbath ; never disobedient to my parents, nor a murderer, adulterer, thief, nor a false swearer, nor a coveter of my neighbour's wife, house, or goods, &c. Oh ! but they that are humbled, by the coming of the commandment, they see what a huge mass of corruption the natural heart is, even the reverse of all God's commands.

The language of the child of promise, that hath got a view of God in the command to his conviction, is not, *All these things have I done from my youth up ;* but, *In all these things have I offended.*—In opposition to the *first* command, my heart is but a throne of iniquity, a *receptacle of false gods* : I have broken it a thousand times ; for, so many lusts and idols as I have had, so many strange gods have taken away my heart.—In opposition to the *second* command, my heart is but a *chamber of imagery* : as oft as I have neglected God's worship,  
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or worshipped him in an unsuitable manner, so oft have I broken this command, and that is, times without number.—In opposition to the *third* command, my heart is but a *dungeon of profanity* : and as oft as I have thought amiss of God's holy name, and spoken irreverently of it, or of any of his titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works, so oft am I chargeable with guilt here.—In opposition to the *fourth* command, my heart is but a *sacrilegious waster of holy time*, a play-house of idleness : and as oft as I have entertained carnal and worldly thoughts, and spoken vain and foolish words, and put off God with dead and formal prayers, and roving affections, in reading, hearing, singing, and praying on the Lord's day ; so oft have I been a damnable breaker of God's Sabbath.—In opposition to the *fifth* command, my heart is but a *palace of pride*, the spring of all my haughty carriage towards my neighbour, whether superiors, inferiors, or equals : and as oft as I have failed in the duties of my station, as a magistrate, minister, elder, husband or wife, parent or child, master or mistress, or servant, not instructing my children and servants, not receiving instruction from master or superior, &c. so oft have I miserably thwarted this command.—In opposition to the *sixth* command, Oh ! my heart is but a *house of slaughter* ; many cruel thoughts against my neighbour make my heart but a slaughter-house : for God hath said, *He that hates his brother in his heart is a murderer ; yea, He that is angry with his brother, and says to him RACA, Thou fool, is in danger of hell fire* : therefore, so oft as I have been guilty of angry thoughts, angry words, and mocking carriage, so oft have I broken this command.—In opposition to the *seventh* command, my heart is but a *cage of unclean birds*, a fountain of pollution : Christ charges the lustful eye to be a committing adultery in the heart ; and as often as I have had unclean thoughts, obscene words, an immodest carriage, or a wanton garb or dress, so oft have I broken this command.—In opposition to the *eighth* command, Oh ! my heart is but a *den of thieves*, and a field of robbery : for, as oft as I have devised fraud,

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and contrived how to have advantage of my neighbour, so as to gain at his loss, so oft have I offended here.—In opposition to the *ninth* command, my heart is but a *fountain of backbiting*, and a seed-pot of slander, debate, and reviling: and as oft as I have reproached his name, received an ill report, and been glad to hear an ill tale of him, and fond to repeat it; so oft have I transgressed this command.—In opposition to the *tenth* command, my heart is but a *temple of idolatry*; for *covetousness is idolatry*: and so oft as I have not been fully content with my own estate, nor pulled out the eyes of envy with respect to my neighbour's goods and possession, wishing what is his were mine; so oft have I broken this command.—Alas! Sirs, you that say or think you have a good heart, or a good nature, did you ever look to your heart and nature in this glass of God's commands? No, no: if you see the spirituality of God's law, you cannot but see the carnality and corruption of your heart and nature, Rom. viii. 7. If you have seen God in a command, you cannot but cry out, *Oh! I am a transgressor from the womb; the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.* Surely, if you have not seen God in the law-command to your conviction, you have not known him in the gospel-promise to your consolation; you are not a child of promise.

2. The *second antecedent* mark is this, That these that are actually by grace the children of promise, have well known and understood, that as, by nature, they are *children of disobedience*, so of consequence that by nature, they are *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. And as they have not only seen God in the command, whose authority was affronted by them; but God in a threatening, whose curse was gone out against them, according to the tenor of the law; *Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. I speak not of the measure of this dispensation; but so it is, that the children of promise are persons that have been so far awakened, by the threatening of God's wrath, to a sight of their misery, as to make them see their need of Christ,

held out in the promise, and flee for refuge to that quarter. I speak not just now of the warrant that all have to flee to the promise, but of the method wherein God brings them to it, whom he calls effectually to be the children of promise: he convinces them of sin and misery; not only of sin, by opening up the spirituality of the command; but also of misery, by opening up the severity of the threatening, shewing them that *the wages of sin is death*; that *the soul that sinneth shall die*; *tribulation and anguish to every soul that doeth evil*. If you was never put in fear of hell and damnation, which all Christless unbelieving sinners ought to fear, or if you have never been terrified at the sight of God manifested in the threatening, it is much to be feared you have never been truly relieved, by the sight of God manifested in a promise. God manifesting himself in a command, makes way for Christ's perfect obedience to be esteemed; and God manifesting himself in a threatening, makes way for Christ's complete satisfaction to be prized: and it is no wonder that Christ, the great promise, be slighted, so long as people have not, in the light of the command, seen themselves to be *children of disobedience*; and in the light of the threatening, seen themselves to be *children of wrath*.

A man's being a child of promise, does therefore presuppose both these; yet these are but *antecedent* marks, and cannot determine the case, except in conjunction with what is to follow: for it is possible a man may be convinced both of his sin and misery, and see himself both a child of disobedience, and a child of wrath by reason thereof, and yet not a child of promise.—Though all the children of promise are thus conceived, yet all that are thus conceived are not the children of promise. The following marks, therefore, are conclusive and determining, being either concomitant with, or consequent unto, your being the children of promise.

1<sup>st</sup>, The *first* mark then is, they that are children of promise, are the special *discerners* of the promise.  
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Their eyes are *enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*: Enlightened to see God in a promise, as the only door of hope and relief in that extremity I was speaking of; or to see God in some gospel-truth and revelation equivalent to the promise. This is that knowledge of God in Christ, spoken of, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*: and the glass wherein that blessed face is to be seen, is the gospel-promise, or word of grace. When a limner draws a picture, he begins at the eye: so, when God draws his image on the soul, he opens the eyes, and discovers his glory in the gospel. The child of promise, then, I say, is a special discerner of the promise; I mean, he hath got a spiritual discerning of the gospel, and of the things of God: for, *the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned*. Natural men think the gospel foolishness, but the child of promise hath another kind of discerning knowledge of Christ and the gospel.

QUEST. *How shall I understand if my knowledge of Christ and the gospel, be of a special nature?*

To this I answer, by asking these questions following.

1. Have you seen your utter *darkness*, that you had not a spark of saving light and knowledge, saying, *Once I was blind*? This is a good appearance.

2. Have you seen the *wisdom* of God, in investing Christ with the office of a prophet; and that he could never have been so fit a Saviour, unless he had been a *light to lighten the Gentiles*?

3. Have you seen the absolute need of *divine teaching*, and still see it, being humbled under a sense of your utter want of light, saying with Agur, Proverbs xxx. 2. *I am more foolish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man*; and with Asaph, Psalm lxxiii. 22. *So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee*: humbled as the most confused creature,

and greatest fool in the world? Why, in that case, it would seem you are one of God's fools. *Let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

4. Have you been made to cry for *light and knowledge*, saying, as Psalm xliii. 3. *O send forth thy light and thy truth, and let them be guides unto me?* And do you prize every degree of light, knowing it pleasant to see the sun, pleasant to see God in a promise; for there is the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, and there is all your salvation, all your relief?—Why, man, if you can answer these questions, it seems you are a special discerner of the promise.

2dly, They that are the children of promise, are the special *descendants* of the promise, and the free and powerful offspring thereof. As Isaac was a child of Abraham, not by the power of nature, but by the virtue and efficacy of the promise; so here, the child of promise is not so by works, but by grace: *There is a remnant according to the election of grace; and, if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work,* Romans xi. 5, 6.

QUEST. *How shall I know if I be thus a special descendant of the promise?*

To which we reply; If you be a special descendant of the promise, to be sure, the Spirit of God hath put power into the promise for this end, and given the promise strength to bring you forth; the gospel hath been *the power of God to your salvation*, Romans i. 16. *Knowing, brethren, your election of God; for our gospel came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,* 1 Thess. i. 4, 5. The gospel hath come to you, not in the external objective revelation only, but in the internal subjective efficacy and demonstration of the Spirit. What have you experienced of this power? If you be the children of promise, you have been *begotten of God's own will, by the word of truth; begotten to a lively hope; not by the power of nature, but by the power of grace; not by*  
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the power of the law, but by the power of the promise.

But here again it may be urged, *How shall one know, that it is not by the power of the law, but by the power of the promise, that he hath been begotten to a profession of religion?* For the law, the bond-woman, hath power to beget children, like Ishmael, that are not the children of promise, or of grace. How then shall I know that it was not the power of the law, but the power of the gospel-grace and promise that I was touched with?

Whereunto it might be replied; If you have been begotten by the promise, and so by the power of divine sovereign grace, then you have found, that God hath shewn no regard either to your *good* or *evil*, in making you his child. If you be a child of promise, you have found he hath shewn no regard to your good or goodness; for you had no good to move him: and that he hath shewn no regard to your evil; for you had enough of that to hinder him. What then hath moved him? Nothing but his own free sovereign grace; sovereign grace is a thing that can neither be hindered by our ill, nor furthered by our good. Do you see it is nothing but free, free and sovereign grace that hath done it? *Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.* If you be a child of promise, and not a descendent of the bond-woman, the law, then you have seen that your salvation and justification is wholly of grace, and not of works; NOT OF WORKS; that is, neither *for* works, nor *in* works, nor *by* works, nor *according to* your works.

1. You will see that your salvation is not *for* your works, and that the promise comes not for your sake; *Not for your sake do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own way,* Ezek. xxxvi. 32. Though the Lord save his people to good works, Eph. ii. 10. *Creating them in Christ unto good works;* yet all the children of promise know full well, that he does not save them for their good works; for that is just the old-covenant way,

way, which now is impassible : *By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

2. You will see, that as you are not saved for, so you are not saved *in* your good works : for you was just in your sins when the Lord saved you ; in the law dungeon of hellish enmity, unbelief, and when *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. Hence your song will be with the church, Psalm cxxxvi. 24. *He remembered us in our low estate : for his mercy endureth for ever.*—*When you was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, in the pit wherein there is no water, he delivered by the blood of the covenant.*

3. You will see also that it is not *by* your good works ; *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5. You will know that *by grace you are saved*, and not by the works of the law.

4. You will see that you are not saved *according to* your good works ; *He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9. If you be a child of promise, then you are a special descendent and offspring of the promise, and not a brat and offspring of the law, the bond-woman : you will see and know, that your salvation is neither *for* works, as the cause ; nor *in* works, as the motive and rise ; nor *by* works, as the mean ; nor *according to* works, as the rule of your justification.

Know, Sirs, indeed, that God will *judge* all the world *according to their works*, but he will *save* none in all the world according to their works. God will judge the world to hell according to their works, *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity* ; and he will judge the saints, and adjudge them to heaven, for the perfect righteousness of Christ, which they will be clothed with : and whatever good works the faith of that righteousness influences them unto, will be made honourable mention of ; and so far they will be judged according to their works : but as none are *saved according*

to their works, but according to his purpose and grace ; so, all that are the children of promise, will be taught this lesson. Whereas, the children of the bond-woman, the Ishmaelites, and legalists, are indocible and untractable on this head ; though they may compliment grace with the name of their salvation, yet in the reality of the thing, they make their works either the moving cause, or the meritorious cause, or the procuring cause, or the instrumental cause, of their salvation.—Either they make their works, I say, the *moving* cause of salvation, thinking that their good performances will move God to save them ; and so they put their works in the room of free grace, the only moving cause.—Or they make their works the *meritorious* cause of their salvation, thinking their pains and endeavours will make a purchase of heaven for them ; and so they put their works in the room and place of Christ's blood and righteousness, the only meritorious cause.—Or they make their works the *procuring* cause of their salvation, saying, Well, though we cannot merit, it is only Christ's merit can save us, yet what was merited by his blood, must be procured by our prayers and good duties ; if they cannot be *whole*, they must be *half* Saviours, by procuring to themselves, by their works, what Christ hath purchased by his blood ; and so they put their works in the room and place of Christ's intercession, which is the only procuring cause.—Or, finally, they make their works the *instrumental* cause of their salvation ; why, say they, must we not do some good works, that we may be saved by them ? And here they put their works in the room of faith, which is the only instrument for receiving Christ, not knowing that there can be no good works before faith ; and that *without faith it is impossible to please God* ; because, out of Christ, and out of a promise, apprehended by faith, nothing will please him. And, therefore, try if you be the children of promise, by your being the descendents of the promise, the powerful and offspring of the free promise and free grace of God, in opposition to the works of the law ; since salvation is not of works, but of grace : *By grace ye are saved, through faith.* Hence,

3dly, The third mark that I give is, they that are the children of promise, are the special *believers* of the promise, and *receivers* of the *promise by faith*, Gal. iii. 14. Unbelief and infidelity is the sin of sins; faith, and persuasion of the promise, is the grace of graces, and the leading mark of the children of promise; for, as none can be saved, except they be the children of promise, as Isaac; and as none can be the children of promise, as Isaac, except they become the *children of Abraham*, Luke xix. 6. : so we cannot become the children of Abraham, but by *walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham*, Rom. iv. 11, 12. And the apostle plainly declares, that *as many as are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham*, and *blessed with faithful Abraham*, Gal. iii. 7, 9. Therefore as we would value the very life of our souls, as well as the glory of God, we would enquire into the description of Abraham's faith, in order to try our faith by.

QUEST. *How shall I know if my faith be right, and if I be a special believer of the promise?*

ANSW. Try it by the *description* of Abraham's faith, from the *ground*, the *battle*, the *victory*, and the *triumph* of it, Rom. iv.

1. Try your faith by the *ground* and *object* of it; and the ground and object of it by that of Abraham's. What was the *matter* whereupon Abraham's faith did rest? It was the *promise* of God concerning ISAAC, and CHRIST in him, Rom. iv. 16, 17. God promised to him a numerous seed; and Abraham saw and felt both in himself and in his wife nothing but barrenness: but yet that was nothing, considering in whom Abraham believed, even *the God who quickens the dead, and calls those things that are not as though they were*: even so, the immediate object of faith, is God's promise; the word of a powerful God, that can give a being to his word.

2. Try your faith by the *battles* of it. And what was the battle of Abraham's faith? Why, the order of nature, and sense and reason, grounded upon natural causes, did show a flat contrariety to, and impossibility of

of the matter promised : against which his faith opposed the mere word and power of God that spake. And this battle of faith is expressed, ver. 18. *Against hope, he believed in hope,—according to that which was spoken.* AGAINST HOPE; that is, against the hope which he might conceive by the consideration of natural causes : *he BELIEVED IN HOPE* ; that is, in the hope which he did conceive by the consideration of the power and promise of God. So, where faith is, there will be a battle of hope against hope ; against *natural* hope, there will be a believing in *spiritual* and *supernatural* hope, grounded on God's word.

3. Try it by the *victory* of faith. And what was the victory of Abraham's faith? It lay in the neglecting of the consideration of, and overlooking the order of nature and natural causes, and all things that, to sense and reason, sight and feeling, show a contrariety and impossibility in the matter promised ; and a resting wholly and only upon the word, promise, and power of the God that speaks : whereby visible things, that to reason are contrary to the promise, do become as things of nothing, and as it were having no being ; and invisible things, spoken by God, become the only things that have a being and foundation with us. This victory of faith you see expressed, verse 19. *And 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.* Thus it is with true faith in the divine promise : whatever the man beholds in and about himself, that is against, and contrary to the accomplishment of God's promise, that he does not consider ; but, giving place to the truth and power of God, the man forgets himself, as it were, and withdraws his mind from all things that he sees and feels in himself to be contrary to the promise, be it felt deadness, barrenness, nothingness, emptiness, sin, and guilt, and whatever else, all that is buried in oblivion, and the soul swallowed up in the consideration of nothing but God's promise and power.—The man believes things that are impossible to nature, sense, and reason ; yea, and contrary thereunto ; because he believes

the word of that God that *quickeneth the dead*: he considers God's word, and drops the consideration of all things else.—See if ever your faith acted thus upon a promise.

4. Try it by the *triumph* of faith. And now the triumph of Abraham's faith here, is his yielding unto God the glory of his truth and power, verses 20, 21. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God: And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform.* And compare this with the account of Sarah's faith, Heb. xi. 11. *Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* Faith triumphant over all its enemies, does, in spite of sense and feeling, reason, and outward appearance, give God the glory of his truth and faithfulness. Hereupon faith believes things that to nature are impossible, and to carnal reason incredible: it marks what sense and reason say, but scores it by, and believes quite contrary. How? even by removing, what they pretend, out of sight and mind; as Abraham did the deadness of his body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb, not considering the same, but trusting in the word of God alone, even though God himself, in his providence, seem to speak otherwise than the word, as Christ dealt at first with the woman of Canaan; and though all the creatures speak otherwise than the word speaks: which indeed may make the stoutest believer stumble at the first view, till he mind what God says, and forget what other things say.—Thus Sarah stumbled at the first, but at length got the victory over her doubting, by forgetting her barrenness and old age, that pretended impossibility, and by *judging him faithful that had promised.*

But, to prevent mistakes, there is a fourfold faith that will not amount to this which the children of promise have, namely, 1. A natural faith. 2. An opinionative faith. 3. A rational faith. 4. A temporary faith.



(1.) Some have a *natural* faith, which they brought from the cradle with them. They have always believed, they say; and there is no persuading them but they believe well enough. This faith grows upon a bad soil, even a corrupt unrenewed nature: it is not a faith of God's planting; it grows of its own accord: it is not a faith of God's watering, nor keeping alive by influences from heaven; it does not hold its life, nor its all of Christ, but carries the soul straightway to God's mercy, without ever owning Christ. Yea, this faith is rooted in gross ignorance of God: and as the tree is, so is the fruit; not the fruit of true holiness, but the fruit of formality and indifferency about salvation, and about the glory of God; fruits that will ripen upon damnation. This natural faith is not the faith of the children of promise.

(2.) There is an *opinionative* faith; that is, a faith or credit founded upon probability and opinion. Some men have an opinion, or probable guess, that the gospel is the sound way to salvation; but this is no laying hold upon the gospel as an infallible truth: yet many snapper into this by-road, making the gospel a probable problem. There is an opinion that is very probable, say they; and there they hold, till another come and contradict it. Why, says the man, Indeed that is very probable too; and so he wavers too and fro, *carried about with every wind of doctrine*. He takes the one end of it this day, and the other end of it the other day; and, so he that offers last carries away the prize. The Sceptics, and probable opiniators, are not among the number of believers, nor reckoned in Christ's roll; for the gospel was never fathomed by them as an infallible truth, nor rooted in the heart and mouth.—The gospel to such is not *Yea*, as the apostle says, 2 Cor. i. 18.; but *Yea* and *Nay*: the one day *Yea*, and the next day *Nay*. These are *clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit wither; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, Jude, verse 19. if they come not to a solid faith.

(3) There is a *rational* faith. The former two take place, especially among the more ignorant sort of people, and this takes place among the learned: they search into the reasons of things, and what they should believe; which is so far well done; they will not receive the truth upon trust from others, but they search into it themselves, that they may give their assent upon rational grounds; and this they take for saving faith: yet they are destitute of the Spirit of faith; this is not the faith of the children of promise, it is at best but a faith founded upon rational grounds, and historical evidence. They seem to take a better grip of the gospel than the former, yet not firm enough for their credit is only grounded upon science, or natural reason; they lay down some suppositions by way of demonstrations, and from thence draw conclusions, which they think cannot but hold their feet. But there is an error in the first building; therefore, all that they build becomes ruinous, and cannot but totter when it gets a shake: for, in comes a better speaker, with a syllogism; and, by way of demonstration, overturns the foundation he stood upon, and there lies he: so that he, who embraces the gospel by way of scholarcraft, or philosophy quits it again.—Natural reason and philosophy brings him to it, and natural reason and philosophy robs him of it again; for, whenever the merely rational foundation, on which his faith is built, comes to be shaken and overturned, then his faith built upon it fails: give such a man an answerable temptation, or a plausible argument, and he will deny even the divinity of Christ, as many are doing at this day, and turn where-away you will; but divine faith stands upon a divine testimony.

(4.) There is a *temporary* faith, that goes beyond all the former, and is effected by the common operation of the Spirit of God: nor is it merely taken up with the truth of the gospel, but also hath some relish of the goodness and sweetness of it; and hence the stony-ground hearers are said to *receive the word with joy*, Matthew xiii. 20.; yet this belief hath no root, no abiding principle: it is not the faith of the  
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promise that takes place in the children of promise.—Here is the most subtle deceit in the matter of faith: some people may take hold of Christ, as it were, and really get some sap and virtue from him, for their refreshment, and yet never get in to him. They are like the ivy, that grows up by the tree, and clasps about the tree, and draws sap from the tree, and yet grows upon its own root, and is never one and the same with the tree: so here, some professors may receive Christ, in the promise, by a temporary faith, they clasp about him closely, and draw some sap and virtue from him; but still they are never rooted in Christ, but rooted in the old Adam; still rooted in the old covenant, were never cut off from the old root, and ingrafted into Christ, but only draw virtue from Christ to maintain their old-covenant fruit. I imagine it will be a hard chapter for some here to read, How shall I know but I am one of these that have only that faith which takes hold of Christ, like an ivy to the tree, drawing sap from him, without ever being rooted in him? I shall offer you but one key for the opening of this difficulty, and you have need to have it opened; for it is as much as your eternal salvation is worth, to mistake here. If you have no other but that temporary faith, you may believe and be damned with the devil, but cannot believe unto salvation.

The key for opening the matter, then, is this question, *What know you of the difference betwixt righteousness IN Christ, and righteousness FROM him?*

Temporary faith may say, *FROM the Lord I have righteousness and strength*; but true faith says, *IN the Lord have I righteousness and strength*.—Temporary faith may get *many* things from him, but true faith gets *all* things in him, and is complete in him.—Temporary faith, being without root, never rooted in him, hath *nothing* in him, but *from* him; but true faith, being rooted in Christ, whatever it gets *from* him, it rests not there, but looks to what is *in* him, and glories in that; *In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*. See Isa. xlv. 24, 25. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. What think

think you the Popish way of believing unto salvation is? Indeed the refined of them go as far as some professed Protestants: they own there is no salvation but by Christ; and though they do not believe, with application, that they have any righteousness in him, yet they build upon a righteousness from Christ, saying, "It is he that gives a man power to do, and then he sprinkles the man's doings with his blood, upon which he merits their life and salvation." So many such papists amongst us, they believe that Christ only can save them, and they go to him to be saved from sin, and for grace to do better; and if they find power to do better, then they hope they shall be saved; while yet they may be damned, and go to the devil, though they should escape all the pollutions of the world, and that even through the knowledge of Christ, not from their own strength, but from the strength and virtue of the knowledge of Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 20. But true faith comes first to Christ for righteousness, and gets a righteousness in him for justification and eternal salvation: and, being rooted in Christ, grows up in him, and hath all in him; and hence can rejoice in him, even when it finds nothing but emptiness in itself: for, it is the nature of it, to go out of itself to Christ in the free promise.—Hence also temporary faith receives Christ *conditionally*, but true faith receives him *freely* as he is offered. Temporary believers take him for a Saviour; but, how? even in this conditional way, if I be a servant to him, he will be a Saviour to me; and so he serves him, and thereupon expects salvation from him: thus he bears the root, and the root bears not him. But true faith receives Christ freely for righteousness and strength both, saying, Even so I take him, both for righteousness, that he may be a Saviour to me; and for strength, that he may make me a servant to him, to serve as a son, not as a hireling.—Temporary faith and legal faith believes Christ will save me upon condition of my good behaviour for the time to come; in case I serve him, then he will save me: but gospel-faith takes Christ upon gospel-terms, as he is exhibited in the gospel-promise, saying, O I dare not promise any thing to him,

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but I take him as promising all things to me : and, blessed be sovereign grace, that all is in the promise ; for, if any thing depended upon my good behaviour and future service, I fear all would be cast loose ; therefore I take a Christ for all, and a promise for all : and, O well is me, that he hath promised all, for I can promise nothing ; therefore, I will rely upon the promise of salvation, I will rely upon the promise of sanctification. And, in this way of taking the promise freely, he comes to be furnished for a better behaviour, than all the legal and conditional believers in the world ; for, as he believes the promise, so he lives upon it.—And this leads me to another mark of these that are the children of promise : not only are they believers of the promise, but,

4thly, They are *livers* upon the promise, they are dependents upon the promise ; this is called a *living by faith on the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20. ; that is, a living upon the Son of God as held forth in a promise. As children live upon their mother, and babes upon the breast ; so the children of the promise live upon the promise, and suck the milk that is in the breast thereof. They trust to his word ; and, being persuaded will embrace the promise, and hing upon the breast all their days. Some will say, perhaps, they believe the promise : well, but do they live upon it ? Nay, but if they live not here, it shews they never truly believed. They are good believers ; but are they good livers too ? No indeed. It is a common word among you, Sirs, such a man is a good liver, such a woman is a good liver, if they be sober, and civil, and morally honest.—Well, indeed these people are good to live with, and it is sad when there is so little morality among Christians, and that there is more of it among some Pagans : but withal, Sirs, consider who are good livers in God's account and reckoning ; it is these that live upon the promise, and live by faith.

QUEST. *How shall I know if I be one of these that live by faith upon the promise ?*

ANSW. I. If you be living by faith on the promise, then you will find the promise to be the *mean* of exciting faith,

faith, as well as it was the mean of *creating* faith at first or begetting it. The believer is in every respect a child of promise; his grace of faith is a child of promise, and his life of faith is a child of promise. The faith that believes the promise, is begotten by the power of the promise; and the faith that lives upon the promise, is also begotten by the power and virtue of the promise, and is cast forth out of the womb thereof. The promise that is the food of faith, on which faith lives, is always the seed of faith from which faith springs; therefore the gospel is called *the word of faith*, in which believers are nourished up, 1 Tim. iv. 6. *Thy word hath quickened me*, saith the psalmist: and the gospel is said to be *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes*. The same power that begets faith, is necessary for the increase thereof, and for drawing forth every act thereof: it is always, like Isaac, a child of promise; for it is a faith of God's operation. Grace, and virtue, and fire come out of the promise, and kindle it. I do not assert, that there is constantly a felt virtue coming from the promise, or a sensible power felt at first; for sensible feeling follows believing: but there is a secret, ineffable, insensible power, while the man is, perhaps, but musing and meditating upon the promise; and thereupon the sensible power and fire follows: *While I was musing the fire burned*. Hence the believer finds faith, both in the beginning, and all the actings thereof, to be both the most difficult and the most easy thing: so difficult, that it is just impossible for him to believe, till power and virtue come out of the promise in some secret and insensible manner, while he is stretching forth the withered hand; and yet so easy a thing, that when he is under the powerful influence of the grace of the promise, making him to roll himself upon Christ, as if he were carried on a wave of the sea, or hurled towards him in a chariot paved with love.

2. If you be living by faith on the promise, then you will find your faith *maintained by prayer*, or in a way of praying, saying, *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief; Lord, increase*

*increase my faith.* This follows upon the former ; for these prayers for faith in the increase thereof, say plainly, that no man can believe when he will, and as much as he will : for, if a man may believe when he will, and as much as he will, what needs he go to God in Christ, by prayer for the increase of faith ? Nay, *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* Faith is the gift of God, and Christ is the author and finisher of faith ; therefore prayer must be made to him for it, and for the increase of it. Yea, this prayer, *Lord, increase our faith,* plainly says that they who pray so, must have faith ; otherwise they but mock God, to seek more of that which they never had. Yet many will say, O my faith is weak, Lord, increase it ; while yet they never had knowledge or faith either. Faith is a fire, and prayer is like a pair of bellows to increase and blow up the fire : but where there is no fire, the bellows will never blow it up ; but where the grace of faith is, it is usually blown by the prayer of faith. Many believe when they will, even as they can eat, and drink, and sleep, though they pray not for strength to do these things ; but true faith waxes and wanes, according as the Spirit of prayer is up or down : and they that think they live by faith, and yet their faith not maintained by the means of importunate prayer, it is to be feared that they will be ashamed of their faith, ere all be done.

3. If you be living by faith on the promise, then you will find *satisfaction to your soul* in the milk of the promise, and no-where else : even as the child that lives upon the milk of the breast, finds satisfaction therein, and cannot be at rest without it ; yea, the child is not content merely with the breast, unless it can find milk in the breast ; even so the child of promise cannot find soul-satisfaction but in the promise ; nor in the bare promise, unless he find the milk in that breast. What is the milk of the promise ? Indeed it is *Christ*, and the child of promise lives upon Christ in the promise. It is not the word alone that satisfies him, but Christ in the word ; it is not the ordinance

alone, but Christ in the ordinance. The promise is the vessel or cup, Christ is the liquor that is in the cup, the living water that is in the vessel: and when one believes, and lives by faith, he does not take the vessel or cup only in his hand; nay, that would not satisfy his thirst, nor feed him; but drinks Christ out of that cup; he takes the living water out of it; and thus he is nourished, and refreshed, and satisfied.— They that find soul-satisfaction elsewhere, are not living on the promise by faith. Some find satisfaction to their hearts in the world, and satisfaction to their conscience in their duties; but they are strangers to true satisfaction in Christ to heart and conscience both: but here it is that the child of promise rests satisfied, when out of the gospel-breast he gets the milk of consolation; Christ, the *consolation of Israel*, for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*.

4. They that are living by faith on the promise, are always *poor and needy*, kept from hand to mouth while here, that they may never cease living on the promise, and Christ in it. Though they get satisfaction here, and no-where else: yet as the stomachs which we seem to satisfy just now, as I noticed on another occasion, yet within a few hours they are empty and craving; so it is with respect to the believer. And as the vessels which we fill to-day, require a new filling to-morrow; so the believer's spiritual wants still increase, and renew themselves: but though the vessel may be dry, yet the fountain is not; though the vessel may be empty, yet the fountain is full, and still streaming. The goodness of God in Christ is a living fountain, and his promises are a perpetual bond, a perpetual fund for the maintainance of the believer all his life-time, from the first moment that he is born and brought forth out of the womb of the promise, to the last moment of his age: *Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me, from the belly, which are carried from the womb. And even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar-hairs will I carry you: I have made, I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you, Isaiah xlv. 3, 4.* They that are full, and  
rich,



*rich, and increased with goods*, full of self-wisdom, self-righteousness, they live upon themselves, but not upon the promise: but the child of promise is a poor and needy, empty, hunger-beaten, starving creature, that sees need of depending constantly on a promise, and so receives out of Christ's fulness daily *grace for grace*. Try then if you be living on the promise, and laying God's promise and your condition together, studying his promise and your case together: for they that study their case, without studying the promise, are ready to despair; but they that study the promise, without studying their case, are ready to presume.

5. They that are the children of promise, are *lovers* of the promise, lovers of the gospel, and of the word of grace, saying, *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things!* Rom. x. 15. And again, *How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* They are the posterity of Ishmael that do not love the promise; all that are, as Isaac, the children of promise, are lovers of the promise. But some may deceive themselves, and think they are lovers, that are yet haters in reality. Therefore,

QUEST. *How shall I know if I be a true lover of the promise?*

ANSW. (1.) True lovers of the promise of the gospel, are persons that *understand the command and threatening of the law*, so as to know there is no dealing with God therein; the law being weak through the flesh, unable to save them, and only able to destroy them.

(2.) The true lovers of the promise, are persons that have *seen God in the promise*, by seeing his mercy, grace, and good-will through Christ held forth in the promise, for their ground of hope; and thereupon have been *begotten to a lively hope* by the means thereof.

(3.) The true lovers of the promise, are true lovers of all the *commands of God*, as they are a rule of holiness, wrapt up within the bosom of the promise. The

command without a promise is terrible to them, it is a covenant of works; but the command within the promise, or the command in Christ as the *Lord our righteousness and strength*, this is lovely to them: and thus they regard all his commands. Hence,

(4.) The true lovers of the promise are *true lovers of Christ*: they that *love not our Lord Jesus Christ, are cursed*; they that love Christ are blessed.

QUEST. *How shall I know if I be a lover of Christ?*

ANSW. [1.] The true lovers of Christ are pleased with a *whole Christ*; Christ is in every respect precious to them: not this part of Christ, and that part, but a whole Christ; as a King, as well as a Priest; in his lowest circumstances, as well as the highest; the very cross of Christ; yea, an absent Christ, as well as a present. It is the property of a believer, to be either rejoicing in Christ's presence, or lamenting his absence. Christ's absence is not uneasy to them that love him not, but lovers think the time very long when he absents, Psalm xiii. 1, 2. Four times he cries, *How long?* They cannot rest while he is absent. Indeed, there may be a spiritual lethargy that may seize the lovers of Christ: but whenever they are awakened, Oh! they think every minute long till he appear. They love his word and ordinances, and esteem them sometimes more than their ordinary food. Can they that undervalue ordinances, and make little use of the Bible, be lovers of Christ? No, by no means. Enquire what esteem you have of a whole Christ, in all his offices, in all circumstances, in all things that appertain to him.

[2.] The true lovers of Christ will *prize his image*, where-ever they see it, were it in a beggar, as well as a prince; yea, a beggar on the dunghill, that hath Christ's image, will be more prized by such, than a king upon a throne that wants it. Indeed, if you do not love his image, you do not love himself; for, *He that loves not him that beget, how shall he love him that is begotten of him?* Do you reckon the saints *the excellent ones of the earth, in whom is all your delight in this world*, even when they are stripped of all earthly things,

things, riches, honours, and even other accomplishments of mind, and considered simply as having the image of God?—Why then, *by this you may know you are past from death to life, because you love the brethren.*

[3.] True lovers of Christ are *haters of his enemies* within and without, Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22. especially his enemies within doors, I mean sin; they cannot allow of a competitor with Christ.

[4.] True lovers of Christ will desire and endeavour to *recommend Christ to others*, that others may love him also: it will be the desire of their heart, that others may behold his glory, and that he may be glorified and magnified in the salvation of others. Christ will be, therefore, much in their mouth, as well as in their heart; for, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* You will desire to transmit the knowledge of Christ to your posterity after you, and that Christ may be your children's portion, though they should beg their bread. Though you had thousands a year, yet if you have a due esteem of Christ, you would wish your children to be beggars all their lifetime, rather than strangers to Christ; and you will endeavour to bequeath grace to them, rather than the richest earthly inheritance.

[5.] In a word, they that are true lovers of Christ, they are lovers of the *place where his honour dwells*. Where-ever he dwells in earth, they love that place, that person, that society; and where he dwells in heaven, they love heaven, and long to be there. Indeed, they that are not lovers of Christ, they cannot love heaven; they love this earth a thousand times better. It is true, heaven may be considered either *privatively*, as a place of freedom from wrath; or *positively*, as it is a place of perfect conformity to God: In the former sense, an unregenerate man may love heaven, because he hates to be damned, tho' he loves the way that leads to damnation; but, in the latter sense, none but saints can love and desire it: no unregenerate man can truly desire heaven as it is a place of perfect holiness. Oh! Christless sinner! you cannot so much as desire to be  
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in heaven, you could not delight in heaven, no more than a swine in a palace, nor a debauchee ranting among his gossips, could delight in a company that are praying, and praising God in the most spiritual manner. What! you may as well kill a carnal man, as confine him to prayer and preaching; he knows not what it is to take real pleasure in spiritually heavenly work; and how can he love heaven itself? They that are lovers of the promise, cannot but be lovers of Christ, *in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.*

6thly, They that are children of promise, are *partakers* of the promise, and of the virtue thereof, in its powerful effects. Not only are they begotten to a new and lively hope, and brought to live thereby; but their life is maintained by the power and virtue of the promise: not only have they all the promises made over to them in Christ, but they have some of the promises made out to them in the accomplishment thereof. Try then if you are such a partaker of the promise, as hath had the experience of the accomplishment of some substantial promise of the covenant to you, infomuch that you are in case to say, with the psalmist, Psalm xlii. 5, 6. *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. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* How dead, and dark, and dull, and discouraged I be at present; yet I remember certain times and places, wherein some promises were so accomplished to me, that I met with God, and he met with me; and my mind was enlightened, my heart was enlarged, my soul was comforted, my diseases were healed, my lusts were knocked in the head, my foes were conquered, my fears and doubts were dispelled, and all my bonds were loosed: I was made to run in the way of God's commandments with delight; the love of God was shed abroad upon my heart; a glance of glory was let in upon my soul, that made me merrier than if I had been a monarch on a throne, and more glad than ever the bird that

that sang upon the bush: for I got the lively faith of the favour of God in Christ; the joy of the Lord was my strength, and the strength of the Lord was my joy; and this drove the bottom out of all my discouragements. They are partakers of the promise, and have had the accomplishment of some special promise of the covenant.

But more particularly, for trying if you be the children of the promise, by the participation of the promise, that I may not miss some of the most substantial promises of the covenant in making this enquiry, examine if you be a partaker of the promise relating to God, the promise relating to Christ, and the promise relating to the Spirit. And,

1. Try if you be a partaker of the promise relating to God; for they that are the children of promise, they are partakers of the promise so far as that they are partakers of God by the promise; *Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.* The children of promise then have the image of the promising God stamped upon them, having a new divine nature: whereas by virtue of their union with the first Adam, according to the old covenant of works, they did partake of the very nature of the devil, and had the picture of hell upon them; now, by virtue of their union with Christ, the second Adam, who became a partaker of our nature, they are, in some sort, partakers of the divine nature. Now, what know you of this participation of the divine nature by the promise. This is indeed a great matter. I shall explain it to you in a few particulars.

(1.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of the *divine light*; for, *God is light, 1 John i. 5.* And if you partake hereof, you are *brought from darkness to light; and are children of light; light in the Lord, so as in his light you will see light.* It is not the light that beasts have, as well as men; they have the light of the sun: nor such light as men have, who have the light of reason and natural understanding: nay, it is a light wherein

wherein God makes a man partaker with himself, so as to see things in God's light ; in the light wherein God sees them. Do you thus see the evil of sin, the glory of God, the excellency of the saints, the beauty of holiness, the beauty of God's way and of his work, his word, his ordinances ? &c.

(2.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of the *divine life*. It is said of natural persons, that they are *alienate from the life of God* : what is that, the *life of God* ? who can define that ? None but God himself. I shall only say, As God lives in himself, so the believer as far as he partakes of the divine nature, lives in God ; *Your life is hid with Christ in God*, Colossians iii. 3. And as God lives *of himself*, and *to himself* ; so they hold their spiritual life *of him*, as the efficient cause ; and it is *to him*, as the final cause : *of him*, as the author ; and *to him* as the end : and they find it wholly of him ; and that they are not sufficient of themselves to produce a good thought, a good desire, a good affection or action, a good word or work. This sufficiency is of God.

(3.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of *divine love* ; for, *God is love* ; and *he that dwells in love, dwells in God*, 1 John iv. 16. God in Christ is all love ; and how he manifests his love, you see, ver. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins* ; and to be a sacrifice to incensed justice for our sins. Now, as God in Christ is all love to his children, so the believer in Christ is all love to God, and to the children of God, as far as he is a believer, and hath the image of God's love on him. Believers are *kindly affectioned one to another* ; the word imports such a love as the dame hath to her young, and it is a fruit of that love that Christ hath to his children. There are some birds, when there is a moorburn, they will flutter over their young, when they are in hazard of being burnt, even till they burn themselves. O Sirs, sin raised a great moorburn, a great fire, the fire of hell, the fire of God's wrath ; all the children of promise, as well as the rest of the world, were like to be burnt in that moorburn :

burn : Christ came down flying on the wings of love in our flesh, and fluttered over his young, till he was burnt to death in the fire ; but, being God as well as man, he rose again, and brought all his children out of the fire with him : and now, all that are actually children of promise, have such an impress of this love stamp on them, that they have some conformity to him in his love. Whatever is the object of God's love, is the object of their love : and the special objects of God's love, are the special objects of their love ; particularly the children of God : they are willing to spend, and be spent, to do them service.

(4.) To partake of the divine nature, again, is to partake of the *divine holiness* and *righteousness*, and to be *holy as God is holy* : not that the saints on earth are either freed wholly from sin on earth, or from a sense thereof ; but they that partake of the divine holiness, are sensible of their own unholiness, and that they have no holiness of their own, but what he imparts to them : they are habitually inclined, and sometimes actually, to every duty of holiness and righteousness, conform to the first and second table of the law ; insomuch that it is impossible for a true believer to be an Antinomian ; that is, an enemy to the law, as it is a rule of holiness : for the law is written upon his heart, in such a manner, that what the law says, his heart says ; what the law commands, his heart commands ; what the law forbids, his heart forbids : not in a natural way, as every one hath a natural conscience, accusing and excusing, upon doing good or evil ; but in a spiritual evangelical way, and by virtue of a new nature given him of God ; for, he is *created in Christ Jesus unto good works* ; not to be saved and justified thereby, but only to witness, by the effects of thankfulness, that he is saved and justified. In a word,

(5.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of *divine happiness* and *rest*, as well as of the divine holiness and righteousness. We have a word, Heb. iv. 1. *Let us fear, lest a promise being left of entering in to his rest, any of you should seem to come short.* Believers enter into his rest by faith ; and, as perfect holiness hath per-

fect happiness; and God, being perfectly holy, is perfectly happy; so, according to the measure of holiness in the saints, such will be the measure of happiness: therefore their happiness and rest here is imperfect. But as God is happy in himself, and rests in himself; so they, according to the measure of faith, are happy in him, and rest in him as a holy God. It is true, there is a rest of justification in Christ, as their righteousness; and a rest of sanctification in Christ, as their strength: but both these tend to advance this rest in God as a holy God. Rest to the conscience in Christ, as our righteousness, is the way to bring in rest to the heart in him as our strength; and the right improvement of Christ for righteousness, is in order to improve him for sanctification; and so in order to win to the enjoyment of God as a holy God, and to rest in him, and thus partake of his happiness.

2. Try if you be a partaker of the promise relating to CHRIST, for the children of promise are also partakers of Christ by the promise; Heb. iii. 14. *For we are partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*; that is, if we be true believers, and live by faith on the promise, we are made partakers of Christ thereby. Try then if you be a partaker of Christ.

(1.) In his *death*, or in the fellowship of his *suffering*, Phil. iii. 10. Do you look upon yourself as crucified with Christ; as having satisfied the law and justice in him; and as having nothing to do either with the law, as a covenant, or justice as an enemy? I speak of what the believer does as a believer, and when he speaks the language of faith, and not of unbelief; for, when unbelief and the legal heart speak, it is the just reverse of what I am saying. The language of faith is, *I am crucified with Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me*; and, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ*. And what a glory is it to be conformable to his death, who is the *Lord of life*? Do you suffer with Christ, and share of the virtue of his death and suffering, by getting sin slain, not  
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only in its condemning power, but also in its commanding power, by the faith of his death and suffering? Do you find the enmity slain, and the flesh crucified, with the lusts and affections? And does the sense of pollution lead you to his blood as your daily laver for cleansing? Again,

(2.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his *life*; I mean, his resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right-hand of God, executing his mediatory office, and communicating of his fulness. Know you what it is to be *begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, who, as he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification?* Know you what it is to be *convinced of righteousness, because he hath ascended to the Father*, thereby declaring that everlasting righteousness, for our justification, is wrought out by him to his Father's satisfaction? Know you what it is to be *risen with Christ*, and to have your *affections set on things above, where Christ sits at the right-hand of God*, and so to share of the drawing virtue of his resurrection, ascension, and intercession?—A-gain.

(3.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his *righteousness*, saying, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness*. It is not in myself, in my duties, nor in my graces, nor in my prayers, nor in my good meanings and intentions; but *in the LORD have I righteousness*. This is what the apostle desires to be more and more *found in, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith*. Can you look upon yourself, however vile and polluted in yourself, yet as beautiful and perfectly righteous in Christ; righteous, I say, *even in the sight of God, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to you?* This is a mystery that none is acquainted with but a believer: none have such an inward sense of corruption as they have; and yet none have such an inward faith, to see that God takes no advantage against them because of it, as they do. Can you put honour upon Christ, so as, even under a sense of sin, wants, weakness, wickedness and vile-

ness, to wrap yourself in the righteousness of a God-man ; and thus covered, to go boldly to the throne of grace? This is a very great honour, done to Christ, to attribute so much to his righteousness, that being clothed therewith, you can boldly break through the fire of God's justice, and all these attributes, when you see them all fully satisfied in Christ : for Christ, with his righteousness, could go through the justice of God, having satisfied it to the full for us ; and we being clothed with this his righteousness and satisfaction, may go through too. What know you of this mystery to your experience ? Again,

(4.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his *strength*. Can you say, *In the Lord have I righteousness, and strength also* ? Christ's strength, as Mediator, is not only for himself, no more than his righteousness ; but all that have union with him by faith, do participate with him of his strength, in so much that they can say, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me*. Indeed, I can perform no duty, I can bear up under no difficulty, no not the least, any more than the greatest, in my own strength ; but seeing his *strength is made perfect in my weakness*, most gladly, therefore, *will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*. Again,

(5.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his *boldness*. Christ, as our intercessor in heaven, hath *access to his Father with boldness* ; to his FATHER, I say, who *bears him always* : And believers, in him, *have boldness, and access with confidence, through the faith of him*, Ephes. iii. 12. They come boldly to the throne of grace to plead, and they have the same foundation to plead upon : he pleads upon the sacrifice he hath offered and the blood he hath shed ; and so believers *have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus*. What know you of this bold approach to God, upon the ground of the Mediator's blood and righteousness, and all-powerful, ever-prevalent intercession ?

3. Try if you be a partaker of the promise relating to the SPIRIT, for the children of promise are partakers of the *Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 13. ; and they  
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receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, Gal. iii. 14. Here then is one of the most notable ways for knowing if we be the children of promise, viz. by our partaking of the promise of the Spirit; for, all the actual children of promise, they have the Spirit of promise: and, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

QUEST. *How shall I know if I have the Spirit of promise?*

ANSW. The Spirit is compared to a *well of water*; and how shall you know a spring-well, but by the bubbling of the water? *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.* Here I might speak of the various operations of the Spirit. I need not here speak of that dispensation of the Spirit, as a *Spirit of bondage*; this is supposed in what I touched at the beginning of this use. I will offer a few properties of the *Spirit of promise*, where he is.

(1.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a *Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*, Eph. i. 17. Ask your own soul then, Hath he come and glorified Christ, by receiving the things of Christ, and shewing them unto you? Hath he come, now or formerly, and made Christ more glorious to you than all the mountains of prey, more precious than thousands of worlds, more to be esteemed than all things, being the *Prince of the kings of the earth, altogether lovely?*

(2.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a *Spirit of grace*, Zech. xii. 10. You read of the *graces and fruits of the Spirit*, Gal. v. 22, 23. If you be utterly destitute of these, and have nothing of the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of repentance, the Spirit of humility, how can you have the Spirit of promise? But, that you may not mistake, I must tell you, that the Spirit of faith makes a man see his unbelief; the Spirit of love discovers enmity; the Spirit of repentance discovers hardness and impenitency; the Spirit of humility discovers pride, and humbles the man for the pride of his heart.

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(3.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the *Spirit of glory*, 1 Pet. iv. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you.* And where the Spirit of glory is, he will fill with the thoughts of glory, with the hope of glory, with the faith of glory, with the desire of glory, with a longing after glory and perfection, expecting the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to destroy this world, and bring his people to glory ; yea, the Spirit of glory fills a man with glory, makes him *all glorious within*.

(4.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the *Spirit of prayer and supplication*, Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered* Know you what it is to go beyond words and expressions in your confessions, in your petitions, in your prayers ? Know you what it is to have the Spirit as a *Spirit of adoption, crying, ABBA, Father*, Romans viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6. ? and, with tears of joy, to cry out, *Father, Father ?*

(5.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a *Spirit of consolation* ; hence so frequently he is called *the Comforter*, John xiv. and xvi. chap. What know you of the joy of the Holy Ghost ? At certain times, it is true, the stony-ground hearers may *receive the word with joy*, yet *they have no root* ; but the joy of true faith is, *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. As the groanings of the Spirit are unutterable, so the joys of the Holy Ghost are unutterable ; and there is a glory in them, surpassing the glory of the sun, moon, and stars ; yea, beyond all created glory ; for, the view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is the root of it. It is a humbling and strengthening joy ; *The joy of the Lord is their strength*.

(6.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a *Spirit of warfare and mortification* ; Gal. v. 16. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary the one to the other.—* You will now proclaim war against all Christ's enemies ; his friends are your friends, and his enemies your enemies. If the Spirit of Christ be in you, you will, thro'  
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the Spirit, *mortify the deeds of the body*. Let not the man think he hath the Spirit of Christ in him, that is not *walking in the Spirit*; and let none think they are walking in the Spirit, who are not walking over the belly of their own lusts, and killing sin by the way. Indeed, we need not desire you who are without Christ, and in a state of nature, to war against your lusts, and mortify them; for, though it be your duty, yet you may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, work without hands, and walk without feet, than you can mortify one sin without the Spirit: therefore, tho' it be your duty, yet it is not your immediate duty; your duty, in the first place, is to come to Christ for the Spirit of promise. If you desire your servant go pay such a sum to your creditor, but by the way to go to such a friend to get the money; it is his duty to pay that sum of money to the creditor, and you may blame him if he do it not; yet it is not his immediate duty, he should first go to that friend by the way, that he may lift the money wherewith he may pay your debt: even so here, sin is to be mortified, but something is to be done in the first place to enable you thereto. Some are taken up in warring against this or that lust, but in vain, while they never strike at the sinful nature that is in them; but you may beat down the bitter fruit of an ill tree till you be weary: but while the root is never touched, it will bring forth more; if the tree be not made good, the fruit will never be good: it is the good Spirit of God that makes a good tree. Do not think, that when you bear down a particular lust for a while about a sacrament, that you are a mortified man: nay, it is but like the making a dam against the water; it may silence the noise of the stream for the small space of time that the dam is a gathering, but it increases upon your hand, and will come down afterwards with the more violence: so here, there will be but little success in subduing particular sins, and mortifying certain individual lusts, while the fountain of all corruption remains unstruck at, and unmortified; for, though particular sins may be silenced for a time, yet, while the seed of all corruption lies in the heart, it will afterwards flow

flow out with a more forcible eruption. True mortification and warring against sin differ as much from that, as the sun painted on a wall differs from the sun in the firmament. The spirit of warfare is so contrary to the flesh, that he is destructive to the quiet and thriving of indwelling sin itself; and he is that fire that burns up the very root of lust. Even though sin prevail sometimes in a child of God, yet the very prevalence of sin, through the Spirit of warfare, is the mean of the destruction of sin; even as the snapper of a horse makes him run the faster, so the very fall of the godly makes him run the faster afterward; and every defeat that he gets makes him fight the better afterward.

(7.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the *Spirit of holiness and sanctification*; not only of privative holiness, in the mortifying of sin, 2 Cor. vii. 1.; but positive holiness, in the quickening of grace, and giving the man new life, new power; *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes*, Ezekiel xxxvi. 27. Here is not only positive holiness, in the principle of it; but active holiness: both internal, in the exercise of grace; and external, in the performance of duty.

(8.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the *Spirit of power*; 2 Tim. i. 7. *For God hath not given you the Spirit of fear, but of power, love, and of a sound mind*. And, indeed, these effects that I have already mentioned, require no less than the power, the almighty power of the eternal Spirit: all attempts to mortify sin, to war and struggle with it, without this power of the Spirit, is like a fleec struggling beneath a mountain; but upon the Spirit's coming, *the mountains flow down at his presence*, and melt under his warm influences. Indeed if you know any thing at all of religion, you know this, that almighty power must be exerted and let forth for every part of the spiritual exercise. There is no believing without power, no repenting without power, no praying without power, no right hearing without power, no right reading without power, no right communicating without power. If you think it an easy thing for you to read, and pray, and communicate; believe it,

it, man ; in God's name I tell you, you have not learned the art of doing any of these to this day : you have not yet got your finger in the loop of religion ; you have not fallen upon the lath to this good hour. As the whole purchase of salvation is by the price of the Mediator's blood, so the whole application of every part of it is by the power of his Spirit. Let Arminians boast of the free-will of man, we will boast of the free-grace of God, and of the powerful arm of JEHOVAH, without which no soul can have so much as a will to come to Christ ; *Thy people shall be willing in a day of thy power.* All men's religion is but a kind of forced work, either from some outward excitement, or from a spirit of fear, till the Spirit of power come to make him willing : it is power that begets, and power that completes salvation-work ; even *God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* What know you, man, of this Spirit of power, and of the promise applied with power, and of the gospel *coming not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance* ; and of the need of the constant egress of divine power, and of the finger of God to cast out the devils that are in you ; and that the hand of Zerubbabel, that laid the foundation of the spiritual temple, finish it *and put the cap-stone thereupon, with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it ?*

(9.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a *Spirit of praise and gratitude* ; PRAISE YE THE LORD, is the motto of the gospel-spirit. Gratitude and thankfulness is the disposition of these who are under the influence thereof ; *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise,* Isaiah xliii. 21. Gospel-service is grateful service ; *Offer to the Lord thanksgiving ; pay thy vows unto the Most High,* Psal. l. 13.—Herein lies the mystery of right vowing and true personal covenanting : it is not the act of graceless unregenerate men, vowing against this or that sin ; for, that is like lopping off the branches, while yet the ax is never laid to the root of the tree. To vow and resolve against sin, without getting first an interest in Christ, and without having his Spirit ; it is like a man

building a great fabric, without taking any care of the foundation; no wonder then, what he build to-day, fall down to-morrow. Some convinced persons go on still in this method: even though they plainly see that what ground they get against sin one day, they lose another; yet still, upon a new conviction, they take the same road again, and so fall into the same pit and snare à-new. Yea, to put a man upon this exercise, is like the driving of an enemy out of the open fields into an impregnable castle, where there is no prevailing against him, no dealing with him for his conviction or conversion. Why, says the man, I hope I am a Christian good enough, for I vow against my sins; and though I break them many times, yet the best of faints have their daily failings, as well as I: and thus he is impregnable and hardened against all the calls to come to Christ; for he is, in his own opinion, a Christian already.—Thus his vowing against his particular sins is his ruin, while the foundation was never laid.

Well, say you, what would you have unregenerate men to do? Shall they give themselves loose reigns, and give their lusts their swing, and not vow against them? Surely, if you call us off from that duty, you are an enemy to holiness. What, man! would you think him an enemy that would call you off from mending a hole in the roof of your house, in order to come down and quench a fire that is consuming the whole building? Your vowing against your particular sins, man, and promising amendment, is but the mending of a hole in the roof of the house, and laying a fagot on it; but there is a fire at the foundation, man, that must be quenched with the blood of Christ; there is a burning furnace of corruption in your nature, that must be extinguished with the flood of the Spirit's influences and operations, otherwise you are undone for ever. Your vowing against this or that particular sin, without considering that you are nothing but sin, is like a being careful about a sore finger that is paining you, without being careful about a hectic-fever that is killing you. Your vows and resolutions may give  
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your natural conscience a little ease, but it will not cure your disease, but rather make you slight and neglect the right cure: like a man in a great fever, complaining of a heat in his skin, particularly a heat in his face: he may get a little ease by casting a little cold water on his face, but will that cure the heat of the liver, which is the cause and spring of the outward heat? No, no: the blood must be rectified, and the ill blood let out, either by a natural course, or artificial lance, or some purgative means: even so here, your vows and resolutions, against particular sins, it is but a throwing of some cold water upon the face of a burning lust; it may give natural conscience some ease for a little, but, alas! there is a heat in the liver that must be abated: your blood must be rectified, by the application of the blood of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit of Christ, otherwise all is vain work.

But the mystery of right vowing and covenanting is here; it is the business of one that hath an interest in Christ, and that, under the conduct of the Spirit of promise, as a Spirit of praise and gratitude, *offering to the Lord thanksgiving, and paying his vow to the Lord*; through grace vowing a grateful service, in heart, lip, and life, to the Lord, that hath saved him from the guilt of sin, the wrath of God, and the power of corruption: the man's resolving hereupon thankfully to give to the Lord the love of his heart, the calves of his lips, and the obedience of his life.—  
There is here,

[1.] *Heart-gratitude*: the man exalts and extols Christ in his heart, and esteems him to be every way *precious*, and *altogether lovely*: he exalts and extols the grace of God in his heart; and hath a high thought of the whole contrivement of salvation. Here is the work of the Spirit of praise and gratitude.

[2.] *Lip-gratitude*: the thankfulness and gratitude of the heart vents itself in words; *For, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. The man hereupon speaks to his glory, and speaks of his glory: *In his temple shall every one speak of his glory*.

[3.] *Life-gratitude*: and here comes in the shining conversation, according to that rule, *Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father that is in heaven.*—Indeed none but these that have God for their Father in Christ, and have some measure of the faith thereof, can engage rightly unto this grateful service.

O Sirs, pray that God may graciously covenant with you, otherwise you will never gratefully covenant with him: your covenanting will be vain, till he come and discover to you the nature, freedom, and fulness of the covenant of grace, that stands fast with Christ.—And let believers themselves remember always that they never go to confound God's covenant of grace with their covenant of gratitude: for your covenant of gratitude, even when entered into rightly upon the main, yet may be a thousand times broken; but, wo would be to you for ever, if the covenant of grace could be once broken: nay, but that is impossible; for it stands betwixt two unchangeable parties, God and Christ. However, as the Spirit of gratitude is necessary before there can be any personal covenant of gratitude; so I despair of ever seeing the National Covenant rightly renewed, till the Spirit of praise and gratitude be poured out: therefore, if you would wish for a great reformation-day, a covenanting-day, O cry for the return of the Spirit of promise, as a Spirit of praise and gratitude! Though the Lord owned our solemn covenanting days, however many make a jest of them now-a-days, and though some did enter into these Covenants under the influence of the Spirit of gratitude; yet the general want of this Spirit, even in these that thus covenanted with the Lord, may be one of the causes why our Covenants were afterwards so fearfully broken and burnt.

I knew once a gentleman, who, after his first conviction, made a covenant, and wrote it, signed it, and laid it up in his chest; but afterwards turned more loose than ever, till, casting off all bonds, he went home one day, and burnt his covenant with God: where-

whereupon he took loose reins to his lusts for a time, till the Lord accidentally ordered his hearing another sermon; the minister was directed to speak to the following strain, though he in the mean time was resolved to be hardened against all that the minister should say: Well, but the Lord put these or the like words in the minister's mouth, namely, "Perhaps there is some one here, that under convictions formerly hath made a covenant, and he hath afterwards gone to such a height of wickedness, that he hath burnt his covenant." The poor gentleman knew that none in all the world but God and his conscience were privy to that story, and therefore he was obliged to acknowledge it was God himself speaking to him; then began a sound work of conviction, and thereupon a discovery of Christ to his conversion; then he knew how he was to dedicate his life to the Lord, under the conduct of a Spirit of gratitude.

I apply this to the case of Scotland, though it may be applied to all personal cases: Scotland entered into covenant with God; but though the Lord helped some of our forefathers to act honestly, and from a Spirit of gratitude, yet the most part of these generations, as well as their posterity, were strangers to the Spirit of gratitude; and what came of the covenant? Behold, it was not only broken, but burnt; and God is saying to Scotland, O Scotland, Scotland, you have broken covenant; you have forgotten the covenant; *you have played the harlot with many lovers*; yea, you have burnt the covenant of your God! And, till God send the Spirit of conviction discovering our sin, and thereafter the Spirit of gratitude making us regularly to engage unto duty, like children of promise, that have got the Spirit of promise as a Spirit of gratitude, there is little hope of powerful covenanting-days. O cry for the return of the Spirit for this end.—Mean time, I say, the Spirit of promise will be a Spirit of praise and gratitude.

(10.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of *liberty*, gospel-liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17.; and particularly liberty from the law as a covenant of works,  
which

which is the distinguishing mark of the child of promise, as Isaac, or of the free-woman, in opposition to Hamaelites, the children of the bond-woman: hence the children of promise will have a gospel-spirit, in opposition to a legal-spirit. Examine, therefore, what is your frame and disposition of spirit: Have you discovered the glory of the gospel? and are you thereby *transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord?*—Have you not the image of the gospel? are you cast into the mould of the gospel, and so got a gospel-spirit, which is a Spirit of liberty, in opposition to a legal spirit? What is that? even the spirit of bondage, belonging to the children of the bond-woman; the legal spirit is a spirit of slavery, a frightful and a fretful spirit, a terrified and melancholly spirit; a hand and foot-bound disposition, wherein the man hath no heart for God and Christ. But what is a gospel-spirit? it is even a holy gospel-liberty, and free disposition, wherein the man is set at liberty both as to his state and frame; his countenance is lifted up, he comes to have spiritual joy. A gospel-spirit is a frank spirit, a joyful spirit, a free spirit; *If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.* It is true, the child of promise, that is married to Christ, and divorced from the law, may sometimes, through unbelief, go to his old husband, by reason of a legal disposition that remains, and is not wholly mortified in him, and then he finds his fetters fast, he cannot stir in the way of duty. But, believer, you will find that whenever your bonds are loosed, it will be in the way of returning unto your first Husband; I mean, to the Lord Jesus, held out in the gospel-promise; and that you must just come back again where you began. The promise that is the mean of quickening you at first, and of begetting you to a new lively hope, it will be still the door of life, and liberty, and quickening to you; you cannot find it in the law, but in the promise. All that you have wrought upon the loom of the law of works, through a legal unbelieving heart, must be unwrought, and undone, and opened out again, that you may begin a-new upon the gospel-loom; for, the Spirit of liberty is not received by the *works of the law*,  
but

but by *the bearing of faith*, Gal. iii. 2. Try then if you be free-born, at liberty from the law ; not from obedience to it, but from bondage to it, either as to obedience or satisfaction.

[I.] As to *obedience*. If your obedience to the law be a *bondage* to you, you are so far acted with a spirit unsuitable to a child of promise, like a child of the bond-woman ; but when your obedience to it is no bondage, no grievance, then you are only *under the law to Christ*, or to God in Christ, whose *commands are not grievous*. I must tell you, that so far as you are a child of promise, you do not owe the law so much as a grain-weight of grievous, hard, and conditional obedience ; for Christ bore all that weight. It is only the law as a covenant of works, that brings in weighty, heavy, grievous, and conditional obedience ; but Christ bore all that burden ; therefore you owe no obedience to the law but that of love, and love makes it *the law of liberty*, Jam. ii. 12. ; and a very lightsome yoke. When the law comes to command the believer some heavy duty, he may tell it, I am not obliged to take a lift of it as a burden ; for Christ bore all the burdensome and heavy part of it, and left nothing to me but the light and easy part of it ; Mat. xi. 30. *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light*. If you be a believer, you will find it to be so. Sometime, when under the influence of the spirit of liberty, your heart is lifted up in the way of the Lord, and in the duty of praying, hearing, communicating, or wrestling with God alone ; O says the heart of the man then, I am so far from wearying of this work, or thinking it a burden, that it is a burden to me to think of giving it over. Oh ! I cannot think of going away from the throne ; I cannot think of going back to the vain, filthy world again. The man that is under the law, on the contrary, Oh ! the sermon is a burden, the sacrament is a burden, long Sabbath, long sermons ; *when will it be over ?* If any duty of the law be uneasy to you, it is not Christ's yoke you are bearing, but some of the old-covenant yoke, through the remainder of that covenant in you : but when you are doing duty,

not like a conditional task, but in a way of flaming love, making your duty your element, and gratitude the spring, then you are acting so far like a child of promise; your obedience will be child-like, knowing that there is nothing you are obliged to do, but what the promise is engaged to do for you, and in you.—Thus, if you be a child of promise, you will have the spirit of liberty, and be free from the bondage of the law, even in respect of obedience: not free from obedience, unless it be the old-covenant heavy obedience; but free to obey, saying, *Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds*; particularly, the bond of obligation to all heavy and uneasy obedience, is torn to pieces, that you may serve in a way of love and liberty.

[2.] As to *satisfaction* and *suffering*, you are free from *bondage* to the law, so as you cannot incur the penalty of death and the curse for not obeying. As you who are believers owe not a cup of cold water, as I said before, to the command of the law as a covenant, so you do not owe a drop of warm blood to the threatening of it: not a stroke of vindictive justice or wrath can fall upon you; for it hath fallen by you, and lighted on your Surety with a vengeance, to God's full satisfaction: so that *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ*. Hence, so far as you are under the conduct of a gospel-spirit, or a Spirit of liberty, you cannot, you will not serve and obey from a principle of any slavish fear of hell and wrath. You may, indeed, fear your disobedience provoke your Father, and that you suffer fatherly chastisements; this is consistent with your state that art a believer: but if your faults and infirmities, whether more or less gross, fill you with the fear and dread of hell, then you act more like a child of the bond-woman, than a child of promise. Unbelievers ought, indeed, to fear hell, and to fear vindictive wrath, because they are liable to it, being *strangers to the covenant of promise*: but for you, believer, to fear God's everlasting wrath, as if God would demand satisfaction again of you, which he hath taken to the full of Christ, is dishonourable to the Lord Jesus, as if he were not a complete sacrifice to satisfy divine justice; yea,  
and

and an affront to God's justice, by making him unjust to demand more satisfaction than due : justice having got all its due from Christ, to seek more would be injustice. And besides, such a slavish fear would be unlike a child of God, that hath God for his Father ; or a child of promise, that hath the promise for his security, and the promise sealed by the justice-satisfying, and hell-quenching, as well as heaven-purchasing, and God-glorifying blood of Christ.

In a word, There are two things that the children of promise, who, having the Spirit of promise as a Spirit of liberty, are set at liberty from, in the course of their walk ; by which you may try yourselves. 1. From the legal *power* of sin. 2. From the legal *penance* of works.

1. I say, from the *legal power of sin*. Sin hath a legal power over all that are the children of the bond-woman ; sin hath a kind of right to reign and domineer over these that are under the law ; the law of works that they are under, is *the law of sin and death*, Rom. viii. 2. ; and *the motions of sin are by the law, bringing forth fruit unto death*, Rom. vii. 5. And hence they are under the dominion of sin, because they are *not under grace, but under the law*, Rom. vi. 14. But believers are free from this legal power of sin ; *The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*, Rom. viii. 2. *Sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace*, Rom. vi. 14. Though sin therefore, may have sometimes a prevailing power, a tyrannizing power, an usurped power over them ; yet it hath no legal rightful power, for they have cast off the authority of sin, and have no king but Christ. Hence the believer complains of sin's usurpation and oppression ; and, upon his complaining of it to his righteous God and Father, he finds the actual power of sin gradually broken : for he goes to God, as Bathsheba went to David when Adonijah usurped the kingdom ; *My lord, hast thou not said that Solomon shall reign ? and behold, Adonijah reigns*, 1 Kings i. 17. So says the believer, Lord, hast thou not said that grace shall reign ? And

hast thou not promised that sin shall not have dominion? and yet, behold, sin usurps the throne; O righteous Lord, see to it: and in this way he gets sin brought down, and grace mounted on the throne.—Thus the believer is free from the legal power of sin. But then again,

2. From the *legal penance of works*. The believer in Christ is the most busy man about works, and yet the most free in all the world, in so far as he is a believer, and a child of promise, or of the free-woman. There is in the works of the believer something common, and something singular: something common to all that can be called good works, and that is their *conformity* to the law as a *rule*; but there is also something singular, and that is their *disconformity* to the law as a *covenant*.—Hence nothing like penance in them; for, in this respect, so far as they are believers, they have *ceased from their own works*: you have the expression, Heb. iv. 10. *He that is entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own work, even as God did from his*. They that have come to Christ, and so entered into their rest initially, they have ceased from their own work; they are *dead to the law*, and *married to Christ*, that they may *bring forth fruit unto God*; not to the law as a covenant, but to their new Husband. And as the Spirit of God says in another case, *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest from their labour, and their works follow them*: so may I say, *Blessed are the dead that are dead to the law and married to Christ*, for they rest from their legal labours, and their works follow them; for they are *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*. But they have ceased from their own works: legal works are our own works, done for our own justification, and done by our own strength; but gospel-works are not our own. And true believers have ceased from their own works, both in point of justification and sanctification.

(1.) In point of *justification*, they have ceased from their own work; that is, they work none at all, that they may get life and justification and acceptance thereby; they that work, for that end, they work their own



wo and damnation, and take Christ's work out of his hand, and frustrate the end of Christ's death to their own destruction; for, *If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain*, Galat. ii. 21. *By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified.* Justification is to him that worketh not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5.

(2.) In point of *sanctification*, they have ceased from their own work, in so far that they dare essay nothing in their own strength; but, having closed with Christ, as their righteousness for justification and acceptance, they close with him also as their strength for sanctification and assistance: and hence they acknowledge they have no strength of their own, yet they are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; and that they have no grace of their own, but they are *strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. They have ceased from their own work, and then they work to purpose, while, coming off from a covenant of works, they come in to Christ, who *works in them both to will and to do*. Therefore, whatever they have ado, they put it in his hand, without whom they can do nothing, saying with David, Psal. lii. 2. *I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performs all things for me.*

Thus, in the tenor of their walk as children of promise, they are free and at liberty both from the legal power of sin, and the legal penance of works: here is a great part of their present liberty, who have the Spirit of promise as a Spirit of liberty, which all the children of promise according to their measure have. By these things you may try yourselves.

Some of these marks, perhaps, will be more clear to believers themselves than others, and some of them more cloudy: may be one mark lifts you up, and another mark casts you down; one mark you take to yourself, and another mark you dare not take? Why? this evidence, you think, is what belongs to you, the other is what belongs not to you; and so you remain in a dubiety. Indeed, none ought to be rash in concluding concerning their eternal state; some take what belongs not to them, others reject what belongs to

them. I know not how it is with the generality of you ; I am a stranger to the case of your souls : but what I have said from God's word to you, I leave it to God's Spirit to make the powerful application, for searching you out, whether you be a child of promise or not.

One reason why unbelievers are ready to mistake, and think they are the children of promise, is, because they are filled with self-conceit ; like a man looking through a green glass, all things appear green to him ; so the hypocrite looking on himself through the fair spectacles of self-love and self-conceit, he looks upon every thing in himself to be fair ; whereas, if the false glass were removed, and that he noticed himself in the true glass of God's word, he would see himself in the *gall of bitterness*.

One reason also why believers are ready to mistake, and doubt of their being the children of promise, while one mark is clear and another cloudy unto them, is, because they are apt to judge of themselves by their present feeling, the man apprehending these things belong not to him, which he does not find in himself at present ; for, as we say of the church universal and invisible, the catholic church, it is not what it is for the present inexistence, thro' the world, but the universal church is that society which hath been, is, and shall be ; so a believer is not to be measured by what he is at present, but what he hath been, is, and shall be. You should try if ever there was a time when you found these things in you, though you find them not at present ; or, if there be some of these, and the like marks, that you have found, and others that you have never found, you should leave room for what God is yet to do before you go to heaven : for, if there be one substantial mark of a child of promise, that belongs to you, as being already wrought, another not yet wrought, you may be sure he that hath begun the good work, will complete it ; if it be a thing absolutely necessary, it is what he hath promised to work : therefore, bless him for what marks you have, and wait  
on,

on, in his own way, for what you want; and, the longer you go on in the Lord's way, the more will you come to discern all the marks in the way. If you be going along a way, and taking the marks of the way; perhaps, there is at such a part of the way a mountain, at another part of the way there is a water, at a third part of the way there is a bridge, and at another part there is a house, and so on; you take these for the several marks of the way. Well, suppose a man sets out to the way with these marks given him, and he comes accordingly first to the mountain, and then to the water-side, and so far he judges he is in the way: but shall he stand still, and doubt if he be in the way, because he is not yet come to the bridge, and to the house? Nay, he goes forward, and then he comes to these also: so here, in the examining the state of our souls, though you should be in some suspense in applying to yourselves some of the characters assigned of the people of God; yet neither give way to disponding fears, nor slacken diligence in the way of commanded duty: go forward, and you will come to the rest of the marks in due time. Mean time, if you have no substantial mark at all as yet, of your being a child of promise, you have no right to a communion-table, which is for sealing of the covenant of promise.—May the Lord give you understanding in all things. Pray to him to search and try you; for no mark will find you out to purpose, unless the Lord himself apply it powerfully to you. \*

*Use 3.* I come to a *cautionary use* and application of this doctrine; and it may be followed forth in the short resolution of some *cases*, which the children of promise may be exercised with, concerning the right use, improvement, and application of the promise.

FIRST CASE. *Whether or not SINNERS, as sinners, have any right to the promise? and what sort of right they have thereto?* This is a case frequently exercising, even to the children of promise; for, though they be

\* It is probable this is the end of Serm. LXIX. preached on the Saturday,

faints, they are always looking upon themselves as *sinners*, and the *chief of sinners*, and thereupon are ready to exclude themselves from the benefit of the promise, through their unbelief.

ANSW. The promise is just a door of hope to a sinner; the gospel is the good news of Christ coming to save sinners: now, the gospel, and the promise, is one and the same thing; the promise of pardon, respects guilty sinners; the promise of cleansing and purifying, respects filthy and polluted sinners; the promise of taking away the heart of stone, concerns hard-hearted sinners. Hence the sinner may conceive hope: it is the like of me that the promise looks to; therefore I will look to the promise, and lay stress upon it, and upon a God that promises. Then is faith wrought by the mean of the promise; and the man becomes a child of promise, being *begotten thereby to a lively hope*.—Hence the promises are declared to belong to a *visible church*, Romans ix. 14. And Peter, in his sermon to the crucifiers of Christ, says, Acts ii. 39. *The promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call*. Even so say I, the promise is to you, man, to you, woman, to you, sinner; be who you will, you have such a right of access thereto, that it is lawful and warrantable for you to embrace the promise; yea, you are commanded to believe it unto your salvation.

SECOND CASE. *Are not the promises only made to BELIEVERS and SAINTS? Therefore I may have no right to meddle with them?*

ANSW. These that are actual believers and faints, they have a right of actual possession of the promise; but their right is not privative, excluding the right of access and warrant to believe and embrace the promise, that unbelievers and ungodly persons have, who hear the gospel, and have the promise set before them as the door of hope, and the ground of faith. Believers have the promise already in its begun accomplishment; yea, in Christ, they have all the promises, and all that is promised; and so the promise cannot be so properly said

said to be to them, for then it would be to promise them what they have already : but more properly the promise of any thing is made to the man that wants it, and as he is a wanter.—They who have all their wants supplied, have no need of a promise, such as the saints in heaven ; and believers on earth would have no need of a promise, if they were not partial wanters in themselves, tho' they have all in Christ. But, as a Saviour and a sinner are relatives ; infomuch, that there would be no need of a Saviour, if there were no sinners : so a promise and a wanter are relatives ; infomuch, that there would be no need of a promise, if there were no wanters. The great promise, *I will be thy God*, relates to these that want God, as we do all by nature ; the promise of Christ, relates to them that want Christ ; the promise of the Spirit, relates to these that want the Spirit, the promise of making a people willing, relates to them that want a will ; the promise of faith, relates to them that want faith, and are unbelievers ; the promise of repentance, relates to them that want repentance, and are impenitent ; the promise of forgiveness, relates to the guilty ; the promise of holiness, relates to them that are unholy, and ungodly, or that want holiness. Let sinners then, as sinners, be who they will, put in for a share of this grace.

THIRD CASE. *If the promises are made to sinners, as such, then it must be to ELECT sinners, to whom only God intends to give what is promised : and I know not if I be an elect, therefore I cannot believe.*

ANSW. That the *elect only shall obtain*, is true ; and that *as many as were ordained to eternal life, shall believe*, and embrace the promise is also certain : but that is so far from being a ground of discouragement from believing, that it is rather an argument to believe the promise, that thus your *election may be sure*. Know, Sirs, that your election is not the first object of faith : nay, you are discharged to meddle with it, because it is a secret thing that belongs to God : the ground and object of your faith is the promise, or the gospel-declaration. Know, that the design of the Promiser is one thing, and the design of the promise is another : whatever be the design,

design, end, and intention of the Promiser, with respect to some, an inhibition is served, discharging you to meddle with that : but the end and design of the promise, and gospel-declaration, which respects all sinners, this you are concerned with, and all that hear this gospel, by virtue of the divine command, to believe the gospel with particular application ; namely, *that Jesus Christ came to save sinners.* Glorious is that wisdom of God, that brings about the design of his particular election, by such a general offer and invitation, so that none shall have any to blame for their perdition, but themselves, and their own wilful enmity, in rejecting the Saviour, and salvation offered through him ; for, *Whosoever will, are warranted to come, and take of the waters of life freely.* May we not say with the apostle, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !* Rom. xi. 33. And since Christ hath declared, that as *all that the Father hath given him shall come to him ;* so, *him that comes he will in no wise cast out :* and that he gathers his elect by this gospel-trumpet ; then put your election out of doubt, by coming to Christ, and laying hold on the promise at his call.

FOURTH CASE. *But what if I have not the inward call of the Spirit in my heart ? May I come to the promise, and rely on it, before it come to me with power ? If so, then I fear I will presume, and believe in my own strength.*

ANSW. 1. The rule of faith, is God speaking in the word, and not in the heart ; the *object* of your faith, is the gospel-declaration, and not the Spirit's operation.

2. You are carefully to distinguish betwixt your *warrant* to believe, and *power* to believe ; your *right* and *warrant* to believe, is grounded on the *gospel-offer* and *promise*, together with *God's command* to you to believe, which constitutes your duty to believe, and makes unbelief your sin ; but *power* to believe, is indeed from the SPIRIT of God, in his saving operation ; therefore you ought to cry for the Spirit of power to accompany the dispensation of the word.

3. Though

3. Though you do not *feel* this power exerted, yet that not being your warrant, but the *word* itself, you ought, at the call of God, to essay believing, and stretch forth the withered hand; and, in the act of so doing, you may find power at hand for strengthening you: but while you wait for the feeling of his power, you delay the believing of his word, which is dangerous. Feeling is not believing; a feeling of his power, is not a believing of his promise: and there is much deceit in saying, you will not *believe his promise*, till you *feel his power*; for though divine power be necessary to believing, yet the feeling of his power is not necessary. Therefore,

4. Distinguish carefully betwixt *real* power, and *felt* power: If, upon the call of God, you be determined in heart to embrace the promise, and accordingly essay it, there is real power, though not felt till afterwards; as it was with the woman with the bloody issue, of which before.

As to the fear of presuming in this matter; why, it is no presumption to do what God bids you, and to take what God gives you; and he gives Christ and the promise to be taken. It is indeed presumption, to think of believing the promise in your own strength: and therefore it is one act of presumption, among others, that you are not aware of, for you to delay believing, till you find you have strength in yourself to believe; because that you will never find; for, when a man is enabled to believe, his faith never says, Now I have strength in myself, therefore I will go and believe in this strength received; nay, but it rather says, Oh! I have no strength, any more than I have righteousness; therefore I will go out of myself, and take God's word of promise, and Christ therein, for strength, and righteousness both: I will take hold of his strength promised, and *go in the strength of the Lord*.

FIFTH CASE, concerning the promise, with which the children of promise may be exercised, is, *Whether the ABSOLUTE promise, that is presented to sinners to be believed, does presuppose the CONDITION of faith? and if faith itself be promised, how shall the faithfulness*

of God be cleared, in not accomplishing the promise unto all sinners that bear the gospel?

ANSW. 1. Faith itself is absolutely promised, in that word, *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me: They shall look to me whom they have pierced, and mourn: They shall be willing in the day of thy power: yea, and the promises, of giving a new heart, and a new spirit, are promises of faith; and seeing faith is absolutely promised, it cannot be the condition of the absolute promise.*—Nay, the grand condition of all the promises, and of that promise of faith among the rest, and upon which it is to be obtained, is Christ's obedience and satisfaction, 2 Peter i. 1. *There precious faith is said to be obtained through the righteousness of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

2. These absolute promises, as given forth in the gospel-dispensation, are *general and indefinite*, unto ALL; not *particular and definite*, unto ANY: it is a blank bond, or an indefinite obligation to blank persons; whosoever will, may come, and sign, by giving the cordial assent of faith thereunto. Thus it is a standing claim to all sinners of mankind to whom it comes, and warrants their believing. In this respect it is given forth generally and indefinitely: but here sinners in general are only named; no person's name in particular is inserted therein, unless they sign the blank bond, and fill up their name by the cordial assent of faith; then the bond gives right to that person in particular; and then, and not till then, is the faithfulness of God obliged to accomplish to that person all that is contained in the bond of the promise.

Why then, say you, *Still faith is the condition.*

I answer, No; for faith gives no right to what is in the bond, but only takes the right which the bond freely conveys, and takes the promise which God freely gives; *He that believes shall be saved.* Why? not because faith gives a *right and title* to that promised salvation, but only it *takes* that salvation which God freely gives in the promise of the gospel; and to which he gives a right and title through the righteousness of Christ.



Christ. Therefore, although it be true, that till the man believe he hath no *actual* right to the thing promised; yet it is no proper condition of that promised thing, because it does not give any right thereunto by way of *moral conditionality*, but only takes the right thereunto by way of *physical instrumentality*. If you should promise a man a great estate which you are able to give him, or give him your bond; if he accept, your credit is obliged to make it out: but if he will not take your promise or bond, you are under no obligation to make it out, notwithstanding that your promise and bond remains still free and absolute: even so it is here, they that will not take what God is giving them in the promise, cannot charge God with unfaithfulness, in not making out what he hath said.— If they take his word, truly then, his faithfulness is engaged: but if not, he is engaged on the contrary, to delistroy them, because, through unbelief, they *make him a liar*, 1 John v. 10. However, the promise is presented to them generally for a warrant of faith, only it is not applied to them particularly and powerfully for the creating of faith; this God does, when, and to whom he pleases.

SIXTH CASE. *If the promise be not PARTICULARLY to me, what the better am I of the general indefinite promise, which God is not obliged to make out to every one? What advantage have I thereby?*

*I answer*, with Paul, Rom. iii. 2. *Much every way*; because you have a claim and warrant to believe and take possession of the promise, which, in itself, is a great mercy; yea, even though not yet particularly applied to you by the Spirit in a day of power. Yea, a general promise to sinners presented to you, with a particular command obliging you to take it to yourself, is as much as if it were particular, running in your very name. Besides, you cannot be wronged here; for, if you will have what God is offering, you shall have it; *Whosoever will, let him come*: but if you will not have what he offers, then your sinful refusal ruins you, you wrong yourself; *Why will you die?*

But, say you, *God can conquer me, and make me willing.*

ANSW. 1. Indeed so he can, though he be not *obliged* by any law but his own sovereign will and grace, which will make him conquer and make willing all whom he hath appointed unto life. But,

2. As he is not obliged to make you willing; so, if he shall not do it, surely you have no cause to complain; seeing, while you are unwilling, you despise his goodness, and care not for his grace.

3. Seeing none are willing to take the promise in Christ till God make them so, he thus makes it evident, that all who are damned, are damned by an act of holy justice, and their damnation is of themselves; so all that are saved, are saved by an act of mercy in Christ, and their salvation is of grace.

4. If you be one that would desire to be made willing, the case alters; there is some will there already, and the power of God is at hand to further the work: only put imployment in God's hand of power, saying, *O draw! draw me, and I will run after thee.*

SEVENTH CASE. *Whether a promise may be applied that is given OBJECTIVELY in the WORD, and not given SUBJECTIVELY and powerfully by the SPIRIT? If the promise, for example, be only presented to the memory, in reading, hearing, praying, meditating, without coming in with any power, may it be applied to any usefulness?*

ANSW. 1. If the question be, whether a man *ought* to apply it in that case, and take it home with particular application? No doubt he ought, for the word of God should be believed; if it be a word of salvation to a sinner, it ought to be welcomed and entertained by faith. But,

2. If the question be, whether a man *can* apply it in such a case, without power attending it? To be sure he cannot: yet he ought to essay it, as I said before, though he feel not the power; not knowing but power will accompany the essay.

3. The word of promise may be presented to the mind *barely* in reading or thinking, and it may be  
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only a *simple* act of the memory that is first exercised about it; yet, through the Lord's blessing, our meditation may be improved to a *lively* acting of faith upon it; *While I was musing, the fire burned*, says the psalmist.

4. A word *suitable* to our need and case, when it is impressed upon the memory, *ought not to be despised*, because it may be a messenger from heaven for our spiritual advantage; for the Spirit is called the *Remembrancer*, for bringing the word to mind, John xiv. 26. This is one of the ways of his teaching; *He shall teach you all things*: How? *He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*. Never cast out with a suitable and seasonable word, because it came only to your mind, as it were, in a seeming overly manner, but give it entertainment; it will, perhaps, make more room for itself, and sanctify your memory: *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee*.

EIGHTH CASE. *If a word of promise come in to the heart with any power and life, how shall I know whether it be from GOD, or from SATAN, transforming himself into an angel of light?*

ANSW. I. God sends his word upon the heart sometimes in such a manner, as carries its own *evidence* that it is from the Lord, insomuch that there is no questioning of it at the time wherein it comes, no more than one can question whether the sun shines at mid-day, it hath such a stamp of divine glory and majesty upon it; but afterwards, when clouds and desertion recur, the soul may be tempted to doubt whether it was a delusion or not. Therefore,

2. It is meet, in such a case, that the man reflect upon the *impression* that the word of power made upon him. Ask a man, when it is dark night, How do you know that ever you saw the natural sun? May be you was but dreaming, and in a delusion; it was nothing but a strong imagination. Why, says the man, I am sure I saw it, because mine eyes were dazzled with the light of it; and I was warmed with the heat of it; and I saw to work by it; and, in the light of it, I saw every

every thing about me; and I was delighted with it; and the like: so may you say, when in the dark night of desertion, tempted to think that the word you got was a delusion; you may reflect how it was with you when the word came from heaven with power and divine light; and when, together with it, the Sun of righteousness shined in your soul: were not your eyes enlightened, your heart warmed, your soul cheered, and your spirit quickened to the Lord's work?

3. Satan may, indeed, send in words of scripture; he spoke Bible dialect to Christ when he tempted him, and so may he do to you; but it is always out of some *ill design*: as he tempted Christ to deny his Sonship, to destroy himself, and the like; so the words that come from the devil, tend to some wicked effects, either to make the soul secure, or desperate; either to depress it too much towards despair, or to elevate it too much to presumption. It tends to disturb and distract, and discompose the soul; or else to fill it with false peace, and to make it rest in itself, and drive it off from its true resting-place. In a word,

4. A word from the devil bears the *devil's image*, but a word from God bears *God's image*. The devil's image is *pride* and *unholiness*; and a word from him tends to make a man *proud* and *carnal*: whereas a word from the Lord tends to make a man *holy* and *humble*. A promise from the Lord is always a glass wherein somewhat of the glory of the Lord appears, whereupon the soul is *changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord*. Though sin may afterwards prevail, yet the power of it is more weakened.

*Finally*, If it come in a time of need, and exactly suitable to the soul's case, and while it is pouring out itself before the Lord in prayer, it looks well; *For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me: and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

NINTH CASE. *How shall I know, when I get a promise sent in to my heart, whether or not I mistake the SENSE of the promise, and the END and DESIGN thereof?* For example,

example, a child of promise gets a promise born in upon him ; *How shall he know that he does not mistake the mind of God in it ?*

ANSW. 1. When God gives a word, he gives it in a *suitableness* to the *design* and *scope* of his HOLY SPIRIT, in that text of scripture. If the sense you put upon it be not suitable to the sense of the Spirit of God therein, then certainly you are under some mistake therein. But,

2. The Spirit of God is *an Interpreter, one among a thousand* ; and readily, when he gives in a word, he makes the sense appear better than all the ministers in the world can explain it : and the soul will see some *gospel-mystery*, some *hidden glory* in the word, that no interpreter, but the Spirit of God, can shew and manifest.

3. You can hardly mistake the sense of the word, if the Spirit *testify of Christ* therein ; for Christ says of the whole scriptures, that *they testify of him*, John v. 39.

4. You can hardly mistake the *end* and *design* of God in the word that you get, if it *lead you in to Christ*, and draw you to him : for the language of the Spirit, in every word of scripture, is, *Come to Christ : The spirit and the bride say come.*—By these generals you may guess, whether or not you hit upon the *sense* of the promise given you.

TENTH CASE, that a child of promise may be exercised about, is, *When I am concerned before the Lord in prayer for a friend in affliction, or in dying circumstances, be it a relation, a child, a husband, a wife, or a near intimate acquaintance, and I get a promise let in to my heart suitable to my concern ; How shall I know if the promise relates to MYSELF, or to the PERSON I am concerned about ? and how shall I judge whether I MISAPPLY the promise relating to them ?*

ANSW. 1. As to that part of the question, whether it relates to *yourself*, or the *person* you are concerned about ; It is, indeed, possible to mistake in this matter ; and I do not understand any other way of your being sure that it relates to your friend, except it be by some

*spiritual instinct* and *secret impression*, that cannot well be explained : only, the Lord, who presents the promise to you, will readily present the person also that you are concerned about, and lay the load of his affliction, as it were, upon your spirit, which you carry to the Lord, and cast down at his feet, till he please to whisper into your ear, as it were, or rather into your heart, some account of his design relating to that person.

2. As to that part of the question, How to judge, whether you *mistake* or *misapply* the promise that relates to them ?

(1.) Perhaps it is a *general* promise applied to a particular case, such as that, *Fear not, I will help, I will save* ; and you are ready to mistake a temporal salvation for a spiritual ; or a spiritual and eternal salvation, for a bodily and temporal one. Or,

(2.) Perhaps it is a more *particular* promise, such as that, John iv. 50. *Go thy way, thy Son lives* ; or that, *This sickness is not unto death, but to the glory of God*, John xi. 4. You are ready to mistake the design of the word, and of the Lord's giving it ; and so to apply it amiss.—Which may be done especially in two cases.

[1.] When you *limit* the Lord to your side of the question ; then you are in danger of being left to mistake the promise.

[2.] When the *natural sway* of your *affections* and *inclinations* is made the STANDARD of explaining the word ; or when you are determined, as it were, before hand with respect to what you would have, and then interpret the promise in favours of your own inclination, more than in a suitableness to what is most agreeable to God's word, or needful for the party you are concerned about. We are ready to mistake a promise, and influences from heaven, as if the design of them were just to humour our present apprehension and judgment ; whereas after-experience may discover that we were mistaken. Job's friends were under a special influence from heaven in all that they spoke concerning Job ; but that influence they were under, came to them when they were under a very gross misapprehension concerning

cerning Job, as if he had been a hypocrite; and accordingly they misapplied that influence they were under, to their present misapprehension; and so went on in their mistake, accusing Job, till the Lord discovered their error. So people may get promises, and adapt them to their misapprehension, whether for or against these they are exercised about, making God's word to bear a sense that most favours their own present sway, inclination, or apprehension; hence many of the Lord's people have found themselves brought under very melancholy disappointments, through their inadvertency this way. Which should learn us sobriety, and wisdom, and holy circumspection, in applying promises of this sort, that Satan get no advantage, to the weakning of faith, and razing the foundation thereof with respect to other promises.

**ELEVENTH CASE.** *How shall I judge of a promise that I have got, when the QUITE CONTRARY to what I thought was promised to me, hath fallen out in providence? How shall I maintain honourable thoughts of the divine faithfulness in that case?*

**ANSW. 1.** *Let God be true, and every man a liar.* You ought to take with ignorance and error in applying and using the promise; and, at the same time, give God the glory of his faithfulness, believing that he will be true to his word, however providence seem to contradict the promise.

2. Perhaps you did not know at that time what God was saying to you. As Christ said to Peter, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*: so he may say to some, *What I speak, thou understandest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter.*

3. Perhaps you have not given God his *day*, by waiting till the time that he designed for the accomplishment; may be it is coming: or, if you have given him his day, you have not given him his *due*, by being *fully persuaded*, that *he that hath promised was able to perform*; and, by *believing against hope.*

4. Perhaps you mistake the *way* and *manner* wherein God designed to make good the promise to you; *His way is in the deep, and his footsteps in the mighty waters,*

He makes the promise of heaven run, as it were, thro' hell before the accomplishment thereof, that so *the trial of faith may be precious*. He accomplishes the promise of glory, through misery; the promise of liberty, thro' bondage and calamity. Judge not of his faithfulness by outward appearances, otherwise you will never believe his word. If you get a bright promise, you may get a dark cloud upon the back of it, to keep you humble, and to try if your *faith be the evidence of things not seen*, or if it can see invisible things through visible impediments, as Abraham's faith did.—There was much invisible glory and excellency held forth in that promise that was made to Mary the mother of Jesus, Luke i. 30,—33. No doubt, Mary thought she would be a happy woman while she lived; and that her Son, our Lord Jesus, would be a great man, even in worldly respects: for we see how the apostles themselves dreamed of a temporal earthly kingdom that Christ should have, as the rest of the Jews did: no doubt, I say, she thought of much temporal happiness, splendour, and grandeur to her Son, even here; but, that she might not live in that mistake, see how the Lord directed old Simeon to speak to her, when he had the child JESUS in his arms, Luke ii. 34, 35.—Thus you see here promises, and God's way of accomplishing them, may be mistaken. O Sirs, see his way to be glorious and honourable.

TWELFTH CASE. *Whether may one conclude himself to be a child of promise, that never found ANY PROMISE come in with power to his soul?* 'Why, says one, 'I am in no danger of mistaking the promise that way you was alledging; for, I get no promise in that manner born home upon me, and this makes me many times doubt whether or not I can be a child of promise: I hear of some getting promises with life and power set home upon them, but I know nothing of that: and therefore I would know, if this be consistent with a believing state.'

ANSW. The dispensation of grace towards the children of promise, is various: I cannot say they have all the same experience of words of promise darted in, as it were,



were, from heaven upon their hearts ; but this I will say of all the children of promise, that there is some word of grace or other, whatever way they get it, on which they were made to hope ; for they are *begotten again to a lively hope by the word of the gospel* : and can in some measure say, *Lord, remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope*. If all the promises of the Bible be alike to you, and you was never *begotten to a lively hope*, by one of them more than another, how can you be a child of promise, when the promise hath never opened its womb to bring you forth any faith or hope in your heart ?

THIRTEENTH CASE. *Whether may a man take a promise that is not GIVEN him, or apply a promise that God does not allow him to apply ?*

ANSW. I. All the promises are given in the gospel-offer, to be received ; and it is the sin of gospel-hearers, that they do not *take and apply* what God gives, but rather put away Christ and the promise from themselves, and live in unbelief.

2. People may take and apply a promise amiss, and ruin themselves in their way of taking, when they take the promise to themselves, not by *faith*, but by *fancy*, and strong imagination : and, indeed, the faith of many is nothing but a strong fancy and opinion ; a damnable faith.

3. People may take and apply the promise amiss, to their own ruin, when they take it, but not out of *God's hand*, and upon his authority ; whereas true faith receives the word, *not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe*, 1 Theff. ii. 13.

4. People may take and apply the promise amiss, and may be said to take what is not given, when they take it, but not as *given*, and for the *end and design* for which it is given. The promise is given to make you holy, as well as to make you happy ; but if you take it to make you secure, and to give you a latitude and liberty in sin, and so to abuse the grace of God unto licentiousness, then you are but *despising the goodness of*

God, and treasuring up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath : but if you take the promise by faith, believing and applying it to yourself ; if you take it out of God's hand, and take it as given, and for the holy ends for which it is given, then you need not fear that you take what is not given you ; God allows and commands you thus to take.

FOURTEENTH CASE. *How may the promises be improved, that, in all probability, will not be FULFILLED in our day?*

ANSW. (1.) We are to live and die in the *faith* of them, Heb. xi. 13.—(2.) We ought to search the *periods of time* wherein they are to be accomplished, Dan. ix. 2. compared with 1 Peter i. 10, 11.—(3.) We ought, with *patience*, to expect the accomplishment, Heb. x. 35, 36.—(4.) We must not judge of the accomplishment by *seemingly contradictory providences* ; for *the Lord is not slack concerning his promise*, but he will take his own time and way, which sometimes is very mysterious.

FIFTEENTH CASE. *Whether may a child of promise have God speaking to him in a promise savingly, and yet be not KNOW it?*

ANSW. I doubt not but there may be young children of promise, like young Samuel, to whom the Lord spake again and again, and he thought it was Eli ; so the Lord may be speaking to some, and speaking to their heart, and they may be so little acquainted with the Lord, as to think it is but the minister that is speaking. However, these whom the Lord begins to speak graciously and powerfully unto, he will make them know his voice, and bring them to more acquaintance with him. But, in case any hereupon presume they are children of promise, though they do not know it ; there are these things they will know something of, who are the children of promise.—They know that, by nature, they are *strangers to the covenant of promise* ; and that, instead of the promise, they are under the threatening of the law by nature ; and, under the apprehension thereof, they have fled to Christ and the promise.—They know, that all the

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*spiritual life* they have, is by virtue of the promise, or the grace of God in Christ; the promise hath given life to their faith, life to their hope, life to their desire, life to their repentance and mortification; *Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, &c. Thy word hath quickened me.*—They know that the promise of God is *good security* for heaven and eternal life; and they take it as such.—They know that the security of the promise depends upon the *blood of Christ*; they are all *Yea and Amen in Christ*, and upon the faithfulness of God, the oath of God; therefore their dependence is thereupon. In a word, they are *prizers* of the promise, and *pleaders* of the promise, *applicers* of the promise; and have communion with God, in Christ, by the means of the promise. †

*Use 4.* I come now to an use of *exhortation*, which may be directed, 1. To *unbelievers*, who have no faith, and consequently no special actual interest in the promise. 2. To *believers*, that are the actual children of promise. 3. To *all* in general.

*First*, To *unbelievers*, that are *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise*. O seek to be *the children of promise*, as Isaac; I mean, to have it made evident to you that you are so. Some *motives* and some *directions* I would here offer to you.

*1st*, For *motives*. I shall only propose that you consider whose children you are, while you are not the children of promise; particularly, whose children you are by *nature*, and whose children you are by *nation*, and so by remote or immediate parentage.

[1.] Consider whose children you are by *nature*. (1.) You are the *children of the devil*, 1 John iii. 10.; even the race of the apostate Adam; *Children of the wicked one*, Matth. xiii. 38. *Ye are of your father the devil*, John viii. 44.—(2.) You are the *children of iniquity*, Hosea x. 9.—(3.) You are the *children of disobedience*,

† It is probable this ends Sermon LXX. preached on the Sabbath.

dience, Eph. ii. 2. and v. 6.—(4.) You are the *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3.—(5.) The children of the curse, *curst children*, 2 Peter ii. 14.—(6.) You are the *children of the night and of darkness*, 1 Thess. v. 5.—(7.) You are the *children of perdition*, John xvii. 12.—(8.) You are the *children of hell*, Matth. xxiii. 15.—(9.) *Children of the flesh*, Rom. ix. 8.—(10.) The *children of the bond-woman*, as in the context.—From these epithets, given to these in our state in scripture, you may gather what a sad and doleful condition you are into, that are not the children of promise.

[2.] Consider whose children you are by *nation*, and that whether by remote national descent, or by immediate parentage.

(1.) By remote *national descent*, as Scotsmen and Scottswomen. Though this be what concerns you all in common, I suppose, who hear me in this place; yet some affecting considerations may be drawn therefrom, for inducing you to be restless till you get some evidence of your being the children of promise. Why, by virtue of your Scottish birth, more remotely considered,

1. You are the children of *Pagans*, a heathen brood. It may be truly said of us, *Thy birth and thy nativity was of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite*, Ezek. xvi. 3. For, before the gospel came first to be published in Scotland, if we look a thousand and some hundred of years backward, we will find we are nothing but a Pagan brood; the children of as blind and brutish idolaters, as ever were in the world. Owen, in his *Theologumena* (besides what historians relate) discovers the cursed idolatry of Britain, that our forefathers were drowned into: their gods were many: and, among the rest, these from whom we derive to this day the ordinary names we give to the days of the week, as Sunday, that was dedicate to the Sun; and Monday, to the Moon; Tuesday, to Twisco; Wednesday, to Woden; Thursday, to Thor: Friday, to Friga, or Venus; and Saturday, to Saturn. They offered human sacrifices to  
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their imaginary deities, in the most cruel manner, which I cannot here enlarge upon. However, we are of a Pagan extract, an idolatrous brood: we have no claim to Abraham as our father; we are not, by birth, of Shem's family, the family of the faithful; and never had we been in a better condition, had not the *Lord persuaded Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem.*

2. You are the children of *Papists*, to come a little nearer-hand. We, as Scots, are of the lineage of Antichrist, a Popish brood; for, after gross Paganism was abolished by the gospel-light, that God sent to Scotland, a cloud of Popery and Antichristian darkness, idolatry, and superstition, overspread the land, or several hundred years before the Reformation, wherein the Lord brought out of that mystical Babylon: however, when we look back to these dark times, we may see ourselves to be but a generation of Babylonish brats. It is hardly two hundred years since our forefathers were all black Egyptians, and many in Scotland are not yet brought out of that popish Egypt to this day; many never had their hearts truly brought out of it, and are longing to be back again to it.

3. You are, even as Scots, children of *Apostates*, a *perjured brood*; the offspring of *covenant-breakers*; a *perfidious race*. We, in our forefathers, have been guilty of the most gross and vile abominations of swearing and forswearing, even since our reformation from Popery: oaths upon oaths have been taken; and some oaths *contradictory* to the former. I speak not only of private and personal, customary and bloody oaths, which abound among all ranks; but even of *public oaths* imposed by law\*. What nation under heaven have changed

\* Our Author here, no doubt, hath his eye on the troublesome persecuting period in the last century, under the reigns of Charles II. and James VII. where many wicked, self-contrary, and insinuating oaths and bonds were imposed on the subjects, particularly on the strenuous adherers to the Reformation principles attained unto in that reforming period between 1638, and 1649.; such as The oath of *Allegiance, or Supremacy*; the *Instrument Assertory*; the *Declaration*; the *Bond of Peace*; the *Bond of Regularity*; the *Test*, &c. And in regard our Author speaks of oaths *contradictory* to our Covenants, he probably alludes to the DECLARATION and TEST, which

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changed their religion so often, and the government of the church so frequently, as Scotland? May not the Lord say of us, as he said of Israel, *My people have committed two great evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living water, and digged to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water?* May he not bid us *pass over to Chittim*, and to heathenish nations, and see if they have changed their gods, their glory for that which doth not profit? Jer. ii. 10, 11, 13. But especially, was there ever a nation entered more solemnly into covenant with God? And was there ever any nation that not only broke, but burnt the covenant of their God, and cried it up for a sin of rebellion to own and plead for the covenant of their God, as Scotland hath done? Was there ever any nation ashamed of their glory as we have been?

4. We, as the people of Scotland, are the children of an *unthankful nation*, and an *ungrateful blood*, that have sinned against old and late mercies. 1. Against *old mercies*. God hath an old kindness for Scotland; and we are a race that have sinned against very antient love: God sent the gospel very early to Scotland, even a few years after the ascension of Christ; tho' Christianity was not established by law, till about the two hundred and third year of our LORD, in the reign of Donald the first, yet it was received by many in Scotland, before the second of the ten primitive persecutions: for, as historians tells us, and even the Roman history confirms it, many eminent Christians fled from that persecution even unto Scotland, because they were as-  
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*inter alia*, disowned the binding obligation of our Covenants, National and Solemn League, and were framed and calculated to unhinge our Covenanted Reformation, and be as a grave-stone thereupon: The words of the *Declaration* are remarkable; wherein the subscriber [which was every one admitted to places in church and state,] is required to *affirm and declare*, "That it is unlawful upon any pretext whatsoever, to enter into leagues and covenants;—that the *National Covenant*, (as explained in the year 1638.) and the *Solemn League and Covenant* were, *in themselves*, UNLAWFUL OATHS;—and that there lieth no obligation on any of the subjects, from the said Oaths, to endeavour any change or alteration, either of church or state, from the present establishment by the laws of the kingdom." By which declaration, *perjury* is made a necessary qualification to invest a person with any office, civil or ecclesiastical.

fured that the gospel was received there ; and that persecution being about the sixty-ninth year of Christ, the gospel-light that shined in Scotland before that time, behoved to have made a very early entrance here ; which, as some tell us, was occasioned by the persecution that the Jews raised against the apostles and disciples of Christ, who thereupon leaving Jerusalem, and Judea, went up and down the world, speaking to every people in their own language : and that these who came to our nothern parts, were the disciples of the apostle JOHN. However this may be, yet it is generally owned that we were among the very first fruits of the Gentiles brought in to the Lord Jesus : therefore, I say, we are a people that have sinned against very antient love, early kindness, and old mercies. 2. Against *late mercies*. Need I here mention the glorious Reformation from Popery, the merciful Revolution, and manifold deliverances from Prelacy, and arbitrary power ? These things are of later date, and better known ; together with the great gospel-light, and innumerable mercies of this kind, that we have sinned against, inso-much as we have sinned away many national mercies, and are become bond-slaves ; having so far sold ourselves, that our posterity may say, we are the children of slaves. And have we not sinned away many spiritual mercies, many gospel-privileges, and sacred liberties ? How is gospel-light darkened, gospel-truth adulterate and sophisticate with legal mixture ?

(2.) Consider whose children you are by *immediate parentage*. Let none boast of their birth and pedigree ; even as they are children of the present generation, every one hath reason to say, with David, *What am I ? and what is my father's house ?* The Lord gives the Jews a black name, Isa. lvii. 3. *The sons of sorcerers, the seed of the adulterer and whore ;* because their immediate parents were idolaters, they are called the children of whoredoms : so perhaps, it may be said of many here, that some are of a bastard-brood, the children of whoremongers and adulterers ; some are of a thievish brood, a race of robbers and thieves ; some are of a graceless pedigree, descended of wicked parents, that

never knew any thing of God : some of a malignant race, the children of these that were enemies to God, and the work of God, and the power of godliness ; some of a viperish brood, of whom it may be said, as John the Baptist to the Jews, *O generation of vipers, haters of God, and bitter enemies to the cross of Christ, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* Oh! how far from, and unlike to the children of promise are such? Or, if any here be the children of gracious and religious parents, yet considering what even they were by nature, as well as others, have you not reason to say, as it is, Deut. xxvi. 5. *A Syrian ready to perish was my father.* Whether your immediate parents were good or bad, you have matter of humiliation : if they were good, then it may be humbling unto you, that you have not walked in their imitable footsteps, nor followed their faith and holiness ; and you are their children and offspring, merely as they were sinners, not as they were saints : if they were bad, then without controversy it is a humbling consideration, they begat you after their own likeness, and you remain *children of wrath and disobedience*, like them, and so you are their rightful and immediate heirs, heirs to all the curses and threatenings that they were under.

Now, should not this stir you up to be restless till you know that you are among the *children of promise*, to consider whose children you are by nature, by nation, and by immediate parentage? especially when it is also considered, what a wrathful heritage you have, by being of such a Syrian brood ; for, by reason of your native pedigree, you are under dreadful plagues, particularly the plague of sin's pollution, and the plague of God's curse.

1. Under the plague of *sin's pollution* : not only destitute of God's image, which man had in his primitive innocent state ; but polluted and defiled throughout the whole man, like children *cast forth to the open field, to the loathing of thy person ; not salted at all, nor seasoned at all : Not washed with water, but lying in their blood*, Ezek. xvi. 4, 5. every finger of your hand, every bit of your flesh and bones is but a clod of corruption ;



tion ; every member of the body, every faculty of the soul, is but a heap of pollution and filthiness ; *Altogether become filthy*, Psal. xiv. 3.

2. Under the plague of *God's curse*, under the sentence of the law ; the curse thereof is against us as soon as we are born ; *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. And so, while you are not children of promise, you are nothing but children of the threatening, and heirs of damnation, *Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise ; having no hope, and without God in the world*, Ephes. ii. 12. Is it not sad to be such plagued and cursed children.

Again, as you would consider whose children you are, and consequently what a *sad state* you are in, while you are not the *children of promise* ; so consider also, for your excitation and upstirring in this matter, whose children you *would be*, if you were the *children of promise* ; and how *happily they are stated* that are so.—Why, these that are the children of promise, (1.) They are the *children of God*, Gal. iii. 26. ; of the *living God*, Rom. ix. 26.—(2.) They are the *children of the kingdom*, in that sense mentioned, Mat. xiii. 38.—(3.) They are the *true children of Zion*, Psal. cxlix. 2.—(4.) The *children of Jerusalem, which is above*, Gal. iv. 26.—(5.) They are the *children of light*, Luke xvi. 8.—(6.) The *children of wisdom*, Mat. xi. 19.—(7.) They are the *children of Abraham*, in a true spiritual sense, Gal. iii. 7.—(8.) They are the *children of liberty and of the free-woman*, Gal. iv. 31.—(9.) The *children of the resurrection*, Luke xx. 30.—(10.) The children of grace and glory ; *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17.—These are not bare names they have ; no, they import the *unspeakable happiness* here, and especially hereafter, that belong to the *children of promise*.

2dly, For *direction*. If you would put in for a share among the children of promise, I offer you these three or four advices.

1. O sinner, see, and know, and believe your relation, by nature, to the *threatening*, and seek the Spirit of God to convince you thereof. The Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, must bind your conscience and the threatening together, and apply the law-threatening before ever you will have any due concern about being the children of promise. If you know not God as a threatening God, you will have little care about knowing him as a promising God. Till the soul be brought to say, "Ah! nothing but the threatening of hell and "damnation belongs to me; I am a child of wrath." never will it value the privilege of being a child of promise. What measure of conviction, or legal humiliation, is necessary, I determine not; but if, in some measure, you do not see yourselves under the sentence of the law, how can you ever relish the promise of the gospel, and see your need thereof? but then, having seen your need,

2. See your *concern* in the promise, and your *claim* thereto, as members of the visible church. Though, by natural generation, you have no part in it, yet by Heaven's gracious dispensation you have a claim to it; *The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call*, Acts ii. 39. The promise is left to the *gospel-church*, Heb. iv. 1. And belongs to them no less than it did to the church of the Jews, Rom. ix. 4. The promise is a letter from heaven, backed for you, sinner: take, and open, and read it, with application to yourselves; for it is a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation*, declaring that *Jesus Christ came to save sinners*. Tho' you have no possession of the thing promised till you believe; yet you have as good a right to take possession by believing, as the command of God and the call of the gospel can give you; and this right was sealed to you in baptism. See your claim.

3. *Plead* this claim, as you may see the Lord calls you to do, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Where, after the covenant of promise is opened and laid before you, the Lord says, *For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*. Plead then, that a sovereign  
Lord,

Lord, who *shows mercy on whom he will show mercy*, would give you the *new heart* there promised, the *new spirit*, the *heart of flesh*, and put his Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in his statutes, and be your God, and make you his people, according to the promise. Plead, that he, who hath given you a promise to plead, may give you the grace of the promise; which when you get, then shall you have evidence of your being children of the promise. And in this way,

4. Be *restless* till the promise be powerfully applied, and till you feel the virtue thereof. Cry for power to accompany the gospel-dispensation, that so the promise may have strength to bring forth children, and to bring forth you particularly, as a child of promise, *begotten to a lively hope* thereby, of his own sovereign will, James i. 18.; and of his free mercy, Titus iii. 5. You can, indeed, no more contribute to your own regeneration by the word, or to you becoming a child of promise, than a child can contribute to its own production, or a creature to its own creation. The new creature is the product of God's almighty efficacious power allenary: yet as this power works upon the rational faculties, when God begins the good work; so he calls us, as rational creatures, to use the means and ordinances of his appointment, and to be found in that way wherein his power and grace uses to ride prosperously. Therefore, seeing the ordinances are the *golden pipes*, Zech. iv. 12. through which the oil of grace runs, attend upon them; and seeing the promises of God are the vessels whereby God conveys and infuses his grace into us, apply yourselves unto them; for these *exceeding great and precious promises* are given us, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. Now, seeing the promise is but the vessel, and Christ is the fountain of grace, in whom all the promises are *Yea* and *Amen*; therefore, in using that promise, bring the promise to Christ, as a man would bring a vessel to the fountain, and see to get the vessel filled with grace and power and virtue there, that out of his fulness you may receive grace for grace,

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John i. 16. Then shall you appear to be the *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, and as the children of promise.

5. In a word, Pray the Lord to enable you to *cast out the bond-woman*, to give up with the law, and renounce it, not as a rule of obedience, but as a rule of acceptance, and as a covenant of works, and condition of life; having no expectation of life by the deeds of the law, or by any personal righteousness of your own, but resting all-enarily upon the free promise of God in Christ, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, according to the gospel-method; that in this way, under the conduct of the Spirit of promise, you may become the *children of promise*, and be the *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, Galat. iii. 27.; and the *children of the free-woman*, Galat. iv. 31.—Be restless in the use of means, till God put power and virtue in the promise, for these ends.

*Secondly*, The *second* branch of our exhortation proposed was to *believers*, that are actually the children of promise; and our exhortation to them is, that being so, they would *live upon the promise by faith*. And here again I would offer some *motives*; and then some *directions*, in order to the believer's living by faith upon the promise.

*1st*, For *motives*. O believer in Christ, and child of the promise, *Take heed lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*; and see that your life be a life of faith upon the promise.—And there are especially two considerations I would urge, for exciting you to this life, namely, 1. The excellency of the promise. 2. The excellency of the life of faith thereupon.

[1.] Consider the *excellency of the promises*. The apostle says, 2 Peter i. 4. they are *exceeding great and precious promises*. Some things may be *great*, and yet not *precious*; but the promises are both *great* and *precious*; and not only so, but *exceeding great* and *exceeding precious*. There is a treasure here, exceeding what tongue can utter, or heart conceive. You may consider

sider the excellency of the promise, in these following respects, namely,

1. The promises are excellent and precious, in respect of their *author*, which is God; *All the promises of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us*, 2 Cor. i. 20. Where God is declared to be the author, for they are the *promises of God*: and God is the end of them, they are to the *glory of God*. If you look into the promise, you will find all the attributes, and all the names of God there; such as, the *love of God*: O how does his love, mercy, and grace appear, in making the promise! It is free love that makes him a Promiser, and thereupon a debtor to us.—Again, the *power of God* is manifested, in making good the promise: God said, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent*: and God hath been obliged to shew his power to make it good in Christ Jesus, to the seed of Abraham by miracles, and to the children of Israel by wonders: it hath cost many marvellous operations to make good his word in several ages to his people.—Again, His *faithfulness* is here displayed: in this is the security of the promise; *Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself*, 2 Tim. ii. 13.—Again, His *wisdom* comes in, to give forth these promised mercies in time of need, and in a suitability to our wants. You have a remarkable word, Psa. cxxxviii. 2. *I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name*; SUPER OMNE NOMEN, *above every name*. God is pleased to make his word above every name; and all his names carry his word upon their shoulders. And, are not these then precious and excellent promises, that are thus enameled with love, mercy, grace, power, faithfulness, wisdom, and all the other names of God? And shall such a treasure ly by us, without being improved?

2. The promises are excellent and precious, in respect of their *object*, or the person to whom they are made, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator  
and

and Redeemer ; not to the elect immediately, but to Christ for them ; *Now to Abraham and his seed was the promise made : he says not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one : And to thy seed, which is Christ, Gal. iii. 16.* Had the promise been made to man, then it had been made to *seeds* ; that is, to diverse ; as to one of the Jews, and to one of the Gentiles ; as of divers kinds ; but it was to *one* ; that is, both to Jews and Gentiles, which are both but one seed in Christ Jesus. All the promises are in him, 2 Cor. i. 20. ; that is, in Christ ; and with him, for the sake of the redeemed. The promises are so precious, that God would not trust them in the hands of man ; nay, nor in the hands of angels ; but only in the hands of the *angel of the covenant*, Jesus Christ.

3. They are excellent and precious in respect of their *price*. We use to value things according to the price that they cost us : Now, the price of the promise was the blood of the Son of God ; hence it is said, 1 Peter i. 18, 19. *We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot.* Would we not think that thing dearly bought, that should cost us the blood of one son, or of one daughter, nay, of one only son ? How precious then is the purchase that cost the blood of God's only Son ? Let this stir us up highly to prize the promise.

4. They are excellent and precious, in regard of the *reality* of them. The promises are not vain toys or empty notions ; nay, all the promises are so many pardons, so many blessings, so many bounties, so many substances of the greatest reality that can be imagined. Gold is counted the heaviest metal ; and, the purer the gold is, the weightier it is. And all the promises, are as gold seven times tried, and purified in the fire. You read, Heb. xi. 1. that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* How so ? because faith does see the substance afar off laid up in the promise. The believer sees and weighs them in the balance of faith, and finds them substantial ; and therefore, ver. 13. the worthies *died in the faith, not having*

having received the promises; but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them.— The stars are of a vast wonderful bigness; but they seem not to be so, because they are at such a vast wonderful distance from us, even many millions of miles; so thus the saints saw the promises afar off, as many great luminaries and lights, and embraced or saluted them: and, did they embrace shadows? No; they were solid things. That must be a reality with a witness, that hath the attributes of God to fill it up: every creature hath so much weight as it hath of God in it; every promise is filled up with God's love, with his mercy, power, faithfulness, and all the names of God; they have a whole God to fill them up. *Take heed, therefore, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, by neglecting to live upon the promise.*

5. The promises are excellent and precious, in regard of their *certainty* and *immutability*. Riches have wings, and flee away; honours have wings, and flee away; frames have wings, and flee away: but God may as soon cease to be God, as not to be true to his word, and sure in his promise: learn, therefore, to be sure of the promise, that you may have something that will bide by you, and stick close; surely they shall not fail. *Though all men forsake thee, says Peter, yet will not I: but the promise says more, Surely and certainly, though all men forsake thee, yet will not I; though friends and relations, health and strength, and life forsake thee, yet will not I; though frames, enlargements, and enjoyments fail thee, yet will not I. All flesh is grass, and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever, Isaiah xl. 6, 7, 8.* You will take the word of a great man, because his word is his honour: but God hath done more than passed his word; for he hath added his oath: Heb. vi. 17. *Therefore God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lye, we might have*

*strong consolation.* O what a happy people are you, for whose sake he is willing to swear? And, on the contrary, How must they be among the worst of men, that will not trust God with his word and oath! Is not his honour concerned to make good the same? If the promises were to be made good by angels, we might question them: but God being the Promiser, and so obliging himself to be the Performer, how can you question them? they are sure; *Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire,* 2 Sam. xxiii. 6.— Hence I shall add,

6. The promises are excellent and precious, in regard of their *fulness*. All your salvation lies there, according to that word just now cried: what can you desire, that is not the promise? What salvation do you need, that is not here? The promise contains salvation from sin, from the guilt of sin, from the filth of sin, from the power of sin, from the sting of sin, from the stain of sin, from the fruit of sin, from the fountain of sin, and from the very being of sin at length. Here are promises of salvation from wrath, from the law, from justice, from death, from hell, from the world, and from the devil, and unreasonable men; salvation from troubles, and reproaches, and fears, and doubts, and faintings; salvation from desertion and despondency, from wants and weakness, from wrongs and injuries done to your names or otherwise: salvation from all woes and weariness; salvation from backsliding and apostacy; salvation from plagues and all imperfections: innumerable positive salvations and mercies; pardoning mercy, sin-subduing mercy, healing mercy, conquering mercy, comforting mercy, upholding mercy, grace increasing mercy, and perfecting mercy; sanctifying mercy to sanctify all providences, all crosses, all relations; defending mercy, strengthening mercy, helping mercy, following mercy, enlightening, enlivening, enlarging mercy; mercy for supplying your wants, dispelling your fears, covering your

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infirmities, hearing your prayers, ordering all things for your good; and salvation to everlasting life, glory, and immortality.—I have in these few words named as good as fifty pieces of salvation contained in the promise of the new covenant: but though I should go on to mention a thousand, yet the text will say more; *this is all my salvation*. There are promises here for all sorts of men; for kings and subjects; for noble and ignoble; for parent and child; for master and servant; for ministers and people; for husband and wife; for married and unmarried; for them that have children, and them that are barren; for these that are whole, and these that are sick; for them that are prisoners, and them that are in debt; for the blind, and the lame, and the diseased; for the soldier and the seaman; for the living and for the dying.—O the infinite variety that lies in the promise! What an infinite treasure is here, that cannot be exhausted! There can be none poor that have a promise; there can be none rich that want a promise; and none so rich as these that have the promises: *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Some will say of a monied man, O! *he is worth God knows what*. Indeed it is an idle way of speaking; why, what do they mean? such an one is worth even a belly-full of earth, and a back-load of thick clay: *Lord deliver me, says David, from the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure*, Psalm xvii. 14. Only believers have a truefulness; and only God knows what they are worth: the promise is full of God; and God only knows what is God's worth: he that fills the pipe with the spring, only knows what a believer is worth. As it was said of Jacob, *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* so, who can count the treasure of the believer? As the heaven is full of stars, so the Bible is full of promises, and the promise full of blessings, suiting all cases and conditions. Oh then! that there should be such a treasure, and we should not know it, nor be acquaint with it; no not one of twenty. Let this be matter of humiliation.

and let the believer be more careful to live upon the promises, seeing they are so excellent and precious.—So much for the *excellency* of the promise.

[2.] Consider the *excellency* of the *life of faith* upon the promise, for moving you to live upon the same by faith: and the excellency thereof may be viewed in these particulars following, besides many others that might be added.

1. The life of faith upon the promise is a most *quiet* and *peaceable* life; *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,* Isaiah xxviii. 3. Men would live at ease and quiet, but they seek this life among the creatures, where it is not to be found; they that seek it there, will find themselves deceived. Greatness and honour in this world, is mixed with gall and vinegar, instead of sweetness. A life of true peace and contentment is not to be had in the creature: all things in this world cannot put us in such a peaceable condition as we would desire, and that because the creature is a mixed thing, and a mutable thing.

(1.) It is a *mixed* thing. The best life here below hath some sweet, and some bitter; some good, and some bad; some rest, and some trouble: and it does not fall out so by accident, but by divine ordination. There is not all quietness to be had in meat and drink, nor all rest to be had in the bed; the best of counsels are not all good, nor the best of armies all strength: nay, it is a mixed contentment that is here below.

(2.) It is a *mutable* thing, as well as mixed.—All creatures have their changes; like the moon, sometimes increasing, and sometimes decreasing; and like the sea, now ebbing, and now flowing. Sometimes we are in a high and honourable, anon in a poor and miserable condition; merry to-day, and sad to-morrow: therefore, says Christ, *Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,* The creature is both mutable and momentary; it vanisheth, and cannot give any content; *Your fathers, where are they?* Where is your husband, woman? Why, this day in the warm bed, to-morrow in the cold grave, Where is your wife, man?

man? To-day in the bosom of the husband, to-morrow in the bosom of a coffin. The very quintessence of all the creatures cannot yield the least drop of happiness, nor a grain-weight of solid peace: it is only a God in Christ that can give satisfaction to the soul; therefore he says, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*—If beauty, riches, honour, should promise any such things they would be liars; *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, but still cast forth mire and dirt.* Whether the waters of the sea ebb or flow, they are never at rest; whether they run north or south, they are still in motion; so the wicked, which way soever they turn, they are never at rest. But now, soul, come here, and you may have the life you desire to live; true rest and quiet is in the life of faith, and nowhere else. It is by faith on the promise that a happy event is secured: you need not trouble yourself here, but only use the means, and leave the event to the Lord: as Jacob, Gen. xliii. he must starve, or send his beloved son Benjamin away: well, says Jacob, *If it must needs be so, take now your brother, and arise, and go again, and take money with you:* he uses the mean, and then he puts all into the hand of God; *God almighty give you favour before the man,* verse 14. To this purpose, *Paul goes bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall him; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide him: but none of these things trouble me,* says he; *neither count I my life dear to me,* Acts xx. 22, 23, 24. Faith is a casting the burden upon the Lord, on which the soul is easy; *Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee,* Psalm lv. 22. Whatever care it hath, it devolves it on the Lord, and so keeps no anxious care behind, and hath its warrant from the Lord; *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your request known to God,* Phil. iv. 6. There is nothing here ado, but to pray and give thanks, and to leave it on God to make answer for all. Men that live by sense cannot

cannot do so; but as the creature fails and changes, so does their hope and trust fail and change; but faith answers all doubts and objections, dissolves all fears, and has happiness bound up in God's glory; *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety*, Psalm iv. 8.

2. The life of faith on the promise, or upon Christ by the promise, is the most *free* and *independent* life that the creature can live here in this world, while others live but a bare servile life, even while they think that they are free.—I name two pieces of freedom that the believer hath, besides many that might be mentioned.

(1.) It is a free life in opposition to the *law*, as a covenant, both in the command and curse of it.—On the one hand he is free from the *command* of the law, as a covenant of works; he is no more obliged to *do*, that he may *live*: he is *not under the law, but under grace*, Rom. vi. 14. Though he be more than ever under the obligation of the law, as a *rule of obedience*, for the *love of Christ constrains him thereunto*, and to testify his gratitude, to glorify his Lord and his God; yet he is under no obligation to it as a *rule of acceptance*: nay, he does not owe it a farthing, as it is a condition of life: he holds his title to life another way, even by Christ's obedience unto death.—Hence also, on the other hand, he is free from the *curse* of the law; *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. Being a child of promise, and living upon it, he is no more a child of the *threatening*, nor of the *curse*, but delivered from all *liableness* and *obligation to vindictive wrath*. This is an article of our faith, however debated by some\*; an article which, I think, is worth the contending for, and that for several reasons.

\* Our Author here has probably his eye on the conduct of the General Assembly, *Annis* 1720 and 1722. in their condemning, *simpliciter*, six propositions, called by them, *Antinomian Paradoxes*.—Whoever inclines, may see this affair set in its proper light, in the Associate Presbytery's Act, concerning the *Doctrine of Grace*, pages 53, —67.

1. Because it is an article of the Bible, declaring that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1. ; and that the law hath nothing to lay to their charge, because they are *free from it*, ver. 2. and are not under it.

2. It is an article of our Confession of Faith, founded on the scripture, and to which we are solemnly bound by National Covenants, “ That the believer is “ not under the law as a covenant of works, to be “ thereby either justified or condemned † :” and if the law cannot condemn them, how can they ever be liable to that vindictive wrath, which is nothing else but law-condemnation.

3. To assert this obligation of the believer, and liableness to hell, is inconsistent with the perfection of justification ; for which our Larger Catechism says, in point of justification, “ That the believer is freed from “ the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in “ this life ‡ .”

4. To bring the believer under this obligation, by his new sins, is derogatory from the perfection of that *glorious righteousness* : that law-fulfilling, justice-satisfying, and wrath-appeasing righteousness of Christ, with which the believer is invested. This robe of righteousness is put upon him, and it shall never be taken off him again : for, *the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all that believe*, Rom. iii. 22. It is upon him for ever, without any intermission or interruption, so long as his union with Christ remains firm ; and, behold, he is *betrothed unto him for ever*. It is true, the believer sins deserve hell ; and, I think, they deserve it more than the sins of others, because they sin against more love and light : and the more their sins are, the more are they liable to *fatherly wrath and chastisements*, as our Confession declares || : but from the *desert of sin*, to infer an *obligation to hell*, or *vindictive wrath*, which is all one, were to destroy the very nature of *pardon*, which removes the

† Confession of Faith, chap. xix. § 6.

‡ Larger Catechism quest. 77.

|| Chap. v. § 5. and chap. vi. § 5.

*obligation to wrath*, but cannot remove the *desert of sin*. The intrinsic demerit of sin flows from the very *nature of sin*, and cannot be separate therefrom; whereas obligation and liability to hell flows from the *threatening of the law*, which, being fully execute upon the Surety, justice itself would be injustice, to demand or bind over the believer to another satisfaction, or threaten him with wrath, though the threatening should never be execute. “For, say some, it is sure as to the event, that believers will never go to hell, though yet their sins make them liable to it.” This is very weak in my opinion: for it was sure as to the event that he should never go to hell, before ever he was a believer; the decree of God, and the death of Christ in his behalf, secured that matter before ever he was born; but now, upon the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, he is not only secured as to the *event*, but secured from the *obligation* to everlasting death. As by Christ’s *active obedience*, the believer is *intituled to heaven*; so, by his *passive obedience*, the believer is *secured from obligation to hell*: his freedom from obligation to death and hell stand as firm upon Christ’s dying, as his title to life upon his doing. And as the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness, not only secures the event that the believer shall go to heaven, but gives him an actual title thereto; so the imputation of Christ’s satisfaction, and passive obedience, not only secures the event that he shall not go to hell, but secures his freedom from all obligation thereto. And now, how the believer, that remains still intituled to eternal life, should notwithstanding be liable to eternal death, is what I do not think any shall be able to make me understand. If a believer’s new sins make him liable to eternal death, then they would also destroy his title to eternal life; and so both parts of his justification would be at once overturned.

Whatever contradiction this doctrine meet with, I little regard it, unless these and the like arguments can be solidly answered, which I gladly despair ever to hear. Believers are not the children of a law-threatening, let be children of wrath, as they were before union to Christ;

Christ ; nay, they are the *children of promise*, not the children of the *bond-woman*, but of the *free*, as Isaac ; and the more faith, the more of this freedom is discerned. And therefore the life of faith, I say, is a free life, in opposition to the bondage of the law.

(2.) It is a free life in opposition to the bondage of *sin*. And this follows of consequence from the former freedom : because they are free from the law, therefore they are from the dominion and slavery of sin ; *Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law but under grace*, Rom. vi. 14. *The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death*, Rom. viii. 2. ; that is, the *covenant of works*, called the *law of sin and death*, because it binds sin and death upon us, till Christ set us free : so it is explained in that little tract annexed to our Confession and Catechisms, intitled, *The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge*. It is the believer only that is free from the servitude of sin, while the rest of the world are servants and slaves thereunto, however they imagine themselves to be free. The rich man thinks his riches serve him, when, in very deed he serves them, and is a slave to them : the ambitious man thinks his honour serves him, while yet he is a slave to it ; the carnal man thinks his lusts and pleasures serve him, while yet he is nothing but a slave to them ; *For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures*, Tit. iii. 3. The wicked are the devil's drudges, their chains rattle at their heels : faith only gives liberty, and makes a man live a free and independent life, infomuch that he depends upon none but God only : *My soul, wait thou only upon God*, says David. The world is mightily mistaken in the choice of their condition ; they desire to live an independent life, and to be beholden to none, and servants to none ; but they seek this life among the creatures, where it is not to be found : it is only attained by the believer, who lives by faith upon a promising God.

3: The life of faith upon Christ in the promise, is the most *fixed* and *unchangeable* life that a soul can live in this world : it is not liable to such mutations and

changes as the life of sense is. He that lives in the changeable creature, as oft as the creature changes and dies, so oft does he, and live a restless life; as Nabal's heart *died away*; so the life of unbelievers is up to-day, and down to-morrow: but faith lives upon a living God, and it is a living faith; the more of this life, the more of fixedness; *My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*, Psalm cxii. 7. And then is the man more in case to serve the Lord without distraction, and to glorify him: *My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise*, Psalm lvii. 7. and cviii. 1.

4. The life of faith on the promise, is a most *spacious* life; whereas the opposite is but a narrow and strait life, and hath hardly room to turn: for, we may soon come to an end of all perfection amongst the creatures; as of the beauty of Absalom; the wisdom of Ahitophel; for there is not enough in the creature: *The eye cannot be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing*, Eccl. i. 8. We cry still, Give more, though we have never so much. Alexander wanted elbow-room, when he wanted another world to conquer.— There is room enough for the body on earth, but not for the soul; because the soul is a vast thing, a noble spirit. But now faith hath heaven and earth to walk in at pleasure: it hath its turns with God; yea, God and all his perfections to walk in: *I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts*; or, as it is in the Hebrew, *I will walk at LARGE*, Psalm cxix. 45.

5. The life of faith is a most *social* life. If a wicked man would live this life, he must indeed forsake his bad company, but he will have better: yea, as we say of the society of some people, they are no company: ill company is worse than no company: but, by faith, we converse with God, and Christ, and the Spirit; with a glorious Trinity, three in one, Eph. ii. 18. and iii. 12. Hence may the believer, that lives by faith, say, as Christ said, John viii. 16. *I am not alone*; why? *The Father was with him*: so the believer is not alone, the whole glorious Trinity is with him; and he is never left alone, for God says to him, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Hebrews xiii. 5. Yea, by  
faith



faith he enters upon a society with a heavenly company; see Heb. xii. 22, 23. Hence,

6. The life of faith is a most *honourable* life. To live upon the promise is very honourable, and that both *subjectively*, with respect to the believer; and *objectively*, with respect to God.

(1.) View it *subjectively*, with respect to the *believer*. What an honourable life is that of faith? It is to live *above the world*; and this is *the honour of all the saints*; while these that are soaked in sense, do ly among the clay, and eat the dust like the serpent; the believer lives a glorious life, having little or nothing ado with the creatures; *Our life is hid with Christ in God*, Col. iii. 3. They have a heaven before their time, while by faith they will what God wills, and are swallowed up in God. O what an honourable life, to live in God, and upon him!

(2.) View it *objectively*, with respect to *God*, it is honourable; for it brings honour and glory to him; *Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God*, Rom. iv. 20.: he gave honour to God by believing. God is more beholden, so to speak, to the poor believer, that lives by faith, than to the greatest potentate in the world, that lives not this life of faith.

QUEST. *What GLORY does faith bring to God?*

ANSW. Even glory to all his attributes and perfections: his *mercy*, in making the promise; his *faithfulness*, in fulfilling the promise; his *power*, in doing, notwithstanding all difficulties in the way; his *wisdom*, in ordering the fittest time and ways of accomplishment; his *all-sufficiency*, in filling the promise with all needful succour.

QUEST. *What WAY does faith glorify God?*

ANSW. Faith glorifies God, both by dependence and by returns.

1. By its *dependence* upon a promising God, when the believer does stay, and rest, and rely wholly upon the Lord: this the carnal man cannot do. Faith can say, I have a God, whom I dare trust, and that is

able to keep that which I have committed to him.— They that mistrust God, do dishonour him; but they that trust him, highly honour him. The believer trusts him, and intrusts himself to him; according to Psalm xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy way to the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* The more we trust him with all our concerns, with our justification, sanctification, salvation, and all according to the promise, the more we honour him.

2. By its returns it does honour and glorify God; for the language of faith is, *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name we give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake,* Psalm cxv. 1. And the believer's design is to study to return praise to God for all his goodness and mercy, saying, *I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up,* Psalm xxx. 1. O! hast thou extolled and lift up me? And shall I not extol thee, and lift up my heart to praise thy name?—What an excellent life is that, which thus extols God, and gives him glory in the highest!—I might here tell you what a pleasant life the life of faith is; O but wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness! And what a profitable life it is; what rich incomes there are this way, while out of Christ's fulness the believer receives grace for grace: what a happy and holy life it is, and how a living by faith makes way for dying in the faith. But let these motives mentioned suffice. What I have said, may make you see what an unspeakable loss you are at, if you be estranged from this life of faith on Christ by the promises.

2dly, I would now offer some directions, some means or helps, in order to the children of promise their living on the promise by faith. And,

[1.] If you would, as children of promise live by faith on the promise; then be convinced of, and afflicted for your unbelief. And, are there not too many witnesses to bear testimony that your life is rather a life of unbelief than faith? Consider, for your conviction herein, these and the like witnesses against you.

1. The first witness is the power and prevalence of sin. Does not this prove that your faith is small, and your

your unbelief great? For, the more faith, the more victory over sin.

2. The second witness is the *strength of worldly-mindedness*. Where this prevails, it argues little faith: *For, this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith*; and, the more faith, the more is the heart determined to count all but loss and dung for Christ.

3. The third witness is your *fears and discouragements* in the day of adversity; *For if thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small*, Prov. xxiv. 10.

4. The fourth witness, to prove your having little of the life of faith, is your *easy and frequent falling* before every temptation and motion towards sin.—No sooner are you tempted, but conquered: corruption is so strong, that you need not be tempted; you are ready to yield without a temptation, or with a very small one.

5. The fifth witness, to prove your unbelief, is *soul-barrenness and unfruitfulness*, and *soul-leanness*; *I said, My leanness, my leanness, two unto me*, Isaiah xxiv. 16.

6. The sixth witness is *sloth and carelessness*, in spiritual duties, and in these duties that are most internal; such as, self-examination, self-resignation, self-judging, self-loathing; praying in the Spirit; watching over the heart; applying the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, the love of Christ, the word of Christ, to your own soul. Faith acts especially in these, and such like duties; and the neglect of these argues little faith, and little of the life thereof.

7. The seventh witness of your unbelief is, the *little growth in grace*, and going *from strength to strength*; *little pressing towards the mark*. No doubt, true grace may have its ebbing and flowing, its waxing and waning, and may, like the sun, be under a cloud; but still it runs its race, and now and then breaks out from under a cloud further advanced.—However, does not your small advance in the Lord's way, discover either the want or the weakness of faith? Together with,

3. Your *low esteem of Christ*, and improvement of him as the Lord your righteousness and strength; seldom triumphing and saying, as it is, Isaiah xlv. 24. *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.*

If I should bring forth all the witnesses that would prove against you, that your unbelief is great, and your faith small, they would be too many.—If you were living by faith, then,

(1.) What means your *ignorance* of, and little *acquaintance* with the promises? God hath given you great and rare promises, and you are a great stranger to them. But, how can there be a fire without fuel? The promises are the fuel of the life of faith.

(2.) What means that *sinking of spirit* that sometimes take place? Out of which David raised himself by faith; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him.* Does not your sinking spirit argue that you are living as much upon the creature, as upon God? As if one should have one foot upon firm ground, and the other upon quick-sand, certainly he would sink into the quick-sand; so a man having one foot upon God, and another upon the creature, he is most subject to fall to the creature.

(3.) What means the *little comfort* you have in the word, if you be living by faith? *This is my comfort in my affliction*, said David, *thy word hath quickened me.* This argued his life of faith; whereas, where there is little comfort from the word, it argues little faith.

(4.) What means your *heart-distractions* about the events and success of your affairs? Surely a life of faith would destroy that life of carking care: Oh! what if my trade should fail me? what if such a debt be lost? what if such a debtor should break? what would I do?

(5.) What means your *self-confidence*? Does not that discover much unbelief? *The true circumcision rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* But, how soon are you swelled with an opinion of yourself, when you do or say any thing that you judge the world may think commendable? O! *Is not this great*

great Babel that I have built? May not I be framed for wisdom and parts? Alas! Faith humbles the man that hath it, and says with the church, *Isaiah xxxvi. 12. Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou hast wrought all our works in us, and FOR us*, as it is in the margin.

(6.) And especially, what means your *estrangement* from Christ? *To them that believe, he is precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 7. But your little esteem of him, and great *estrangement* from him, shews little of the life of faith. The more faith, the more high thoughts of Christ; beholding the glory of God shining in his face.

If ever, then, you will live the life of faith, labour to find out the unbelief that lurks in your bosom.— Search out your infidelity, and say with yourself, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief*. Go and lament your unbelief before the Lord, in a corner or a closet, and say, Oh! what an unbelieving creature am I? How ready am I to sink with Peter, by reason of the weakness of faith? How little do I see and admire the beauty of Christ? How many witnesses are there against me of my unbelief? Shame yourself for it before the Lord, and consider what a poor, mean, base life you have for want of faith, and how soon you ly in the bottom of the mire and dirt, when you might live above, even with Jesus Christ. Till you be convicted of unbelief, you will just remain among the creatures, and think it is good to be there. Again,

[2.] If you would, as children of promise, live by faith on the promise, then *labour to be well acquainted with the promise*. It is one thing to talk of the promises, and another thing to be acquainted with them. How will you love the promises, or live on them, if you do not know them? Therefore study a due acquaintance with them: and to help you in this, there are four things relating to them, that would be a profitable study, namely, 1. The worth of them. 2. The distinction of them. 3. Your interest in them. 4. The law of the accomplishment of them.

1. Study the *worth* of the promise, as exceeding *great* and *precious*, in all the six respects that I have formerly

merly taught.—See them to be an invaluable treasure: none but God knows the riches of them, in their Author, subject, price, reality, immutability, variety and fulness. And see that you study these things well, not contenting yourself with the hearing of them, but by serious meditation of the preciousness of the promise. O believer, learn to know what you are born to: for, *Didst thou know the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, live by the promise, and what a godly inheritance the promises are, surely you would be more taken up in asking of the Lord Jesus, And he would give you living water out of these wells of salvation,* John iv. 10.

2. Study the *distinction* of the promises, and the variety of them, that you may be able to find out, on all occasions, promises suitable to your necessity, and seasonable. A believer cannot be in that condition, wherein he may not have recourse to a promise fitted for him to serve him in his need, if he be acquainted with them distinctly; but for a child of God to live in the midst of promises, and yet not know where they ly, he is like a wounded, sick, or diseased man, that is in the midst of an apothecary's shop, and knows not where the boxes or glasses with the salves, or ointments, or cordials are, that should help him; he is as ready to fall upon the thing that would hurt and harm him, as upon the thing that would help and heal him; he is, as it were, in a wilderness. Believers should have the promises, in a manner, at their finger-ends; yea, treasured up in their hearts; *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

It were good, I think, and profitable for a believer's advancing in a life of faith, to make a catalogue of the promises, as they travel through the scriptures morning and evening. Gather together the promises that relate to the *softening of the hard heart*; then the promises that relate to the *subduing of corruption*; next the promise that relates to the *healing of backslidings*, and so on; taking a list of the promises, and seeing all the promises are *Yea and Amen* in Christ; and Christ is called *the Covenant of the people*. Notice how the promises

mises are in him, and belong to him and his several offices : reduce the promise of Christ, to the offices of Christ ; for example, his threefold office, of Prophet, Priest, and King.

(1.) There are promises of wisdom, and knowledge, counsel, conduct, direction, and resolution of doubts ; these belong to Christ, as a *Prophet*, and are to be reduced thereunto.

(2.) There are promises of pardon, justification, peace, joy, acceptance with God ; these belong to Christ, as a *Priest*, and are to be reduced to that office.

(3.) There are promises of victory over sin, subduing iniquity, supplying of wants, protection and defence ; these belong to Christ as a *King*, and are to be reduced to that office.

Could you thus, were it with a pen, or by whatever other means you can, reduce the promise to the offices of Christ, it would be a ready way to have recourse to them in time of need ; and also it would help in the right manner of pleading the promises. How desirable and pleasant would it be, to go to such an office, and plead such a promise there, saying, Lord, does not this belong to thee as a Prophet to do so and so, as a Priest to fulfil such and such a word, and as a King to accomplish such and such a promise ! Could you bring Christ and the promise together, and then the promise and the office together, it would be a mighty advantage, especially to these that know not where to have a promise, nor how to plead the promise. Therefore study in this manner the distinction of the promises.

3. Study your *interest* in the promise. If you should know of never such a fair and rich inheritance, while yet you know of no right and title you have to it, what would it avail you ? Endeavour therefore to clear your title. People give no rest to themselves, with respect to their earthly inheritance, till they have settled their title : and so should you do in this, and much more ; otherwise you will discover your unbelief, instead of faith, if you take more care for your inheritance and title in earthly things, than you do in hea-

venly. The outward call of the word of grace, and gospel-dispensation, clear your general title and claim to the promise, so as to encourage and warrant your fleeing to it, believing it, and embracing it by faith. But moreover, believer, you have a special title to and interest in the promise, that believers want: seek to have the Spirit of the Lord clearing that up to you, that you may live by faith joyfully; and the joy of the Lord may be your strength. The more you know your interest in it, the more freely will you betake yourself to it, and make improvement of it, to the glory of God, and your own spiritual good.

4. Study the *law of the accomplishment* of the promises, and that here God keeps a reserve in his own hand, as to the time, as to the mean, as to the method, and as to the measure of accomplishing the same; *The vision is for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry*, Hab. ii. 3. *The Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him*, Isa. xxx. 18. The Lord will accomplish his word; but it may be through *fire and water that he will bring you to a wealthy land*; it may be thro' many difficulties, and in such a manner, as you did not expect: but *fear not, only believe*: and, *If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God*. However, *He that believes, makes not haste*; but waits the Lord's time and way of coming.

[3.] In order to your living by faith on the promise, as being a child of promise, *study always your case and the promise together*, and endeavour to adapt the promise to the case, and the case to the promise; be it an afflicted case, or a deserted case, or a backsliding case, or whatever sort of case it is, study the case and promise together; for if you study your case without the promise, you are in danger of despairing; and if you study the promise without studying your case, you are in danger of presuming. Therefore, for your *ignorant case*, study the promise that relates to Christ as a *Prophet*, and lay the case and the promise together: for your *guilty case*, study the promise that relates to Christ, as a *Priest*;



*Priest* ; and lay the case and the promise together : for your *captivated case*, when overpowered by your enemies, study the promise that relates to Christ, as a *King* ; and compare the case and the promise together. —Also, amidst the distresses of *saints*, study Christ in the promise as the *King of saints* ; amidst distresses of *nations*, study Christ in the promise as the *King of nations* ; amidst distresses of the *church*, study Christ in the promise as the *Head of the body the church*. And whatever your need be, believer, know that in the promise there is your provision ; you are a child of the family, and God hath said, *He that provides not for his family, is worse than an infidel*. And now, O believer, think on this, will not God provide for his family ? will you make him worse than an infidel ? Oh ! beware of that blasphemy ! Confide in him for your provision, and be not anxious, though you have very little in hand, you have a great stock upon bond ; the greatest part of your estate now, O believer, lies in bills and bonds ; and it is kept for you in your Father's hand. If you study your case and the promise together, it is the way to improve the promise in every case ; and this is what you are called to. —Improve the promise as an *antidote*, against all temptations ; as a cordial, under all your tribulations ; as a spur, to all your duties. If the love of God and Christ in the promise constrain you to duty and service, it is a gospel-walk. O let the love and grace of the promise influence you to love, so as you may be able to say, O it is love brings me to hear ; it is love makes me read ; and love makes me pray : and love makes me meditate ; and love makes me go about my duty, and wait on ordinances ! —Again, improve the promise for the encouragement of *others* that are believers. There is a promise, *Where two or three are met together in my name, I will be with them* ; therefore, let the saints gather together, keep together, converse together, pray together, and encourage one another in the Lord's way, forasmuch as you see the day approaching. —Yea, improve the promise for an encouragement to your *graceless friends* : tell them, on all fit occasions, O there is

a promise that did me good; the Lord thereby opened my heart, and killed my corruption, and quickened my soul. What know you but you may be an instrument of gaining their souls, and engaging them to seek after the Lord?—In a word, improve the promise in *every case*: in *darkness*, improve the promise of *light*; in *weakness*, the promise of *strength*; when under the *power of corruption*, the promise of *sanctification*; when under a *sense of guilt*, improve the promise of *pardon*; when in *bondage*, the promise of *liberty*; when in *straits*, the promise of *supply*; when in *danger*, the promise of *protection*; when in *confusion*, the promise of *direction*; when *tempted*, the promise of *support*; when *dejected*, the promise of *comfort*; and when *deserted*, the promise of the Lord's *return*.

[4.] In order to live by faith on the promise, O believer, that art a child of promise; see that you *neglect not the use of means and ordinances of God's appointment*. Though the promise is free and absolute, yet the use of the means does not detract from the freedom and sovereignty of the grace of God manifested in the promise. You are to wait on him in his own way, otherwise you tempt God, and throw away the promise and all. See the direction given, Luke xxiv. 49. *Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye at Jerusalem, till ye be endowed with power from on high*. The promise will be accomplished, but tarry ye at Jerusalem, and wait in the use of means: as the mariner does at the harbour, when his ship is upon ground; he does not fall a dragging and pulling at the ship; no, he knows his own power will not do it, but waits at the shore till the water return, and the wind blow, and then he makes his way: he hath no command of the water or wind; nay, the God of providence orders the return of these as he pleases; but he waits at the water-side till providence order matters unto his mind: so, believer, you can do nothing of yourself; you are, perhaps, standing aground, it is vain for you to think of pulling and dragging at your own heart; it is not in the power of your dead heart

heart to live and believe, nor have you the ordering of the floods of the Spirit and the wind of Heaven's influences: but wait you at the shore, in the use of means, till the Lord himself return, and till you be endowed with power from on high; then shall you make way heaven-ward.

QUEST. *What MEANS shall I use, in order to the living on the promise by faith?*

ANSW. There are some of these means I have already mentioned; and, besides these, there are both outward and inward means of faith, and the increase thereof. And, besides these outward means of waiting on the word and sacraments, and all the instituted ordinances of God, I shall mention these following means further for the increase of faith in the promise; and they are partly outward, and partly inward means.

1. *Pray for what is promised*; for it is in the way of prayer that the promise is accomplished.—Thus you see the psalmist exercised, Psalm cxix. 49. *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope*: and thus were the disciples exercised, saying, *Lord, increase our faith*.

2. *Look to the promise for all the grace you need*; and expect not qualifications in you, till you get all out of the promise: *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* Can dry ground produce water of itself? Nay, the promise must first water the dry ground; *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*, Isaiah xlv. 3. Our hearts are like dry ground, a dry pump. You know, the pump of a ship will draw up no water, if it be altogether dry, till once some water be poured into it, and then it will bring up water: even so it is here; you may pump at your hearts till you break them, before you can draw up one drop of grace; so dry are they, that they can yield none, unless Christ himself be first poured in by his Spirit, according to the promise. Stay not away from taking hold of the promise, because your hands are defiled, and must first be washed: nay, though your hands be never so polluted, stay not on  
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the pretence of wiping them first, but take Christ as thou art, that he may wash and make thee clean himself; when *he sees thee polluted in thy blood, he says unto thee, Live.*

3. *Look after Christ in the promise.* The promise is the vessel, Christ the treasure; the promise the cup, Christ the liquor: be not satisfied with the cup, or with the taking it by the handle; but make application, drink out of that cup.

4. See the reason of your believing, as well as the greatness of the promise to be believed, lest you think it too good news to be true: therefore, still know the reason of your faith; that is, the faithfulness and power of God: give him the glory of his *faithfulness*, Heb. xi. 11.

5. Consider the promises *already made out*, (1.) To Christ the Head. His *head is lifted up*, after he hath drunk in the brook; according to the promise. This is a pledge that all will be made out to his people. (2.) To the *members* of his body. The promise fulfilled to one, is an argument for faith to another; as the promise made to Joshua, belongs to all believers, Heb. xiii. 5.

6. Consider your *experience* compared with the *promise*, and say, *He hath delivered, and doth deliver*; and in him *we trust that he will deliver*. The experiences of others may be useful also for the increase of faith in the promise, Psalm xxxiv. 5, 6.

7. Let the children of promise be *fruitful in bringing forth children*; I mean in bringing forth the fruits of holiness and righteousness, as children of promise, in an evangelical manner. And thus grow in grace upon the tree of promise, which hath brought them forth as branches thereof: this is the way to grow in the knowledge and faith of the gospel promise, John vii. 17. And the more again of the gospel you know, the more fruitful will you grow.

Perhaps some believer may object. *Oh! I think I was better long ago than I am now, notwithstanding that I dare not deny but the Lord hath given me some further knowledge of the gospel.*

I answer,

I answer, That the Christian may grow *evangelically*, when he does not grow *morally*. For clearing of this, know that the believer hath two roots, out of which he brings forth fruit.—There is a *legal root*, or principle, so long as there is any remainder of the covenant of works in him, which will be to his dying day; and this presses him to duty upon moral and legal grounds, from legal rewards and threatenings, fears and hopes; and this root may bring forth some fruits of tenderness and obedience: but this bond-woman must be cast out with her children and her fruit, as the apostle says in the context, Gal. iv. 30.—There is also an *evangelical root*, or principle, which is Christ in the believer, or the new covenant, when through faith the man brings forth fruit to the new Husband, Rom. vii. 4. Now, at the first conversion, both these principles do remarkably concur, a mixture of law and gospel both, as it were; and hence a great deal of fruit, a great deal of prayers and tears: but though there be much fruit, yet it is of a mixed nature; partly legal, partly evangelical. Now, when the legal principle, or the dominion of the first husband, the law, dies and languishes, and little remains but the gospel-principle, the fruits may indeed appear less bulky, but they may be better in their kind. Some indeed may leave their first love, and turn more legal and carnal; but I speak of what may and ought to take place, and will do so in a growing believer: the second covenant gets place, and draws him to duty; and his work may be less, but yet better than formerly. As it is with a young apprentice to a carpenter or wright; he hacks and cuts more, and casts many more chips; but, when he hath learned the trade better, he casts not so many chips, but he makes better work; so, believer, perhaps you prayed more formerly, when the law was concurring; and, perhaps, you was always in bondage, except when you was upon your knees, while the law was pressing you on; you then seemed more tender and sedulous: but now you pray better, and with more faith and love; you cleave closer to Christ, depend more on him, and  
draw:

draw more out of this fountain. Let your growth be evangelical ; and if it be so, it will, by no means, encourage sloth, but will advance a holy gospel-liberty, and diligent activity in the ways of God.

8. Keep alive a *pregnant sense of your want* ; for the promises are the supply of want ; and wants are for the honour of the promises. Wants and promises are correlatives. A gospel-sense of want, and of nothingness and unworthiness, encourages faith in the promise ; as it was with the apostle, Rom. vii. 24, 25.—There is a *legal sense* of want, that discourages believing, when the sense of corruption weakens faith, and discourages faith ; when a man would have something in him to boast of, or glory in, and whereby he may bribe the free grace of God. Some believers are so legal, they would indeed swim in the water of the promise, but they would have some bladders of their own to be under their arm-pits to bear them up, and cannot trust to the free grace of God in the promise to hold up their head. A child of promise, that is born of the promise, is born up by the promise too ; but you would have something in yourself. Nay, you must be content to say, *It is not in me, it is not in me, but in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.*—But there is a *gospel-sense* of want, that encourages faith, and furthers it. The apostle laments that sin dwells in him, and cries out, *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death !* yet it did not damp his faith ; he cries out also, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The psalmist also says, *Iniquities prevail against me : but it did not damp his faith ; as for our iniquities thou wilt purge them away.* Again, says the psalmist, *I am poor and needy ;* yea, but he instantly adds, *the Lord thinks upon me.* The right sense of sin and want does not damp believing, but forces the man to Christ and the promise : it drives him out of himself, and his own righteousness and strength. Happy the man that sees nothing but Christ left him, nothing but a promise, and that hath nothing else to rely on, Isa. xl. 29, 30, 31. *He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength ;*  
them

them that have nothing else to confide in; but see what follows, *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail.* These that have strength of their own, and stand by their own strength, they will fail; *but they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength*: they that have no dependence but on the Lord they shall CHANGE their strength; for so is the Hebrew word; and it is borrowed from them that have change of garments for every day: some have a garment for the house, and a garment for the field; a garment for work, and a garment for travel; a garment for the Sabbath-day, and a garment for the week-day; a garment for their several pieces of business, walking or working: so, *they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall CHANGE their strength* according as they need it. If they need a little strength, for some lesser work, they shall have it; they shall renew and change their strength; they shall have flying strength, running strength, walking strength, according as they need: for so it follows, *They shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not weary, and walk and not faint.*

Thirdly, The third branch of the exhortation, that I promised, was to *all* in general, namely, that they would *improve the promises*, whereof believers are the children, in order to their first or further believing and laying hold upon Christ, as held forth to them in the gospel-promise; and that they would apply the promise, so as to apply Christ therein.

If it be asked, *What connexion is there betwixt applying the promise, and applying Christ? or, how is Christ in the promise, and the promise in Christ, so as I may know that in dealing with the promise, I deal with Christ; and in applying the promise, I apply Christ!*

ANSW. Though Christ be in heaven, and we upon the earth; yet the promise is the means of communication betwixt Christ and us, as the apostle explains it, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down? or descend into the depths, to bring up Christ? but the word is nigh, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word*

*of faith which we preach.* Christ is brought near to us by the promise, as a fountain of water is brought near to a city by pipes and conduits: perhaps the fountain is several miles distant from the city, yet the pipes convey the water of it, so near, that you may put your mouth to the pipe and drink, or your empty pitcher to it and fill it; and thus you apply, improve, and make use of the water of the fountain, though at a great distance, by the means of the pipe that is at hand: so it is here, Christ is the fountain, *in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead*: the promise is the pipe: though the fountain-head be in heaven, yet the pipe is at your hand, at your mouth; yea, *in your mouth, and in your heart*, says the apostle. Is not that word of his, namely, the gospel, and the promise of it, called *the word of faith*? because it is both the object of faith, the word which we are to believe; and the means of faith, by which we believe; *for faith comes by the hearing of it*. Is not the word of promise in your mouth, when we are speaking it, and you reading it? and in your heart, when either you are, or should be thinking of it? What remains but that we put the mouth of faith to the pipe, and then we take in the water of life? O for the Spirit of faith, in opposition to that legal spirit, which the apostle is here discovering! ver. 3. He is telling that the law requires doing for life, ver. 5.; and that the gospel requires no doing at all, but he exhibites Christ doing in our room, which we are to believe he hath done. You need not be anxious, might the apostle say, about *ascending to heaven to bring Christ down* to do all for us, he hath descended for that end already; nor about *descending to the grave to bring Christ up*, why, he hath already risen and ascended, as a token that he hath finished the work; so that there is no more doing for life necessary; Christ hath done all: and this word concerning Christ the great doer in our room, is nigh; the promise is nigh. He left this pipe when he ascended to heaven, and appointed ministers to turn the cock of the pipe, and let out the water, saying, *Preach the gospel to every creature*; and



and he promised that his Spirit should run through that pipe till he come back again, saying, *Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world.* How? the pipe is as long as to reach from heaven to earth, from Christ's heart to your heart, as well as from his mouth to your mouth, Isaiah lix. 21. Now, Christ is in the promise, while this pipe conveys Christ and his Spirit to us; and the promise in Christ, while the pipe is fixed into his heart, *all the promises being in him Yea and Amen*: YEA, in point of *affirmation*, he having affirmed them in his veracity; and AMEN, in point of *confirmation*, he having confirmed them by his death. Even as the pipes, or conduits, may be said to be in the water, and the water is in the pipe; so Christ is in the promise, and the promise is in Christ; and to take the promise in Christ, or Christ in the promise, comes much to the same thing. Only, now Christ in the promise is come down, and he is as nigh to you, as your mouth and your heart is nigh to you. The gospel is the great pipe, and all the promises are like so many branches and lesser pipes for conducting the water to this, or that part of the city, and even to private houses, for the benefit of particular persons, according as the contrivance is ordered: Behold, here is a contrivance of infinite wisdom, from the conduit of the covenant that stands fast in Christ Jesus: there are many pipes full of water, for refreshing; full of wine, for cheering; full of milk for nourishing souls, Isa. lv. 1. And we are come to set the pipe to your mouth; *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk without money, and without price.*

Now, here is a pipe for every mouth, by which you may draw in Christ to your heart, though he be in heaven, and you on earth.—Is there any *blind and bewildered* soul here, that needs a drink of *instructing* grace out of Christ's fulness? Behold, there is a pipe for your mouth; *I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not trod.*—Is there any *guilty* soul here, that needs a drink of *pardoning* grace? there is a pipe for your mouth, in that

promise; *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my name's sake, and will remember thy sins no more.*—Is there any *filthy* and *unclean* soul here, that needs a drink of *sanctifying* and *purifying* grace? why, there is a pipe for your mouth; *I will sprinkle clean water on you;—and from all your filthiness and idols will I cleanse you.*—Is there any *bound, fettered* soul here, that cannot believe, cannot repent, cannot pray, and whom Satan hath bound for many years, and needs a drink thus to your soul of *bond-loosing, Satan-conquering* grace? why, there is a pipe for your mouth; *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, says Christ, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*—Is there any *backsliding* souls here, that cannot keep a word that they say to God, whose heart hath beguiled them a hundred times, a thousand times, and needs a drink of *healing* grace, healing water, to cure the disease of backsliding, so far, as that you shall never fall back into perdition? here is a pipe for your mouth; *Return, backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely.*—Is there any *dead* soul here, that needs a drink of *quickening* grace? there is a pipe for your moute; *I am the resurrection and the life: the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live.*—Is there any *deserted* soul here, that needs a drink of *never-leaving* nor *forsaking* grace; there is a pipe for your mouth; *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*—Is there any *dispirited, weak, fainting* soul here, that needs a drink of *strengthening* grace? there is a pipe for your mouth; *My grace shall be sufficient for thee; my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness: He gives power to the faint, and increaseth strength to them that have no might.*—Is there any *dejected* soul here, that needs a drink of *comforting* grace? there is a pipe for your mouth; *I will send the Comforter, and he shall testify of me, who am the Consolation of Israel.*—Is there any *overmastered* soul here, that hath been long led captive by the power of some strong corruption, and needs a drink of *sin-conquering* grace? here is a pipe for your mouth; *He will subdue*

our iniquity, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.—Is there any tempted soul here, that needs a drink of devil-vanquishing grace? here is a pipe for your mouth; *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent: The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*—Is there any backward soul here, that needs a drink of drawing grace? here is a pipe for your mouth; *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me.*—Is there any death-frighted soul here, that is afraid for the king of terrors, and needs a drink of death-conquering grace? here is a pipe for your mouth; *Death shall be swallowed up in victory; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.*—Is there any secure, stupid soul here, whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and that needs a drink of awakening and convincing grace? here is a pipe to your mouth; *I will send the Spirit, and he shall convince the world of sin.*—Is there any awakened conscience here, who, under a sense of sin, are under fears of damnation, and need a drink of hell-conquering grace? here is a pipe for your mouth; *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin: Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.*—Yea, is there any heaven-daring, atheistical, prayerless, graceless, ungodly wretch here, that hath been living without God, and without thoughts of eternity to this day; and that, whether they see their need or not, yet need to be plucked as brands out of the burning, and need a drink of saving and converting grace? behold there is a pipe for your mouth; *There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

Old sinner, young sinner, man, wife, and child, that is capable to understand what I am saying; whatever grace you stand in need of the pipe of the promise for conveying that grace from Christ to you, is at your very mouth; yea, saith the apostle, the promise is near, *the word is near, in thy mouth, and in thy heart.* Is not the Lord beating at every door of your hearts by these words of grace? And, Oh! wo and misery! will you let all this grace fall by you? Will you spit it

out of your mouth, and let the devil run away with it out of your heart, saying, O such a word is not to you, it is not to the like of you? Why, the devil is a liar; and, because he is so, he is perhaps tempting you, thro' unbelief, to make God a liar. God says, *To you is the word of salvation sent; the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off*; it is to you to be received and believed by you: and, will you say it is not to you? What! will you put away the grace of God from you? Wherefore came I to this place, but to tell you that this grace is tendered to you, to every one of you? And I tell you it, in his name, who hath given me a charge to *go and preach the gospel to every creature*; Christ is seeking entrance into your heart by the means of this word; and so near is he come to you by this long pipe of the promise, that you cannot miss Christ and salvation with him this day, without shutting him out at the door of your heart and mouth both. Oh! will you open your mouth wide, and he will fill it; and cry to him, saying, Lord, come and open my heart; open the everlasting doors, and come in, O King of glory! Welcome him, and welcome his word of grace, and take him at his word, saying, Lord, *be it to me according to thy word*, according to thy promise of pardoning and purifying grace, saving and sanctifying grace.

O sinner, sinner! the promise of pardon concerns you, guilty you; the promise of purifying concerns you, filthy you: you shall not have it to say that you wanted grace, and knew not where to get it; for the God of all grace is come near to you, with a promise and profer of all grace in Christ. If death, judgment, and eternity were as near to your view, as this promise of grace is come this day, you would give all the world for a promise; and will you now thrust it out of your heart, and eject it out of your mouth? What can you expect in this case, but that God will *spue you out of his mouth*, and thrust you out of his presence, and cast you in among devils and damned spirits to all eternity? What! will you prefer a black devil, a base world, a brutish lust, before Christ, and all his promises  
of

of grace and glory ! O God forbid. Fly for shame ! will you reject the word of grace, the promise of mercy that God is putting into your mouth by this glorious gospel ? O better chuse to die upon the spot, than lose such a sweet morsel, a taste of grace, and a foretaste of glory. However it be, though you would reject this grace, as I fear the most part will do, yet I must tell you, that the *kingdom of God is come unto you*, and you shall not have it to say, that you came to Glendovan such a day, and got nothing ; for I take you all witnesses, and heaven and earth to witness, that you have got an offer of grace, of Christ, and a promise that is worth ten thousand worlds.

May a promising God set it home upon you, that, being begotten to a lively hope, by the virtue of the promise, it may be said of you, that, *Now, brethren, as Isaac was, you are the children of promise.*

## S E R M O N LXXII.

The MEDIATOR'S POWER in HEAVEN  
and EARTH.\*

MATTHEW xxviii. 18.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power  
is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

**H**AVING now in view the administration of one of the most solemn and august ordinances of God upon earth, namely, our New-Testament solemn feast, the sacramental Supper of our Lord Jesus; if any should question, by what authority we set about such a work? We need only look to the context here, and notice the Lord Jesus giving a commission to his disciples, and their successors to the end of the world, to dispense the word and sacraments to all nations. The sacrament of baptism is here mentioned, and the sacrament of the supper included in that word, verse 20. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;* and this commandment among the rest they received of the Lord, 1 Cor. xi. 23.—But, to corroborate and fortify this commission given to his servants, if any should question further, by what authority did Christ give a commission to this effect in the church of God? If he had assumed a power to himself, without having any divine commission of his own, then theirs, received from him, might be reckon-

\* This subject was handled in an Action sermon, preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 14th, 1728. It hath undergone seven impressions.

ed not valid ; therefore, our Lord here clears to them the validity of their commission, by declaring to them the nature and extent of his own, saying, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

My friends, we are called this day to commemorate the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ ; yet it may be no loss to our faith, that it is not the *manner* of his death and passion, but rather the remarkable *effects* of his death, and the grand *reward* of his sufferings, that my text leads me to : I say, it may be no loss, but rather an advantage to our faith, could we follow him from the cross to the crown ; for, tho' they believe to advantage, who look to a crucified Christ hanging on a cross, yet they believe to more advantage, who step up a little higher, and look to a crucified Christ sitting upon a throne of power and majesty. It is best looking to Christ where he is, and not where he was : as the angel said to the woman, verse 6th of this chapter, *He is not here, for he is risen,* when they were seeking him in the grave ; so we may say to these who would seek Christ upon the cross, *He is not here, but upon the throne.* It is true, as the angel further said to the woman, *Come see the place where the Lord lay,* though they were not to stay there, but seek after a risen Christ ; so may we say to you, it is not amiss for you to come see the place where he was, namely, in Golgotha, hanging on a cross, *Making his soul an offering for sin* : but, having finished that work, he is not there ; therefore let not faith stop and tarry only in the place where he was, but come see the place where the Lord is : and, behold, it is a place of absolute supremacy and universal government, wherein now he is fixed : *All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.*

Our Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, having appeared to the eleven disciples, verse 16. we find the different entertainment he met with from them, verse 17. *When they saw him, some worshipped him, and some doubted.* Now, the words of our text meet with the case both of worshipping and doubting disciples ; for,

that the *worshipping* disciples might know they had a right object of worship, and that the *doubting* disciples might know they had no reason to doubt, he tells them, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* These words hath both a retrospect or back-look to what went before, and a prospect or looking forward to what follows. As they have a reference to what went before, they show, that as there is good reason why all should worship him, so there is no reason why any should doubt concerning him; for, *All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him.* Again, as they have a reference to what follows, they show not only the ground and foundation of all our ministerial administrations of word and sacraments, as I said already, but also the ground of hope we have of success therein, according to the promise in the close of the chapter, *Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world;* q. d. As I have power and authority to institute these ordinances, so you may be sure that my powerful and spiritual presence will never be wholly wanting to make them effectual; for, *All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.* Here is a great word, such as none but he can say; and it imports a great dignity and advancement.

More particularly, you may notice therein these *four* things following.

1. The *Person* dignified, even our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the blessed speaker of these words, who lately before this was hanging on a cross, and lying in a grave; humbled to the lowest, and now exalted to the highest.

2. Notice the *nature* and *kind* of this dignity; namely, *power*; and ALL *power* reposed in him; all supremacy, sovereignty, might, and dominion; and a plentitude thereof.

3. Notice the *degree* of this dignity, or the *extent* thereof; what are the vast dominions to which his power extends? Why, it is *all power in heaven and in earth.*—Our Mediator is an universal Monarch, having all power in heaven above, and earth beneath.

4. No-



4. Notice here the *manner* of the conveyance of this dignity, and the way how he came by it as Mediator; it is *given* to him; *All power is GIVEN unto me.* He did not usurp this dominion, but was legally intitled to it, and invested with it by divine donation. Christ hath a twofold right to this power and universal dominion.

(1.) A *natural* right, as he is God, equal with the Father; and thus, all power is *originally* and *essentially* his: he is the omnipotent God.

(2.) A *donative* right, as he is Mediator, God-man; and thus, all power is *given* to him. But who is the giver? Who can give all power? Who but GOD, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, essentially considered, hath lodged all power in the person of the Man, the God-man, Jesus Christ, as our Mediator? Where-ever this donation is ascribed to the Father, there the Father is to be considered essentially; as in Matth. xi. 27. It is the whole glorious Trinity, one God in three persons, by mutual concert, that confer this honour and dignity upon the Man Christ; as may appear in the sequel. The further explication of this great subject I refer to the prosecution of a doctrine.

OBSERV. *That all sovereignty and supremacy of power is delegated to, and resides in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: or, to the same purpose, That, by divine donation, Christ is invested with all power and dominion over the whole creation of God.* ALL POWER IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH IS GIVEN TO ME.

Now, as he that hath all power may be pleased to assist and enable, I will speak to this great doctrine in the following method;

- I. I would *confirm* the truth thereof from other parallel texts, and scriptural instances.
- II. Enquire what this *power* is, that is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ.

- II. Speak of the *extent* of his power, as it is declared to be *all power in heaven and in earth*.
- IV. Touch at the divine *donation* thereof, by shewing when and how it was given to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- V. Offer some *reasons* of the doctrine, why it is that all power in heaven and earth is given to him.
- VI. Draw some *inferences* for the *application*.

And, O may your eyes be towards him for power to speak and hear of his power! His powerful presence would make it a precious communion-day to us.

I. The *first* head proposed is, To *confirm* the truth of the doctrine. But what do I speak of confirming a truth that is delivered out of the mouth of TRUTH itself? What needs more confirmation than his own declaring it here, *All power in heaven and earth is given unto me*? Here is the testimony of the faithful and true Witness concerning himself, and that after he was declared to be the *Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead*. It is the testimony of the eternal Son of God, in the name of his eternal Father, under the glorious effusion of his eternal Spirit; and therefore, to doubt of this testimony, would import the highest blasphemy, and be a questioning the veracity of the glorious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Therefore, not to say for the *establishing* of this doctrine, but for confirming our *faith* therein; let us consider, that what Christ says here, is the same that he says elsewhere, and that the Father says of him, and that the whole scripture testifies concerning him. I shall, for clearing of this, give you a short view of several things that are said to be given to Christ, which carry in them this gift of all power.

As Christ is the *unspeakable gift of God*, so every thing that he hath, as Mediator, is the gift of a glorious Trinity made over to him.

I. A *call* and *commission* was given to him, and that from all eternity in the *counsel of peace*, when he was

*set up from everlasting*, with respect to his being the Mediator betwixt God and man, and the Saviour of a company of lost sinners, whom he was to redeem by the price of his blood, and the power of his Spirit, according to that gracious covenant-transaction, *Is. lxii. 6. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness,—and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, &c.* This is what our Lord Jesus points at, *John x. 18.* when he speaks of the *commandment given him of the Father*, concerning his giving his life a ransom for many, and taking his life again, to complete the redemption-work by power as well as by price.—Here was a call and commission given him, with reference to a work attended with such difficulties from heaven above, and earth beneath, that indeed required all power in heaven and earth to accomplish it; and the giving of the former, and plainly supposes and imports the giving of the latter to him.

2. A *seed* was given him, and that also from all eternity; an elect seed and offspring, which it was promised he should actually see in time and to eternity, when once he made his soul an offering for sin; *Isa. liii. 10. He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* Concerning this seed that was given him, he speaks, *John xvii. 6. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* Now, here was a vast seed; when God declares the decree concerning it, *Psal. ii. 7, 8.* he says, *I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession:* yea, it is a *numberless number out of all nations* that was given him, to be saved and governed by him, to be fitted for heaven, and guided on earth, it required and imported all power in heaven and in earth, which accordingly was given him.

3. A *body* was given to him in time, for accomplishing, in our nature, the great business that was committed to him from eternity; *Heb. x. 5. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; wherefore when he came into the world, he says, Sacrifice and*

and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me ; that is, a human nature to be a sacrifice to offended justice ; which sacrifice we commemorate this day : and, O may it be a day of power from him that hath all power in heaven and in earth ! O sure, when this body was given to the Son of God, and our nature was joined into the same personality with him, then he had all the power of heaven and earth to grapple with ; all the vengeance of heaven, and all the violence of earth lighted upon him : and, did not this require all power in heaven and in earth to be given for his support ? But some may think, What ! had he the power of heaven to grapple with, and yet the power of heaven to support him ? Was there a battle betwixt two powers in heaven ? Yes, there was a seeming war in heaven betwixt the power of God's wrath and the power of his love ; the power of his wrath must vent against sin, and yet the power of his love must vent upon the sinner, according to the eternal concert : but finite wisdom cannot tell how both these could come to pass ; but, behold, these two powers made an appointment, as it were, with mutual consent, to meet in the body, the humanity that was given to our IMMANUEL, and there they *met together, and kissed each other*, Psalm lxxxv. 10. And can you tell me which of these powers prevailed ? Indeed, I think, they both prevailed ; and none of them without blood upon this wonderful field of battle : for, *Without shedding of blood there could be no remission*. The power of God's wrath prevailed, and got a condign satisfaction by that sacrifice : and the power of his love prevailed, and got a blessed vent thro' that sacrifice : therefore, if it be said, *Who knows the power of his wrath ?* May I not also say, *Who knows the power of his love ?* Now, when the humanity of our IMMANUEL was the theatre on which this wonderful scene was acted, surely, while all the vengeance of heaven and violence of earth was pressing him down, he needed all power in heaven and earth to bear him up, and accordingly he had it : for,

4. *Help* was given him ; yea, all the help and assistance of the glorious Trinity was given to him ; Isaiah

lxii. 6. *I the Lord have called thee, and will hold thine hand and keep thee ;* and ver. 1. *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold.* To this same purpose you read, *Isaiah xlix. 8. and l. 6, 7.* The fountain of all power was opened, and gushed in upon him in an everlasting flood ; while he offered his human nature a sacrifice on the altar of his eternal Godhead, he was upheld in the arms of his eternal Father, and the power of his eternal Spirit ; for,

5. The Spirit was given him, even the Spirit of power ; *Isa. xi. 1, 2. and xlii. 1. I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.* And, according to the promise and prophecy concerning him, *the Spirit descended and rested upon him, Matth. iii. 16.* And he received not the Spirit by measure, but above measure ; *For God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him, John iii. 34.* Now, the Spirit of power above measure given to him, carries in it all power in heaven and in earth given to him.

6. To show that it was no dumb Spirit that was given to our Lord Jesus, he that gave him a *body* to be a sacrifice, gave him a *tongue* to be a teacher ; and a powerful tongue, to teach with a strong hand, and to *speak as never man spake ; Isa. l. 4. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season, to him that is weary.* O ! *who teaches like him !* None in heaven or earth hath power to teach like him ; *To whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life, John vi. 68.* Such grace is poured into his lips, that eternal life hangs upon his tongue, and depends upon a word from him ; *The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live, John v. 25.* He that, by his divine power, spoke the world from a state of nothing to a state of being, even he had the tongue of a man, a human tongue given him, to speak man from a state of death, to a state of life. But whence can he do this ? Why, that blessed tongue is in the mouth of a God-man, who can speak words of power  
from

from heaven to earth, and that even by the means of poor mortal tongues whom he employs for him; which imports all power in heaven and earth given to him.

7. A *robe and raiment* was given to him, Isa. lxi. 10. It is our Lord Jesus that is there speaking both of himself and his bride, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*—Christ, as Mediator and Surety, the blessed Bridegroom of his church, rejoiceth in his being clothed with this garment of salvation and robe of righteousness for the behoof of his bride, whom he covers with the same mantle, and fills with the same joy. As he was, in the capacity of Surety and Cautioner, solemnly condemned in the flesh for our sin; so, having paid all the debt by his doing and dying, he was as solemnly *justified in the Spirit*, and absolved as the *Lord our righteousness*; and, having risen again, is clothed with righteousness and salvation: and the Man Christ rejoices in God as his Father and Justifier, that hath thus clothed and adorned him; *He is near that justifies me, who will contend with me?* Isa. l. 8. Now, this righteousness being such a glorious one, as brings in glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace and good will towards men on earth, implies all power in heaven and in earth that was given to him.

8. A *throne* was given to him: not only a prophetic tongue and a priestly righteousness, but also a royal kingly throne, according to God's oath unto David, Acts ii. 30. which refers unto Psal. cxxxii. 11.; and therefore says the apostle, Acts ii. 30. *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* See how he was set upon this throne, Psal. ii. 6, 7. *I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion: I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said to me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* As God co-equal with the Father, he sits upon the same supreme throne with the  
Father

Father and eternal Spirit, which are one God in three persons; but, as God-man, the imperial throne is given him, and his throne is an everlasting throne; *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre*, Heb. i. 8. Psal. xiv. 6. Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool; which imports all power in heaven and earth.

9. A name was given him suitable to his throne, majesty, and dignity, Phil. ii. 9, 10. *God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.* It is a name above men; *Thou art fairer than the sons of men*: a name above saints; for he is *King of saints*: a name above angels; for he is the *Lord of angels*: a name above all names; for he is the *Head of all principality and power*. See his name that is given him, Isa. ix. 6. *To us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* See his name, Rev. xix. 16. *He hath upon his vesture and his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,* In a word, his name is, **JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** And who can explain his name, or his Father's name? Prov. xxx. 4. *What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?* Because he is God as well as man, God equal with the Father, therefore though he hath a new name with relation to us, yet his name is not changed no more than his nature; the man Jesus Christ is the supreme God: it is Arian blasphemy that would rob him of this part of his name. But in vain do they rob him of that which God hath given him; God the Father calls him *God*, Psal. xiv. 6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*: there is a name given him above all names. But, perhaps, some one may think, if it be only given to him, then it does not belong to him but by gift, and so not by nature. I answer, As *God*, it is not given to him, for it is natural to him to be God; but it is given to the *man* Christ, because he is God essentially, as well as man; and God-man in one person: *He hath then given him a name above every name.* And there is no name

above his, so there is no God above him ; he is the God, the Angel that *swears by himself*, because he could swear by no greater, Hebrews vi. 13. *I am God, and and there is none else*, says Christ, Isaiah xlv. 22. And hence his name is *the Supreme, the most mighty God*, Psalm xlv. 3. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.*—Thus then all power in heaven and earth must be given to him.

10. To add no more, *all things* were given to him, and therefore all power in heaven and in earth ; Matt. xi. 27. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father.* John iii. 37. *The Father hath given all things into his hand.* John xiii. 3. *Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand ;* and therefore he says, John xvi. 15. *All things that the Father hath are mine.*—Here I might tell you some of these *all things* that are given to him.—All *gifts and graces* are given to him ; *He hath ascended up on high, received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them.*—All  *blessings* are given to him : all the stock we lost in the first Adam is more abundantly in him ; *Grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God thy God hath blessed thee ;* and hence he is the fountain of all blessings ; and *men shall be blessed in him.*—All *treasures* are given to him : *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;* all the treasures of power and pity, grace and glory.—All *fulness* is given to him ; *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell : yea, In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*—Now, there is not one of these things I have mentioned on this head, that could have been given him, unless all power in heaven and earth also had been given him. Let our faith then be fortified in the truth of this doctrine of Christ here. What could he have done with *all things*, if he had not *all power* to manage them ? Yea, it could not be true that all things were given him, if all power were with-held : but it is an eternal truth, that our God and Saviour, the fountain of truth, says here, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* I go on,



II. To the *second* head proposed, which was, To enquire, *what* this power is, that is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ: *All power*, says he, *is given unto me*. As to the nature of this power, I shall only say in general, it is what we cannot define nor pretend to give a full description of: only, to hint at the scriptural definition of it; it is a power above all power that Christ hath; for he is *set far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his church*, Eph. i. 21, 22. It imports his just and indisputable right to govern the world, and dispose of all creatures in it according to his sovereign will and pleasure. But, more particularly, to give some further scriptural account of this power that is given to Christ, I would touch at these four things, 1. The kind of this power. 2. The parts. 3. The acts. 4. The qualities and properties thereof.

1<sup>st</sup>, I would touch at the *kinds* of this power of Christ: and it is twofold, either *essential* or *æconomical*.

1. His *essential* power, as he is the *great God*, from *everlasting to everlasting*, whose *kingdom ruleth over all*: Rom. ix. 5.—*Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen*, says the apostle; so it is, so let it be, and so shall it be: and, AMEN, will all the church of Christ say, except damnable Arian and Socinian blasphemers. And if he were not a God of infinite patience, as well as of infinite power, he could not have born so long with the high affronts which have been of late cast upon his supreme Deity in Britain and Ireland, and even in the church of Scotland also; wherein the groundless noise and outcry of *novelties of doctrine*, and *dangerous Antinomianism* †, is, in the righteous providence of God, like to be drowned with a more hideous noise of *damnable Arianism* ‡. However, this essential power of our Lord

† See this accusation opened up, Vol. II. pag. 304, 305, 393, 396.

‡ See this matter briefly cleared up, Vol. II. pag. 466, 467. Vol. IV. pag. 148.

Jesus is the same with that of the Father and Holy Ghost, who are one in essence. And if we view him in his personality, as he is the eternal Son of God, he is equal in power and glory with the Father and eternal Spirit; *He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phillip. ii. 6.: *being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3.

2. His *œconomical* power, as he is the great Messias, God in our nature. This is the power, that is properly said to be given to him: and this mediatorial power of Christ, though it be of another kind, yet it is not separate from, but founded upon his essential power, insomuch, that he could not be our almighty Mediator, if he had not been the almighty God; but our *help was laid upon One that is mighty*, Psalm lxxxix. 19. *One that is MIGHTY*; there is his essential power: *I have LAID help upon him*; there is his *œconomical* power given him as Mediator; in which respect, it is *given him to have power over all flesh*, John xvii. 2.; and to be *Head over all things to his church*, Ephes. i. 22.

2dly, I would touch at the *parts* of this power that was given to the Lord Jesus. For clearing of this, you are to consider, that the *œconomical*, or mediatorial power of the Lord Jesus Christ is twofold, namely, his power of *authority*, and his power of *ability*.

1. His power of *authority*: he took not *this office on himself*, without the call of God, Heb. v. 4.; He was *chosen* of God to it, Matth. xiii. 18.; He was *appointed* to it, Psalm ii. 6.; and thus *sealed* and *authorized* of the Father, John vi. 27. This divine call and commission conveys authority to all his mediatory acts. The word here in the text, *πᾶσα ἐξουσία*, properly signifies, not simply *potentia*, that is, *force* and *strength*, as *Δύναμις* among the Grecians does; but *potestas*, that is, *authority* and *right to rule*, grounded upon a law: a legal authority, a rightful power over all.

2. His power of *ability*, whereby *he is able to save to the uttermost*, Heb. vii. 25.; yea, both *able to save* and

and to destroy, James iv. 12. And no wonder, he is the very same person who was able to create the world out of nothing, and did so; who *clave the sea, and made a way for his ransomed to pass over*; who was able to lay down his life, and to take it up again; which accordingly he did, John x. 17, 18. These two parts of power in the Lord Jesus Christ are inseparable, notwithstanding that they are distinct things, and separable in themselves. Some kings, for example, have a power of legal authority over their rebellious subjects, but they want a power of ability to repress them; that is, they have *right*, but they want *might*: others again have a power of ability to subdue their neighbours, but it is an act of iniquity, for they have no legal authority over them; that is, they have *might*, but they want *right*: but both these, you see, do concur in our Lord Jesus Christ; he hath both a power of authority, and a power of ability over all things in heaven and earth; *All power is given unto me*. Now, from these essential parts of his œconomical, or mediatorial, power issue these four consequential parts thereof, which I but name.

(1.) There is a power of *pre-eminency* given him; *He is the Head of the body the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*, Col. i. 18. *He that came from above is above all*, John iii. 31.: above all, by nature, as God; and above all, by donation, as Mediator; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

(2.) There is a power of *dominion* that is given to him, a power of government; *The government shall be upon his shoulders*, Isaiah ix. 6. This dominion is an universal dominion over all in general, as he is the *King of kings*; and particularly over his church, as he is the *King of Zion*, and *Head over all things to his church*.

(3.) There is a power of *dispensation* that is given to him, to dispense, distribute, communicate, give, and bestow what he will upon whom he will; John xvii. 2. *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give*

give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ; that is, to as many as he pleased : for he and his Father are one in will and pleasure, as well as in essence and nature.

(4.) There is a power of judgment given to him ; As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, even as Mediator, to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man, John v. 26, 27. Authority to execute judgment both in this world and at the last day. — Thus, I say, there is given to him all power of authority and right ; all power of ability and might ; all power of pre-eminency, whereby he is above all ; and all power of dominion, whereby he rules over all ; all power of dispensation, to give what he pleases, to whom he pleases ; and all power of judgment, to acquit or condemn whom he will. — These are the parts of his power.

3dly, I would touch at the acts of his power ; whereby he exercises that power that is given him. And here, all that can be said is but a dilating upon the former head ; for all these acts of power that can be mentioned, are but so many more pieces of his power, founded upon, and included in what I have said. The acts then and egress of his power may be viewed in these following outgoings thereof, especially in his church.

1. He hath power to gather a church to himself out of all the corners of the world, as it is said, *To him shall the gathering of the people be* : so, having all his power in his hand, hath no more to do but to lift up his royal standard, and then there is a rendezvous under his banner, who is the *standard-bearer among ten thousand* ; Isa. xi. 11, 12. *He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth.*

2. He hath power to give laws and ordinances in his church, and to commissionate officers and servants to dispense these ordinances of his appointment : hence it follows in the context here, *All power is given unto me ;*

me ; *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.* Well, but may they teach any thing he hath not ordered nor invented, any new ceremonies he hath not instituted? No ; *Teach them to observe, whatsoever I have commanded you.* Whatever, therefore, is not his institution, but of human invention, is to be rejected as spurious, though it were enforced with the authority of all principalities and powers in heaven, let be of all the popes and prelates on earth ; if it bears not his superscription, who hath all power in heaven and earth, it is to be rejected.

3. He hath power to *convert sinners, to subdue rebels,* and to draw whom he will to his obedience ; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,* Psal. cx. 3. *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me.* There is many a hard stony heart here : but, O Sirs, it is good news that he hath power even *out of stones to raise up children to Abraham.*

4. He hath power to *justify the guilty, and pardon whom he pleases,* Mat. ix. 6. : there he wills us to know that the *Son of man hath power even on earth to forgive sins.* Had the *Prince of peace* this power when he was in a state of humiliation, in the depth of his poverty ? Who then will question, his power now when exalted to the height of his pomp, and when he is exalted by, and to the right-hand of God, to be a *Prince and a Saviour,* for this very end, *to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sin ?*

5. He hath power to *adopt the fatherless* and to bring these that are the children of wrath, by nature, out of the devil's family, and to make them the children of God by faith, whereof he himself is the powerful author ; *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name,* John i. 12. The power of adoption and filiation is in his hand, whereby he can make these that were heirs of hell to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with himself : for, as he is the everlasting Son, so he is the everlasting Father.

6. He hath power to *sanctify the filthy,* and to purify his church, and to *present it to himself a glorious church,*

not having spot, Eph. v. 26. It is he that hath power to purify the sons of Levi, Mal. iii. 3. And though it seem to be a contemptible office for him that has all power in heaven and earth, to stoop down so low as to wash and purify such abominable filthy lepers as we are; yet, if he wash us not, we have no part in him; and he wills us not to say to him, *Depart from us, for we are sinful men*: nay, but rather, *Come to us, for this very reason, because we are sinful men and women*. For as he alone hath power to wash us in his blood, and invites us to come to him that he may wash us, so he commands us to invite him to come to us and wash us; *Take with you words, and say, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously*, Hof. xiv. 2.—But to mention all acts and outgoings of his power, is impossible: he hath power to *reveal all mysteries*, and to make known the very mind and heart of God; *All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him*, Mat. xi. 27. *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*, John i. 18.—And again he hath power to make effectual all his ordinances, word, and sacraments: they are all lifeless and powerless without him; but they are effectual through his powerful presence, which, glory to his name, he promised when he appointed them; *Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world*, Mat. xxviii. 20.—He hath power to *destroy unbelief*, and *create faith*, being the *author and finisher* of it: and indeed, in working it, he shews the *exceeding greatness of his power*, Eph. i. 19. For why, (O admire his power!) he hath *power to send the Spirit*, John xv. 26. and xvii. 7. Here is a power above all finite power, a power to send the Holy Ghost, the third person of the glorious Trinity, that is equal in power and glory with the Father and with the Son; *If I go, I will send him*: when I go up, I will send him down. O let us say, AMEN, Lord; thou hast gone, therefore now send him, send him, send him: the Father promised the Son, and he sent him; the Son

hath

hath promised the Spirit, and will he not send him? Yea, he hath sent him already many a time since he went away: but hath he not promised to send him to the end of time, when he said, *Lo, I am with you to the end of the world?* Yea, he hath promised, and therefore rely on the promise. Thou hast gone, Lord Jesus; therefore send the Spirit, according to thy word. O blessed power of our Lord Jesus!—He hath power to send the *Spirit of power*, as he did on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 33. And, O! here is the great reason why he can give us power to preach, and power to hear, power to believe, and power to repent, and power to love, and power to pray, and power to praise, and power to communicate, because he hath power to send the Spirit of power, by whose power alone we can do all things. What shall I say? Surely I cannot give any more glorious instances of his power than what I have done.—He hath power to loose all *bonds*, to liberate *captives*, and bring them to the glorious liberty of the children of God; *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed*, John viii. 36. A freedom from the curse of the law, freedom from the wrath of God, freedom from the power of sin, and from the slavery of Satan. Let the bonds of sin and corruption be never so strong about you, man, woman; let the bonds of death and despair be never so powerful, he can, in a moment, loose them, and let you go free, saying, *Come forth ye prisoners of hope*.—But, passing many particulars that might here be mentioned, I shall proceed,

*4thly*, To touch at some of the *properties* of this power that is given to our Lord Jesus Christ. I might here shew you that his power is not only a *legislative* power, a power to give laws to, and write his laws in the hearts of his subjects, Jerem. xxxi. 33. which no king could ever do but himself; but also an *executive* power, for executing his royal acts and orders, whether they be acts of grace and mercy promised towards his willing subjects whom he makes so in the day of his power, or acts of justice and vengeance threatened against his rebellious enemies; of both which we read, Psal. lxxxix. 21, 22.

compared with ver. 28, 29. and downward, and also with what is spoken of him both in the second and hundred and tenth psalm. Some have power to make laws and acts, but no power to execute them : it is not so with him, that hath *all power in heaven and in earth*. But more particularly, there are these few properties of his power I would mention.

1. It is an *irresistible* power : if all power is given to him, then, what can resist him ? His power is invincible, and who but he can speak in that language, Rev. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty ?* Hence, when his day of power for drawing sinners to him comes, there is no standing before it ; why, it is the power of an irresistible will ; *For who hath resisted his will ?* Rom. ix. 19. ; and the power of an irresistible arm ; *The right-hand of the Lord being exalted, the right-hand of the Lord does valiantly,* Psalm cxviii. 15, 16.

2. It is a *serviceable* power : though it be not communicable to any, in the manner that it is in him, yet it is serviceable to many, and communicable in the effects and outgoings thereof, to impower and strengthen them, and to *perfect strength in their weakness*. Yea, as his power is omnipotent, so it is omnipotent ; it is laid open and exposed for the use and service of sinners, who are therefore called to *lay hold on his strength, that they may make peace with him*, Isa. xxvii. 5. Our stock of strength, in the first Adam, was lost ; and now all shops are closed, but Christ's shop stands upon ; and whosoever will, may come and take supply freely, and get a better stock in a better hand, even that of Jesus, who is *Jehovah our righteousness and strength* ; therefore, *Trust ye in the Lord for ever*, says the prophet, Isaiah xxvi. 4. ; *for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength*. Which leads to another property,

3. It is *everlasting* power, everlasting strength : his power is, like himself, unchangeable ; the *same yesterday, to-day, and for ever* : *his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*. It is true, the time is coming when it



is said, *He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father*, 1 Cor. xv. 24. But this respects the *different administration* of it at the end of time, when he shall have no more subjects to bring in, nor enemies to bring down, and when all his mediatorial power will be seen to have been given him for glorious designs, and God will appear to have been, and to be *all in all* in this wonderful business of redemption. Christ will give an honest and honourable account of the whole work put into his hand, when he shall say, *Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me*, Heb. ii. 13. And, *Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing*, but managed all according to thy will, John vi. 39. But the God-man will never cease to be King, and his kingdom, power, and authority will be everlasting and unchangeable; for it is to him the Father says, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, Heb. i. 3. The believer may be sometimes weak and sometimes strong, as well as empty by turns; but, O the power that is in this glorious Head is everlasting power! This is the ground of his peoples everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation, and everlasting glory.

4. It is a *suitable* power; suitable to the royal dignity of the person to whom it is given, suitable to his station and quality as God-man, Mediator; it well becomes him to have all the power that is given him: it is suitable to the great end that God proposed, namely, his highest glory and honour in the salvation and redemption of his people: it is suitable to the trust that God reposes in him; and suitable to the honour that God would confer upon him: it is suitable to the delight the Father hath in him; and suitable to the agreement the Father made with him: it is suitable to his office that had so much ado with God: and suitable to his people that had so much ado with him. In a word, it is suitable for his work that he be thus qualified; and suitable for his reward that he be thus glorified: *All power is given unto me*. Hence,

5. It is a *glorious* power; *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, even thy glory and thy majesty*,

Psal. xlv. 3. His powerful sword is *glorious majesty*, Psal. lxiii. 2. Why is the sight of his power and of his glory in the sanctuary put together, but because his glory is a powerful glory, and his power a glorious power? It is a glorious divine power. Christ crucified is the *wisdom of God*, and the *power of God*, and the *glory of the power of God*; for, he is the *brightness of the Father's glory*: and the power of God being the glory of God, Christ is the brightness of the glory of the power of God, in whom his power shines more than in all the works of creation and providence: for in his powerful saving of sinners out of the hands of sin, guilt, Satan, death and the law, and out of the hand of all the powers of earth and hell, and out of the hand of infinite justice and incensed wrath, the glory of God's power shines so much, that if God had made ten thousand worlds more and greater than this, he could not thereby have given such a discovery of the glory of his power as he hath done in the face of Jesus Christ. O! hath the God, who *commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ*, and among the rest the glory of his power!

6. It is an *universal and extensive* power; *ALL power is given unto me*. As it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, so all fulness imports all power; yea, in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and so all the power of the Godhead.—Creatures may have some power by communication from him; but where is there another beside him that hath *all* power, and that both in heaven and in earth? But this leads me,

III. To the *third* head proposed in the general method, which was, To speak a little of the *extent* of this power, as it is declared in the text to be *all power in heaven and in earth*; which I consider under a distinct head, because it is so particularly mentioned, as extending to heaven above, and earth below. Let us consider then, 1. What lies in this, *All power in heaven*. 2. What lies in this, *All power in earth*.

1<sup>st</sup>, *All*

*1st*, All power in *heaven* is given to Christ ; What is that ? O ! who can declare this but the God of heaven ? We shall only touch a little at what he hath said in his word concerning it.—I think it imports these two things.

1. All power in *heaven*, imports, a power reaching *over* heaven, even all the *principalities and powers*, in *heavenly places*, as they are called, Ephes. i. 20, 21. He appointed them to serve his saints upon earth ; *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation ?* Heb. i. 14. Even when Christ was upon earth in his lowest state, as they were apprehending him, he could have *ordered twelve legions of angels for his assistance*, Matt. xxvi. 53. ; but that this was not agreeable to the glorious work of redemption that he was pursuing, according to the scripture : and now, in his exalted state, he hath the ordering of the heavenly hosts as he pleases, and to what errand he will.—See how all the saints and angels about the throne are employed, Rev. v. 9,—12. : and this in a suitableness to the orders given, Heb. i. 6. *When he brings the First-begotten into the world, he says, Let all the angels of God worship him.* In a word, *The chariots of our Lord are twenty thousand*, Psalm lxxviii. 17. : he drives these heavenly chariots where he will.

2. All power in *heaven*, imports, a power reaching *above* heaven : not only a power *over* heaven, and all the heavenly inhabitants, whether angels or saints : but a power *above* heaven ; I mean, with God, that is infinitely above heaven : a power with his eternal Father, and a power with his eternal Spirit. Such a power of *intercession* with the Father, that nothing he demands can be denied ; for, *the Father hears him always* : for he always intercedes in the virtue of the sacrifice and atonement that he made, which is infinitely well-pleasing unto God. Such a power of *mission*, with respect to the Holy Ghost, that when he will he can send him, as I was shewing already ; it is a power and authority to pour out the Spirit, Isa. xlv. 3. *I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.*

ground. What is that? even *my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring*. Such a power with God hath the Lord Jesus, that his will is a law to his Father; *Father, I will, that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory that thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*, John xvii. 24. *Father, I will*; there is a power infinitely above the heavens. Such a power hath Christ, with respect to the Holy Ghost, that the Spirit's descending from heaven to earth, depended, in a manner, upon his ascending from earth to heaven; *I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come*, John xvi. 17. And according to the stated œconomy of the glorious work of redemption, the Holy Ghost comes not down without a mission from heaven; therefore he adds, *If I depart, I will send him*: Whence will he send him? Is it only from heaven? nay, there is more, *I will send him from the Father*, John xv. 26. There is a power above the heaven of heavens, a power to send the eternal Spirit from the eternal Father!—See then what it is to have *all power in heaven*; it is a power reaching *over* heaven, and a power reaching *above* heaven.—O what a powerful Saviour have we to look unto! *All power in heaven is given unto me*.

2dly, All power in *earth* is given unto Christ: What is that? This to be sure, follows of consequence; for, he that hath *all power in heaven*, cannot but have *all power in earth*: and, I think, this imports two things also, namely, a power *over* the earth, and a power *under* the earth.

1. A power *over* the earth. Though *his kingdom be not of this world*, but distinct from all earthly kingdoms, yet he hath a power over the earth; a general power over all things and all persons on earth, from the greatest to the most minute: for, he being *King of kings*, and *Lord of lords*, his *kingdom ruleth over all*. His providential power and government extend from the king upon the throne, to the sparrow on the bush; from the disposing of kingdoms and sceptres on the earth, to the number-

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ing of the hairs on our head. But there is a particular power and authority he hath over his church on earth; this I have touched at already: and therefore shall only say, He hath power over all *gifts* in the earth; to bestow all gifts and graces, and all spiritual blessings: for, Psal. lxxviii. 18. *He hath ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* He hath power over all *souls* in the earth, both to save and to damn them. Power to *save*; and therefore says, *Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.* Power to *damn*; and therefore says, He that looketh not, *he that believeth not, shall be damned.*—He hath power over *all things* on earth, so as to *make all things work together for good to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose.*—He hath power over all *enemies* of his church upon earth; when *the floods lift up their voice, the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.*—He hath power over all *cases* of sinners on earth, and can save in the most desperate cases; from the utmost point of sin and misery, to the utmost point of happiness and glory; *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to him, because he ever liveth to make intercession,* Heb. vii. 25. *The Son quickeneth who he will,* John v. 21. His voice will raise the dead at the last day, when he comes to judge the world; and his voice can raise the dead sinner out of the grave of sin and security.

2. A power *under* the earth belongs to him also, and is imported in this *all power in earth*, that is *given to him*: for, if there be any under the earth that attempts to undermine and oppose his power and authority in it, that must also be under his check and controul, and his power must extend thereunto; otherwise he could not be said to have all power in earth. His power then extends not only to things *of* and *in* the earth, but to things *under* the earth, Phillip. ii. 10. *That at [or IN] the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things UNDER the earth*: that is, a power over all the devils in hell.

Christ

Christ could not have run through his kingly office, if he had not had this power over devils : he could not have been able to bind the strong man, if he had not been stronger : nay, he came for this very end to the earth, to *bruise the head of the serpent* ; and by death to *destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil* ; and accordingly, *having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross*, Col. ii. 15. And if he triumphed above them, when the cross was on his back, how does he now triumph and exert his power above them when the crown is on his head ? His having *all power in heaven and earth*, then, imports also, that he hath all power in *hell*, and *under the earth*, which that word perhaps relates unto, Rev. i. 18. *I am he that lives and was dead ; and, behold, I live for evermore ; AMEN : I have the keys of hell and death.* The keys argue power ; for it is metaphor from conquerors, when they take a city, they have the keys delivered to them, in token that the city is now under their command. Christ hath the keys of hell, and can send whom he will to it. In a word, the power of the keys is only his ; *He hath the key of David, that opens and none shuts, and shuts and none opens*, Rev. iii. 7. All the keys of power and authority hang at his girdle ; these for keys particularly, (1.) The keys of *heaven*, to open heaven, and let in whom he will to glory : and he must needs have supremacy of power, that can set a crown of glory on the head of all his ransomed ones, who *shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.* (2.) He hath the key of *hell*, to shut up whom he will into the pit. (3.) He hath the key of the *word*, to open it, and discover the mysteries of the kingdom to whom he will. (4.) He hath the key of the *heart*, to open it, as he did the heart of Lydia, when he pleases : and, indeed, no less power than that of his, who hath *all power in heaven and earth*, can open the heart of man upon earth, to let in this *King of glory*, this *Mighty King*.

Let us then view the *extent* of this power that is given him, even all power in heaven, over heaven, and  
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above the heavens; and all power in earth, over the earth, and under the earth. His power then extends from the battlement of heaven to the bottom of hell; it is a power over all the angels in heaven, and power over all the devils in hell; power to pacify the God of heaven, and power to destroy the god of this world. *All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.*

IV. The *fourth* general head proposed, was, To touch at the *divine donation* of this power, by shewing *when* and *how* this power was given to the Lord Jesus.—  
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*1st*, *When* was all power in heaven and earth given unto him! There are four periods we may cast our eye upon, in answering this question.

The *first* period is from all *eternity*, before the foundation of the world was laid, in the counsel of peace. Upon his undertaking the work of redemption, all power was given him *decretively* and *federally*, according to that glorious transaction betwixt the Father and him: and hence the gospel is said to be but the declaration of the decree concerning him; *I will declare the decree*, Psal. ii. 7. What decree is it? even of giving Christ *all power in heaven and earth*, of giving him a throne in Zion, and giving him *the heathen for his heritage, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession*: and hence also he is said to be *set up from everlasting, ere ever the earth was*, when, in the prospect of this great work now declared unto us, he was his Father's *delight*; and his *delights were with the sons of men*, Prov. viii. 23, 30.

The *second* period is from the *beginning* of the world; or rather, when, upon the back of the fall, the first promise was proclaimed in Paradise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent*, all power was given to him *virtually*, insomuch, that it was not only promised he should have all power to destroy the old serpent's devices, but his parole and word of honour, in the counsel of peace, was so much regarded, and the Father put so much trust and confidence in him, that he intrusted him with all power and authority,

even before his incarnation, and before ever he paid the debt of obedience and satisfaction : and upon this ground it was, that by virtue of this power lodged in him he bestowed the Spirit, and many spiritual blessings upon his people, under the Old-Testament, before he took on our nature ; yea, upon this ground, all that were appointed to life, from the beginning of the world, and during the time of the Old-Testament-dispensation before Christ assumed our flesh, were saved by this Mediatorial power and grace that was given him upon trust : hence says the apostle, Acts xv. 11. *We believe we shall be saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, even as they.*

The *third* period wherein all power was actually given to him, and *initially*, was even in the days of his *humiliation* ; for therein he was, as God in our nature, clothed with all this power for performing the work that belonged to his humbled state. The New-Testament history, therefore, is full of the account of his power that he exerted in working miracles, healing diseases, opening the eyes of the blind, and the like. When the *Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*, says the apostle, even then, *We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth* : and even when he was riding to Jerusalem on an ass ; yea, when he was hanging on a cross, and lying in a grave, he was clothed with the same royal power and glory that was manifested to the wise-men of the east, when he was lying in a manger. There were, indeed, some remarkable times wherein his glory was discovered in a more special manner, witness at his baptism and transfiguration. But then,

The *fourth* period wherein all power in heaven and earth was most eminently given to him, was immediately upon his *resurrection* ; then he was more signally and solemnly invested with all power.—The first step of his exaltation, namely, his *rising again from the dead*, was the first step of his solemn investiture with universal power and authority : for clearing of this, compare Psal. ii. 6, 7. with Acts xiii. 33. When is it that God says, *I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion, and declared the decree, saying, Thou art my Son, this day have*



*have I begotten thee?* God hath fulfilled the same unto us, says the apostle, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written in the second psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: why, his resurrection was the great proof and declaration of his being the Son of God: for then, *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead*, Rom. i. 4. And though it would not be improper to apply that word, *This day have I begotten thee*, to his eternal generation; for, *From everlasting to everlasting he is God*, as it were, one and the same eternal day: yet we see it is accommodate to his resurrection in point of declaration; *I will declare the decree; this day have I made it appear, that I have begotten thee*. His resurrection was the declaration of his being the Son of God with power.—The other steps of Christ's exaltation, his *ascending into heaven*, and *sitting at the right-hand of God*, were so many other steps up to the glorious throne of universal power and supreme authority, Phil. iii. 9.—When God *highly exalted him*, then he *gave his name above every name*; a throne above every throne: when he *ascended up on high*, then he *received gifts for men*; and here is the sum of his gifts, *All power in heaven and earth is given unto me*.—You see the time when it was that *all power* was given to him.

2dly, As to the manner how all power was given to him. Here it might be shown by whose pleasure, and by what means and acts this power was given to him.

[1.] As to the first, by whose pleasure was it, or who could give him this power? I answer, in a word, *it pleased the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, one God in three persons, *that in him, the second person, as God-man, Mediator, should all fulness dwell, even all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Colos. i. 19. and ii. 9. It pleased the Father, that all the fulness of his Godhead; it pleased the Son, that all the fulness of his Godhead; it pleased the Holy Ghost, that all the fulness of his Godhead; or, it was the pleasure of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that all the fulness of the Godhead should centre and reside in the

Man, the God-man, Christ Jesus. And, because God the Father is the first in the order, or the manner of the subsistence of the three persons of the glorious Trinity, therefore it is especially ascribed to the Father, *It pleased the Father* : and again, *All things are delivered to me of my Father* : yet here the Father is to be considered *essentially*, including the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, in the unity of the same essence ; for, though Christ is God, yet being somewhat else beside God, and acting in this glorious dispensation not as God *absolutely*, nor as the offended majesty, but as one interposing in favours of his offending creatures, he is said to have this power given him ; which, therefore, must be by the pleasure of the offended Trinity ; the pleasure of the great God, in pursuance of this grand device for averting his just displeasure from us. Christ then derived his Mediatorial and œconomical power in our behalf from the united infinite power of the glorious Trinity, and thus delegated to him, with infinite pleasure and satisfaction ; God having a rapturous delight in that method of man's salvation.

[2.] By what *means* or *acts* was all power in heaven and earth given to him ? We reply ; It was given him by the following acts, or with the following solemnity : as all power is originally in him by nature, as God ; so all power is delegated to him, by office, as Mediator, in this manner :

1. All power was given to him by solemn *election*, Isa. xlii. 1. compared with Matth. xii. 18. *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth.*—He was chosen of God to be *joint Emperor* with himself : and as David set up his son Solomon to reign, and gave all the dominion to him ; so God hath given all to Christ, as if he would meddle with nothing ; *For, the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son*, John v. 22. This was done then by an ancient statute of heaven, insomuch, that the exhibition of Christ, upon his throne, is called, a *declaring the decree*. He was chosen of God to the *universal government* ; and there was more of God in the election of that one Man, Christ, than in the elec-

election of all the angels and saints in heaven.—He was chosen to be the *Lord of angels*, and also to be the *King of saints*: and they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4.

2. All power was given to him by solemn *transaction*; Pſal. lxxxix. 3. *I have made a covenant with my Chosen.* The Father transacted with him to this effect, that, upon condition he should *pour out his soul unto death*, he should *divide the spoil with the strong*, Isa. liii. 12. And, because it was a bargain betwixt them, therefore,

3. All power was given to him by solemn *promise*; Pſal. lxxxix. 19,—27. where God having said, *I have laid help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people*, it follows, *With him my hand shall be established, and mine arm shall strengthen him: in my name shall his horn be exalted; I will set his hand in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers*; that is, he shall be Lord of the isles in the sea, as well as King of nations. ver. 17. *I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*

4. All power was given him by solemn *oath*; Pſal. lxxx. 3, 4. *I have sworn unto David my servant; Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations*, SELAH. With Pſal. cx. 4. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever: a priest upon a throne, with a sovereign sceptre in his hand; even the rod of his strength, Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*

5. All power was given to him by solemn *inauguration* and legal *instalment* into the government of his church; Pſal. ii. 6. *I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion: and accordingly, the government is put upon his shoulders, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*

6. All power was given to him by solemn *obsignation* and supereminent *unction*; Pſal. ii. 6. *I have ANOINTED my King*, as the word signifies; and, Pſal. lxxxix. 20. *With my holy oil have I anointed him*: Pſal. xlv. 6, 7. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness,*  
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and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Christ himself speaks of this, saying, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me*; and again, *Him hath God the Father sealed*.

7. All power was given to him by solemn proclamation, and that by a voice from the most excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*, 2 Peter i. 17. Yea, with many great Oyes, with many a sweet Behold he hath been proclaimed King since the beginning of the world. His royal power and authority was proclaimed in the first promise: he was proclaimed in all the after-promises, prophecies, types, and sacrifices, whereof the voice of all was, *Behold, O Zion, thy salvation cometh; behold thy King comes*; he was proclaimed by his harbinger, *John the Baptist*, who was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*: he was proclaimed by an heavenly host, when he made his entrance into this world on the stage of time in our flesh, when the angels of heaven, in the hearing of the shepherds, cried out, singing and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men; for, behold the good tidings of great joy that shall be unto all people; for unto you is born, this day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*; even Christ the Lord of lords, the Lord of angels and men; he was proclaimed again at his baptism, and transfiguration, with a voice from heaven: he proclaimed himself also by his own authoritative preaching and miraculous works; and afterwards he ordered his ambassadors to go and proclaim him to the world, even to teach all nations, and preach the gospel of his kingdom to every creature. And then, last of all,

8. All power was given to him by solemn coronation, being crowned universal Monarch on the right-hand of power; *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*, Heb. ii. 6. For the crown of thorns he hath the crown of glory, power, and authority put upon his head. There are two coronation-days

days of our Lord Jesus; one is, the day when he ascended into heaven in person, and sat down at the right-hand of the throne of God, where the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb that sits upon the throne, and lay down their crowns at his feet: another is, the day when he descends down to the earth in the power of his Spirit among his people, enabling them, by faith, to put the crown upon his head, and to put honour upon him, by counting all but *loss and dung*, for the excellency of the knowledge of his glory: and, O what a happy day would this be, were I preaching the coronation-sermon of our glorious Lord Jesus upon his coronation-day! O behold his glory! behold his crown! *Behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart; yea, behold King Jesus, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him! All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.* I proceed now,

V. To the *fifth* head, namely, To offer some *reasons* why it is that all power is thus given to our Lord Jesus Christ: why it is delegated to and resides in his person? There is the greatest reason for it, and that in these following respects:

I. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, to REWARD *him for the work that he hath done*: and, particularly for his *obedience unto death, even the death of the cross*, according to the eternal purpose and concert wherein all this business was laid down and agreed to: Christ having finished the work of his humiliation, he was to be advanced to a state of exaltation: Phil. ii. 6, 9. He, who was in the *form of God, took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God hath given him a name above every name*: hence, it is said, that *for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and now is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God*, Heb. xii. 2. *having drunk of the brook in the way, he was to lift up his head*, Psalm cx. 7. The prophecy of Isaiah is full  
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of this ; yea, all the prophets treat so much of it, that our Lord reproves his disciples going to Emmaus, in these terms, Luke xxiv. 25, 26. *O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ; ought not Christ to suffer all these things, and then to enter into his glory ?* All power then is given to him in recompence of his work of doing and suffering, and as the reward of that death of his, which we celebrate the memorials of this day : that sacrifice Christ offered was of such a *sweet smelling savour unto God*, that he cannot reward him too highly for it ; nor for his assuming our nature, that therein he might offer it to the eternal satisfaction of his justice, and the vindication of the honour of all his excellencies. Hence it is said, John v. 27. that *authority to execute judgment is given him, because he is the Son of man ; that is, All power in heaven and earth is given him, and universal government.* But why is it said, *Because he is the Son of MAN*, and not rather, *because he is the Son of GOD ?* Why, as he is the Son of God *absolutely*, he hath no need of this gift of power and authority ; it belongs to him naturally and essentially : but it is given him because he is the Son of man ; because he condescended to assume our nature and become man : he became a *true man* ; having a true body and a reasonable soul : a *poor man* ; that had *no where to lay his head* : a *distressed man* ; a man of *sorrows and acquainted with grief* : a *mortal man* ; that actually died the cursed death of the cross : and now, all power is given to him, because he was the Son of Man, the true promised Messias, that, in our nature, humbled himself to the lowest ; therefore he is exalted to the highest throne of power and glory.

2. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, not only to reward him for the work he hath done, but also to *FURNISH him for the work he hath to do* ; namely, to carry on and finish the work of redemption by power ; as he hath done by price ; to apply what he hath purchased, and give out the blessings he hath bought ; John xvii. 2. *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many*

as thou hast given him: How many is that? Even as many as he will, John v. 21. *Even as the Son quickens whom he will.* Here is a great work, that, indeed, requires great power, namely, to give eternal life to whom he pleases, in all nations under heaven: and therefore, immediately after, he shows the power given him, he gives a commission to his servants here, saying, *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; lo, I am with you to the end of the world; go ye and preach the gospel to every creature;* intimating, that the great end of his getting all power in heaven and earth, was, that he might exert his power by a preached gospel, in the conviction, conversion, and eternal salvation of all whom he pleases to save. This gift then is for our behoof given to him: when *he ascended up on high he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious,* Psalm lxxviii. 18.: and the sum of all these gifts is here, that *all power in heaven and earth is given him.* But what he received for men, he will not keep up from men; nay, what he gets for men, he gives to them; nay, what the psalmist calls *receiving gifts for men,* the apostle calls his *giving gifts to men,* Eph. iv. 8. *When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men:* and thereupon a description of a gospel-ministry follows in the main principal ends thereof, namely, *The perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,* ver. 12, 13. What! might the disciples say, Can any great thing be expected by our preaching? What can a company of poor fisher-men do to the subduing of rebellious sinners, and the spreading of the gospel with any success among all nations? Never fear that, says Christ, *All power is given unto me;* and, *lo, I am with you.* We that are ministers, being also poor frail sinful men, might faint and give over, if it were not for this, that the work is his; and all power is given to him: because all the work is committed to him, he is well furnished for it.

3. All power is given to him, because *all his enemies are to be SUBJECTED by him, and subdued,* either in

mercy or in wrath : some in *mercy*, Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power : thus his arrows are said to be sharp in the hearts of his enemies ; whereby the people fall under him, Psalm xlv. 5.—* Some in *wrath*, Psalm cx. 1. *Sit thou at my right-hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. And, verse 5. The Lord at thy right-hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. Psalm ii. 9. Thou shalt break them in pieces with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* His church's enemies, his peoples enemies, whether outward or inward, are to be subdued, the devil, the world, and the flesh ; and it requires *all power in heaven and earth* to break the power of sin, and destroy the works of the devil in them.

4. All power is given to him, because all *GLORY* comes to God thereby ; for, when Christ is exalted and glorified, God is glorified in him ; *God hath highly exalted him*, that the world may see and own *that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father*, Phillip. ii. 9, 11. *Father, glorify thy name*, says Christ : yes, I will says the Father ; *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again* : and, how does he it ? Even by exalting Christ to the highest, he gets glory in the highest ascribed to him. Christ, who is said to be *set up from everlasting*, was in time set up first upon a cross, that the glory of God's love and grace might be seen in him ; therefore, says Christ, before he was lifted up on the cross, *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* Next, He was set up on a throne of power and majesty, where a crucified Christ appears more eminently to be the *wisdom of God, and the power of God* : and, *Now, is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*

5. All power is given to Christ, that *all HONOUR* may be given to him ; John v. 23. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son ; that all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father : for he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him.* How can they honour the God of heaven, who do not honour him that is invested



ted with all the power and authority of the God of heaven ?

6. All power is given to Christ, and resides in his person, because of the PERPETUITY of his *priesthood and mediation* ; Heb. vii. 25. *He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession.*—He intercedes upon the ground of the full satisfactory atonement that he hath made ; and, being a *Priest for ever*, his everlasting priesthood is the foundation of his everlasting power, whereby he is able to save to the uttermost.

7. All power is given to Christ, for the SECURITY of the *new covenant*, that stands fast in him : Why ? because he is *higher than the kings of the earth, and his throne as the days of heaven*, Psa. lxxxix. 27, 28, 29. : Christ is the great guarantee of the new covenant ; *all the promises are YEA and AMEN in him* ; and therefore must be the *sure mercies of David*. Our stock is better secured than it was in the hands of the first Adam ; nay, all the power and policy of hell cannot rob us of it, because it is in his hand that hath *all power in heaven and earth*.

8. All power is given to him, that *all BLESSINGS may be given out by him to his church* ; Acts v. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right-hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sin.* Repentance here, implies faith, and all the other graces of the Spirit : and *forgiveness of sin* here, implies justification, and all the other blessings and benefits of the covenant : and Christ being exalted by and to the right-hand of God, as a *Prince and a Saviour*, to give these things to sinners ; to *impenitent sinners*, for only such need *repentance* ; to *guilty sinners*, for only such need *forgiveness of sin* ; it says, that all power is given to Christ, that he may be in case to give all blessings to sinners like us. Therefore,

9. All power is given to him in heaven and in earth, that all *SINNERS* under heaven and upon the earth, may *flee to him alone for righteousness and strength*, and glory only in him ; Isaiah xlv. 22,—25. *Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God ;*

and there is none else: They are to look to him by faith, saying, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: To him shall men come, &c.* And again, *In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* All power is given to him, that all flesh may look to him, and that *no flesh may glory in his presence, but that he that glories may glory in the Lord,* 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. If any power were in us, there would be matter of boasting.

10. All power in heaven and earth is given to Christ, because he is the *FITTEST person for receiving such a gift*: should we search heaven and earth, there is none so fit as he: why? there is none so capable of it among angels or creatures; there is none able to bear the weight of it: therefore, in Zech. vi. 13. it is said, *He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.* No cherubim or seraphim in heaven is able to bear the glory of all the power in heaven and earth, but Christ can well bear it; he that bore the greatest weight of wrath, does bear the greatest weight of glory.—Again, as there is none so *capable* to bear it, so there is none so *creditable* to possess it; for he, being in the *form of God*, counts it *no robbery to be equal with God*. God cannot have a more honourable representative; God does not discredit himself by making Christ the repository of all fulness, the storehouse of all power,—Again, as there is none so capable, none so creditable; so there is none so *responsible* as he, so as to improve that great stock to the greatest glory of God, and to the best advantage of his people: he was found to be responsible enough in his humbled state. If God had exacted the payment of the infinite debt that we owed to justice from the hands of any besides Christ, all the creatures would have said, *We are not solvendo, we are not in case to pay*: but, behold our *help was laid upon One that is mighty*; mighty to save, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give the law and justice all their due. And now in his exalted state, being intrusted with the business of saving, by the power of his Spirit, all whom he hath saved by the price of his blood, he is no less responsible, being *able to save to*

the uttermost, and to bring in all the rent and revenue of praise and glory to God in the highest by so doing. —Again, as there is none so capable of all power, none so creditable to possess it, none so responsible to make a good account of such a trust, so there is none so acceptable to God; and, therefore, it is that all power is given unto him; *The Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into his hand*, John iii. 35. He takes infinite delight in him, even as he is Mediator; *Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth*. And what can he withhold from his darling? Hence he glories in him as his righteous Servant; *By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many*, Isa. liii. 11.; and as his prudent Servant; *Behold my Servant shall deal prudently*, Isa. lii. 13. O what a faithful and prudent steward is he, to distribute of this fulness that is in him to needy sinners! —Again, as there is none so acceptable to God, so there is none so accessible by man, he being God-man; there is no sufficient helper so nearly related to man, he being *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*, to whom the right of redemption belongs, as the nearest of kin; and we may go to him as a relation of our own: he is full of compassion towards mankind sinners, and full of condescension. Never was a king so humble as he, *riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass*: although he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; yea, poorer than the poorest, and lower than the lowest; and it behoved him, in all things, to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest, Heb. ii. 17. And, chap. iv. 15. *We have not, therefore, an High-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. Therefore, though he be upon the throne of power and glory, yet it is also a throne of grace and mercy to which we have access: *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*, Tho' he be now exalted to the highest, yet he stoops down to the lowest; he that hath all power, hath all

pity;

pity : and, O ! is he not then the fittest person for receiving such a gift ? *All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.*

In a word, he hath *all right* to the universal government, and to all power : a right by *nature*, for he is *God over all blessed for ever* ; a right by *purchase*, for he hath *bought the kingdom with his blood* ; a right of *heritage*, being the *heir of all things* ; a right of *primogeniture*, being the *first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*. Ought he not to have all power in heaven and earth, who, by *the blood of his cross, hath reconciled all things in heaven and in earth* ? Col. i. 20.—So much shall suffice for the *reasons* of the doctrine.

VI. The *sixth* thing proposed, was, To draw some *inferences* from the whole, for the *application*. A vast many uses might be made of this great doctrine, but I shall confine myself within as narrow bounds as such a subject can well allow. Is it so, *That all sovereignty and supremacy of power is delegated to, and resides in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ* ; or, *that all power in heaven and earth is thus given to him* ? Then,

1. Hence we may see the *fountain of all ministerial authority to preach this gospel, and administer the sacraments of the New Testament*, and this of the sacramental supper, that we have in hand. Christ, having all authority himself, is the only hand that can give authority to whom he will : therefore Christ opens up his own commission from the Father, and so gives commission to his servants ; accordingly, says Christ, John xx. 21. *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you*. And as Christ had his commission from his Father to show and open, so they may preach most warrantably who can show their commission most clearly : *How shall we preach except we be sent* ; Gospel-ministers have need to keep their commission clear for their encouragement, because the world is ready to question their authority, and despise their message, as it was with Christ himself. Luther said once, “ That to preach the gospel was to draw  
“ the hatred of the whole world upon a man ; yea, the  
“ hatred

“hatred of earth and hell;” for, as the gospel of the kingdom of Christ is opposite and destructive to the kingdom of Satan, so it is cross to the natural inclinations, corrupt humours, and legal bias of men and women in the world. However, every faithful minister, being confident that his cause is good, his crown better, and his captain best of all, may, notwithstanding whatever dirt or calumny, or dart of cruelty may be thrown at him, rejoice in his being treated as his glorious master was. Mean time, however weak and sinful the poor mortals are whom he employs, yet let the word and ordinances be entertained with due reverence and holy fear; because they are dispensed by us, in his name, who hath *all power in heaven and earth*.

2. Hence see on whom it is that the *virtue and efficacy of the gospel, and gospel ordinances, does depend*; not upon the *minister*, not upon the *ordinance itself*, but upon HIM who hath *all power in heaven and earth*.—What can make a sermon and sacrament powerful and efficacious? Nothing but this powerful presence, according to his word here, *Lo, I am with you*. Heaven would be but darkness, if the Lamb were not the light of the place; and surely all ordinances on earth, without Christ, would be sapless, feeble, empty, insignificant, and ineffectual things. The scripture, without Christ, is but a dead letter, a letter of death; sermons, without Christ, are dead words and empty sounds; the sacrament here, without Christ, will be but a dead work, an empty table; yea, God himself, without Christ, is nothing but fire, and fury, and flames of wrath. Oh! powerless praying, powerless praising, powerless preaching, powerless hearing, powerless communicating, without Christ, who is the substance, the life, the soul, the all of his ordinances; yea, *All in all!* O Sirs, look for power from him, who is the store-house of all power.

3. Hence see the *glorious dignity and everlasting excellency* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, the second Adam. The first Adam had a *natural* power given to him, and he lost it; but the second Adam hath *all power* given to him, and he keeps it for ever, and is inamissible; it cannot

cannot be lost: *The gifts and callings of God are without repentance*; and surely the gift of all power in heaven and earth, that Christ hath received, is what God will never repent of; nay, *he hath sworn, and will not repent, saying, Thou art a Priest for ever*: and again, *Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever*. O what a well-qualified Saviour is Christ! having all power given him, and all power to give what is necessary to us, and all power to heal the most desperate diseases: none so qualified as he is for sinners to come to. If any of you were taken with a dangerous distemper, that were like to prove mortal, if there be a physician in all the country better qualified or more able to help than another, you will have recourse to him: well, should not this be a spur to us, and a powerful argument to come unto Christ and employ him? Never any had such qualifications as he, even *all power in heaven and earth*, and that for our use and behoof, he having received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, to subdue them to him, that God the Lord might dwell among them: he is the the magazine of all power; the repository of all divine fulness.

4. Hence see, how much the *salvation* of a company of *poor sinners* hath been upon the heart of God and of Christ from all eternity, and how much it appears in time, by the great work he hath wrought for that end, namely, in Christ's being humbled to the lowest, and then exalted to the highest pitch, and all for accomplishing this business. See the vast difference of times, in the condition of our Lord Jesus: for thirty years, or thereby, he was greatly humbled, wounded, bruised, lived such a poor life in this earth, that he had no place where to lay his head, nor a penny to pay his tribute, and then died a shameful and accursed death: but now exalted to the greatest honour, having all power in heaven and earth, and all gifts in his hand, to bestow upon poor needy creatures; and, the more honour and dignity he is advanced unto, the more advantage do sinners get by him, he being *exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins*.

He

He is not exalted to heaven, to neglect the earth, and leave us hopeless ; nay, but, on the contrary, exalted to heaven, that he may send down heaven's blessings upon earth ; and exalted to all power in heaven, that he may show the more pity on earth : therefore, *If I go*, says he, *I will send the Spirit*. The light of the sun is not designed for itself, but for the world : so the mediatorial fulness and power of Christ is not designed for himself, but for his church and people in all nations of the earth. O wonder at this contrivance, which the infinite wisdom of God spent an eternity upon. The shallow capacity of man, by studying twenty or thirty years, will fall upon great inventions ; but, O Sirs, what must be the product of the heart of God ! what must be the production of his infinitely wise mind from eternity ! Behold, here it is, a CHRIST, in whom dwells all his fulness, all his power ; his heart was set upon the great work of first giving Christ to us, and then giving all power to him for our behoof. O what encouragement to look for a day of power !

5. Hence see, that since all power is given to Christ, then *all power and pre-eminence* should be given to him : *Thus should it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour* : thus should it be done to the God-man whom the Father delighteth to honour ; *For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell* : It pleased the glorious Trinity, that in him, as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth should reside. God's great design, all along, hath been to glorify and exalt Christ : all his *promises* were for exalting Christ ; to him they were all made *before the world began*, Titus i. 2. ; and in him they were *all Yea and Amen*.—All his *dispensations* and remarkable *providences* were for exalting Christ : Isaac was not killed, why ? because Christ was to come of him.—All his *commands* are for exalting Christ ; they are all summed up in, and reduced to a *looking to Christ and a believing in him* : *This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son*.—All his *ordinances* are for exalting Christ : what is the great subject of preaching ? It is Christ ; *We preach Christ crucified*. What is the matter of the sacrament ?

It is a crucified Christ.—All the *services* he requires of his church and people are esteemed only according as they have this engraven and written upon them, JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, *The Lord is there*.—All the *work* of the church triumphant is to exalt Christ: the great task of heaven is to sing *everlasting Hallelujahs to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever*.—And, in a word, all God's *dispensations* towards Christ are still to set him on high, and put honour upon him. The Father puts Christ amongst all relations, offices, and conditions, and then brings him out with the most ample testimonial that ever was. He classes him amongst the number of *lords*, and then brings him out with this testimonial, LORD OF LORDS: He puts him amongst *kings*, and then brings him forth KING OF KINGS: He names him amongst *princes*, and then calls him, *The Prince of the kings of the earth*: He ranks him amongst *prophets* and *priests*, and then declares him to be the *great Prophet*, the *great High-priest*: He places him amongst *lights* and *luminaries*, such as the sun and the stars, and then he proclaims him to be the *Light of the world*, the *Sun of righteousness*, the *bright and morning Star*: He names him amongst *servants*, and then calls him his *faithful Servant*, his *righteous Servant*: He puts him amongst the *dead*, and then he is the *First-born from the dead*, who runs away with the *keys of hell and death*, and goes forth with this name, *The resurrection and the life*. But, what needs more to be said of the honour that God puts upon him than this, *All power in heaven and earth is given to him*? And should not we give all honour and pre-eminence to him? We should honour him in the divinity of his *person*, as the *Son of God*: in the divinity of his *office*, as he is the *Sent of God*: in the divinity of his *suffering*, for his blood is the *blood of God*, and his sufferings of infinite value: in the divinity of his *resurrection*, being declared to be the *Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead*; he laid down his life of himself, and took it up again, which none but a God could do: and in the divinity of his *power* and *strength*, as being *able to save to the*



*uttermoſt, and having all power in heaven and in earth. And in all this we may read the neceſſity and excellency of faith, by which alone we can put honour upon him whom the Father honours: being ſtrong in the faith, we ought to give glory to God, and that by putting honour upon Chriſt; for, he that honours not the Son, honours not the Father. To pretend to honour God out of Chriſt, is to diſhonour him, and deſtroy ourſelves; but to put honour upon Chriſt, is to put honour upon God in him; for, God is in him, and all the fulneſs of God is in him, and all the power of God is in him: All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.*

6. Hence ſee, that the *followers of Chriſt* have no reaſon to be aſhamed of a crucified Chriſt, that is now ſuch a *glorified Chriſt*, having *all power in heaven and in earth*. How ought we to glory in his croſs when we ſee him advanced to the crown? *God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world, Galat. vi. 14.* As Chriſt is well qualified to be the Judge of the world, having *all power in heaven and earth*; ſo they that are aſhamed of him now, may expect he will be aſhamed of them when he comes in the *clouds of heaven with power and great glory*. Oh! who would be aſhamed of the very reproach of Chriſt, or the worſt thing about him! *If ye be reproached for the name of Chriſt, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God reſteth on you.* Who would be aſhamed of his truths, though called to bear witneſs thereunto, over the belly of cruel calumny and bitter oppoſition from earth and hell? Who would be aſhamed of his cauſe and intereſt, though civil and eccleſiaſtical power were combined againſt him; though court, and council, and judicatories, were againſt him; though princes and parliaments were againſt him and his royal prerogative and headſhip over his church, as the only King in Zion? This was the cauſe that our worthy Forefathers and covenanted Reformers were not aſhamed to own, even upon bloody ſcaffolds, and to ſeal it

with their blood : Woe's us that any of their degenerate race are ashamed of that which was their glory ! ashamed, I mean, of the glorious Reformation, as it was carried on by Solemn National Covenants from time to time. I shall not enlarge upon this ; I know some are reproached for singularity on the one hand, when they make honourable mention of our Covenants ; and for neutrality on the other, when they do it not ; and so, if we should study to please men, we would neither speak nor hold our peace, which is impossible. But, as it is our duty to glorify Christ, and speak honourably of his cause ; so I shall only say, on this subject, that if once he that is the glorious Head of the church, and King of Zion, who hath *all power in heaven and earth*, would exert and put forth that power, that took place in our reforming and covenanting days, that glorious work would be again revived to advantage, and these that oppose and impugn it would be ashamed. I speak not in resentment of any trivial calumny ; it is below my present work : neither do I go aside from my purpose in hand, nor make an extraneous digression. Why should our natural solemn Covenants with God be reviled under this notion, among others, as if there could not be such a thing as a national church on earth, and as if the seat of our Lord's kingdom were in heaven only, and not upon the earth ? But though *his kingdom be not of this world*, or an earthly kingdom ; yet it is a kingdom in earth, as well as in heaven : *Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies*. All power is given to him, not only in heaven, but in earth.

7. Hence see the *excellency and acceptableness* of that *everlasting righteousness of Christ*, which he hath brought in for our justification before God : for, why is *all power given to him*, but because *all righteousness was fulfilled by him* ? Therefore, when he sent the Spirit, he says, *He shall convince the world of righteousness ; why ? because I ascend to my Father*, John xvi. 10. He had not been admitted to this supreme dignity, nor ascended to the throne of all power, if he had not fulfilled all righteousness, and finished his work, to the

Father's

Father's infinite satisfaction. But now, when *all power in heaven and earth is given to him*, we may be sure that the *Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness sake*, that it is acceptable to God; and we may, with the utmost safety, and with the full assurance of faith, build our acceptance with God upon it.—There are two considerations, by which our faith may be confirmed in this matter, namely, That the power given to Christ was partly in point of *qualification*, to fit for his work on earth, when he was fulfilling it; partly in point of *remuneration*, to reward them for it in heaven, when it was perfected.—In point of *qualification*, all power was given him to work out that righteousness; he was upheld therein by the power of omnipotency: *Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold*. Hence, wonder not that God exacted so much of Christ, as both a perfect obedience to his law, and a condign satisfaction to his justice; why? he knew he was well-furnished and able for paying the debt that he had undertaken as our Surety to pay: he exacted of him the debt of *active* obedience, that he owed to the precept of the law; and all the debt of *passive* obedience, that we owed to the threatening of the law: all the debt was required of him, because all power was given to him.—And now, in point of *remuneration* and reward for his work, all power is given to him both in heaven and in earth: O then, what can a God do more to make the excellency and sufficiency of Christ's righteousness to appear? Is there any more ground left to doubt of its being satisfactory and acceptable to him? Yea, may not the divine glory of it fill us with sweet amazement! Oh! what poor, low, perishing things do we spend our contemplations upon! Were we to have no advantage by these things, yet the excellency thereof deserves the flower of our enquiry, the vigour of our spirits, and the substance of our time; but when our life, peace, joy, and happy eternity, and all, ly herein, shall not the thoughts thereof always dwell in our hearts? And shall we not build upon this sure foundation that God hath laid in Zion?—Also, let the world

world see here, our Lord Jesus is the true Messias, and no impostor: Would God set a deceiver at his right-hand of power?

8. Hence see the *nature of Christ's kingdom*, together with the *nature of unbelief* that opposes it, and the *nature of faith* that advances it.

As to the *nature of Christ's kingdom*, you see, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. iv. 20. *It is not in word, but in power*: hence the efficacy of a preached gospel lies not in the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, but in the *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*: this is what overcomes enemies. A member of the council of Nice encountered with a great philosopher, and it was feared, because he was but a poor simple kind of a man, lest the cause should suffer through his weakness; but he, being full of the Spirit of Christ, opposed so much power to what the philosopher said, that he professed plainly, "While arguments, says he, were opposed against arguments, syllogism against syllogism, and reason against reason, I was hard enough for them all; but here comes a man that speaks in the power of the Spirit of Christ, and I am not able to resist him." *The kingdom of Christ is not in word, but in power.*

As to the *nature of unbelief*, that opposes this kingdom of Christ, we see also from this doctrine what an evil thing it is, either in sinners or saints, in regard, it will not trust him whom God hath entrusted with all power in heaven and earth; it will not trust God's *Trustee*; it will not confide in the Father's *Confident*. O Sirs, *Take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief*, when you are making a solemn profession of faith in Christ: unbelief casts the most solemn affront and indignity upon the Father and the Son; and in effect, charges God with folly, in putting this trust in his hand; or rather, it charges the God of truth with a lye, and says in effect, that Christ hath not received it, or that he is unfaithful to his trust; that either he hath not *received gifts for men, even for the rebellious*, or that he *embezzels* them, and keeps them to himself. Can there be a greater affront or indignity cast upon a man of any candor or credit? Yet this is the

the treatment that the sin of unbelief gives unto Christ. It says in plain terms, though secretly, Either he hath not that saving power he is said to have, or he hath not prudence to manage it, or pity to exert it in their behalf.

On the other hand, as to the *nature of faith*, this doctrine shows us, that as it is a fruit of this power, so it lies in our particular improvement thereof, by trusting him whom God hath intrusted, and crediting him whom God credits with all power for our help and salvation, according to his word, *I have laid help upon One that is mighty*: and there lies my help also, says faith; it is safe trusting to God's Trustee, it is safe leaving the care of our salvation where God leaves it, and putting all our confidence in him to whom all power is given. Faith is a powerless sinner's looking to a powerful Saviour, and saying, Though I have neither righteousness nor strength of my own, yet *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*. There are two things concerning this faith that I would here notice. 1. That it is the *exceeding greatness of divine power*, that is the cause of it; true faith is of God's operation. 2. *Christ*, in the word, is the *ground and object* of it: faith is no enthusiastical notion of a powerful Christ, but it is a receiving of his testimony, or himself, in the testimony that he gives of himself in the word; as when he says here, *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth*.

Some in our day, to avoid the necessary doctrine of *particular persuasion of salvation*, through Christ, in the *nature of faith*, are like to turn the notion of faith into mere enthusiasm, as if it were a receiving of Christ, but not in a word of promise; whereas there is no receiving of Christ, or closing with the person of Christ, but as he is offered, or exhibited to us in a word of grace. *To receive and rest upon Christ for salvation*, is not faith, if you take away the other part or branch of definition, namely, *as he is offered to us in the gospel*: Take away the gospel-offer, or gospel-promise, and to receive and rest upon Christ without that, is mere fancy, mere delusion, mere enthusiasm: You may see your picture or  
image

image in a glass or mirror; but take away the glass, and you see no more of it: the gospel is the glass wherein we behold the glory of the Lord, and see Christ the image of the invisible God; but take away the gospel, or the promise, and you will see no more, except it be an image of your own brain. If you say, Are we not to take Christ, and then we have all the promises in him? Very true, but how will you take Christ, if not as he lays himself out in the word? Will you *ascend to heaven*, to take him there? Though you could, it would not be faith, but vision; Or, will you *descend to the deep*, to seek him in the grave? that is a fancy; *he is not there, he is risen*: But, what says the Holy Ghost? *The word is near, even the word of faith which we preach*, Rom. x. 8.: there you may see him; there you may take hold of him. And to take him in his word, is to take him at his word; to receive his testimony by believing and being persuaded of it, and giving a cordial assent unto it, and so trusting in him that thus speaks in his word to you, and continuing to hope in his word.

But what is the glass, the word, the promise, wherein I may see, and eye, and receive Christ? Why, my text is as clear a glass as any: there is not only a promise in the context, *Lo, I am with you*; not only with you ministers, but with you for the sake of my people, that I may exert my power on them by you as my instruments: but there is more than a promise in the text, *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth*. If any thing can be better than a promise of God to build faith upon, here it is; for it is not a promise made to Christ, but all the promises fulfilled in him, that he may fulfil them on whom he will. God promised to Christ, that if once he had given himself a sacrifice for sin, then he would give him all power to save whom he pleased; and now the sacrifice is offered, and God's promise is performed; *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth*. Well, but what am I concerned? say you; and how does it yield a ground of faith to me, that God's promise to Christ is performed? Why, his promise to Christ includes all the promises; they are reductively all

all in this one, and the accomplishment of this is the radical accomplishment of all. Now, since there is a promise left for sinners to build their faith and hope upon, Heb. iv. 1. and a word of reconciliation for you to confide in, 2 Cor. v. 19. ; here is the surest ground for faith imaginable, that whatever promise of God you take hold upon, it is fulfilled already in Christ, by his having all power given him to fulfil it in you. And here you see, that all the promises are not only sealed by his precious blood, according to that word, that they are *Yea* and *Amen* in him ; but they are like so many sparkling jewels set upon his golden crown, according to this word, *All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.* He hath not only fulfilled the condition of them, by his obedience unto death ; but received the accomplishment of them, by his receiving all power to make them out to whom he will : and when a man, by the power of his grace, takes hold of a promise, he may believe it to be as sure as the blood of Christ upon the cross, and the power of Christ upon the throne can make it. Now, all the promises that we are called to build our faith upon, are included in, and depend upon this promise that is already performed to Christ ; so that here our faith may have a footing, not only upon a promise made, but a promise fulfilled in Christ ; not only a promise sealed by his precious blood, as a Priest upon the cross, but a promise put in his powerful hand, as a Priest upon a throne ; a promise that hath both the sign of the cross and the sign of the crown engraven upon it ; that, looking to the cross, we may see and believe that the condition of it is fulfilled, and the price of it is paid ; and, looking to the crown, we may see and believe that the effectual application and powerful accomplishment thereof is secured.

9. Hence see, if all power is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ ; here is matter of *terror* to the enemies, and *comfort* to the friends and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. And,

(1.) On the one hand, what matter of *TERROR* to his enemies, and all these that oppose him ! The power

of Christ hath a black side full of amazement to all his enemies; he is the chief corner-stone to some, but to others a rock of offence.

QUEST. *Who are the enemies of Christ, to whom the doctrine may be terrible?*

Alas! how terrible may it be to all ignorant persons, that live content without the saving knowledge of God in Christ! For he that hath *all power in heaven and in earth*, is to be *revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God*, 2 Thess. i. 8.—How terrible may it be to all profane persons, that say, in effect, *they will not have this man, this God-man, to reign over them*; but let us *break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us!* For he will *break them in pieces as with a rod of iron, and dash them like a potter's vessel*, Psalm ii. 9.—How terrible may it be to all hypocrites, that *profess to know God, and have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof!* The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, is said to have *seven eyes and seven horns*: He hath omniscient eyes to find out all the corners of hypocritical hearts; yea, and he hath omnipotent horns to push and destroy them.—How terrible may it be to all *proud boasters* of their own power and strength, that boast of the power of nature; the power of free-will, and think to spin somewhat out of their own bowels to be a robe of righteousness to themselves! But, as all power is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, so *he will not give his glory to another*.—How terrible may it be to all the *despisers* of Christ, that with Herod, and his men of war, set him at nought, and pour contempt upon all his ordinances and institutions, by slighting them and casting them behind their backs? Whom are you despising? even him that can grind you to powder; for all power in heaven and earth is given to him: therefore, *behold, ye despisers, wonder and perish*. Whom do ye mock and revile? Hath he not power that will reach you? What will you do when he comes in the clouds, with power and great glory?—In a word, How terrible may it be to all *unbelievers* who sit under the gospel, and yet  
fit



fit his call therein, and slight his invitations? How will he send forth his armies and destroy these murderers? The Son of God is said to *fit upon a red horse*, and that *there was given to him a great sword*, Revel. vi. 14. He rides on a terrible red horse, with the sword of power in his hand, to take vengeance on his enemies; for, *If he whet his glittering sword, and his right-hand take hold of judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and a recompence to them that hate him*, Deut. xxxii. 41. Who but these that are clean distracted would remain in a state of enmity and rebellion against him that hath all power in heaven and earth? it was a good counsel that Gamaliel gave to his followers, *Take heed that ye be not fighters against God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

(2.) On the other hand, what matter of COMFORT does this doctrine afford to the *friends and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ*, seeing he hath all power in heaven and earth given unto him? for, as they shall be kept by his power, through faith to salvation, so their enemies may fight with fury against them, but they shall never be able to prevail; for their Lord and Captain is said, Rev. vi. 2. to ride upon *a white horse, with a bow in his hand, and a crown upon his head*, and to go forth conquering and to conquer. We read of a *cup of consolation*, Jer. xvi. 7.; and this doctrine holds it to the mouth of all the friends and followers of Christ. What comfort is here to the *broken-hearted* sinner that is under the pangs of the new birth, that the power of the Spirit rests upon Christ for healing of such? Luke iv. 18. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, and to heal the broken-hearted.* Yea, what comfort is here, to these that complain they are *hard-hearted*? For he hath all power to take away the *heart of stone*, and to give the *heart of flesh*. But here I especially speak of these that are in a state of friendship with this glorious and powerful Lord; surely such may encourage themselves in the Lord their God.—Here is encouragement against the *want* and *weakness* of grace, that he, hav-

ing all power, is able to *make all grace abound*, 2 Cor. ix. 8.; and to *make the feeble as David, and David as the angel of the Lord*, Zech. xii. 8.—Here is encouragement against *apostacy* and fear of falling away totally, in that he, who hath all power, hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, and is able to *make us stand*, Heb. xiii. 5.—Here is encouragement against *unbelief*, and doubting of the promise of God; for, having all power, we may be fully persuaded that *he that hath promised is able to perform*, Rom. iv. 21. To doubt of his promise, is to doubt of his power; to discredit his promise, is to deny that he hath *all power in heaven and earth*.—Here is encouragement against *enemies without and within*; the devil, the world, and the flesh: tho' thou art weak, and hast no power against them, yet he having all power, you may receive the comfort that Hezekiah gives to his subjects, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8. *Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles.* So here, 1 John iv. 4. *Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.* Wicked men and devils, their will is larger than their power; their will is to do many things that they cannot do: but it is not so with Christ; his power is as large as his will, if not vastly larger in certain respects; for, though he will not do all that he can, yet he can do all that he will; for, *All power in heaven and earth is given unto him.* You see, believer, the might of your enemies: but see also that your Redeemer is the *mighty God*, as well as the *everlasting Father*, and the *Prince of peace*; and because he is the *God of peace*, he will *bruise Satan under your feet*, and destroy your enemies that disturb your peace.—Here is encouragement against the *danger and difficulties*, the *crosses and losses, reproaches and trials* you may meet with in following the Lord Jesus; he, having all power, can easily make up what you seem to lose in his service: hence *Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*; and *chused rather to suffer affliction*  
with

with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It is said, *He had respect unto the recompence of reward.* Therefore, whatever loss you sustain in the Lord's service, we may say to you, as the man of God said to Amaziah, 2 Chron. xxv. 9. *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.* Is thy cleaving to his way seemingly prejudicial to thy credit, wealth, or gain? Yet fear not; for he whose name you profess hath all power in heaven and in earth.—Here is encouragement against the seeming *hardness* and *difficulty* of the duty or work the Lord may call you to; for he having all power, is there any thing too hard for him, who, at the same time promises, that *his grace shall be sufficient for thee, and his strength, perfected in thy weakness,* and to *work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure?* Therefore, says Paul, *I am able to do all things through Christ strengthening me.* How can I deny myself, take up my cross, and follow the Lord? Why, though *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing of ourselves, yet your sufficiency is of God.*—Here is encouragement to *pray without ceasing*; if you prayed to one that had no power to give what you ask, you might have little courage, comfort, or confidence in prayer; but he, having *all power,* is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that works in us,* Ephes. iii. 20. The conclusion of what we call, *The Lord's prayer,* teaches us to pray in the faith of his power; for, after we have prayed for these things contained there, the conclusion is, *For thine is the kingdom and the power:* hereupon we ground our assurance to be heard, that he who hath the *kingdom,* hath also *all power in heaven and earth.* Here is encouragement against all the *confusions* and *commotions* in the church of Christ upon earth, when the *floods lift up their waves*; and when floods of division and defection, floods of profanity and impiety, and floods of error and heresy are like to overflow the church of Christ; yet he who hath *all power in heaven and earth,* as Head of his church, and King of Zion, hath the command of the floods, and is *mightier than the noise of many waters*; there-

therefore, *Upon all the glory there shall be a defence: the gates of hell shall not prevail.* It is not in the power of all the devils in hell, and wicked men on earth, to thrust our Lord out of the earth; for, he hath *all power in heaven and earth*; and when he exerts his power a covenant-reformation will revive, in spite of earth and hell: *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory.*—Here is encouragement against *powerful lusts, powerful corruptions, powerful temptations*, that you may be harrassed with: he that hath all power hath said, *I will subdue your iniquities, and that sin shall not have dominion.* He it is who *once suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18.: where you see, his ability, as Mediator, to succour the tempted, is founded on his *once suffering, being tempted*: which bespeaks power, joined with pity and sympathy. —Here is the encouragement against the most *desperate case*: when soul-matters are at the lowest pass with you, and when you are brought to the utmost distress, to the utmost confusion, to the utmost perplexity, and, as it were, to the *belly of hell*, with Jonah; yet here is a present relief, *All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him*, whereby he is able to *save to the uttermost*: his power reaches from the lowest hell to the highest heaven.—Here is encouragement against the *fears of death*: he that hath all power hath said, *O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction: for I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I live for evermore; I have the keys of hell and death.* When death begins to stare you in the face, believer, you may say, *O death, where is thy sting?* Where is thy power to hurt or harm me? All power is taken from you, and all power is given to Christ, the power of the keys is in his hand; and though death may tumble my body into the grave, and crumble my flesh and bones into dust, yet you have no power over a pile of my dust, nor shall one pickle of it be detained in the earth any longer than he pleases; for he that hath all power in earth, as well as in heaven, will command the *earth and the sea to give up their dead*, Rev. xx. 13. He that is *declared to be the Son of God with power by his*

his own resurrection from the dead, will raise the dead with the same power by which he made the world out of nothing, and raised himself out of the grave: *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first,* 1 Thes. iv. 16. Therefore, O death, may the believer say, Let Sadducees and Atheists doubt and debate the resurrection of the body as they will. *Not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God,* nor believing that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Christ; yet, as for me, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me,* Job xix. 25, 26, 27.—Finally, here is encouragement, O believer, against the fears of safe landing in heaven: when your body is to be laid in the dust for a while, fear not but your soul shall be led safely to heaven; for he hath all power in heaven, as well as in earth: he hath the keys of heaven and life, as well as the keys of hell and death; he hath all the keys of his Father's house, and many a million of chambers are there; *In my Father's house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you,* John xiv. 2. Immediately after Christ had spoken the words of this text to his disciples, saying, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,* he ascended up into heaven in their view, as they were all gazing up after him; and so he took them to witness that he had the keys of heaven in his hand, by which he opened the gate, and sat down with his Father upon his throne: and by the same key of omnipotency will he open the way to the heavenly mansion for you, believer, that *where he is there you may be also.* There is no power in heaven to oppose him, and there is no power in heaven but what is given to him: the King of glory hath power to set the crown of glory upon your head; he hath such power in heaven, that it will cost him no more to bring you there, but to say,  
*Father,*

*Father, I will, and it shall be done; Father, I will, that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world,* John xvii. 14.—Take home then to you all the encouragement that this great truth imports. If you live in the faith of this power that is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, you may live in the joy of the Lord as your strength, and enjoy all these encouragements that his power carries in the bosom of it.

10. Hence see, in the last place, the *duty of all that bear this gospel*. If all power in heaven and earth given to the Lord Jesus Christ, then surely it is the duty of all that hear me, 1. To *try* what *interest* they have in this power, that is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ. 2. To *trust* him with their souls and their eternal salvation, as their powerful Saviour and Redeemer, to whom all power in heaven and earth belongs. Let me, therefore, exhort you to both these duties.

[1.] Let me exhort you to *try* and *examine* what *interest* you have in this power, or rather in this crucified Jesus, as he is the *power of God*, as well as the *wisdom of God*: I mean not here that *common* interest in him that all the baptized members of the visible church have in Christ, whereby they have a sealed warrant to come to him, and take possession of him and his saving power as their sanctuary; but I mean that *special* interest in him, whereby they are actually, as believers in Christ, possessed of that power in your begun salvation, How shall that be known? Say you. I shall, for gaining of time, only say, There is a twofold mark by which it will appear whether you have an interest in this power, namely, his laying out his power for you, and your laying out your power for him: for if you have an interest in his power, then it is betwixt Christ and you in some respect, as it is betwixt God and Christ as Mediator; God lays up all his power in Christ, and then Christ lays out all his power for God, and for his Father's glory: so they that are specially interested in this powerful Saviour, he exerts his power, and lays it  
out

out for them and their happiness ; and they exert their power, and lays it out for him and for his honour. Try then by these two things :

(1.) Hath he exerted his power *for you*, and exercised his power *in you*? Hath the *gospel come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*? 1 Thess. i. 5. I might here, if time allowed, speak particularly of the *convincing* power of the Spirit of Christ upon the conscience, giving the soul to see the natural power of death and darkness it is under ; his *enlightening* power upon the mind and understanding, how the *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shineth into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ* ; his *reigning* power upon the will, by making the soul willing in the day of his power ; and thereby his *drawing* power, and *converting* power upon the whole soul, in persuading and enabling to embrace this powerful Jesus, as he is offered to it in the gospel. What power did he ever give you to believe in him? You that say you believe in Christ, and yet never got power from Christ to believe in him, you may score out your name from the number of believers ; for your faith is a powerless faith, it cannot save you ; nay, it hath power to hurt you, but no power to help you. Faith that never had power to keep you from sin, will never have power to keep you from hell ; the faith that had never power to lead you to duty, will never have power to land you in glory ; the faith that never had power to bring you from self to Christ, will never have power to bring you from earth to heaven : that which makes true faith powerful, is, that it hath a powerful original ; the power and acts of true believing are from God, Phil. ii. 13. All the activity of the will, before the conversion, lies in an opposition to the work of grace ; till the power of God be put forth, no man is made willing to believe or receive Christ ; the power that raises the soul to faith, is the same power that raised Christ from the dead, Eph. i. 19. ; yet it is the act of the believer, in the day of power, as well as it is the work of the Spirit : it is an act of the soul put forth

contrary to, and above the natural ability of the soul; and yet, in the mean time, this power, in making a man believe, is exerted so wonderfully, by the Spirit of faith, that the man sees nothing but weakness, inability, and utter insufficiency in himself; and, perhaps, hath no sense or feeling of power at all, but, in the sense of weakness, looks greedily and gladly to him that hath all power.—It is the powerless sinner rolling itself ever upon a powerful Saviour, saying, Surely in me there is no righteousness nor strength; I have no righteousness in me, but the righteousness of guilt, which is the righteous demerit of eternal death; I have no strength in me, but the strength of sin, which is like to pull me down to hell; and yet I am venturing to say, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. There I see it, there I seek it, there I settle my guilty soul upon it; and though I have it not in myself, yet I rest myself content that I have it there, and am well-pleased that God hath put it in such a good hand. I ask then, Have ye ever thus got power to believe in him that hath all power? Was you ever, by the power of Christ, raised up from the *place of dragons*, when you was *fore broken and covered with the shadow of death*? Psal. xlv. 19. Was you ever brought, by this means, from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, from bondage to liberty, and from death to life; that is, in short, from a graceless to a gracious state, and from legal fetters to gospel-freedom? In a word, let me here ask, if ye would know that his power hath been exercised in you, Whether or not he that hath all power in heaven and earth given to him, hath communicate and given to you, at any time, some power both in heaven and in earth?

1. Hath he ever given you any power *in heaven*, or influence there, by virtue of his own power and intercession at the right hand of God? It is said of Jacob, Hosea xii. 4. That *he had power over the Angel, and prevailed, while he wept and made supplication to him*: it was that Angel of the covenant, CHRIST, who hath *all power in heaven and in earth*. Now, tell me,  
got



got you ever any power with the angel in wrestling with him? Got you ever, as it were, such a grip of him in your arms, as to say to him, Now, Lord, since I have got hold of thee, I will not let thee go, no; *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?* And, perhaps, he indeed blessed you with such a glad heart, that, with Hannah, your *countenance was no more sad*, your heart was no more heavy, you could then fly on the wings of love to do him service. What, man! it seems you got some power in heaven, and power with the God of heaven: what other thing could it be than power in heaven, when you got power with him that hath *all power in heaven?*

2. Have you ever got any power *in earth* given to you from him that hath *all power in heaven and earth given to him?* Surely, if you have got any power in heaven, you have also got some power in earth; I mean, power to *overcome the world* by faith in him that hath all power in heaven and earth, 1 John v. 4. Got you ever power to triumph over the devil, the *god of this world*, saying, O blessed be God that ever Christ bruised the head of the serpent? Got you ever power to triumph and tread upon your lusts and corruptions, in the faith of his power that hath said, *Sin shall not have dominion*: and in the faith of complete victory through him, whose name is JESUS, *because he saves his people from their sins?* And have you not some time a day got power over all things on earth, so as you could tread upon all the glory and grandeur of this world, and trample upon all the crowns and diadems, thrones and sceptres, in the earth, with a holy, humble, generous contempt and disdain, saying, Behold, *I count all these but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ?* And have you not got power to tread self to the ground, and to trample upon your own credit, your own name, your own righteousness, your own strength, while you have apprehended the glory of Christ as the Lord your righteousness and strength; and got power to become nothing, and a thousand times less and worse than nothing, in

your own fight, while he, that hath *all power in heaven and earth*, was *all in ail* to you? *No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Spirit of God.* Can you say, I got power to call Jesus LORD, and to call myself a devil? I got power to say, *Truth, Lord, I am dog*, and yet to creep below his table for a crumb: yea, the time hath been, when I got power to pursue all my enemies with sword in hand; yea, to drown them in the Red-sea of the blood of Jesus, and to overcome by the blood of the Lamb; I was more than a conqueror through him that loved me. Why, here is power in earth; what know you of that? Can you say, Whatever I be at present, yet, I think, you are telling me what I have known; I mind the time, I mind the place, I mind the occasion, when I got such power as you speak of? Why, then, it seems he hath been exerting his power towards you, and exercising it in you; he that hath all power in heaven and in earth, hath given you some share of his power in heaven, and of his power in earth both; this evidenceth you have an interest in his power. But then, as they that are interested in his power are persons in whom he exerts his power, and lays it out for them and their happiness: So likewise,

(2.) They exert their power, and lay it out *for him*, and for his honour: if they have any power on earth, they desire and endeavour, through grace, to lay out their power for his Father's glory and honour. What power have you? none, indeed, but what he gives you, either in a way of common or special bounty.—There is a *natural* power of eating and drinking; if you have interest in Christ's power, you will not dare to squander away that power, by eating to gluttony, or drinking to drunkenness; but, *whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God and Christ*: this will be your habitual desire, even in sitting down to your meals, to set the Lord before you, and to eat and drink that you may be fitted for the work wherein he calls you to serve him.—There is an *acquired* power that you have less or more of; the Lord hath bestowed on you some gifts, some parts,  
some

some talents, of which he says, *Occupy till I come.*—Some have a *secular* power and authority in the state, as rulers, magistrates, judges, justices: some a *spiritual* power in the church, as ministers, elders, and other officers in the house of God: some have, though not a *magistratical*, yet a *magisterial* power, as masters of schools, over children; masters of houses and lands, over tenants and cottars; masters of families, over their children and servants: some have a *providential* power and superiority over their neighbours, by God's putting them in a more eminent station in respect of outward wealth and honour. Whatever power you have, if you be interested in Christ's power, or a true subject of his who hath all power in heaven and earth, you will endeavour to employ that power of yours for his honour and glory, and to advance his kingdom and interest. I know none but have some power or other, if they had a heart to employ it for the Lord. If you have no power of authority over your friends and neighbours, because of your inferior station; yet, have you no power of influences? May be you have had power to harm them by your ill words, your ill ways, your ill example; and, Oh! if the channel of your power and influence were turned to another airth, you might have power to do good to others, instead of doing them ill; and power to commend Christ to them by your good advice and good example. O Sirs, what should you do with that little power of yours, but improve it for advancing the great power of our Lord Jesus, for glorifying him, raising his honour and dignity, and studying to bring in some revenue to his crown? Your power must be employed either for or against him; if against him, then wo to you that will fight against him that hath all power in heaven and earth! But if you have any interest in his power, you will employ your power for him, saying, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* I know Abraham, says God, *that he will command his children to fear me.* If a true subject of Christ could command a thousand to come to Christ, and submit to his government, he would do it. No doubt the best believer here will be

conscious to himself of a multitude of failures in this respect; yet, sure I am, according to the measure of power he receives from Christ, his heart will be engaged to employ all the power he hath for his honour.

[2.] Let me *exhort* you to come to this great and glorious Lord, who hath *all power in heaven and in earth*, and to *trust* him with your souls and your eternal salvation. You that never trusted him before, it is time to begin now; *now is the accepted time*: and you that have truly done it formerly, it is a fit time for renewed acts of faith upon him before you go to a communion-table.—If you would have power to communicate worthily, then come to, and trust in him that hath all power in heaven and earth given to him, and given to him for the behoof of weak, powerless, needy, guilty sinners. Here is a mighty Saviour, a complete Redeemer: there is none like him in heaven or earth; for he hath all power of authority, and power of ability, both in heaven and earth, for the salvation of sinners: *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*, and that to him should all power be given; and, therefore, there can be nothing more pleasing to God, than that we give all trust and obedience to him. What can be more acceptable to God, than that we give all honour, all reverence, all love, all trust, all confidence, all submission to him; to whom he gives all power in heaven and earth? Yea, this is his commandment, that we believe in him; and he himself cries from heaven to the earth, saying, *Look to me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved; for I am God, and there is none else*; infomuch, that it is treason, rebellion, and disloyalty, to disobey him that hath all power and authority in heaven and in earth. By virtue of his supreme power and authority, he hath given us ground to hope that our ministerial administrations in his name shall not be altogether in vain, and without fruit or success. We might be hopeless, considering the holiness of the God of heaven, and the sinfulness of men on earth, if it were not that he who hath all power both in heaven and earth is here saying,

ing, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; and, lo, I am with you to the end of the world*: giving us to know that by this gospel-ministry of his appointment, he will gather in his people from the four winds. Come then, let us sow in hope, in hope of a seed-time and harvest, in hope of a seed to serve our glorious Lord; for his Father's promise to him shall be accomplished, namely, that *he shall see his seed* to his satisfaction: and who knows but it may be a seed-time in Dunfermline, or a seed to be created at this occasion? Let me then, in his glorious name, that hath all power in heaven and earth, who can put a creating power in his own ordinances, intreat and invite all the sinners within these walls to come to this powerful Saviour, and to believe in him, as such, for your own salvation: and this I do, by virtue of the commission that here he gives, *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations*. And what lesson means he shall we teach? Why, the sum of all is in his own commission, and there is nothing more necessary for us to teach, or you to believe, than this, *That all power is given to him in heaven and in earth*. In this word the powerful Saviour offers himself to you, man, to you, woman; to you that are before me, and you that are behind me, and round about me: and if all the nations of the earth were within hearing of me, I would have allowance to teach them the same, and to call them to come to this powerful Jesus, by believing, that he hath all power in heaven and earth, whereby he is able to save them.

To come to Christ, is to believe in him, and to receive his testimony; and the testimony he here gives of himself in this word is, That he, as Mediator, hath *all power in heaven and earth*: and his call and command to each of you in particular is, that you believe in his name, by believing that he hath all power to save you in particular. Why, may you say, I do not doubt of his power, but I doubt of his commission to save me; for his power is most extensive, but I find his commission from the Father is limited to a certain number, John xvii. 2. *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he*  
may

may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ; and it may be I was not given to him among the elect ; and therefore, though I believe his ability, yet I doubt of his commission to save me in particular. In order to remove this block out of your way, over which there is no occasion for you to stumble ; consider, that in *the volume of the book*, wherein Christ's commission is written and recorded, there are two remarkable golden leaves, a folded leaf and an open leaf ; and of both these you read in that one text, John vi. 39. *All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me* : there is a folded leaf : but then it follows, *Him that cometh, I will in nowise cast out* ; there is the open leaf ; and in this open leaf it is written, *Whosoever will let him come*, Rev. xxii. 17.

Now, if the question be, *Who are they that are written within the folded leaf*.

I must say, It is presumption for you to enquire into that ; what God hath folded, no man, no angel, no devil, no creature can unfold, till God himself do it. If an angel in heaven should come to you, before you come to Christ, and say, You are an elect ; you ought not to believe him ; for it is a lie to tell you what he does not know. If the devil from hell should come and tell you that you are no elect, you ought as little to credit him, but tell him he is a liar for telling you what he does not know ; for that is the folded leaf, that no creature can unfold. It is like the book you read of, Rev. v. 1. 5. ; and it is not lawful for you to pry within the folded leaf. It is not the first object of your faith, to believe your election ; *Secret things belong unto God, but to us the things that are revealed* : the things that are written within the open leaf ; and, till you read and subscribe what is written there, it is not possible for you to know if your name be written within the folded leaf, nor are you concerned to know. If it were possible for you to know your election before you come to Christ, it would do you no service, but real hurt ; it would make you secure in your natural state : and therefore it is, in infinite wisdom and mercy both, that it is hid from your eyes. Some are  
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hardened with the very fancy of it, saying, If I be elected, I will win to heaven; and so neglect God's call: but now the open leaf of Christ's commission is before your eyes.

But, is my name there? say you: Yes; if you be a sinner, your name is there, 1 Tim. i. 15. *Jesus Christ came to save sinners*: he hath a commission to save sinners: and all sinners in every corner of the earth are called to look and read here, and then salvation will follow; *Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for as I am God, and there is none else*, Isa. xlv. 22.; so all power in heaven and earth is given to me as Mediator.—And therefore, in this open leaf of Christ's vast commission, write you down your name as a poor sinner, beside his name as a powerful Saviour, and that by believing: set down your name, I say by believing, not what he hath folded, but what he hath unfolded to you, namely, that *he hath all power in heaven and in earth*; and then you are safe and secure: you are won gear if you believe what he hath revealed; your salvation lies in believing of this, that he hath all power in heaven and earth given to him. It is our believing of this, that makes us preach to you with any hope of success; and it is your believing this, with application, that will bring in life to your souls. The matter comes to this therefore, Do you believe that he, as Mediator, hath all power to save you? Why, may you say, since I dare not pry within the folded leaf, but only am required to believe what is revealed to me in the open leaf of Christ's commission, that extends to all the ends of the earth; and if this be all that I am to believe, that he hath all power in heaven and earth to save whom he will; really, Sir, say you, I believe that he is able to save all the world. Nay, but, man, woman, the Lord is now dealing with you in particular, for it is not his *absolute* power, as God, that is the object of saving faith; but his *relative economical* power, as Mediator: therefore I ask again, Do you believe that he, as Mediator, hath power to save you in particular?

OBJECT. *Why, say you, I think that is not my difficulty ; I believe he hath a POWER, but I doubt if he hath a WILL to save me ?*

ANSW. Here is a grand objection of unbelief which I must endeavour to remove ; and, in order thereto, I must tell you, that where faith is lively acted upon the *power* of Christ, the soul will have little doubt of his *will* : if you savingly believe his power to save you, you will certainly credit his will to save you ; if you doubt of his will to save you, it is because you question his power to save you. We read, Numb. xi. 18, 19, 20. God promised Israel *flesh in the wilderness for a whole month* : What, says Moses, ver. 21. *The people among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen ; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month.* Where we may gather, that Moses doubts if God had power to perform this.—He doubted whether God had not out-promised his own power : and therefore the Lord says to him, ver. 23. *Is the Lord's hand waxed short ?* See also Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20. If it be not a doubting of God's power, why do we believe most when there is least danger, and believe least when there is most danger, that God is willing to help ? Why, we believe his will least when the danger is greatest, because then greater power is required ; so that the great obstacle is at the power of God, though his will is pretended. When Abraham overcame this difficulty, that God was able, nothing stood in his way ; *He considered not his own dead body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, but was fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform,* Rom. iv. 20. It is not said, that he was *fully persuaded* that God was *willing* to perform what he had promised ; but, so soon as he believed the *power* of a promising God, his faith had no more stop. And if we search our hearts to the bottom, we will find our doubting reflects most upon the power of Christ : we shorten his hand, though we commonly say we are uncertain of his will. Though we cannot directly affirm, that God will do a thing, because he hath power to do it ; yet here is a mighty argument to help faith, when we  
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are assured that he can: when power is at an end, faith is at an end; but, seeing the power of Christ is never at an end, our faith needs never be at an end, nor at a loss. Yea, in the matter of salvation, God hath expressed himself in scripture as much; nay, more for his willingness, than for his power: Our God *says* in his word, that he hath *all power*; but we have not only his word, but his *oath* concerning his *willingness*; Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.* Yea, I may say, God hath manifested his will to help and save people, when his power hath not concurred; *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee!* But he never manifested his power, where his will did not concur.

The question therefore is still this, *Do you believe that he hath power to save you?* Or, are you willing to believe that, and to be saved accordingly? Christ's willingness prevents our unwillingness; none are *truly willing* till a *day of his power*, which is the day of his grace and good-will. And therefore, in the very nature of the thing itself, if you be willing to be saved by his power from sin and wrath, and to believe that he hath power to save you, and to take hold of it for that end, his good-will hath prevented you. Say not then, you doubt of his will, but not of his power: but, do you believe he hath all power to save you? O Sirs, it is a great faith, and the fruit of his great power, if you can believe that *he hath all power in heaven and earth given him* for your eternal salvation, and this is the faith I call you to in his name. O that power would come from him, who hath power to give the Spirit of power, to cause you lay hold on this power of his!

Behold, O sinner, he that hath power to damn you for ever, as you justly deserve, is offering his power to save you for ever: and if you can believe his Mediatorial power to save you, your salvation is begun; *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Here is the arm of the Lord re-

revealed to you, even Christ, and all power in heaven and earth in him: but, is he so revealed to you, that you believe this report of him; yea, this report and testimony that he gives of himself, *All power is given unto me*? A *cordial assent* to this divine testimony, with *particular application* to yourself, is a *true saving faith*, such as no devil in hell, nor hypocrite on earth ever had: this is the very soul of "receiving and resting on Christ for salvation, as offered to us in the gospel." The gospel-offer and revelation is the ground of faith; and Christ is received and rested on no other ways but by believing his testimony, and taking and trusting him at his word.

But, Oh! what hinders your coming to this powerful Saviour by this faith of his power? What power on earth can withstand his power who hath *all power in heaven and earth given unto him*?—Tell me, is it a power of *darkness* and *spiritual blindness* that you are under? Behold, here is a powerful *Prophet*, that is able to open your blind eyes with the eye-salve of the Spirit's efficacious teaching and illumination; and this he is concerned to do by virtue of his prophetic office. Let me, therefore, ask you, in the words of this glorious Prophet, who is the *light of the world*, his words to the two blind men that came crying to him, saying, *Thou Son of David have mercy on us*, Matthew ix. 28. Christ says to them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this*? Yea, Lord, say they: *Then Jesus, touching their eyes, said, According to your faith, so be it unto you; and their eyes were opened.* Well, sinner, though this were the very hour and power of darkness with you; yet, do you believe that he hath power to give you light and sight? do you believe that he is able to do this? do you believe that *all power in heaven and earth is given to him*? When Christ is saying to you, *Do you believe that I am able*? Can you answer, *Yea, Lord*? Then, I hope, he is *touching your eyes*; and, *according to your faith, so be it unto you.*

Is there a power of *guilt* that you are under? Is the guilt of great sins, and the fear of God's great wrath lying like a heavy mountain upon your conscience?

Behold,

Behold, here is a powerful *Priest*, that was able, on earth, to forgive sins, and now he is exalted to heaven? Do you believe that he is able to forgive your sins, by virtue of his priestly office? If you have the faith of his power; yea, but a grain of it, like a grain of mustard-seed, you may say to this great mountain of guilt, *Be thou removed*, and be thou cast into the sea of the Lamb's blood: *Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubabel? Thou shalt become a plain.* Have you the particular faith of his priestly power? Do you believe that he is able to forgive *thy* sin, man; *thy* sin, woman? Then, *Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* What mountain can stand before him that hath all power in heaven and earth? The particular faith of his priestly office is true justifying faith; for it lays the stress of remission of sin upon the power of his blood, the power of his righteousness, and so gives it the glory and honour of its divinity, as it is the blood of God, and the righteousness of God: therefore, if you could say in his strength, you believe he is able to forgive your sin; then I could say, in his name, *Your sins are forgiven you.*

Is there a power of *rebellious lusts* and *corruptions* that you are under, that hath been conquering, and captivating you all your days? Behold, here is a powerful *King and Captain of salvation*, that hath all power in heaven and earth: and believe that he hath power to subdue the enmity of your nature, and the rebellion of your nature, and the rebellion of your lusts; and that this he is able to do, by virtue of his royal kingly office. To act faith the more successfully here, you are to deal with your rebellious lusts, as the man was to deal with his rebellious son under the law, Deut. xxi. 18,—21. He was to bring him out before the *magistrate of the place*, saying, *This our son is stubborn and rebellious;—he is a drunkard and a glutton;* and then orders were given to *stone him with stones that he die*: so, bring forth your rebellious lusts before the supreme Magistrate of heaven and earth, that hath all power and authority both above and below, saying, Lord, it is a stubborn lust, a rebellious lust; whatever

base kind of lust it be, it is a rebel I cannot get mastered or commanded; yea, it is a rebel against thy crown and government: Behold, this great Magistrate, this glorious King, will give orders to stone it to death; yea, he will order so many words of power, at this occasion, and perhaps so many words and exertions of power at another occasion, like so many mighty stones thrown by his powerful arm at the rebel, till at last it be stoned to death. O Sirs, are you coming to this powerful King, by believing that he hath power to crush all your rebellious lusts? If you be truly believing his power, surely the power of sin will fall before the faith of his power, like Dagon before the ark; for no Dagon lust can stand before the ark of his strength. The more you believe his power, the less power will sin have; and little power may it have this day.

Are you under the power of *pollution* and *filthiness*; heart or hand-pollution, and filthiness of the flesh or of the spirit, and can hardly believe his will to save and cleanse you? yet, is there any grain of faith in you with respect to his power, saying with the leper, Matt. viii. 2. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*: *Jesus answered, I WILL, be thou clean*: q. d. If you truly believe my power, you have no reason to doubt of my will: I had never given you grace to believe that I have power to make you clean, if I had no will to make you clean: therefore, dost thou believe my power? then you possess my good-will; *I will, be thou clean*. Let your faith, then, act more strongly than to say, *If he will, he can*: but if you believe he can, you may be sure he will cleanse you; for, though he will not do all that he can do, yet he will do all that he enables you to believe he can do unto your soul, when your faith is founded upon his promise, such as that, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. *I will sprinkle you with clean water; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you*. Are you saying, *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief*; I believe thou canst make me clean, even ME? According to that promise, then he is saying,  
*I will,*

*I will, be thou clean,* even THOU. There is a particular ME in faith's acting towards a powerful Jesus; and a particular THOU in God's dealing with that soul. It comes to close reasoning betwixt the poor sinner and the powerful Saviour, as if there were none but these two speaking together face to face, and mouth to mouth; yea, and heart to heart; *thou and me.*—It comes to close reasoning; and this ME in faith makes it the hardest thing in the world, and yet the sweetest thing in the world, to believe that Christ hath *all power in heaven and earth*, and that for *me*, for *me*, for *me*, and *my* everlasting salvation; for justifying, sanctifying, and cleansing of *me*. Do you believe that he hath power to save and cleanse *you* in particular? Why, man, *according to your faith, so shall it be unto you.*

What shall I say, O sinner, O enemy, O rebel! will you submit to him, by believing that he hath *all power in heaven and earth*! Who can harden himself against God, and prosper? As it is a dangerous thing to stand out against such a powerful prince; so, I am sure, you could not stand out a moment longer, if you cordially believed that he hath *all power in heaven and earth given unto him*. O Sirs, if you believed this doctrine, with application, namely, “That all power is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ,” and that so as he hath power to save THEE in particular, then salvation were begun. O then, put honour upon this powerful King of kings, and Prince of princes, by believing his power for your good and benefit.—Art thou under the power of *heart-hardness* and *stupidity*? Yet, O will you put honour upon his power, by believing that he hath power to heal thy backsliding, even THINE, and it shall be done?—Art thou under the power of innumerable *heart-plagues*, inasmuch, that none in the world hath such a plagued heart, and that no power under heaven can heal you? O will you come to this powerful One, and put honour upon his power, by believing that he is an able physician, to heal you, and you in particular. If there be any faith here present, to glorify his power,

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er, then, I can assure you, the *power of the Lord is present to heal*.—Art thou under the power of the devil, and his temptations and fiery darts? What is the matter? Here is relief; only look to a powerful Lord, that came to bruise the head of the serpent, and destroy the works of the devil. - Put honour upon his power, by believing that he is able to *succour them that are tempted*, and to succour you, and you are safe; for, the *God of peace*, and the *God of power*, will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.—Are you under the power of *unbelief* and *impenitency*, and the want of all grace and good? O come to him, and glorify his power, by believing that he is able to make you believe: by believing that he is the powerful *author of faith*, and that *he is exalted, by the right-hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins*; and that when he *ascended up on high, he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them*: gifts for men, even for you, and you in particular. If *thou couldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God*; and if you believe his power, you see his *power and glory in the sanctuary*.—Are you under the power of *inability* to believe his power, and inability to help yourself, and credit his power with application to yourself? Yet still, however strange the call may seem, it is not I but HE who hath *all power in heaven and earth*, that calls and commands you to believe in his name, and to glorify his power, by believing that *God hath laid help upon One that is mighty*. Though the hand of faith be not only weak, but withered; yet it is he that hath all power that says, *Stretch forth the withered hand*, and take hold of his strength: for his power and strength is laid to your hand in the promise; *My grace shall be sufficient for thee; and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness*. His power is laid to your hand in this *word of faith that we preach*; so that you need not ascend to heaven for it, or descend to the deep; nay, the *word is nigh*, and Christ in the word: there his power is offered to your faith.—Again, Are you under the power of *unwillingness*, to believe his power for your salvation, under

der the power of enmity and unwillingness to be saved by his power? Let me ask you, Whether this power of unwillingness and enmity be *easy* or *uneasy* and weighty to you? If you be *easy*, and living easily under the power of enmity against Christ, then it seems you are easy and content though he put forth his power in your everlasting ruin: for one of the two must take place, the power of Christ is to be put forth either in the conversion and salvation, or in the everlasting destruction and confusion of every one that hears this gospel — Why, say you, If he be so powerful, able, and willing to save, then let him exert his power; I am easy whatever he do. What! are you content to want this powerful Jesus to save you from sin now, and from hell hereafter! Then I take witness against you, that if he put not forth his saving power upon you before you go into eternity, you shall be inexcusable at the great day, when you stand before his awful tribunal: he will be just in pronouncing that dreadful doom against you, *Depart from me, ye cursed!* and you shall have nothing to say for your defence, but that your ruin is of yourself; and his damning power shall be just and righteously exerted against you, because you did not care for his saving power. But if your enmity and unwillingness to believe saving power, and lay hold upon it, be *uneasy* and weighty to you, then there is *hope in Israel concerning you*; for his power to destroy the power of enmity, is put in a promise for you to believe and grip unto; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, Psal. cx. 3. Therefore, O glorify his power, by believing that he hath power to bow your will, and break your enmity; and if you believe this with any pleasure and contentment, I can tell you, the day of power is partly come already, the day of believing is the day of power.—In a word, are you under the power of *death*, dead *really*, under the power of spiritual death; dead *legally*, under the power of the condemning sentence of God's law, that binds you over to eternal death? Yet, so long as you have yet a natural life, a life of common sense and reason, though you cannot believe by the power of natural reason

no more than Lazarus could come forth out of the grave by his own natural power, when he was dead and stinking there; yet, because the power of God works upon the natural faculties, in the day of power, therefore, may I speak to the dead, in the name of him that hath all power in heaven and earth, over the dead and the living both, and who says, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live*: O dead sinner, hear and believe what he says, John xi. 25. *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* O sinner, tho' you be dead, not only in a dead frame, but in a dead state, say not, What need you enjoin me to believe? what can I do, who am dead? Why the question is not what *you can do*, but what *he can do* that calls you; and it is not *I* that call you to believe, but *he* that hath all power in heaven and earth, and that can make you believe.—Therefore, though you be dead and rotten in the grave of sin and security, yet he that is the resurrection and the life says, *Lazarus, come forth, come forth: Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, Ephes. v. 14. Oh! is there none here who are hearing the voice of the Son of God? The voice of a mortal man hath no quickening power to make you believe, but if the voice of the Son of God be heard, faith comes by hearing of it: hearing him, and believing in him, go together; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my words, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not enter into condemnation*, John v. 24. If you have heard his voice, then you believe his power; and if you truly believe that all power is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ, and that as Mediator he hath power to save you, then your salvation is begun: *He that believeth shall be saved.*

Now, my friends, a powerful Prince and Saviour hath been offered to you in the word, to be received by believing; hath there been no power here to make you believe his power? Where there is no power, there



there is no faith. People may fancy they believe that Christ is able to save them; the preaching of the word may work a strong imagination that way: but, hath the power of the Spirit, accompanying the word, made you believe that Christ is sealed and authorized of the Father, so as all power of ability and authority is given to him, and that with reference to your salvation, so as you have put your everlasting salvation over upon that power that resides in the person of Christ, as Mediator, and made you to rest and rely upon this powerful Prince and mighty Saviour for eternal life? Now, that you may not be mistaken about the faith of his power, you may try it further by these following particulars.

1. If you have believed his power unto salvation, then the faith of his power and ability to save you hath been acted in the sense of *utter weakness* and *inability* to save or help yourselves; in the sense of inability to believe, inability to do, inability to think; *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God,* 1 Cor. iii. 5. All power was lost in the first Adam, insomuch, that we are by nature *without strength*, and only under the *strength of sin, which is the law,* 1 Cor. xv. 56.—— Therefore the faith of the gospel, and of strength in Christ, the second Adam, by virtue of the covenant of grace, presupposes the faith of the law, and of our being without strength of grace, and under the strength of sin.

2. If you have believed Christ's power unto salvation, then the faith of his power to save you hath *begotten hope,* 1 Pet. i. 3.; insomuch that *you are begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead*; that is, by the faith of his rising and reigning in heaven. If he had not risen and received the crown, and been set down upon the throne, the right-hand of power, we had been left hopeless, 1 Cor. xv. 17. But his resurrection and exaltation is the ground of hope, 1 Peter i. 2. Have you been begotten to a lively hope by this means, even to a hope of life, a hope of

salvation, a hope of rising and reigning in heaven with him?

3. If you have believed, unto salvation, this power of Christ to save you, then the faith of his power, whereby he is able to save your soul, will be found *standing upon his Priesthood*, whereby he is able to satisfy God's justice. As Christ is a King upon the throne, because he was a Priest upon the cross, and able to save to the uttermost, because he was able to satisfy to the uttermost, or because *he ever lives to make intercession*, upon the ground of the atonement and satisfaction he made; so the true faith of his strength to save, stands upon his righteousness, whereby he was able to fulfil God's law, and satisfy God's justice. The faith of his ability then to save you, is well-founded, if it be built upon the faith of his ability to please God, and pacify his wrath on your behalf.

4. If you have believed unto salvation this saving power of Christ, then the faith of this power hath made you *weak in yourself*, emptied you of all strength and righteousness of your own, and made you see all your strength, as well as righteousness, to be only in the Lord, and to close with him as the Lord your strength, because he is the Lord your righteousness. *Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*; first righteousness, and then strength. It is remarkable, that, according to the tenor of the new covenant, Christ's being our righteousness, is the very reason of his being our strength; Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. Why will he give all these blessings? For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, namely, through the righteousness of Christ. Hence the faith of Christ's power and strength, founded upon his righteousness, makes a man truly

truly weak and empty in himself ; for he sees his stock lies only in Christ's hand. And hence,

5. If you have believed Christ's power, unto salvation, then your faith of his power hath made you *strong* ; *Strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might* ; or, in the POWER OF HIS POWER, Eph. vi. 10. And hence, when you are weak, then you are strong ; the faith of his power brings in power to the soul, and strengthens the heart. Hence says the psalmist, Psal. xxvii. 13, 14. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living* ; and it follows, *Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart : wait, I say, on the Lord*. According to the measure of faith in the power of Christ, such will be the measure of spiritual strength, power, and courage. And hence,

4. If you have believed his power unto salvation, then the faith of his power hath begotten *joy in the Lord*, and spiritual consolation ; or, at least, some real relief from heart-trouble ; *Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John xiv. 1. ; intimating, that the more faith, the more freedom there is from heart-fears and fetters : and surely the faith of Christ's power, as Mediator, must, according to its measure, free the heart from all fears of hurt or harm, either from heaven above, or from earth beneath, because *all power in heaven and earth is given unto him*.

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