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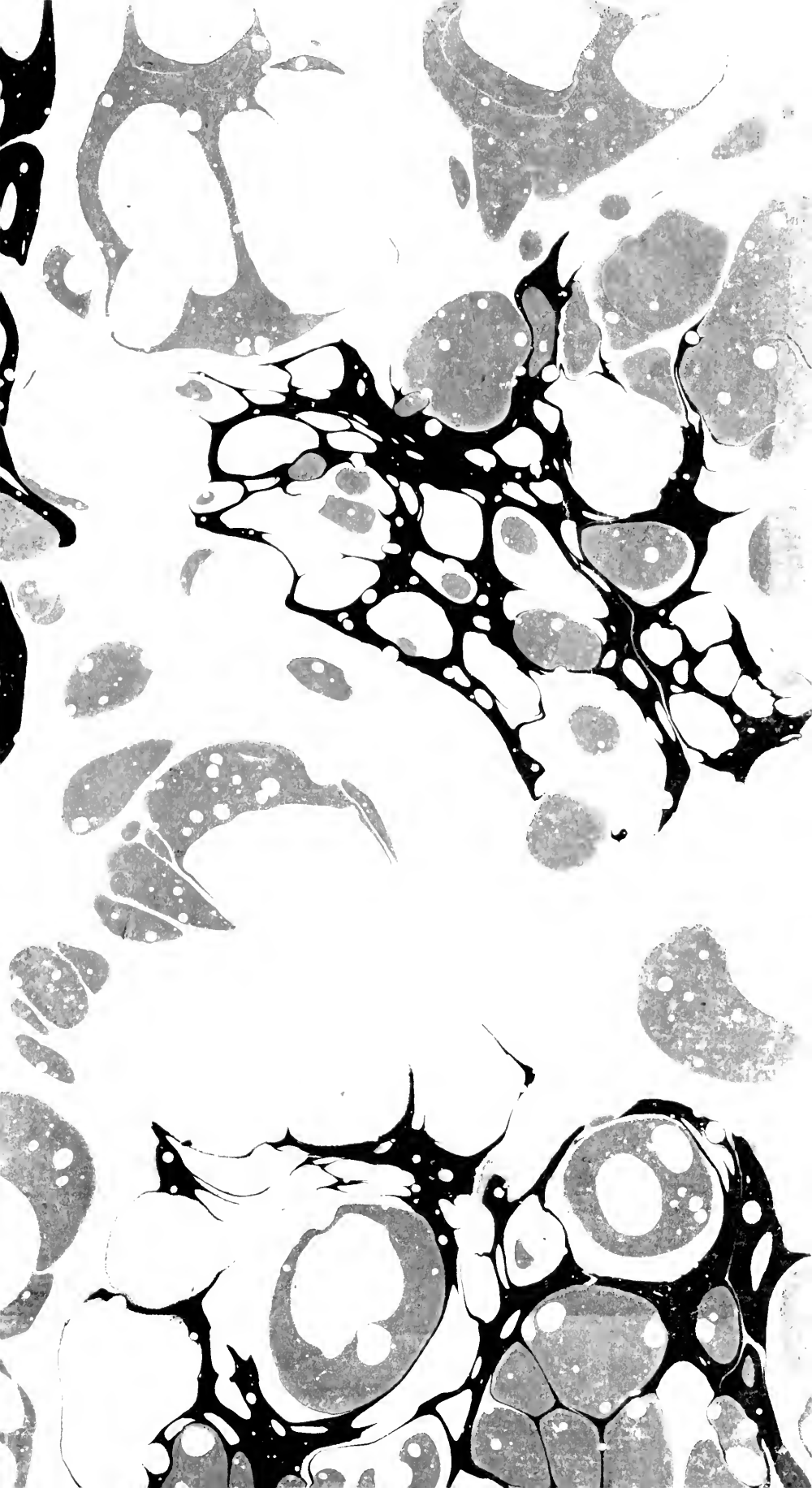
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PRACTICAL WORKS

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REV. RALPH ERSKINE, *A. M.*

CONSISTING OF HIS  
SERMONS AND POEMS.

IN TEN LARGE VOLUMES OCTAVO.

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AND OTHER  
P R A C T I C A L W O R K S,

Of the Late REVEREND and LEARNED  
MR. R A L P H E R S K I N E,  
Minister of the Gospel in DUNFERMLINE.

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To which is prefixed,  
An Account of the AUTHOR'S LIFE and WRITINGS,  
with an ELEGIAC POEM and large CONTENTS.

*I am sent for the defence of the gospel, PHIL. i. 17.*

V O L. IX.

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MDCCLXXVIII.



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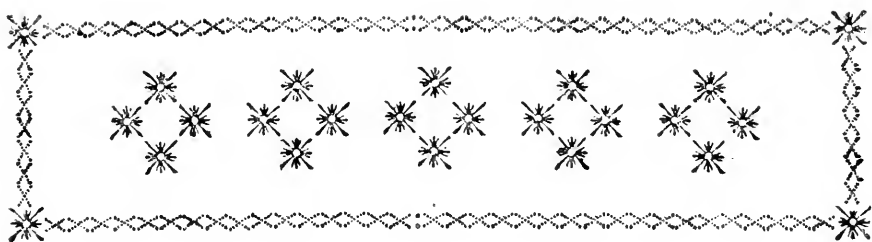
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SERMON



## S E R M O N CXXXVIII, CXXXIX.

The BELIEVER'S INTERNAL WITNESS;  
or, the Certain EVIDENCE OF TRUE FAITH\*.

I JOHN V. 10.

*He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.*

**W**E have, in the beginning of this chapter, two things observable.

1<sup>st</sup>, An *exhortation to true obedience, and love of God*, from its connexion with the mutual love of God's children. This exhortation is pressed with several arguments, the first is taken from the *nature and office* of children; *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*, ver. 1. He that loveth the father, will love the child. But how may we know, if our love toward the children of God be of the right sort? This is answered, ver. 2. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments*. Then is our love to our neighbour true, when it arises from our love to God, and is founded thereupon; for, here he makes love to God,

\* This subject was handled in two discourses, at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Stirling, June 25. 1749. The first on the Saturday before, and the second on the Monday after the solemnity. *The second impression.*

the fulfilling of the whole law : and this is the second argument for the love of God, namely, from the *facility* and *possibility* thereof ; *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous*, ver. 3. The love of God is very possible to the children of God, seeing *his commandments are not grievous*, namely, to believers ; for, to be a believer, and a child of God, are one and the same thing here. Now, to the believer the commands of God are not grievous, because, by faith, he fulfills the law in Christ his Head ; and because, by faith, he is regenerate ; and, by virtue of his regeneration, hath the love of God and his neighbour begun in him, and a new obedience according to all the precepts of the law. It is true, the commands are grievous to the regenerate, in so far as they are yet flesh ; but not so far as they are renewed, or as to the sanctified part : therefore the apostle explains and amplifies this, ver. 4. *For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Why is it that the commands of God are not grievous to God's children ? Because, though the reigning lusts of these that want faith, make the commands of God grievous to them ; yet the children of God have that faith that conquers and overcomes all worldly lusts. Their faith hath influence on the mortification of the old man, and the vivification of the new man ; and so upon the purification of the heart. This is the principal way of faith's overcoming the world, namely, by its subduing and conquering worldly lusts, whereby others are captivated. This victory over the world, he more particularly ascribes to believing, ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?* Why, do not devils believe this ? Yea, but they do not apply it to themselves ; they cannot believe that the Son of God came for them : but true faith is applicatory and appropriating ; applying and appropriating even the filiation and sonship of Christ : leading the man to believe that he is God's adopted son, upon the account of Christ who is his natural Son. But now,

2dly, We have the *confirmation* of Christ's being the Messiah, from verse 6, 7, 8. Having shewed the excellency of faith, and that it consisted in a believing that Christ was the Son of God; now he comes to confirm this foundation of faith, that Christ is indeed the Son of God; *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, &c.* The typical administration of old was partly by *water* and legal washing; partly by *blood* or bloody sacrifices. Now, Christ came to fulfil both these types. By working *regeneration*, he performs that which the legal *washings* represented; and by purchasing *redemption* and *reconciliation* with the price of his blood, he performs that which the *blood* of the sacrifices of old adumbrate and point forth. And hereupon the apostle leads us to the testimony of the Spirit, which believers have within them, and so comes more directly to treat of the witnesses of Christ being the Son of God, particularly the witnesses in heaven, and the witnesses on earth.

1. The witnesses in *heaven*, are three, ver. 7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.* How eminently did these three witness Christ's Sonship when he was baptized! The Father from heaven with an audible voice, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* The Son present in our nature which he had assumed. The Holy Ghost visibly appearing in the shape of a dove, and resting on him. And many other ways do these three witnesses attest Christ's Sonship; as in the word; in the miracles of Christ; in the ministry of the gospel: but, in whatever way, these three are one; not only one in essence, but one in will and consent; they agree in their testimony.

2. The witnesses on *earth* are three; the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Where by the *Spirit* we are to understand the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and his own immediate manifestation. By the *water* we are to understand regeneration and sanctification, represented by the old washing and cleansing with water. And by the *blood* we are to understand redemption and sancti-

fication, through the blood of Christ. These give their testimony to this truth, and witness that Christ is the Son of God: and they are said to do it *on earth*, even in all believers.

Now, having adduced all these witnesses, he shews them all to be divine witnesses; and the refusal thereof to be extremely dangerous, for thereby we make *God a liar*. However, the ninth verse refers especially to the seventh, concerning the witnesses in heaven; *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for, this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son*. But ver. 10. where our text lies, hath a reference especially to the eighth, concerning the witness on earth; *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself*. The three on earth bear witness in the court of the believers breast.

In the words of the text you have the believer *described*, or his faith accounted for, and unfolded, in these four things.

(1.) The *act* of it; it is called a *believing*, namely, upon the authority of God testifying and declaring what he should believe. This believing is called a *receiving* of Christ; *To as many as received him, to them gave he power, [OR PRIVILEGE,] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name*, John i. 12. It is a receiving Christ, and receiving the testimony concerning him; setting to the seal that God is true.

(2.) The *object* of this faith: it is a believing on the Son of God. This object of faith is fully illustrated in the following verse, namely, *This is the record of God, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. True faith then hath the revelation of Christ as the only begotten, and eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world, for its object. This is God's record and testimony that Christ is his Son, and our Saviour; that he is our salvation and eternal life by God's appointment and constitution. But,

(3.) We have the *evidence* of it: *He that believeth hath the witness* thereof. By the *witness* here, I conceive, we are to understand what we have in the eight verse, and in the close of the sixth. It is the *Spirit* that



that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. The Spirit, together with the *water* and *blood*, is the witness on earth, and within believers, which conquers with the witnesses in heaven, and agrees with them in witnessing the same thing, namely, that Christ is the Son of God, and the true Messiah. This is the end and design of all these witnesses in general. But the special end and design of this internal witness to particular souls is, their own adoption, filiation, and salvation, through this Messiah. This is expressly declared to be the end, ver. 13. *That ye may know, that ye have eternal life.*

(4.) You have the *subject* of it, he hath the witness *in himself*. He that believeth the witness and testimony of God, testifying his Son to be our life and salvation, he hath the witness in himself, in his own heart, in his own soul. He finds and feels him as the Author of faith within him. It is not a fluctuating opinion, but an internal testimony; and internal sensation of what God testifies and speaks, namely, peace and salvation, in and through his Son Jesus Christ. He that believeth in Christ hath the Spirit of Christ, of whom Christ hath said, *He shall testify of me*, John xv. 26. And again, *He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you*, John xvi. 14. He testifies in the man also by water and blood. He therefore, that believeth hath a sufficient efficacious witness in himself, and needs not seek it elsewhere.

What is further necessary for explaining this subject, will come in under the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. *That true faith carries its own evidence, or witness, along with it.*

See for illustration of this, besides the text, the following scriptures: Eph. i. 13. *After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.* Romans viii. 16. *The Spirit also beareth witness, with our spirits, that we are the sons of God.* I think it was this evidence the apostle's faith carried along with it, when he said, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know in whom I have believed.* And

And the believer's, mentioned in the close of this chapter, ver. 20. *We know, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ : this is the true God and eternal life.*

The method we propose for illustrating this proposition, thro' the divine favour, shall be the following.

- I. To enquire what this *faith* is ?
- II. What is that *evidence* and *witness* that it carries along with it ?
- III. What this witness doth *depone* and *attest* ?
- IV. What is the *quality* and *property* of this witness that the believer hath in himself ?
- V. *Why* true faith hath this witness along with it ?
- VI. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We return then to the *first* thing proposed, *viz.* to enquire, What true FAITH is? The text would give us ground to enquire into two things, *viz.* 1. Into the *object* : 2. The *nature* of it.

*1st,* The *object* of it is the SON of God. Not the Son exclusively : God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the object of our faith ; *He that receiveth his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true,* John iii. 33. But this God would be as inaccessible to us, as fallen angels, were it not through his Son, who *took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham!* therefore it follows, in the last verse of that third of John, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life :* and in the twelfth verse of this chapter, *He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.* Faith centers on him as the SON of God, as the *brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* Were he not God, faith would want a sure foundation ; *Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides me there is none else.* The salvation that we need, is a salvation that God only could contrive, that God only could purchase, that God only could administer. This is a strong support to the soul in all things than can difficult it, that he is God, the Son of God, God-man, Mediator.

In a word, I understand here *the Son of God*, and all these things in him, on which faith terminates. The object of our faith is the Son of God, as made of God unto us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: the Son of God, *whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation for our sins*. When faith takes him up as the Son of God, it looks on him as a *glorious object*; *More glorious than the mountains of prey*: as an *able Saviour*; *Able to save to the uttermost*, being the Son of God: as one *dear and near to God*, and in whom God cannot but be well-pleased; he is well-pleased with him as his own Son, and well-pleased with him as our Saviour, and well-pleased in him: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matth. iii. 17.

2dly, As to the *nature of faith*: it is not my design to enlarge upon it at present; only, a short account of such as believe on the Son of God, you may take in the following particulars.

1. *He that believeth on the Son of God*; that is, he who is *self-condemned*, and hath the sentence of the law pronounced in his conscience, and thereupon finds himself lost and undone without Christ; *The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost*. *The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick*. For whom then is consolation prepared, but for these that are cast down? For whom is wisdom, but for the foolish? For whom justification, but for the guilty? For whom sanctification, but for the filthy? For whom salvation, but for the sinner?

2. *He that believeth*; that is, he that hath no expectation from the law as a covenant of works, whom the Lord hath divorced from that husband, in order to his espousal to Christ, who sees his own righteousness to be filthy rags, a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself upon; a covering narrower than that he can wrap himself into; who finds his best duties and holiness cannot over-mantle him, and be proof against the consuming fire of God's infinite justice, which requires infinite satisfaction; or vindicate God's infinite holiness, which requires perfect obedience,

3. *He that believeth ;* that is, he to whom the Son of God hath been made *known and revealed*, according to that of our Lord, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, &c. But God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, in the face of Jesus.* Accordingly, every believer hath got the Spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

4. *He that believeth ;* that is, he who, from the discovery of his glory, hath had his *heart drawn out toward him as the Lord his righteousness and strength ;* his righteousness, for justification ; his strength, for sanctification. The man having seen his fittedness every way for his Mediatorial work, his eye hath affected his heart, and his heart made to go out after Christ, and to settle in him as the running river settles in the ocean. The man before this was unfixed, unsettled, running hither and thither ; but now, having come to Christ, he is at rest, and hath no further course : *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee.*

5. *He that believeth ;* that is, he that *lives upon him ;* who by faith draws virtue from him, for every thing that appertains to life and godliness. The man hath cast himself into his arms, to sink or swim with him : he is swallowed up wholly in Christ as his *all in all ;* his ALL, for light, life, strength, joy, grace, and glory.

6. *He that believeth ;* that is, he whose *faith works by love*, and draws out love.—See verse first of this chapter. But these things I do not insist upon.

II. What is that WITNESS that the believer hath in himself? This, according to the explication I gave, is threefold, in verse 8th, namely, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.

1st, *The Spirit*, by his own immediate testimony ; *The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits*, Rom. viii 16. The Spirit, by himself, witnesses in a distinct way from  
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that which is by water and blood, by shedding abroad the love of God upon the heart, in a soul-ravishing way: and ordinarily he makes the word useful in this way of witnessing; or, if not an express word, yet some scriptural consideration. Now, that the Spirit doth witness in believers this way, distinct from the water and blood, is evident,

1. From the apostle's *ascribing* it to the Spirit himself, in that forecited Rom. viii. 16. It is not said, *the Spirit*, but *the Spirit himself*. The graces of the Spirit are witnesses; for, every effect is a witness of its cause: but the *Spirit himself* doth it, says Paul.—A man does many things by his substitute: but when he is said to do it himself, it argues his doing in his own person.

2. It is evident from the *fitness* of many words and promises to witness immediately to a man, when the Spirit applies them; such as that, *Fear not, for I am with thee: Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee*. Now, the Spirit doth apply such words to particular souls; for, they are ordained on purpose for the believer's strong consolation: and the believer hath a right to them, being in Christ, *in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen*: and the Spirit is promised to take of the things of Christ, and shew them to his people.

3. It is evident from the *number* of the witnesses that are here owned in the context; there are *three* that bear witness on earth. Now, if the Spirit should not be a distinct witness from the water and blood, then there would not be three. The water and blood are not sufficient of themselves to witness: but the Spirit witnessing by water, is but one witness; and the Spirit witnessing by the blood, is but one witness; and therefore, if the Spirit had not a distinct way of witnessing from its concurrence with these, there would be but *two* not *three* witnesses. The Spirit witnesses with the blood and water; but, beside, he hath a distinct way; enlarging the soul with the joy of God's salvation, in a more immediate way.

4. It is evident from the *experience* of the saints.—Many of them have been brought to assurance in this immediate way; and not merely by reflection upon marks, and signs, and qualifications within, which is the Spirit's witnessing by water, or sanctification. It is true, that light that is darted in into the soul doth discover grace, insomuch, that when the Spirit doth suspend his operations, the remembrance of the graces, that were then acted, may confirm and evidence to the soul, that it was really the Spirit himself that was witnessing within the man.

2dly, Another witness is the *Water*; that is, sanctification; which was, under the law, typified by *washing*: and it is called the *washing of regeneration*, Titus iii. 5. Now, that the Spirit doth witness in the believer by water, or by sanctification, is evident,

1. Because it is expressly here called a *witness*; and there could not be three, if this were not one.

2. Because it is reckoned amongst the peculiar *favours* that believers receive from Christ, that he is made of God unto them *sanctification*, 1 Cor. i. 30.

3. Because there is a necessary *connexion* betwixt it and salvation; *We are chosen to salvation, thro' sanctification of the Spirit*, says the apostle, 2 Thess. ii. 13.; therefore they are said also to have *inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith*, Acts xxvi. 18. Whatever hath salvation coupled with it, being discovered, must needs have a witnessing power with it. And yet sanctification cannot witness our interest in Christ, without the Spirit irradiating and shining on us, and upon his own work, because this water is many times muddy, through the stirring and prevailing of corruption.

3dly, The third witness is the *Blood*; that is, the blood of Christ, by which we have redemption, remission, and justification. The blood of Christ, and the righteousness of Christ, are all one; therefore we are said to be *justified by the righteousness of God*, and also by the *blood of Christ*, Rom. v. 9, 13. Now, that this blood is a witness, is evident,

1. Because it is here *called* a witness, and that *distinct* from the Spirit and the water.

2. Because this blood and righteousness of Christ is the *ground* of our boldness and confidence; *Having boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. x. 19.

3. Because the *application* of this blood of Christ is by faith, which makes it witnessing blood; for, the blood cannot witness unless it be appropriated and applied: now, it is the office of faith to make that general proposition of Christ's shedding his blood, for the redemption and reconciliation of sinners, to be of a particular advantage to the soul; for, God is the *justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*. Thus *he that believeth hath the witness in himself*. Now, the *blood* seems to be a clearer evidence than that of the *water*, which many times is so muddy that its testimony cannot well be perceived: for, though a man, that hath no sanctification at all, which is the witness of water, cannot have the witness of the Spirit or the blood; yet sanctification may be dark, and yet the Spirit and the blood may witness within him: as in a dark day, a man may conclude the sun is up, though he cannot see it; so a man, acting faith on the blood of Christ, may conclude his sanctity, though he cannot see his own sanctification: and the not drawing this conclusion, is the occasion of many fears, doubts, and disquietments in the souls of believers.

III. What doth the witness, that the believer hath within him *depon* and *attest*? For, we may speak of these three as *one*, because they *agree in one*, as it is verse 8th.

We reply to this in general. This threefold witness, that the believer hath within him, doth testify, that CHRIST is the *Son of God*, which is the general scope of the preceding part of the chapter: they testify that he is the *true Messiah*, the *only Saviour*, whom God the Father hath sealed and authorized to be our Redeemer: that *God hath given us eternal life*, and *this life is in his Son*. More particularly,

1. The witness that the believer hath within himself doth testify and depone, that the believer hath an *union* to, and *interest* in Christ : that *he is in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ*, ver. 20.

Perhaps you may say, *How shall I know if I be in Christ, or have an interest in him?*

Indeed, you cannot know unless this threefold witness attest it ; without them you cannot know it : but any one of them will discover it. If you have either the Spirit's immediate testimony ; or the witness of water, in sanctification ; or the witness of blood, in justification, you may thence conclude, as if you heard it by an audible voice from heaven ; yea, and much more surely, than by any voice from men or angels, that Christ is yours, and ye are Christ's ; in regard, none of these witnesses can depone any thing but matter of fact : therefore, when the witness speaks, the man can say, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his ; I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine*, Song ii. 16. and chap. vi. 3.

2. This witness that the believer hath in himself doth attest and depone, that he is a *child of God* ; for, *the Spirit witnesseth with our spirits that we are the sons of God*, Rom. viii. 35. *We are the children of God by faith*, Gal. iii. 26. *And to as many as received him, to them give he power to become the sons of God*, John i. 12.—Now, the witness within doth declare this, because it witnesseth that the man is a believer that hath received Christ : for, by the bye, it witnesseth that his faith is no fancy, or delusion, but the work of God ; a *faith of God's operation*, which once he had not, and now he hath, which no man could effectuate but the power and grace of God ; and therefore the witness gives the man a persuasion, that as all that receive and believe in Christ, have authority to become the children of God ; so, he in particular, thus believing and receiving him, is a child of God.

3. This witness that the believer hath within him doth attest and depone, that he is *freed from condemnation*, and *reconciled to God* ; for, *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1. *He that be-*



*believeth on him, is not condemned*, John iii. 18. Christ was condemned, that the believer might not be condemned. Nay, instead of *condemnation*, the deposition of the witness declares, that he is *absolved* for ever from condemnation, and hath peace with God; for, *we have peace, through the blood of his cross*; and, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God*.

4. The witness that the believer hath within, doth depone, that he shall be *saved eternally*; that he hath *eternal life* in Christ: see verse 13th of this chapter; *He that hath the Son, hath life: He that believeth shall be saved*. Salvation and eternal life is attested by the deposition of the witness within; for, according to the clearness of the testimony, that the witness gives, such is the believer's assurance of eternal life. See 2 Cor. v. 1. Job xix. 25. It was by virtue of this witness speaking in Paul, that he was able to say, *I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto me*, 2 Tim. iv. 7.

5. The witness that the believer hath within him, does testify and depone that nothing can be laid to *his charge*, Romans viii. 33. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies*. The witness depones, that *justice* can lay nothing to his charge, because Christ hath cleared off justice to the full: it depones, that the *law* can lay nothing to his charge, because Christ hath stopped its mouth with a perfect obedience: it depones, that *Satan* can lay nothing to his charge, because Christ hath bruised the head of the serpent, and judged the prince of this world: it depones, that *conscience* can lay nothing justly to his charge; for, when the conscience is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, which is a concurring witness, here all its accusations fall to the ground. If God be for a man, who can be against him?

6. The witness that the believer hath within him, does sometimes depone and attest, that the union betwixt Christ and him is *inseparable* and *indissoluble*; that neither death nor devils shall part Christ and him;

*I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom. viii. 38, 39. The witness doth attest that his market is made for ever ; that he shall be for ever with the Lord ; that his Redeemer liveth, and though after his skin, worms destroy this body, yet in his flesh shall he see God ; that this corruption shall put on incorruption ; and that death shall be swallowed up in victory.*

In a word, the witnesses doth sometimes depone, that *all things shall work together for his good ; that tho' the Lord should hide his face, yet he will return with everlasting kindness ; yea, that though he fall he shall arise ; and though he sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to him ; that his grace shall be sufficient for him ; that the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and that he hath a godly heritage ; that this God is his God for ever and ever, and will be his guide even unto death ; that he will never leave him, nor forsake him, but keep him by his power, through faith unto salvation ; that the God of peace will bruise Satan under his feet ; that he shall overcome thro' the blood of the Lamb ; that when he shall appear he shall be like him, for he shall see him as he is ; that though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet he needs fear no evil, for his rod and his staff shall comfort him ; that he shall come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon his head ; that he shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*—These, and many such things of the like nature, doth the witness attest and depone, when it speaks : but though the believer hath the witness in himself, yet this witness doth not always speak within him ; but when it speaks its deposition and testimony, make one or other of these things as clear as day-light to the believer. A waff of the Spirit's testimony, either by himself, or by the water and blood, is sufficient to assure him of all this. I come now,

IV. To the *fourth* thing, namely, The *QUALITIES* of this witness which the believer hath within himself. What sort of a witness is it?

1. It is a *credible* witness that the believer hath in himself, that cannot go about to deceive us. The *Spirit* cannot deceive; for, the Spirit is *truth*, ver. 6.; he is the *God of truth*; one God with the Father and Son. The *water* cannot deceive; for sanctification is the very *image of God*, and holiness cannot lye. The *blood* cannot deceive; for, it is the *precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot*. Besides, that water and blood do not witness without the Spirit, which makes the witness of undoubted credibility; yea, there was never such a credible witness in the world, as the believer hath within him.

2. It is a *competent* witness. As the witness the believer hath cannot deceive, neither can it be deceived. Other witnesses may be, and have been deceived, either when he witnesses immediately, or by the water and blood. People may deceive themselves with a vain confidence, and false assurance, because their blind mind, and erring consciences may be deceived; but the believer, that hath this witness in himself, may be sure that as his witness cannot be deceived, so he may depend upon the testimony thereof, because it is truth, and *no lye is of the truth*, 1 John ii. 21,—27. The same *anointing teaching all things, and is truth, and is no lye*, &c. And so,

3. It is a *true* and *faithful* witness. This is plain from what is said. If it be a credible witness, that will not deceive; and a competent witness, that cannot be deceived; then it is a true and faithful witness.—This is a title that is given to Christ; and it may be given to his witnesses also, that witness for him: the three that bear record on earth witness truly for him, as well as the Three that bear record in heaven. The witness that the believer hath in himself is steady, will not say and gainsay; it will not attest the truth, and then retract. It is true, the believer himself may draw back; when the light of the Spirit is gone, he may be ready to throw all the witnesses depositions away, saying, *A-las!*

las! I thought I had seen God in such a way, and heard his voice, and felt his love; but now I fear I was mistaken: But the witness itself will not retract; for, whenever the Spirit shines on his own work again, then he attests the same thing again, and makes the soul that *remembered God, and was troubled*, now to *remember again the years of the right-hand of the most High*.

4. It is a *concurring* witness that the believer hath in himself. The Spirit witnesseth together with the water and the blood; and *these three agree in one*: and, you know, *by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established*. It is true, the Spirit may witness by water, or by graces and experiences, when he does not witness by his own immediate testimony; and, perhaps, may witness by his own immediate testimony, when his witness by blood and water is not so clear: but yet, as these three may witness conjunctly all at once; so, though they witness severally, yet, whenever any of them witness, they concur in attesting the same thing: the one never witnesses the contrary of what the other witnessed.

5. It is an *evident* and *clear* witness that the believer hath in himself, it is not dark, but clear; therefore called *THE witness*, by way of eminency and evidence. It is true, the witnessing of the Spirit admits of degrees; as the operations of the Spirit are at one time more powerful and manifest than at another; so may the soul's persuasion of its adoption by it be, which is one of the great things that I told you the witness doth depone. At one time he acts so powerfully, as that all fears and doubts are banished; at another time it may not be so clear, but much overclouded, and yet accompanied with some degrees of persuasion that Christ is theirs, even though faith be weak. A rich man's window may be wider than a poor man's, and so the sun may make his house the more light, that the things within it may be the better discerned; but the poor man may really enjoy the beams of the sun, and see what is in his house: so the poorest, the weakest believer may know the Spirit hath shined into his heart, as well as others,  
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that enjoy brighter beams than he hath been acquainted with.

6. It is an *internal* witness; he hath the witness *in himself*. You will say, In what court doth this witness depon? Why, it is even in the court of conscience; he hath the witness in himself: and he still hath the witness in himself, though the witness be not still actually deponing in that court: see 2 Cor. i. 12. The believer may not only say with Job, *My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high*; but also, my witness is on earth, and my record is in my bosom. He hath the witness in himself.

V. The next thing was the REASONS why it is that the believer hath the witness in himself? Why doth true faith carry its witness along with it? It doth so for the following reasons.

1. To distinguish it from *false* faith, which hath no such witness. The Spirit of God will not give witness to a lye. False and delusory faith is a lye; and none bear witness to it but the devil, who is the *father of lies*. Some will say, "God forbid, but we believe in the Son of God; we never made a scruple about believing that." Well, we may tell such persons, that they are deceiving themselves: but they will not believe us as long as the devil is confirming them in their lye. But herein true faith is distinguished from false; the man hath the witness in himself.

2. True faith hath the witness to *demonstrate* it to be true faith, and to put honour on this workmanship of God. God's work must have God's witness; and this is the mark and seal that God puts upon the forehead of all the followers of the Lamb. This mark distinguishes it from false faith, and demonstrates it to be true faith: God appends his seal to his own grace of faith: *In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 13.

3. True believers have the witness in themselves, because true faith *receives* the witness; this is the office of faith, Gal. iii. 12. *That the blessing of Abraham might*

come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. And ver. 2. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Faith takes hold of the Spirit; it takes hold of the water; it takes hold of the blood: it takes in the witness; and so the believer hath the witness in himself.

4. Believers have the witness in themselves because God hath promised this witness to attend believing. See a sweet promise of it, John vii. 37, 38. *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, &c.* See this water further spoken of, John iv. 14. *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life; that is, even the Spirit witnessing by water, or sanctification.*

5. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, because outward witnesses cannot clear him with any comfortable evidence; and the Lord wills that believers should have *strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them*: but now, no means, no ordinances, no instruments, can clear, or comfortably attest his interest in Christ, his sonship, or reconciliation, unless the Spirit of Christ witness within him. The white of a wall, can as soon make day, as ministers, or outward means, can give comfort or clearness to a believer, unless the Spirit of the Lord concur with the mean, and witness in the man's bosom, either by himself, or by water, or by blood.

6. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, because true faith hath many *false* witnesses to rise up against it. The devil is a false witness, that many times suggests to the poor believer, saying, Thou hast no part nor lot in Christ; thou hast no inheritance in the Son of Jesse: and, indeed, his faith would faint and fail, if he had not a witness in himself to declare the contrary. The wicked world are sometimes false witnesses, that accuse the believer of being a vain pretender; that he is nothing but a hypocrite: but having a witness in himself, it makes him easy. His carnal reason is another false witness:

witness: "Why says carnal reason, do you believe that God will have mercy on the like of you? Do you think that all the sweet promises of the covenant will be made out to you? Do you think that such a privilege as an interest in God and Christ belongs to you?" Many such false witnesses rise up against faith; and therefore the believer needs to have this true witness within, that faith may be able to hold up its head. *He that believeth hath the witness in himself.* I come now,

VI. To the *sixth* and *last* thing of the general method, *viz.* The *application*; which we shall essay in an use of information, trial, and exhortation.

The first use may be of *information*. Is it so, *That he that believeth hath the witness in himself?* Hence see,

1. That though *faith alone* justifies, yet *justifying faith* is not alone; it hath its witness with it, even the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood; namely, manifest sanctification, as well as justification. This removes the reproach that Papists and ignorant Protestants casts upon the doctrine of faith, and justification, thereby alone, as if thus we were enemies to holiness and sanctification: but, though faith alone justify, yet justifying faith is not alone; it hath the witness with it; and particularly the witness of the water; that is, the sanctifying graces, fruits, and operations of the Spirit.

2. Hence see how *false pretenders* to faith may be unmasked and discovered: if none but he that truly believes on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, then the faith that hath no such witness is but a false faith. Never conclude that you have true faith, unless you find, or at least have found, the witness within you giving testimony thereto. If you know nothing more or less of this witness, then it is plain you know nothing of true faith: for, it is expressly said of all believers, weak or strong, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* What have you to say, man, woman? If you were upon your death-bed, and

we should ask you, as we have done at some, if ever you have been made to believe on the Son of God ? Yes, say you : but then we ask what evidence you can give of your faith ? Can you produce your witness to attest ? Can you bring forth the rings, the bracelet, and signet, the pledges and pawns of his love ? Alas ! that many people in that case, either they can say nothing to the purpose : and all that some can say is much worse than if they could say nothing, while they were never brought out of their lying refuges, but go down to the grave with a lye in their right-hand.

3. Hence see, what is the *true matter* of a believer's confidence and assurance : why, they have the witness in themselves : and whenever the witness speaks, then they not only believe, but believe and are sure ; not only that he is Christ, the Son of the living God, but that he is their Lord and their God. And thus the man's assurance is not built upon a wavering foundation ; though he may waver himself, yet the foundation stands sure ; it is built upon the testimony of God, or God's witnesses and deponents within him, which cannot attest a lye.

4. Hence see, that the believer's doubts, and fears, and jealousies are *inexcusable* and *unwarrantable* ; for, he hath the witness in himself : and his unbelieving doubts do nothing but give the lye to God's witness that is in him. Indeed, the clamours of unbelief may sometimes drown the voice of this witness, when it is not speaking audibly ; and the Spirit, who is the principal witness, being sometimes grieved, may cease to depone ; but if the witness hath attested your interest in Christ, your forship, your peace with God, O beware of such unbelieving jealousies as tend to deny what the witness hath declared ; for, this is to bear false witness against God : if you be left utterly in the dark, rather suspend your judgment, and say nothing, than to say otherwise than the witness hath said ; delay your own verdict till once your witness speak again : and while it is silent, say not, that either its deposition was false, dark, or fallacious ; that it was a fancy or delusion : speak not an ill word of your witness, lest you



you thereby reproach God. When matters are at the worst with you, rather speak for God than against him. Your fears and doubts are no religion, but so many lies against the witness.

5. Hence see, what it is that may *support* a child of God amidst trials that he meets with in the world. He may be tried before several bars. He may be tried at the bar of *providence*; one affliction on the back of another may try what mettall he is of, and put him to all the corners of the saddle, as we speak. He may be tried at the bar of *God's law*; it may examine and weigh him in its balance to see what weight he bears, what conformity he hath to its precepts. He may be tried at the bar of *conscience*, and there accused of innumerable imperfections. He may be tried at the *devil's* bar, and there he may be winnowed and sifted as wheat. He may be tried at the bar of *men*, and brought before governors and kings for Christ's sake, falsely accused.—Well, whatever bars he be set before, the witness within him is ready to appear at the bar with him: and whenever it speaks, it will bear him out, and bear him up, and answer all that can be said against him, with one word; *If God be for me, who shall be against me? It is God that justifieth me, who is he that shall condemn me?* One word of this witness will answer a thousand accusations: the secret testimony thereof will bear up the soul under a world of difficulties. See Prov. xiv. 14. *A good man shall be satisfied from himself.*

6. Hence see, what a *lonely, desolate state* an unbeliever is in. If he that believeth hath the witness in himself, then he that believeth not hath no such witness. An unbeliever wants a good bosom friend a believer hath.—He that wants this witness in himself, wants good company within doors. There is no better company in the world than this witness that the believer hath. But the unbeliever is desolate and destitute in this respect: he hath no such company; yea, he hath the quite contrary, he hath the devil and an ill conscience within him: he may have an erring conscience, that may attest a lye unto him and deceive him, to which the devil may concur, by keeping all quiet within;

within ; for, *While the strong man keeps the house, the goods are at peace* : or he may have a seared conscience, that may attest nothing good nor bad, being stupified, and seared as well as hot iron.

The *second* use may be for *examination*. If he that believeth hath the witness in himself, then try if you be *believers* indeed ; or, if you can produce the witnesses of your faith. This inquiry is necessary to give satisfaction to the doubting, by differencing the testimony of the Spirit from the delusions of Satan, and the single testimony of our own spirits ; and necessary to confirm and establish these that enjoy this privilege of the witness within them. For your trial then, I would, 1. Offer some general marks of these that *enjoy* the true witness within them. 2. Some more particular marks of the *witnessing* of the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

*1st*, In general, I would offer you these mark of a person that *enjoys* the witness in himself, upon his believing in the *Son of God*.

1. This witness fills the soul with a high and inexpressible *admiration* of the love of God, in bringing it into the number of his children, *Behold ! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God !* 1 John iii. 1. The soul sees God's wonderful love of good-will in the contrivance of its adoption and salvation ; and sees that it would have nonplust all the creatures ; and so admires that ever *God so loved the world*. The man admires God's love of compassion towards it in the many strivings with it while it was in a natural condition. He admires his love of delight which is discovered : O that ever he should take pleasure in such a worm ! And so also admires his infinite condescension that ever he looked upon such an unworthy wretch. He admires and wonders at the glory and excellency of the things which he is by the witness assured of : does he find the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ ? O then, he sees an extraordinary glory and excellency in this blood and righteousness of Christ ; he prized it before, but

now more than ever, when he finds the witness in himself.

2. This witness fills the soul with kindly *sorrow* and *self-correction* for former unkindness offered to the Lord. Oh! says the soul, how miserably have I forgotten the Lord these many days and years by-gone! And yet now I see he hath not been forgetting me; for, now I feel his love: and so the soul takes God's part against itself more than ever. The clearest sight of God causes greatest self-aborrancy; whereas a delusion puffs up: and though hypocrites may have a shadow of humility at other times; yet there is least appearance of it under their highest attainments. Peter, after a love-look of Christ, O how he sighs and sobs, melt and mourns at the remembrance of his former denial of his master: under such heart-ravishing revelations this doth pierce and wound the soul, that the Lord should have had such unsuitable and ungrateful returns from it, after many large expressions of his love: *He looks on him whom he pierced, and mourns.*

3. This witness, when enjoyed, fills the soul with great desires and endeavours after *heart-purification*; John iii. 3. *He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* Delusions tend some way or other to unholiness; Satan drives at some corrupt design therein: but the true witness procures an expulsion of Satan. As Christ proved himself to be no impostor, by his casting out Satan, Matth. xii. 22.; so, if the witness within tends to the casting out of Satan, this shews it to be no delusion: for, the binding of the strong man must be by the Spirit; for he only is the stronger: and, indeed, when Satan sees himself cast out, he will be the incensed; and hence floods of new temptations are to be expected, Rev. xii. 13, 14.— And this is also part of Satan's subtle engine of causing the soul to doubt of the witness's testimony; though he seeks to prevent any doubts or fears in his own, yet where he is cast out, he will raise storms; yet still the more the witness is enjoyed, the more is he and his work ejected, and the soul prompted to the utmost after holiness and purification. Again,

4. This

4. This witness fills the soul with earnest expectations of *full communion* with Christ; for, the soul at such a time, is upon the mount of communion with the Lord, and is exceedingly watchful against any thing that would interrupt its communion with Christ: and though the most glorious revelations are oft-times followed with the most horrid and violent temptations, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Mat. iii. 16, 17.; yet when the Spirit of God is the witness, he will make the soul watchful against sin, Song viii. 4. and ardently desirous after uninterrupted communion; Oh! *When shall the day break, and the shadows fly away?*

5. This witness fills the soul with a *persuasion* of the Lord's affording spiritual and suitable provision for it at all times, and on all occasions. Formerly it went drooping under fears that it should want protecting grace, under dangers; preserving grace, under trials; supporting grace, under sufferings: the man feared he should never hold out to the end; and did mistrust God in every condition. But now, when the witness speaks, he is delivered from these fears, and made to see the Lord's name to be JEHOVAH-JIREH, that *the Lord shall provide and see*; that the Lord is his shepherd, *he shall not want.*—Thus you have some of these general marks of the witness that the believer hath in himself.

2dly, I would offer some more particular marks, from the several ways of *witnessing* spoken of in the doctrinal part; how a soul may know that the Spirit, the water, and the blood hath witnessed.

[1.] How may a soul know if the *Spirit* hath witnessed in a more immediate way, or not? It is true, every one is not capable to make trial here: it supposes, that some strong impression of adoption be made upon the heart, otherwise there is no ground to pretend to an immediate testimony; for the enquiry is, *How we may know a strong opinion of our own spirits, and a delusion of Satan, from the testimony of the Spirit?* In answer then unto the question, I say, in general, that the immediate testimony of the Spirit is self-evident, while a soul is in the actual enjoyment thereof. More particularly,

I offer

I offer the following marks of the Spirit's immediate testimony.

I. These *irradiations* of the Spirit do carry with them such a clear demonstration of their coming from the Spirit, as puts it in some measure out of doubt, there are such *sparklings* of *divinity* in them: according to the degree of clearness in which the Spirit manifests his presence, such is the degree of the persuasion, weaker or stronger. The Spirit is appointed to this witnessing work as you see, ver. 6. of this chapter: and he is the highest witness; there can be none higher: for, it is the Spirit that makes other things have a witnessing power. No grace or experience can witness without him; and he is given for this end, among others, to make the children of God to *know the things that are freely given them of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. 2 Cor. iii. 16, 17, 18. and 1 John iii. 27. All which shows that the testimony of the Spirit hath a property to discriminate and difference itself from these flashes that come from Satan. The Spirit's inhabitation and indwelling is appointed to be an evidence of our adoption; and this is made the rule for trial, Rom. viii. 9. *Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.* 1 Cor. vi. 19. *Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, that is in you.* By all which it is evident, that the Spirit gives testimony to himself in his operations, so as neither Satan, nor any creature, can be the author thereof. For, though the Spirit be not discernable in his essence, but in his operations; yet, as the Spirit gives effectual conviction of sin, that the soul cannot deny its guiltiness, and that without enquiring whether the Spirit hath done this or not; so the Spirit doth work effectually in assuring and comforting the soul, though the soul doth not, till afterwards, reflect or enquire whether it was the Spirit or not: and so the essence of the Spirit may not be discernable, and yet the testimony may be sure to the soul, while the Spirit not only gives the soul such a sweet persuasion, but also discovers such invincible grounds, and undeniable demonstrations of what he witnesses, that the soul must fall down before it, and say to the Spirit, as the disci-

ples did to Christ, John xvi. 29. *Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb* : but this will be more clear by a

2d Mark of this immediate testimony, or witness of the Spirit, namely, that the Spirit, when he thus witnesses, makes some *divine attribute* to shine forth eminently in these witnessing acts ; for instance, the Spirit causeth the soul to take notice of the *divine wisdom* that shines in the application of the promise, which is a special work of the Spirit, wherein his presence is as discernable as in any other operation ; now, the soul is made to see what wisdom shines in the time and season, when the promise came with light, life, and power to them : wisdom in the suitability of the promise to their condition ; wisdom in the manner of its working ; the soul finds how the heart was ravished, how Satan was defeat, how corruption was depressed thereby ; and then the man cries out, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !*—The Spirit gives the soul also to see *divine power* improved for it in a glorious way ; even such power as *raised Christ from the dead* ; the *exceeding greatness of his almighty power*, Eph. i. 18, 19. The child of God sometimes feels a divine power in the application of the promise, or presenting thereof to the heart ; but, perhaps, cannot tell who is the agent, whether Satan or the Spirit : and therefore the apostle, in that place, speaks by way of question, with three remarkable WHATS ; *That ye may know WHAT is the hope of this calling ; WHAT the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints ; and WHAT is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe* ; importing, that it may be known to be indeed the Spirit's power by its actings ; for, the Spirit's power is exerted in overcoming the heart, and powerfully persuading it to accept of the promise : the soul sees its own insufficiency to make the application, which now it hath felt, and an aversion thereto ; yea, was ready with Sarah, to laugh at the promise ; and to say with these, 2 Kings vii. 2. *If God should make windows in heaven, can such a thing be done ?* And yet now it was not able to withstand the sweet power that did

did draw it that way. The Spirit's power is thus exerted in overcoming the heart, and overcoming Satan, and discovering his subtilties.—Again, the Spirit causeth the soul to observe the divine *faithfulness* that shines herein, Psal. lxxxix. 2. *Mercy shall be built up for ever*; and then it follows, *thy FAITHFULNESS shalt thou establish in the very heavens.* After the Lord hath promised so and so to the soul, the soul faints and gives over hope; yet the Lord returns to the man, throws the promised mercy into his lap, and so discovers his faithfulness. O! how is the soul then taken up with the Lord's truth and veracity! *Faithful is he that promised, who also will do it.*—Again, the Spirit convinces the soul of the divine *goodness*, when he thus comes and makes application of the promise, Psal. xxxi. 19, 21. *O how great is thy GOODNESS which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, &c.* The man is swallowed up with admiration.—The Spirit causes the man to see how ready he was to say, God had neglected him, yet nevertheless now he sees that God hath dealt graciously and marvelously, and nothing can make him deny divine love at the time. It would therefore seem needless to ask this question, By what evidence we may know the Spirit's immediate testimony? Because thus it is also self-evident to such as actually enjoy the same; but yet, because, after the Spirit may suspend his operations, and then the soul may question it; and because some have strong opinions, that they enjoy this immediate testimony, when yet they are under a delusion. Therefore,

3. Another evidence of the Spirit's more immediate testimony, is, the eminent *acts of faith* upon the promise, drawn out thereby. If the soul hath assurance, faith hath a hand in it, Heb. x. 22. and lives upon Christ in the promise for it, Psal. xxv. 2. *O my God, I trust in thee.* When the soul hath a sight of its propriety in God, and interest in Christ, this puts it upon renewed actings of faith; if it can say, *My God*; it cannot but say, with holy boldness, *I trust in thee.* Delusions rather hinder the actings of faith.

QUEST. *When is a word, or promise, received by faith ? and so, When does faith discover a testimony to be no delusion ?*

ANSW. (1.) When the heart is *commanded* by a persuasion of divine love, by the word, as an act of obedience to the Lord ; not barely when there is a word given in, but when the Spirit over-awes the soul with the majesty that comes along therewith to yield subjection, Psal. xlii. 8. *The Lord will command his loving-kindness.* Psal. cxxxiii. 3. *The Lord commands the blessing.* The Spirit commands faith to own the loving-kindness of the Lord. It is not every one that hath a persuasion that Christ is his, that doth enjoy the immediate witness of the Spirit ; for, Balaam said, *My God,* Num. xxii. 18. ; and yet had no interest in God. Thus Satan raises false confidences in many profane wretches, and backs them with scripture ; such as that, that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; that God will not the death of the sinner ;* and their own spirits conclude that they are the sinners whom he will save : but unless such scriptures, or rather the Spirit in them, have commanded their hearts to a persuasion, out of respect to the Lord, they are not to be regarded as the Spirit's testimony.

(2.) Then does faith evidence a testimony of the Spirit to be no delusion, when the sinful *objections* that swarmed in the soul are suppressed. If the soul hath faith upon Christ in any promise, then it is pained and afflicted with the sense of its former unbelief, Psalm xlii. 5, 8. Delusions do stupify men that they do not seek for a satisfactory deliverance from objections ; but the Spirit, like the sun, causes such mists of darkness to fly away, and puts abundance in the mouth to answer Satan in all.

(3.) Then faith evidences the testimony of the Spirit to be no delusion, when its reception of the word, or promise, causes *self-abasement*, Matth. xv. 27. There the woman calls herself a *dog*, then presently Christ owns her faith. Great faith causes great self-abasement, Mark xiv. 31. Peter declares his preferring Christ before his own life ; yet this was but the voice of his spirit, because it did spring from self-confidence.

(4.) Finally,



(4.) Finally, when the heart is carried out *Christward* by the reception of any promise; when the whole soul runs out after Christ, taking the promise out of his hand, Eph. iii. 6.; owning him in the purchase of the mercy whereof it is assured; building its confidence on him for the further communications of the promised blessing; and being laid under strong obligations and engagements to Christ thereby, crying out, *What shall I render to him?* Psa. cxvi. 12. You may have strong confidences of your interest in the love of God in Christ, such as no argument can beat you off from it, and yet you may be under a delusion, if your heart be not drawn out after Christ, in a suitableness to the strength of your confidence. But if your confidence be built and bottomed upon him, and his promise, Psa. xxx. 7.; and if your affection to Christ rises as high as your persuasion of his love, then you have enjoyed the witnessing of the Spirit.

The *act* of faith may be a clearer evidence sometimes of the Spirit's testimony than the *object*; for, a man may have a right object for his faith, and yet not a right act about that object: and so his faith can witness nothing. We are told, John ii. 23. *Many believed in Christ's name*; here was a right object of faith: and yet their faith was wrong and vain, ver. 24, 25. A man may put forth a natural act upon a supernatural object; he may have a human faith about divine things, 1 Cor. ii. 5.: but the scripture declares, that such as do rightly believe, are adopted and justified; and determines what faith is, John i. 12. Rom. v. 1. Acts xiii. 39. which may make a man have a particular persuasion; though no scripture speaks expressly of any man, saying, Thou James, John, Thomas, art adopted and justified; for, its giving such characteristic notes and marks must needs be a particularizing of them, as well as if the Lord should call them by name: the soul is made to believe, when many others, that hear the same word, believe not; this makes the difference. But then,

4. Another evidence of the Spirit's immediate testimony, is, that the soul is enabled, at such a time,

to discern many of its *former experiences*. The Lord had manifested himself to Jacob at Bethel; Genesis xxxviii. 10,—15; and for a long time we read of little intercourse betwixt God and him, at least no such signal manifestations of his glory to him as he had met with at Bethel: he had been serving Laban for twenty years; during all which time there is no word of Bethel: but when the Lord returned to him, calling him to return to the land of his kindred, when he came back to give him a new testimony of his love, he remembered him of his former loving-kindness, saying, *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow unto me*, Gen. xiii. 13. The believer may have very rich experiences of what the Lord hath done for him in former times; but yet the sense thereof may be much obliterate, and worn out, that he may be left to desperate conclusions, as Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* But when the Spirit's testimony is again renewed, then he chides himself, saying, ver. 10, 11, 12, 13. *This is mine infirmity: I will remember the years of the right-hand of the Most High: I will remember the work of the Lord; surely I will remember his wonders of old: I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of all thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* The Spirit's breathing, and testifying in the believer, makes his old experience new to him again; and gives him a new feast upon an old meal, and surprises him with his love, grace, faithfulness, and constancy therein: he sees that he is God, and changes not; and therefore the children of Jacob are not consumed, Mal. iii. 6.

5. The witnessing of the Spirit carries a *glorious transformation* into the image of the word. Many have had flashes of joy in the reception of the word, Luke viii. 13. yea, have been raised to great hope and triumphing joy, Job viii. 13. *The hypocrites hope shall perish.* Chap. xx. 5. *The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite for a moment.* Chap. xxvii. 8. *What*

is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? But here, I say, these witnessings of the Spirit cause glorious transformations into the image of the word. Delusions do not imprint the word upon the heart, so as to change it; but these witnessings of the Spirit transform the soul into the image of the word, according to the promise of writing the word into the heart, Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. Some dispositions, principles, and inclinations are wrought within, that have a lively resemblance in them unto the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. The working of the Spirit in hypocrites is like the smell of an apothecary's shop, which one that passes by, receives, though he never carry any of these odoriferous things along with him; but the witnessing of the Spirit, in the true believer, is by imparting the thing to the soul which is witnessed thereto, and making the man really to possess it; so that if a man could see the soul of a true child of God, he would see engraven upon it, mercy, peace, love, righteousness, life, joy; yea, and Christ himself.

6. The witnessing of the Spirit hath *powerful operations* in the heart towards the attainment of spiritual gospel ends there. The hearing of heaven and happiness is taking, even with carnal hearts. Many with the young man in the gospel, may be inquisitive about eternal life, have desires after it, and be sorrowful at the thoughts of missing it; and these things imply some *taste of the heavenly gift, and the good word of God*, Heb. v. 5, 6. A man may be elevated with raptures of joy upon a supposed interest in heaven; like Haman, he may think, *Whom will the Lord honour but myself?* But yet, with the young man in the gospel, he may mind earthly things more than Christ, or eternal life. Like a physician, who hath prepared a comfortable potion for the health of a friend; he may give to others a taste of it, to let them know how sweet it is; but not such a taste as to have any operation in the stomach: so the Lord may let some carnal men discern some goodness in Christ, and eternal life; but these tastes do not make them partakers of the refreshing power thereof: they may have great reformation and profession; but no  
such

such operation as to cause their hearts to mount up Christ-ward, and place their satisfaction in him alone. But the witnessing of the Spirit makes the soul to cry out, Song v. 10. *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.* The soul, at such a time, cannot but reckon Christ the top of its glory; and carnal delights will have no relish with the man. O! shall I be drunk with the sweet cups of worldly delights! Is not the wine of Christ's cellar better? O! *whither shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

[2.] How may a soul know if he hath the witness of blood; or, if the Spirit witness in him *by blood*? For this is the other witness the believer hath in himself, namely, the blood of Christ applied for his justification. How may this be known?

1. The Spirit's witnessing by blood may be known by the *application* of the blood of Christ, in the promise, by faith. We are not to think there is any application of material blood; but the gospel discovers that the blood of Christ, which was shed, was intended for the justification and redemption of sinners. Now, the application of this blood is by faith, Rom. iii. 25. And therefore, it must be by a promise; for, faith must have a divine word to build upon: so that if the promise be yours, then the blood of Christ is yours in the several uses thereof; and that ought to satisfy the believer: for there is an inseparable connexion betwixt the blood, and the covenant of promise; therefore it is called the *blood of the covenant*. Now, *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*; that is, faith carrieth a man out of himself to find a righteousness in another, which availeth to justification; and that faith is cordial: Christ owns not that faith where the heart is wanting, John ii. 23, 24, 25. Acts viii. 13, 21.

2. The witness of the blood may be known by the man's *preferring* that blood before all other things; or that righteousness before all other things else: *Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which*

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is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Is thy thirst unquenchable for this blood? Can nothing give thy heart and conscience contentment but this blood? The excellent uses and ends of this blood should raise our estimation of it: it is useful for *justification* and *salvation*, Rom. v. 9, 18.; and for obtaining *communion* with God: it is useful for *reconciliation*, Col. i. 20. Rom. v. 1. God will become a friend, open his bosom, reveal his secrets, express his love to these that obtain interest in this blood; it is useful for obtaining liberty for *near approaches* to God, Eph. ii. 13. *We are made nigh by the blood of Christ*, Heb. x. 10. Sweet intercourse is obtained this way.

3. The witness of blood may be known by the *renunciation* of whatsoever stands in competition with the blood of Christ, in these uses and ends which it serves for. The believer hath no *confidence in the flesh*, or his own righteousness. A believer may, through want of sufficient illumination, or through violent temptation, rest on some particular duty; but his inward bent is against it. Many acknowledge that they could never have yielded perfect obedience to the law, and that they would have been under the curse, if Christ had not taken away the rigorous exaction of the law; and now they build their confidence upon Christ, in conjunction with their own actions, their praying, hearing, reading, offering no wrong to their neighbour, loving and serving God, and the like; but if you look for justification by any one work, and Christ together, you will have no advantage by Christ, Galat. v. 2, 3, 4. and are *debtors to the whole law*. Neither faith nor works can be the least particle of that righteousness which God hath promised salvation to; because the two ways of faith and works are incompatible one with another, and so admit of no mixture, Gal. iii. 12. *The law is not of faith*; that is, let no man think to mix them together: for the law presents to God a man's own righteousness, *He that doth them, shall live in them*; but faith receives Christ's righteousness, and presents this to God: in the way of works, a man is to fulfil

this righteousness himself ; in the way of faith, it is fulfilled to him by his Surety, Jesus Christ ; and he is made partaker of it by receiving it, Rom. v. 17, 18, 19, 21. Heb. ix. 15. Gal. iii. 12, 13. If salvation were of works, then the reward should be of debt, but not of grace ; either of which are contrary to Rom. iv. 4. Salvation is a debt to Christ ; but only free grace, and the satisfaction of Christ, can make it a debt to us.—  
Again,

4. The witness of blood may be known by the *efficaciousness* of that blood. What power and efficacy have you found it having upon your heart ? Have you found it sprinkling from an *evil conscience* ? Heb. ix. 19, 22. xii. 24. Have you found your heart secured against the roarings of the law, and temptations of Satan, by opposing the blood of Christ thereto, and found a spiritual peace and tranquillity established by this blood ? In a word, have you accepted of the blood of Christ, for the uses and ends it serves for, as recorded in the word, and made freely to choose it for these ends ? Many are like him that has a gangrene, there is no way to save his life but by sawing off some member of his body ; if the man submit to this, it is with abundance of unwillingness, not freely : so many may see an absolute necessity of the blood of Christ ; they may choose it with reluctance : but the believer is made to choose it freely ; and the heart is set upon it, and made to see that there cannot be a better or a sweeter way of salvation than by Christ and his blood. A man may come to God as a Creator, and cry for mercy, and yet never have it ; he may plead a promise, and that with importunity, and the utmost natural sincerity, and yet miss salvation, if he take it not as in Christ ; for God hath made no promise but in Christ, Eph. iii. 6. 2 Cor. i. 20. Not one covenant mercy but must pass through his hand to the soul. So that if your heart hath not freely owned his mediation, his blood cannot be witnessing ; but the heart's freeness in choosing and accepting of the blood of Christ, for the ends and uses for which it is designed, may discover that we have the witness of blood.

[3.] How may a soul know if he hath the witness of *water* ; or, if the Spirit witness in him by water in sanctification ? There are two parts of sanctification, namely, mortification, and vivification ; and the Spirit witnesses by water with respect to both.

1<sup>st</sup>, The Spirit witnesses by water in respect of MORTIFICATION, or dying unto sin. That this is a witnessing thing is evident from Rom. vi. 16. *His servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.*

QUEST. *How shall I know if sin be MORTIFIED in me, or the dominion of it broken ?*

ANSW. This may be known by the *choice* of the heart to part with sin. The very *reign* of sin consists in the voluntary subjection of the whole man to it ; and therefore, a thorough unwillingness to sin, must argue freedom from the reign of it. A choosing and consenting doth express Paul's subjection to God's law, when he falls short in practice, Rom. vii. 16. ; and so a hearty consenting to part with sin doth argue freedom from the reign of it, even though you may be rushed into the act of it. Measure yourself by your choice. You may be restrained from gross sins, which others commit ; but, if you choose sin, it is all one in God's account as if you acted it, Mat. v. 28. But because wicked men may have some unwillingness to commit some sins, I would give you some account of this right choice of freedom from sin.

1. It is *free*. When a man is free in his choice, and without co-action, then it evidences liberty from the dominion of sin. The apostle makes an opposition betwixt doing by constraint, and doing willingly, 1 Pet. v. 2. Many would choose rather to part with sin, than be damned ; as the mariner would rather part with his goods, than be drowned : this is not willingly. But if it be a free choice, that though there was no danger, no fear of hell, yet the nature of sin would make you deny subjection to it ; then you are not under the dominion of it, Romans vi. 16, 22. John viii. 34, 36.

2. When the choice is *universal*, then it evidences freedom from the dominion of sin ; when the man consents to part with all sin. Not that a man can really be freed from one sin, who is under the reigning power of other sins ; but he may be restrained from many, and yet not be freed from the ruling power of any, Psalm cxix. 104, 128. The subduing of one sin may discover freedom from the dominion of all, when the heart is carried out against the nature of sin in that one ; but the heart indulging one sin, though never so small, argues the dominion of all, James ii. 10, 11.

3. When the choice is *absolute*, without condition. If there be any condition in the world, that will allure you to sin, it is not a hearty choice. Herod was unwilling to behead John the Baptist ; but, for Herodias sake, he would do it. A true choice is absolute, without condition : as also without parley, or any condition of agreement with sin. When there is a conflict betwixt the flesh and the Spirit, it discovers the truth of this choice, Gal. v. 17, 18, 19.

QUEST. *But may there not be a conflict with sin, that doth not evidence the dominion of sin being broken ?*

ANSW. Yea, when it is not between the right parties, the flesh and the Spirit. There may be a struggle in a man's spirit, by the interfering of one sin with another ; or betwixt the inclination of the will to the commission of some sin, and the dictates of the natural conscience ; but the true conflict is betwixt the flesh and the Spirit, corruption and grace ; but then is the opposition and war with sin, an evidence of sin's dominion being broken, when the opposition is made by the hiding of the word in the heart ; *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee*, Psalm cxix. 11. When the word within us is a *seed* that opposes sin, then it is evidential of sin's power being broken, 1 John iii. 9. You may have an hundred scriptures forbidding sin, which the flesh lusteth after ; and as many promises of help against it : all sin may be eyed and thought upon, and your affections may be slightly touched therewith ; but if these words be not  
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treasured up in your hearts, you may be into sin in the face of all these : but when the heart engages against sin, by the word, then it is evidencing ; for, the *word is the sword of the Spirit* ; when, for example, faith acted upon a word of promise discerns the love of God, which constrains the soul not to meddle with the abominable thing he hates, and discerns the power of God therein engaged for its through-bearing, and hereupon is encouraged to oppose sin : the choice, I say, of freedom is absolute, without condition of agreement. A right choice is also absolute, without condition of reconciliation. There is an irreconcilable opposition in the soul against sin : mountains of gold cannot win the least token of favour or respect in the soul towards sin ; but it cries out under it, *Oh ! wretched man that I am ! who will deliver me from the body of this death ?* In this case the soul may conclude, that it is free from the dominion of sin, having the Spirit witnessing by water ; for such a choice of freedom from sin does lead to, and end in the mortification of it, which is an evidence of adoption and spiritual life ; *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,* Rom. viii. 13. There may be cessation from the actings of sin, and yet no mortification of it ; there may be a change of sin, and no change of heart : but mortification strikes at the root of sin, and aims at the destruction of it, Rom. vii. 24. vi. 6.

4. When the choice of freedom from sin is *evangelical*, and upon evangelical accounts. A man may be incensed against sin, upon natural accounts ; and yet be under the dominion of sin still, Rom. x. 2.

QUEST. *When is a man's choice of freedom from sin EVANGELICAL, or upon evangelical accounts ?*

This being a material question, I would answer it in some particulars.

1. When the heart is disengaged from sin upon the account of its contrariety to the will of God in Christ. We are, indeed, to look upon sin as a violation of the Father's will ; but it is his will, not according to the  
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enor of the old covenant, Gal. iii. 10, 11. but as he hath revealed his will in the new covenant. The least duty you perform ought to be done as a service to Christ. If your heart be carried out to duty, as a service to Christ as Redeemer, then it is evangelical. And if your heart be not carried out against sin, as striking at Christ the Redeemer, it is not evangelical: but if a sight of the injury offered to Christ, by sin, doth carry out your heart against it, then it is evangelical. A man may have sorrow for, and hatred of sin, as it procures discredit, suffering, or the like; but when the soul is touched with a deep sense of it, in Christ's sufferings for and by it, when its piercing, wounding, and grieving of Christ does melt the heart for it, then the soul acts evangelically.

2. When a discovery of the love, goodness, and kindness of God in Christ is the *constraining thing* that keeps you from sin; or when the appearing of his grace teaches you sweetly *to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, Tit. ii. 13.; when the *goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*; and when love overcomes the heart to the acknowledgement of sin: when the remembrance of the former loving-kindness of the Lord doth melt the heart for sin; this is soon swallowed up with a testimony of remission. See an instance of this, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 9, 13.

3. Then the choice is evangelical when the man aims at a *conformity* to Christ in his *seeking freedom* from sin, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 23, &c. Custom, example, education, credit, and the like, may make a man to discountenance sin in some measure; but except Christ be the pattern of your imitation, and your sorrow be that you fall so short of him, he regards it not.

4. When the man aims at the coming up to some *special gospel grace*, or the attainment of some *special gospel privilege*, in seeking freedom from sin, then it is evangelical. A man may see that sin is cross to his carnal interest, brings on diseases on his body, and the like; but then he acts evangelically, when he is sorrowful for sin, and hates it because it hinders the exercise

ercise of some grace, or the performance of some duty, or the attainment of communion with Christ.

5. Then is it evangelical when it is by the *application* of the death of Christ, in a promise, that he makes *resistance* against sin, Rom. vi. 4, 14. Heb. ix. 14. Acts v. 31. Rev. xii. 9, 11. *They overcame by the blood of the Lamb.* This must be an ingredient in all the former particulars; no freedom but by Christ, Luke i. 71, 72, 74, 75.

6. When sin is *really subjected*. Sin cannot be both king and subject, in the same soul, at the same time. There may be a conflict with sin, and yet it may seem to have the upper hand for a time; but when the soul hath gotten sin under it, then it is evident that sin doth not reign.

QUEST. *How doth it appear when the soul hath gotten sin under it?*

ANSW. Sin is subjected and brought under the soul, when the soul is enabled to a speedy *mortification* of it upon all its rebellions: when sin, like a cowardly conquered enemy, comes out to the field, but is presently beat off the field again, and is not able to keep the field any longer. As a conquered enemy may run about and make resistance, but they hasten on their own ruin thereby; so the motions of sin may be felt, but the soul is enabled to look to Christ, and to oppose the word and blood of Christ to sin, and is speedily saved, Revel. xii. 8, 9, 11. When corruption is laid lower by every onset, this says that it hath not the dominion.

Again, then is sin subjected under the soul, when even the former *prevalency* of corruption is made serviceable for spiritual ends; as when the prevailing of sin doth produce soul-humiliation, self-abasement, and fills it with more admiration of, and study after the advancement of the riches of free grace, in opening a way of deliverance from sin, Ezek. xvi. 61, 63. Eph. ii. 5, 6, 7. Thus the soul can triumph over sin through Christ; and retain its assurance notwithstanding that corruption works.

But here it may be asked, *Can a soul retain ASSURANCE after the prevailing of corruption.*

To which it may be replied ; You would know that there are sins of *infirmity*, or *grosser* sins, which are the *failings* of the saints ; you would know also that there is a *nourishing* of these sins, or there is an endeavouring the *mortification* thereof, through grace. Now, premising this, you would know for answer,

(1.) That as assurance, in the duration and continuance of it, hath a dependence upon the *acting* of the Spirit of God, witnessing with our spirits, who can, if he pleases, continue such acting, at such a time, so a man ought not to cast away his confidence, so long as scriptural grounds are given to found it upon. Many Christians, if they fall into sin, they presently reckon it their duty to judge their state ; this is very sinful : the church is upbraided for saying, *The Lord had forsaken her, and her God had forgotten her*, Isa. xlix. 14.

(2.) You would know, for answer, that the *nourishing* of sin and corruption hath a tendency to deprive the soul of assurance, Heb. x. 22. Psal. li. 12. It is dangerous on this account to cherish the least sin. Therefore,

(3.) If you enquire, whether assurance may stand with the nourishing of any sin ? Either the question must look to the time *past*, *present*, or to *come*. If to the time *present* or to *come* ; know that the Lord hath not granted you liberty one moment for the nourishing of any corruption ; and so it is a sin to be studying to make assurance, and any sin to dwell together. But if the question respect the time *past* ; though you did nourish some corruption, yet your after mortification of it, through grace, is witnessing ; it is a part of the witness of water.

(4.) I have no hesitation to say, that assurance may be retained *after* the prevalency of corruption ; after not only sins of *infirmity*, but also the *falls* of the saints, when these sins are not nourished. That it may continue after sins of infirmity, is undeniable ; because otherwise it were impossible for any to retain it, seeing the best of saints are daily subject to these sins of infirmity ;

firmity; and for other sins, see 1 Sam. xii. 19, 20, 22. Micah vii. 8, 9: I say, *when these sins are nourished*; for, if sin be nourished, then is the man's confidence, or assurance, highly suspicious; for, where-ever there is sensible assurance, it will make opposition against sin in the soul; *Every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself, as he is pure*, 1 John iii. 3. See also, to this purpose, 1 Sam. xii. 20, 24.—Thus much of the witness by water, with respect to mortification.

2dly, I come to speak of the witness by water in respect of VIVIFICATION, or *living to God*. Now, if the question be, *How may a man know his LIVING to God, which is the other part of sanctification*; or, *the witness of water*? A man may know his living to God and Christ,

(1.) By his *esteeming* God and Christ above all other things; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee*, Psalm lxxiii. 25. Others desire Christ only for heaven; but the believer desires heaven chiefly for Christ. He may be interrupted in his motion toward Christ, in particular acts; but Christ is the prime and principal object his soul is set upon, Rom. viii. 5. Phil. iii. 20. *Christ is all in all*: all other things are nothing to him, if Christ be not enjoyed in them. He is all, in all enjoyments; all, in all enlargements; all, in all duties; all, in all comforts. Hypocrites may apprehend that other things are little, and Christ is better; but this man reckons that all other things are nothing, and Christ all in all. Hence he spends all his desires and endeavours, after communion with God in Christ, Song iii. 3. Psalm cxxx. 5, 6. Phil. iii. 14. And he is willing to part with all other things at Christ's call, and for his sake, Luke xiv. 26, 33. Matth. x. 37. Hence also the carriage of his heart, under Christ's withdrawings; why, these procure such heart sickness as can be cured no way but by the Lord's returning, Song v. 6, 8. Although, or even when he hath no fear of hell upon him; yet, oh! the sighings, sobbings, cryings, faintings of a love-sick soul for Christ's presence! The soul

may know its vivification, or living to God, by its *enjoyment* of the leading of the Spirit. This is a certain evidence of this witness of water, or sanctification; and also of adoption; Rom. viii. 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

QUEST. *When does a man enjoy the LEADING of the Spirit?*

ANSW. 1. When a compliance with the will of Christ becomes *natural* to the soul: suppose there was no wrath to follow upon disobedience, nor no reward the effect of gospel-obedience; yet the sweetness of wisdom's ways itself inclines the man to it; *I have chosen thy way of truth; thy judgment have I laid before me,* Psalm cxix. 30, 137. see also verse 35. Romans viii. 7. The carnal man calls his liberty that he takes in sin freedom; but such as are indeed freed from condemnation, and walk after the Spirit, they call this their liberty, to be free for Christ, and free from sin. A man may be exercised in external duties; but he is not led by the Spirit, unless he hath a liberty of heart therein, and account it a high favour from the Lord that he will employ him in any service; and it is to him matter of lamentation that he cannot do more for the Lord, that he finds a backwardness in himself, and a contrary principle that seeks to obstruct and hinder his following the Lord in his ways; *For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members,* Rom. vii. 22, 23. Then he enjoys the leading of the Spirit.

2. Then hath a man the leading of the Spirit, when he hath *corroboration* and *assistance* against these impediments that would hinder his walking in the ways of Christ; the Spirit removes these. Carnal men wonder that any should complain of want of strength unto duty; they can easily come up unto these duties: why, Satan is quiet, and they are not sensible of corruption; and they look mostly to the external part. But if you have been eagerly pursued by Satan, and he hath beset you with temptations, and you have found many  
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and strong lustings of flesh to hinder you from following Christ in duty; and if such mountains have been made plains, and corruption borne down, even when you have found your heart so full of darkness, deadness, hardness, unbelief, and all manner of distempers, that you have even despaired of acting in duty, or of access in prayer; yet these spiritual enemies have been conquered, and your heart let out toward the Lord more than at other times; here was the leading of the Spirit, Romans viii. 13, 14. Gal. v. 16, 17, 18. Tho' you cannot do what you would, cannot perform the duties you would; yet the will, in this case, does prevail against corruption, even when the duty is hindered, and sin acted in the soul; yet that corruption is not predominant there: why, your *love* to Christ is predominant, and prevails over the love to other things; your *joy* in the Lord is predominant, and prevails against carnal joy in the creature; your *peace* by the blood of Christ helps to let you see the false peace which you have had upon other grounds; and your *faith* is predominant against unbelief, which formerly discovered itself in causing you to choose other objects beside Christ.

3. Then hath a man the leading of the Spirit when his heart is under powerful *drawings* toward Christ; such as are spoken of, Eph. i. 19. The lowest duty requires the heart, Eph. vi. 6. If in the improvement of praying or preaching gifts, our hearts be carried out Christward, though we should find more straitenedness of expression than at other times, yet we have enjoyed the leading of the Spirit, Jer. xxx. 21. If a man have had never so much enlargedness of expression in prayer; yet, if his heart hath not been drawn out toward Christ, it is not witnessing. But if the duty had been of advantage that way, then you have had the leading of the Spirit, however mean the duty hath seemed to be.

4. When the man is made to own the *mediation* of Christ, and to embrace the *gospel promise* in his acting, then he hath the leading of the Spirit. Many, in words, do make use of Christ for acceptance with God; but, unless your heart have been held up, and drawn to

make use of the name of Christ, and the sufferings and intercession of Christ, you have not the leading of the Spirit. Whereas these who attain to this do find acceptance with God, John xiv. 13, 14. xv. 16, 23.— Gospel promises also are the chariot whereby the soul may ride towards the King of glory in triumph, 2 Peter i. 4. 2 Cor. i. 20. And when the soul is made heartily to make use of Christ by these, then it enjoys the leading of the Spirit of promise.

5. Then is the man led by the Spirit, when he is helped in gospel duties, to act for *spiritual* and gospel ends. When he desires to aim not at self-advancement, or his own name and glory, as Matth. vi. 1, 4. But, when the great thing he would be at, is the mortification of corruption, communion with God, increase of faith, growth in grace, &c. When he seeks outward mercies in a subordination to these, and in a way of subserviency to the interest and service of Christ; and when, as the ultimate end of all, he seeks the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31.; then he enjoys the leading of the Spirit, and consequently the witness of water or sanctification.—And thus you see how the soul may know if he hath the witness in himself, *viz.* the Spirit, Blood, and Water, the *three that bear witness on earth.*

The *third* use is of *exhortation* and *direction*. And here I might address myself both to sinners and saints.

*1st,* We are to address *unbelievers*. Is it so, that *he that believeth hath the witness in himself?* then you who are unbelievers, 'O be restless till you know what it is to believe on the Son of God, and so to have the witness in yourselves. Know that it is your duty to believe; and you perish for ever, if you get not faith. And yet know also, that you cannot believe of yourselves: and therefore, look to the Son of God for grace to believe in him; for he is the *author of faith*: and in this way, seek to have the witness within you; for, you will otherwise deceive yourselves, as you have been deceiving yourselves all along, while you have been taking the testimony of an erring conscience, or the testimony of men and ministers only, without hav-

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ing the testimony of the Spirit, and the witness within you : yea, perhaps, you have been taking the testimony of Satan, instead of the testimony of the Spirit of God ; for Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, while you may reckon that you have the testimony of the word applied, not by the Spirit of God, but by your own spirit, or by an evil spirit.

QUEST. *How shall we know the witness of the Spirit, from Satan transforming himself into an angel of light ?*

ANSW. Much hath been said for the discovery of this already ; and therefore look back to what has been offered. Satan's witnessing doth exalt self ; the Spirit's witnessing doth tend to self-humiliation. Satan's witnessing encourages carnal liberty ; the Spirit's witnessing destroys the liberty of the flesh. Satan's witnessing confounds a man, and his natural darkness and ignorance continues ; the Spirit's witnessing convinces, clears, and enlightens the man, by internal, gracious revelation. Satan's witnessing defiles and deforms the soul more and more in the issue of it ; the Spirit's witnessing is of a heart-purifying, sin-mortifying nature. But the text being directed especially to believers ; therefore I would address myself,

2dly To *believers*, who have the witness in themselves. I would offer you these following *directions*, in order to the strengthening and maintaining of the witness within yourselves.

1. O Sirs, *wait for the Spirit*, who is the principal witness, by asking him of the Father ; *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father, give his holy Spirit to them that ask him ?* Luke xi. 13. Neither the water nor the blood, neither promises nor graces, will witness without the irradiation of the Spirit ; for, *the Spirit searches all things ; yea, the deep things of God*, and reveals them to us, and makes us *know the things that are freely given us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 12. A true dial hath an aptitude and fitness to shew us the hours of the day ; but unless the sun shine, you can know nothing by it ; so, it may be day-light with your soul, and you may have precious graces, that have a fitness  
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and aptitude to witness your being a child of God ; but they cannot do it, without the shining of the Spirit upon his own work. It is said, that the Sabin stone is of a dark, dusky colour, till it be sprinkled with oil, and then it will burn of a light fire ; so, graces and experiences are of a dusky colour, till the oil of the Spirit be poured upon them ; then they will burn forth with brightness, so as to witness to the soul its adoption and reconciliation with God.

2. Mark the *deposition* of the witness, and take not the testimony of any other witness, but in an agreeableness with this. It hath been sometimes an objection among serious souls, “ Oh ! I have found my heart deceiving me, in passing judgment about other matters ; and I had as many symptoms of my being led by the Spirit of God to these conclusions, as I have of his leading me in this, that concerns my eternal state ; and therefore I fear I be deceived in all.” Now, what shall we say to this ? Why, in general, it is the work of the Spirit to discover both the *sincerity* and *deceitfulness* of the heart. Seeds of hypocrisy are in the best, as well as other sins : grace doth not totally destroy the being of any one sin. Peter's heart did deceive him when he was upon high resolutions for Christ ; and yet he was a believer. But never does a soul see more of the deceitfulness of his heart, than upon the discovery of divine love, Job xlii. 5, 6. Isa. vi. 5. Ezek. xvi. 63.—But further, upon this head, you would remember, that the believer may be deceived about some *circumstances*, and about the particular *ends* of some dispensations, and yet his judgment may be right in the main ; and therefore, particular mistakes are not to be made general rules. Peter had a clear testimony of his adoption, and that from the mouth of Christ himself, Mat. xvi. 17. ; yet this did not preserve him from a delusion of Satan, that came afterwards, verses 22, 23. : the same mouth that blessed him, quickly called him *Satan*. Christ's testimony was enough to secure him of divine love ; and yet it did not secure him against a false confidence, in a particular case ; nor against a sad fall, Matth. xxvi.

35, 70, 72. If your heart then has deceived you in some particular thing, do not conclude, that you are deluded in all; but let your particular mistakes provoke you to mark the disposition of this witness, and to watch against the delusions of Satan, and your own spirit, that you take not the testimony thereof.

Perhaps you may say, *How shall I know these delusions?*

We have hinted at these already; take these particulars, in short, as symptoms of a delusion, and beware of them.

(1.) Whatever hath a natural tendency to *promote* sin and unrighteousness, is a delusion: unholiness cannot be from the holy Spirit. Beware of that which gives encouragement to corruption.

(2.) That which arises from, and leads to *security*, is a delusion, Rev. iii. 17, 22. The Laodiceans there thought they wanted nothing, but the Spirit of God thought otherwise, and tells them that they wanted all things.

(3.) That which springs from a supposed *self-sufficiency*, or, in its own nature, leads to *self-advancement*, is a delusion; *In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved*, Psalm xxx. 6. David was confident that he should not be moved, because of his outward accommodations for self-defence; therefore he checks and corrects himself, ver. 7. *By thy favour my mountain standeth strong*. So, if you overcome this or that temptation, and thereupon conclude, that you are able to encounter with any, it is but the voice of your own Spirit, and, it may be, a small temptation will surprize you shortly; yea, very quickly: and so, if it tend to make you aspiring, as Gen. iii. 5. suspect it as a delusion.

(4.) That which begins not *with*, and ends not *in* Christ, is a delusion. Peter engages for Christ, but not in the strength of Christ; and so he fell.—Therefore, we say, mark the deposition of the witness, and take not the testimony of any other.

3. Beware of grieving your principal witness that you have within you, either by rejecting his testimony,

or indulging sin. There are several things that tend to keep off from assurance, which you should beware of.—Beware of thinking that assurance is not *attainable* ; that it is attainable, see Isaiah xlv. 24. lxiii. 16. 2 Cor. v. 1, 6. Rom. viii. 39. Some think it is their duty to live doubting, and imagine they would sin if they would seek assurance ; but it is a duty commanded as well as other duties : *Wherefore, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10.—Beware of *limiting* the Lord to your time ; wait his leisure.—Beware of *grieving* the Spirit, and *resisting* his motions ; *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*, Eph. iv. 30.—Beware of yielding to *carnal* and *unbelieving* reasonings ; reason your heart rather out of unbelief, saying, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God*, Psal. xlii. 11.—Beware of *spiritual sloth* and *security*, Heb. vi. 11. ; or of nourishing any sin, Heb. x. 22. Seek to be sprinkled from particular corruptions, by the blood of Christ.

4. Be much in the *exercise* of these duties of religion that have a tendency to cherish the witness within you. *E. g.* Frequent *self-examination* hath a tendency this way ; *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves : know ye not your own selves how Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates, [i. e. unapproved or rejected,]* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Satan endeavours to beat off from this duty, because the end of it is to help the soul to the right understanding of its condition : but exercise yourself much in it, especially when your eyes are clear, and not dim with desertion.—Also, a careful observing of the *Lord's dealing* with your soul hath a tendency towards this. God's end towards the Israelites in their temptations, and miraculous preservation in the wilderness, was, that they might know that the Lord was their God, Deut. xxix. 3,—6. A multitude of experiences must needs conduce much to clear up the state.—Renewed *actings of faith* have a special tendency this way also : all opportunities that are offered,

offered, even for the most eminent acts of faith, are to be improved. Abraham's slaying of his son Isaac seemed to be contrary both to God's command, that *he should not kill* ; and to God's promise, that *in Isaac his seed should be called* : yet his faith got over all, and he had a bright appearance of Christ after it, Gen. xxii 11, 12, 16. Perhaps you are in an ill frame, a sad condition, and dare not act faith on the promise ; but it is your duty to believe, whatever your condition be, were it even a desperate, hopeless-like condition : why, faith may then be most gloriously acted, when against *hope*, you *believe in hope*. Though the particular promise fail ; though sensible experience fail, so that it is a midnight darkness with you ; yet there is the name of God still to run to ; such as that, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6. that he is *the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious*. When you cannot see that he is gracious to you, or that he hath forgiven your sin ; yet, through grace, essay to stretch forth the withered hand, and to put forth an act of faith upon him through Christ : and in that way wait for his being gracious, and for his forgiving your sin. A new act of faith is the best way to recover all.

But, perhaps, you cannot believe ; mountains of difficulties are in the way of believing : if you could get believed, you would not complain. But know, that the Lord himself may cast in matter of discouragement in the way of your believing, purposely to draw out the acts of faith, Rom. iv. 19, 20. Matth. xv. 24, Why, how could Abraham believe an apparent impossibility, he being old, and Sarah's womb dead ? How could the woman believe ? Christ called her a *dog* ; and tells her, *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Seeming impossibilities may be in the way of his mercy, and yet it may be intended for the trial of faith, and not for the hinderance thereof ; but in such cases, the Lord holds up the heart ; as this woman was the more importunate, the more repulses and seeming denials she had.

Christ never contradicts his own command, to forbid any soul to believe ; therefore, nothing should

beat you off from this. In Psalm lxxxix. 34, 35, 36: the Lord engages himself by oath and covenant, that *the throne of David should be established for ever*; and presently he was rushed under such dispensations as did threaten the non-accomplishment of what was promised, ver, 38,—45.: But the Lord's design herein was not to lead him into contradictory apprehensions to his oath; but to give an opportunity to believe above, and against hope.

In a word, it tends to cherish the witness mightily, when a man, at all times, in his pleading with God, makes use of arguments drawn from God himself. Do not present the Lord with your prayers, or any performance of yours; but urge his name, his nature, his word, his free promise, Isa. lxiii. 15. *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory: where is thy zeal, and strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?* Then follows assurance, ver. 16. *Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.* See Num. xiv. 17, 18, 20.

Finally, It tends to this that a man make much use of the *scripture*: *Search the scripture*; for it is by the word that the Spirit doth witness. If a word, suitable to your case, be given, bless the Lord for it: if not, seek out one, take it and pray over it, till the Lord make a powerful application, by drawing you out after Christ by it; for, though you should get never so many words hinted into your heart, they will be of little advantage, unless your heart be thereby drawn out after Christ.

I shall yet add another thing that may tend greatly to the cherishing of confidence about your state, who are believers, and that is, *holding fast the doctrine of perseverance*: the Lord hath promised that he *will put his fear in your heart, that you shall not depart from him*, Jer. xxxii. 40. Psalm lxxxix. 30,—34. He *will not cast off his people*; if they sin, he *will correct them*, Isa. liv. 8, 9, 10. A saint may fall into *sin*, but he cannot fall

fall from his *faith*, Luke xxii. 32. with John xxvii. 20. Let go the doctrine of perseverance, and your peace will be like the morning dew that passeth away; but retain this, and then you may rejoice in *hope of the glory of God*. If ever the Lord hath wrought this grace of faith in you, plead he may *increase your faith*; for, *if he that believeth hath the witness in himself*, then, the more faith, the more evidence; the more of believing, the more of the witness is discernable.

May the Lord himself give you to know from sweet experience, that *he that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself*.

## S E R M O N CXL.

The REPOSE and REPAST of FAITH,  
under the SHADY and FRUITFUL TREE of  
LIFE\*.

SONG ii. 3.

—*I sat down under his shadow with great delight ;  
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

**M**Y friends, though I do not determine that the forbidden fruit, of which our first parents did eat, and poisoned themselves and all their posterity, was the fruit of an *apple-tree*, yet I have ground, from this text, to make proclamation this day to you, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the **APPLE-TREE** whose fruit is a blessed antidote against that poison. The *tree of knowledge of good and evil* proved, in the issue, a tree of death and destruction ; but here is the *tree of life*, that grows in the heavenly paradise above ; yea, in the gospel paradise below : and happy they who can, or shall have it to say on this occasion, *I sat down under his shadow with great delight ; and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

These who are my ordinary hearers, know I have preached, for some time, on the verses preceding ; wherein we have these two things more generally.

1. Our *Lord Jesus Christ*, the glorious Bridegroom of the church, commending *himself*, ver. 1. saying, *I am the rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the vallies* ; then

\* This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 16. 1749. To which is subjoined, the DISCOURSES before and at the Service of the first table. It hath undergone six impressions.



commending his *bride*, as a sharer of his beauty, notwithstanding her afflicted lot in this world, ver. 2. *As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

2. We have the *Bride* of Christ taking her turn in commendation of him, ver. 3. Wherein I have observed,

(1.) The *compellation* she gives him, *My Beloved*. He had named her *his love*; and here she names him *her Beloved*: his love to her fired her love to him.

(2.) The *commendation* she gives him, in the following comparison; *As the Apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons.* He had commended her as the *fairest among women*, the most beautiful among the *daughters*; and now she commends him as the most excellent among the *sons*; as fairer than the sons of men; infinitely fairer than the most excellent creatures, men or angels: this she expresses metaphorically, taking a view of his comparative excellency, as the apple-tree in the garden among the barren trees of the wood, *So is my Beloved among the sons.*

(3.) We have here the *confirmation* of this from her experience, or the *improvement* she made of Christ under this view of him as the apple-tree; *I sat down under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste.* Here is faith's improvement of Christ as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood.

More particularly, you have here these five things following.

1. The *subject* of faith, namely, the believer, the bride of Christ, supposed to be in a scorched, wandering, weary, toiled condition; *I sat down.*

2. The *object* of faith, namely, *Christ* as a *shadow*; or a shadow tree for the scorched and weary soul.

3. The *act* of faith expressed under the notion of a *sitting down*: *I sat down under his shadow.*

4. The *manner* of faith's acting, *I sat down under his shadow with GREAT DELIGHT.*

5. The *feast* of faith that follows, or the consequent good

good that issues upon this acting of faith; *His fruit was sweet to my taste.*

I shall endeavour the explication of each of these particulars in the prosecution of the following doctrinal proposition.

DOCTR. *That faith's improvement of Christ, as the tree of life, in whatever sad case the soul was into before, is a sitting down under his shadow with great delight, and feasting sweetly upon his fruits.*

Here we see the bride of Christ in her present scorched, sun-burnt, weather-beaten case, what *she* did in these circumstances; *I sat down under his shadow with great delight*; and then what *she* felt in that situation; *His fruit was sweet to my taste.* The doctrine being so much the very words of the text, I shall essay the explication of the several branches thereof in the following method.

- I. Consider the *case* of the believer here supposed.
- II. Speak of the *object* of faith, Christ as a *shadow* and *shelter* for him.
- III. Speak of the *act* of faith, as it is a *sitting down* under that shadow.
- IV. Of the *manner* of faith's actings, sitting down *with great delight.*
- V. Of this *feast* of faith that follows, his *fruit being sweet to their taste.*
- VI. Apply the whole in sundry *inferences.*

I. The *case* of the believing soul, the bride of Christ, here supposed is, that she was *scorched* with heat, *wearied* with labour and toil, and *disquieted*, while here in the weary wilderness wherein she needs a shadow to protect her. She had said, Song i. 6. *The sun hath looked upon me, so as I am sun-burnt*; and my *mother's children were angry with me*: I am persecuted, reproached, and abused, and stand in need of a *shadow from the heat, a refuge from the storm.* There is a fourfold account on which the shadow is needed by his people.

1. Consider them in their *state by nature*, before conversion, they have no rest there, but are *as the raging sea, casting forth mire and dirt*. Here they may see their way vanity and folly; and yet their corruption carries them over all their convictions and resolutions, even to that which they see to be vain: and this is the case of all by nature. In which state they are liable to the scorching wrath of God, and cannot be safe till they get under the shadow of the apple-tree.

2. Consider them *after conversion*; and both in the pangs of the new birth, and after they are born again, they need a shadow from the fiery darts of temptation: *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*, Eph. vi. 16. They are ready to be scorched with this fire, that, for ordinary, flies upon them suddenly like a *dart*, and is hot and scorching like a *fiery dart*; and ready to consume and destroy the soul, and make it cry out with Jonah, *Better for me to die, than to live*, chapter iv. 3. In this case, how much do they need a shadow from the heat of temptation!

3. Consider them in their *wandering case*, even after they have been comfortably drawn to Christ, they are ready to run away from God and forget their resting place: they will find, in the issue, that by their departures, through an evil heart of unbelief, that they have *forsaken their own mercies, and turned again to folly*, Psal. lviii. 8.; and that they have made but an ill bargain: the Lord *hedges up their way with thorns*, and makes them see it is best for them to return to their first husband. Indeed, God's people are the greatest fools imaginable when they begin to think that apostasy will thrive in their hands; for a storm will meet them in the teeth, and make them see the need they have of returning to their nest, under the shadow of the apple-tree. New discoveries of sin and guilt may be ready to make them think their case to be hopeless; and yet these discoveries open the door of hope, even as the law before was their school-master to lead them to Christ.

4. Consider them even in their *best case*, in this world, when coming a-new unto, and abiding in him, without departing from him; yet they may lay their account, that their condition in this world will be such as that they shall still need a shadow: for, partly, Christ will give them much ado, that he may be employed by them, and get work put in his hand by their daily errands to him; and partly also they must look for a scorching sun from the world, because they are not of the world, and therefore they may expect that the world will hate, persecute and abuse them: they need to be armed against daily difficulties, daily storms, and scorplings; and fenced against the heat of that sun spoken of in the first chapter, *The sun hath looked upon me*; this is a fiery sun of worldly tribulations that,

(1.) Consumes, sometimes, the man's *estate* and *worldly fortune*, as it did Job's sheep, and oxen, and cattle, and servants; all taken away.

(2.) It sometimes scorches and consumes their *relations* and *friends*, as it did Job's sons and daughters; as they were eating in their elder brother's house, a wind comes and smites the corners of the house: this was a scorching flame indeed, insomuch that Job rose up and covered himself with ashes, and cries out, *Naked came I into the world, and naked must return*, chap. i. 13,—22. It is a terrible scorching heat that strips a man naked of all his relations, friends and brethren.

(3.) It sometimes scorches their *body*; and I need go no further than Job in this also; he was scorched and smitten with *sore boils*, *from the sole of his foot to his crown*, that *he took a pot-sheard, to scrape himself withal*, chap. ii. 7, 8.

(4.) It sometimes forches their *good name*, and in a manner consumes it; as not only Job's wicked wife, chap. ii. 9. but his godly friends reproached him, and laid to his charge much sin, and wickedness, and hypocrisy. This was one of the hottest beams of the fiery sun with which he was burnt black; and it made him cry out, *O that my grief were weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance; for now it would be heavier than the*

*the*

*the sand of the sea*, chap. vi. 2, 3. And while men and devils were throwing darts at him, he saw the hand of God drawing the bow and shooting the arrows at him; *The arrows of the almighty are within me; the terrors of God set themselves in array against me; the poison thereof drinketh up my Spirit*, chap. vi. 4. Thus the New-testament saints also were scorched, Heb. xi. 36,—38. *they had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds, and imprisonments, even they of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.*—Thus you see how the bride of Christ may be scorched and beaten.

If it is enquired, for what *reason* is all this? Why, one great reason is their *distance* from the apple-tree, when they are not below the shadow thereof: and the reason of this distance is either more *extraordinary*, when the Lord in sovereignty withdraws, as it was with Job, from whom God did not withdraw for his sin; for he commends his servant Job as a *perfect and upright man*, none like him in all the earth, chap. i. 1.; or, the more *ordinary* reason is the bride's withdrawing from under his shadow, through unbelief and sinning against God; *Your iniquities separate between you and your God*, Isa. lix. 2. Yet it is to be here remembered, the distance is neither total nor final; for he said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5.; and that though, when distance takes place, they want the refreshing benefit of the shadow, yet they have his love, and his goodness and mercy to follow them; and though for a *small moment he hide his face from them*, yet with *everlasting mercies will he gather them*: for, *He will not contend for ever, nor be always wrath, lest the Spirit should fail before him, and the soul which he hath made: he will see their ways and heal them; and restore comforts to them*; which proves that his love is never altered toward them.

In a word, the case of the soul, that comes to sit down under this shadow of the apple-tree, is such a sore scorched case, that sometimes the scorplings of the *fiery law* are

great, and the scorplings of the *awakened conscience* are severe. It is said, *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Prov. xviii. 14. The soul of a man will bear his bodily troubles; but when the soul itself is troubled and wounded, who can bear him up? Who but he that *healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds*, Psal. cxlvii. 3. Although a real convert, after the first convictions have issued in conversion, doth not *receive the spirit of bondage again unto fear*, in the manner as before, yet after grievous backslidings, he may in a manner be sent back to mount Sinai, and find great flames of the fiery law flashing in his face: his convictions may be greater and the scorplings hotter than before, because now he sees he hath sinned against so many mercies, so much light, and so many experiences of God's goodness, so many sweet enjoyments and enlargements, that he is thunder-struck with the fearful apprehensions, that he hath sinned the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost; though the trouble on that head gives him the lye, and manifests that that is not the case, yet the wound is deep, and the soul is thus scorched almost to death, till in answer to the call, *Return backsliding children, for I am married to you*, it returns again to its resting-place, and sits down under the shadow of the apple-tree. I go on, therefore,

II. To the *second* thing proposed, To speak of the *object* of faith, CHRIST, as a shadow and shelter for the scorched soul. And here you may take both a *negative* and *positive* view of this shadow.

1<sup>st</sup>, View it *negatively*; and remember there is no other shadow, no other rest for the soul but Christ; all other shadows are but refuges of lies: *There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved; neither is their salvation in any other*, Acts iv. 12. Other shelters are broken reeds. What says God to them that trusted in the shadow of Egypt, and in the strength of Pharaoh? *The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion?* Isa. xxx. 2, 3. They that trust to any other shadow

shadow, both *rebel against God*, and *ruin themselves*, Isa. xxxvi. 5, 6. Jer. xlvi. 45. *Truly in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel*, Jer. iii. 23. All other shadows that men betake themselves to, will bring them to a *bed of sorrow*, Isaiah l. 11; they will prove as *Jonah's gourd*, having a *worm at the root* that will wither them. Whatever shadow men trust to, whether it be the shadow of worldly props and mistaken providences, the shadow of unsound experiences, the shadow of natural and common graces, the shadow of gospel privileges, the shadow of legal righteousness; duties of civility, morality, or whatever else, unhappy are they to find a shadow to rest under without Christ: *Their sorrow shall be multiplied that hasten after another God*; their sorrows will but gather into a dam to meet them in their extremity, when they have little need of such an encounter. Happy only are they that find no rest for the sole of their feet, till, with the dove, they come to the ark, Christ. Here by the bye, is a touch-stone of a good or bad condition: he that is in a bad condition, any shadow, without Christ, will satisfy and content him; but he that is in a good condition, no shadow, in the world, but Christ, will ease and please him.

2dly, View this object *positively*; Christ is the shadow indeed, and he alone, for the relief of poor scorched souls, the sun-beaten, and sin-bitten soul. I shall direct you to some scriptures for shewing this; and then observe that he is a shadow for all sad cases, and having all good qualities.

1. For the scripture-expressions hereof, see Psalm xxxi. 20. he is said to *hide them in the secret of his presence from the pride of men*; and *keep them secretly in a pavillion from the strife of tongues*: hence says David, Psal. lvii. 1. *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, till these calamities be over-past*: and Psal. xci. 1. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*. Psal. cxxi. 5, 9. *The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right-hand; the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the*

moon by night. Isa. iv. 6. *And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.* Isa. xxv. 4. *For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, &c.* Isa. xxxii. 2. *A man shall be a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

2. Here is a shadow in *all cases*, particularly in the four following ones.

(1.) A shadow and shelter against the *wrath of God*, for guilty sinners to fly to, that would fly from the wrath to come: he is Jesus, who delivers us from the *wrath to come*, and from the *curse of the fiery law*; for, he hath righteousness without the law to give, whereby he justifies the ungodly, in a way that magnifies that law, by paying all the debt of obedience and satisfaction it can crave, and so is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*.

(2.) He is a shadow against all *challenges and charges* whatsoever, in so much, that the believing soul, that sits under this shadow, may say, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* Rom. viii. 33, 34.—He is a shadow against every raging and impetuous *lust and corruption*, that tosses and vexes his people like the raging waves of the sea; and that by the mortifying virtue of his death and blood: hence these two things go together, Rom. xiii. 14. *the putting on Christ Jesus the Lord, and the making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*: the raging heat of corruption is abated under this cool shadow.—He is a shadow from all *fears and cares, anxieties and grievances*, relating to worldly circumstances, when a believer hath the faith of Christ's care and providence between him and the storm, according to that word, Matth. vi. 31, 34. *Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed. Take no thought for to-morrow, for to-morrow shall take thought for itself.* And Phil.



iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing, &c.* 1 Pet. v. 6.  *Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.*

(3) He is a shadow from the scorching heat of the fiery darts of Satan's *temptations* : for, who is it that rebukes the tempter? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, with a *get thee behind me, Satan.*—Who is it that prays always acceptably for the tempted and scorched believer? It is Christ: *Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired thee, that he may sift and winnow thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.*—Who is he that is always a friend at hand, when the believer is at the last gasp, ready to be scorched to death? It is Christ; 1 Cor. x. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you but what is common to men: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.*—What should one do for relief against all the temptations and delusions of the day, but just come under the shadow of the apple-tree. Christ himself suffered, being tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18.

(4) He is a shadow against the scorching heat of *afflictions*, and that either when he prevents them and keeps them off, and *stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind*, being a *present help in the time of trouble*; or when he sanctifies troubles, and blesses them to the advantage of his people, *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged*; or when he supports under trouble, and enables them to bear, and by faith to quench the violence of fire, and out of weakness makes them strong; or, when whatever be their losses by affliction, he makes up their loss with a hundredfold more, and makes them with all other things, to work for their good, though some trials may separate them from friends and brethren; but here is a shadow against that sorrow, namely, *Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?* &c. Rom. viii. 35.—39.

3. Here is a shadow with all the good *qualities* of a shadow; particularly, a thick, a broad, a lasting, and a living shadow.

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(1.) It is a *thick* shadow. Some trees have shadows, but in hot days the beams of the sun will pierce through them, because they are thin; but this is a thick shadow: no scorching wrath of divine displeasure can get into the soul that is under it. The destroying angel that slew the first-born of Egypt, could not come near the door that was sprinkled with the blood of the lamb; no more can the wrath of God reach these that are under the cover and shadow of the blood of Christ, that spotless Lamb of God, that *taketh away the sin of the world*.

(2.) As it is a thick, so it is a *broad* shadow, it covers the whole man; and it covers all that come under it: notwithstanding of the multitude of the receivers of Christ; yet a numberless number may get room here: notwithstanding all the redeemed from the beginning who have come; yet there is room for more: *Whosoever will, let him come: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life*.

(3.) It is a *lasting* shadow, not like Jonah's gourd, that came up in a night, and withered in a night, it fenced him from the sun's heat, and from the east wind, and that only for a night, and then went away: but this is a shadow of goodness and mercy, that follows the believer all the days of his life, as the pillar of cloud that followed Israel in the wilderness, and never left them as long as they had occasion for it: Christ never leaves the soul till he sets it beyond all hazard and danger in the heavenly Canaan. Whatever are or may be your trials, this is a shadow that was, and is, and is to come. For,

(4.) It is a *living* shadow; it is the shadow of the *tree of life* that hath life in itself, and that gives life and health to all that sit down under it; *the leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations*, Rev. xxii. 2. Was there a healing virtue in Peter's shadow, Acts v. 15. that the sick were brought forth to the street, and laid in beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them? O! what must be the healing and quickening virtue of  
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this shadow of the tree of life itself, from which Peter's virtue was borrowed ! O dead and diseased soul, look to this apple-tree to overshadow you, and sit down under this shadow. This leads,

III. To the *third* thing proposed, *viz.* To speak of the *act* of faith, as it is expressed by a *sitting down* under this shadow. And,

1. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, *deliberation* ; it is a deliberate act : when one sits down, he is not rambling nor rushing headlong, but acting deliberately and considerately. Here he acts from a manifold conviction.—From a conviction that it is *lawful* and *warrantable*, and no presumption for him to do it : Why, here is a shadow proposed to me to make use of ; I am a poor sinner in danger of wrath, God holds out to me the sceptre of grace, and calls and allows me to take up my rest under this shadow. He acts from a conviction of *necessity* : I must do it or be undone to eternity ; but I must not abide in Sodom, for the fire of God's wrath will destroy me there : I must put myself under this shadow, or perish—He acts from a deliberate conviction of *profit* and *advantage* that is to be had under this shadow : If I were once there, may he say, what blessed fruit will I find upon this apple-tree ? Peace with God, and access to him, and communion with him : what justification from all guilt, what manifestations of God's love, what consolations of his Spirit may I expect ! therefore, I will do it, because I may do it, and because I must do it, and because it is the best, the only shift, and the most profitable course that can be taken.

2. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, not only deliberation, but *design* also, for *present rest* and *present ease*. The man is pursued, and wants a city of refuge ; scorched, and wants a shadow from the heat ; and so he comes, and receives, and rests upon Christ alone for salvation.—He sits down for rest from a troubled *conscience*, and from all the challenges thereof, under this shadow ; his *heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience* : here the law cannot touch

touch him ; Christ is the *end of the law* : here justice cannot condemn the Mediator, and I am under his shadow : wrath cannot win through to me here.—He sits down for rest from all his *excessive desires* after created good, which he vainly pursued before, saying, O for this and that worldly thing ! *Who will shew us any good?* But, when he comes to Christ, he finds contentment ; he is where he would be ; and finds no want ; he hungers and thirsts no more insatiably after vanity ; *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* Though streams should fail him, he now hath the ocean ; though the stars should be withdrawn, he hath the Sun. He sits down to be free from the *turbulency of corruption* : there is a great struggle between a man's light and his lusts ; his lusts driving him contrary to his light ; but, under this shadow, his lusts are brought down to subjection to his light : grace gets above corruption, and *faith purifies the heart.*—He sits down to be free of *scorchings* that annoy him. Faith is acted to be free of all hot pursuits whether from law, justice, conscience, or from any other quarter : from the heat of *fiery lusts*, which only can be quenched with the blood of Christ ; from the heat of *fiery temptations*, this shadow is a shield for safety in this case : also from the heat of *wrath-like dispensations* ; *If thou mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?* When trying and fiery-like providences come, who can abide them, till they lay themselves down under this apple-tree ? Faith acts likewise to be free from the heat of *fearful looking for of judgment*, spoken of, Heb. x. 17. and *fiery indignation, that shall consume the adversaries* ; from the fear of death, the king of terrors, with its sting ; and from the fear of an awful tribunal, and a wrathful sentence issuing from it. Where shall I be secure from these fears but under this shadow of the Mediator's blood and righteousness ? It acts, in a word, to be free from the *curse* of the fiery law, saying, *Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them* ; to avoid this, says the believer, I cast myself under Christ's shadow ; *I fly to thee to hide me.* I quit the law as a

covenant,

covenant; and want to be married to another Husband.

3. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a *centering here*. When restless wandering souls come to Christ, they need go no further; if they come indeed to God in Christ, they may now sing a *Requiem* to themselves, *Soul, take thy rest*. Christ, as *Mediator*, is the way, and as *God*, is the end of that way. The bride of Christ here was like a weary traveller walking through a wood; and whatever tree she met with, she found some defect and barrenness in it: but coming to the apple-tree here, she found none; and therefore goes no further. When one comes to Christ, and to God in Christ, then he is at his journey's end; he may set up his staff, and take himself rest. And hence also,

4. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a *continuation of the act thereof*. When we meet with Christ, we should sit down, and make him our home, our house of residence, our habitation, to which we may continually resort. The true improvers of Christ must abide with him: though sensible comforts should be withdrawn; yet they must not quit their resting-place. It is a sitting down without purposing to rise again. Every believer should have a firm purpose to live by faith on the Son of God, under all possible changes and alterations that fall out, either in his spiritual or temporal condition; he is to make use of Christ while he is living, and when he is dying.—When he is *deserted*, he must live upon Christ, saying, *I will wait on the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob*.—When he is *dismayed* and *afraid*, he should live upon Christ, saying, *What time I am afraid I will trust in thee*.—When he is *weighed* with work, he should live upon Christ, saying, *I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness and his only*.—When he is *oppressed* with burdens, he should live upon Christ casting all upon him, and saying, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him*.

5. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a *ready act of faith*, and *catching the opportunity*. No sooner is the apple-tree discovered to the bride here, in the superlative excellency thereof, than she just takes hold of the occasion, and sits down under the shadow of that tree. No powerful corruption, no assaulting temptation of Satan, no dark dispensation of providence, no great or greatly aggravated sin, nor long continuance in sin, should hinder or make a delay in the acting of this faith; but the feeling of these maladies, the present feeling of the scorching heat, and the seeing of what a thick, and broad, and living, and lasting shadow this is, should make us quickly sit down here. Nothing must hinder you from making use of Christ; neither sins against law, nor sins against gospel, nor sins against vows, mercies, crosses, providences; instead of hindering they should hasten you, that here you may get relief.

6. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a *full and entire acting of faith*, the whole man upon a whole Christ; *I sat down*. The believer leaves not one part of himself from under the shadow. *I sat down under this shadow*; he makes use of all the shadow for all the good that God gives him for. Some, thro' unbelief, fear it would be too bold for them to expect all the benefits that are to be had in Christ, *viz.* wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; but true faith acts fully for all the good of the gospel. Some, like the prodigal son, think God will not make them sons but as hired servants; but this faith is a sitting down where no drop of wrath can touch you, and where you may have all the fruits that grow upon the apple-tree, and have perfect rest.

7. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, *the activity of faith through grace*. The soul being acted is active in sitting down, saying, *Return, to thy rest, O my soul*, Psal. cxvi. 7. I was weary with wandering from one barren bush to another; but whenever I got a view of the glorious apple-tree, the tree of life, some invisible secret virtue came from it  
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that caught my heart, and made me take up my rest here; and so *I sat down.*

8. And *lastly*, Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, *as composed a posture of soul as can be had in this world.* Christ is elsewhere compared to the *shadow of a great rock in a weary land*, Isaiah xxxii. 2. The rest to be had here, by faith, will always be different from, and short of the rest that remains for the people of God hereafter: it is therefore a rest amidst trouble; *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, says Christ; *but in me shall have peace*, John xvi. 33.

Let us not mistake the nature of this rest and recumbency under this shadow: some may think they have been essaying to sit down and rest under this shadow; but they cannot find that which they can call a *rest*: but, in order to remove this difficulty, you will consider the nature of this rest. It is not like the rest of a big rock on the land, or in the sea, that doth not shake or move when the waves beat, or the storms blow and make a tumultuous noise about it; but it is like the rest of a ship at anchor, that may be tossed and moved to and fro in a storm, and some waves going over her, but she is secured against splitting, or sinking, or being cast away, as long as the anchor does not drive: such is the nature of this rest; it is a rest with fighting and exercise, a rest that secures the main point from ruin as long as the soul keeps under Christ's shadow. And this is the rest and recumbency of faith that we should look for in time: and if we thus took up the nature of this quiet rest under the apple-tree, it would loose many doubts, and help to break many snares and temptations, to which we expose ourselves many times, because we cannot get that rest we would be at.

In a word, faith's sitting down under this shadow, imports, that *faith is a composing grace*, making the soul easy, quiet, and composed amidst all troubles, saying, *Though my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure: and this is all my salvation, and all my desire.*

2 Samuel xxiii. 5. *Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be found in the vine, &c. : yet will I rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation,* Hab. iii. 17, 18. *Though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, &c. yet there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,* Psalm xlvi. 2, 3, 4.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed, was, To touch at the *way* and *manner* of faith's sitting down under this shadow, namely, *with great delight ; I sat down under his shadow with great delight, &c.* It is observed, that the word may be read, as in the margin, *I delighted, and sat down ;* intimating, that the delight was both an antecedent and a concomitant of her sitting down under his shadow. The shadow of a tree is comfortable and refreshing to these that are parched with the scorching and boiling heat of the sun : so is Christ to his church under hot persecutions, being in the world as a *lily among thorns*, and under the heat of wrath revealed in the law ; therefore with so much delight does she rest under this shadow, who hath delivered her from the wrath to come, according to his word.

*Remark 1.* This delight is very much *spoken* of in scripture ; hence Psalm cxix. 50, *This is my comfort in mine affliction, thy word hath quickened me.* Psalm lxiii. 5. *My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness.* Psalm xciv. 19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.* Psalm iv. 6, 7. *Many say, Who will shew us any good ? But Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance ; then shall I have more gladness, than in the time that their corn and wine increaseth.* O what great delight is to be had under Christ's cool and refreshing shadow !

2. This delight carries always along with it, a delight in *tender walking*, and a delighting in the *law of the Lord*, as the rule of holiness ; Psalm i. 2. *His delight is in the law of the Lord.* Christ is not a shadow to screen wickedness. This tender walk evidences their delight to be no delusion.

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3. The Lord having designed a *fulness* of delight for his people hereafter, as it is, Psalm xvi. 11. *In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand are pleasures for evermore* : it pleases him to grant some delight in time as a pledge of that ocean of pleasures they are to enjoy above, that new wine of consolation that they shall drink in their Father's kingdom.

4. This delightful frame in closing with Christ, and improvement or use making of him, is a very *excellent* and *necessary* frame ; for, besides that he is in himself a very delightful and lovely object, this delight is a token for good, evidencing that the heart is warming towards him, and it is more than half an enjoyment of him, and tends to ensure a further and fuller enjoyment of him ; having so much in hand he hath the more in hope : and as this delighting in him is begun enjoyment, so it is a mean of preserving and continuing the enjoyment ; because, when the soul is satisfied and made up in him, it warms the heart and cherisheth praise ; yea, delight and satisfaction will beget praise, and praise is a notable preserver and fosterer of the good which we enjoy : whereas on the other hand, a discouraged and dissatisfied disposition, a murmuring, quarreling, discontented person soon clouds his clear days, and cuts short his enjoyment through his peevish ingratitude ; whereas a blessing and a praising frame, quickens our prayers and supplications for the continuance of what the soul delights in. It is said, 1 Sam. ii. 1. that Hannah *prayed to God*, when yet all she says is *praise and thankfulness* ; intimating, that delight in God, begetting praise, is a noble supplicant.

But more particularly, this faith that sits down under Christ's shadow, brings with it great delight on these accounts following.

1. Because it reconciles us to our *consciences* that accused us for guilt ; for, under that shadow we have *our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*, Hebrews xi. 22.

2. Because it reconciles us to our *uneasy crosses*, and quiets us under them ; *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,*

peace, whose mind is stayed on thee ; because he trusted in thee, Isa. xxvi. 3. It makes a calm, though the soul before was a raging sea.

3. Because it begets *pleasant views* of God ; for we cannot make use of Christ, and yet find the Father displeased ; because faith is the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ* ; so that, when we see him, we see the Father, and the Father to be well-pleased in him.

4. Because it lays hold on a *complete salvation* and an incomprehensible good, that, as it were, swallows up the understanding to take up the worth of it, *Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls*, 1 Pet. i. 19. The lively exercise of faith takes just a great salvation in its arms ; and the man sees himself a saved man, and that there is no difficulty in all the world can stand in the way of his salvation ; this creates joy.

5. Faith's act must be delightful, because it is accompanied, with comfortable views of *providence* ; for when a man comes under this shadow, then he can say, Come what will, and let the Lord do with me what he will ; yet all things shall work together for my good.

6. It is attended with comfortable views of the *meaning of the scriptures* ; for they become so favourable as to be the *favour of life*. Lively faith makes scriptures have another lustre than before. It was a good saying of an old Reformer, " That the Christ, which is pointed out in scripture, could never scar a sinner." When conscience is awakened to see what the law says, it is terrible ; but let a man have the lively exercise of faith in Christ, then the scriptures have the smell of a pleasant garden : the very threatenings of the scripture are pleasing ; for a man can say, They have frightened me to my resting-place. There is not a word in the Bible but what is favourable to the believer, as seeing God's good-will in it.

In a word, under this shadow the man hath a pleasing view of *death, judgment, and eternity* : for here he finds himself well secured against all evil, and well provided

vided with all good ; therefore, he cannot but sit down with great delight.

V. The *fifth* thing proposed was, To speak of the *feast* of faith ; *His fruit was sweet to my taste*. After one that hath been hotly pursued, comes under a shadow or shelter, yet if it be not well provided with necessaries, he may starve ; one may be furnished in a strong hold, and faint, if he hath not food there ; but in Christ there is maintainance as well as protection. Instead of all the heads that might be proposed here, relating, 1. To the fruits ; 2. To the sweetness of the fruits ; 3. The sensible tastes and experiences thereof ; and, 4. Christ's standing propriety therein, even when given out of his hand into the bride's mouth, *His fruit, my taste ; His fruit was sweet to my taste* : instead of enlarging on all these, we may take up the import of this part of the text in these following particulars.

1. That the necessities of God's people are not few, but many ; they need a *feast*, as well as a *fence* ; and *fruit*, as well as a *shadow*. Our Lord keeps them under many wants, that they may have many errands to his door ; and that he may have many vents to let out of his fulness, and give proof of what is in him for their good. His full breast of all-sufficiency and affection needs all their wants, as vents to let out himself by many ways, and many communications to them. The day comes when they shall *enter into the joy of their Lord*, that cannot now enter into them ; their vents are so narrow that they cannot let in what he hath, and what he is in himself for them, and whereof they are not capable now, notwithstanding their manifold necessities. Hence you that are acquaint with manifold necessities, if you look upon them abstractedly, you may get an embittering sight of them, and may wonder and cry, Wo is me that I am so full of wants ! but look upon them with an eye to Christ's design, and they will be another thing : you will see that he keeps you under many wants, that he may have much work about you and them : he keeps you empty, that his fulness may be in request. And if thus you look upon them,

them, it will serve not only to encourage you, but to make you lament that you should be so straitened in your own bowels, when you are not straitened in him: yea, sense of want would be more desirable in order to supply; considering, that when all your wants are laid together, yet you have but straitened bowels to take in what he is willing to let out. The

2. Particular here imported is, That the necessities of Christ's followers and of his bride, are not only *many* but their improvement of Christ will be so far from *diminishing* the sense of their necessities and wants, that *new* wants will be discovered, and new enjoyments will beget new appetites. When does the bride need fruit? Even when she is set down under Christ's shadow, and begun to make use of him. The scope of the metaphor teaches this. A person scorched and pursued, sees no more needful at that time but a shadow; yet when he hath got under that shadow, his other necessities and want of provision pinches him: so here, when the scorched bride is driven to her shadow, and set down under it, then she finds her other wants. This is the kindly fruit of well improv'd enjoyments, that they still raise a new appetite for more. These that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, will, as *new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word*, 1 Peter ii. 2. Hence, take a right look of the growing discovery of wants; you may think it is an evidence of a worse condition than you was in before; but mistake not, it is a great evidence of communion with Christ, and that you are come under this shadow, when even there your faintness calls for fruit. It is a sad evidence of distance, and that people are not making use of Christ, when their wounds begin to close up, and the sense of their wants is diminished. But, on the contrary there is no better evidence of communion with Christ, of nigheness to him, and that your enjoyments are real and blessed to you, than when your enjoyments discover want, and beget appetite for the supply thereof.

3. Another thing imported is, That communion with Christ and closing with him, should not be entertained with *idleness*, but with *diligence*. The bride of Christ here

here hath no more ado than to sit down under his shadow with great delight; she finds that in that case, she is called to gather fruit under the apple-tree; and eat, and improve that opportunity she hath gotten, by taking his fruit and feeding thereon: communion with Christ is given us, not to set us idle, but to make us busy on such a happy opportunity; and that partly,

(1.) Because we know not what may be upon the *back* of that opportunity; it may be like that which Elijah got under the juniper-tree, 1 Kings xix. 5, 6, 7. where the angel desires him to eat, for *the journey is great* he hath to go; and he got *forty days fasting* after that double meal: little know we what may be on the back of a banquet, how hardly we may be put to it.

(2.) Because idleness will soon cut us *short* of our enjoyments. When Christ and the bride are together at a feast, Song v. 1. on the back of it she falls asleep; though it was but a slumber, her heart waking, yet he thereby was put to the back of the door, ver. 2. Ill improv'd opportunities may strip a soul of all its enjoyments before it be aware: *Emptiness and distance may steal on, as one that travails; and poverty as an armed man.* Under the happy shadow we should be holy epicures, diligent feeders, and greedy eaters of the fruit of the apple-tree.

4. It is here imported, that the *necessities* of the saints cannot be so many but Christ hath *supply* for them all. If they be assaulted and tempest-beaten, or scorched and sun-burnt, he is a shadow; if they be faint, he hath fruit; and his fruit is,

(1.) *Refreshing* fruit; and is called *fruit*, in conformity to the metaphor of his being the apple-tree: the purchased and promised allowance of Christ to his people are refreshing and satisfying, like savoury fruit.

(2.) This fruit is *solid* fruit; the believer feeds not upon *wind*, as it is said of Ephraim, Hos. xii. 1. but fruit; he does not feed upon *ashes*, as it is said of idolaters, Isa. xlv. 20, but fruit; he does not feed upon *poison*, as it is said of the wicked, Job. xx. 16.; nor

does he feed upon *bushs*, as it is said of the prodigal son, before he returned to his father, but the fruit that grows upon this *apple tree*, the *tree of life*.

(3.) This fruit is not only pleasant and solid, but *plentiful* and sufficient to answer their necessities and all their wants: *Where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound.* O Sirs, it is an useful study to study the fulness of Christ, in his natures, in his person, in his offices, in his states of humiliation and exaltation, and his words and precious promises! Here is *wine and milk*; both special and common allowances, Isa. lv. 1. Again,

(4.) As this fruit is *durable* fruit; so it is good to study the durableness of his allowances; for John iv. 14. it is the *water that springs up to everlasting life.* The fruit of the tree of life is still green and fresh, Rev. xxii. 2.; and still ripe and ready for eating: and all these rich, full, and durable allowances are thine, poor needy soul, according as thou dost need them; and thy need is thy pass and warrant for closing with them, Isaiah lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters.* John vii. 39. *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.* The thirsty ground is the ground that needs a shower; the thirsty soul is the soul that needs a drink, even as the hungry man is the man that needs meat: and the more need, the more let be your errands to Christ for supply. Have you much to do? Well, in him you have much to do it with; here would be your life, to take up Christ's fulness rightly, and to improve it as your need is discovered to you.

5. *His fruit was sweet to my taste*, it imports, that there is a *pleasant relish* and *sweetness* in Christ's allowances to his people. Concerning which we may remark,

(1.) That his allowances to them are not only *sufficient*, and enough, *Bread enough and to spare*; but they are *sweet* and *delicious*. Christ's fruits are like the tree cast into the waters of Marah, that made them sweet, Exod xv. 25. It is like the meal cast into the  
prophet's

prophet's pot that took death out of it, 2 Kings iv. 41. So that if you would have any sorrowful or bitter condition sweetened, then no method is so commodious, nor mean so sure, as to take the fruit of this apple-tree to season it: they are much to be pitied that are under any hard and bitter lot, and have nothing of Christ to sweeten it.

(2.) As Christ's fruit is sweet in itself, and sweetens other things, so the saints will *acknowledge* it to be sweet when they are in a right frame, and their taste not corrupted and vitiate; for then they are like persons in a fever, their taste marred; and the sweetest things seem to be bitter to them; but when the saints of God are in a right frame, they will not fall in that fault which Eliphaz suspected in Job, chap. xv. 11. *Are the consolations of God small to thee?* Yea, when their souls are in health, even his words of reproof will be sweet, even as the wounds of a friend that is faithful to a right discernor, and as excellent oil that will not break their heads. Surely then his honey, and honey-comb allowances will be sweet unto them; and they owe this testimony to the truth of the matter, that *his fruit is sweet*. We are not complimenting him when we commend him and his fruit: we ought to commend him thus to others, saying with the church, *His mouth is most sweet*; and with David, *O taste and see that the Lord is God*: when we repine and quarrel and fret because of our scanty allowances, O how ill bred are we! And as the full soul that loathes the honey-comb, it is a sign our spiritual sense and discerning is corrupted, when we cannot attest *that his fruit is sweet*.

(3.) The Lord is pleased sometimes to satisfy his people with the sweetness of his fruits, without putting them still to the *trouble* of believing a bare word: he can, by sensible comforts, make the greatest doubter and drooper to call himself a liar, that ever he should have brought up an ill report of Christ and his allowances. This is sometimes the privilege of God's people; and though it were but once in a life-time, or though it were, as in Jacob's case, twenty years between one sweet Bethel and another, he should be blef-

fed for it : it is not their ordinary to have these sun-blinks, or to be overcome with love and sweetness, for ordinarily they walk by faith, not by sight : by these warm blinks he sometimes gives faith a breathing. And therefore, surely they make a wrong use of these sensible comforts, who cannot live without them ; and who think God is gone, and Christ is gone, and all is gone, when these comforts are gone : Asaph calls himself a beast for thinking so, Psalm lxxiii. 22, 23. *So foolish was I, and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee ; nevertheless, I am continually with thee ; thou hast holden me by my right-hand : under my temptations I questioned all my religion as vain, and thought God was gone ; but now I see that at my worst his hand was round about me.*

(4.) Yet it would still be remembered, that these sweet comforts and sealing favours are the *effects of faith*, if they be real and not delusive : *I sat down under his shadow* ; then follows the sweetness and sensible tastes of his goodness and grace : these are sent in order to cherish faith ; and to exercise faith in Christ is the way to have more of these : *In whom believing we rejoice. After ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.* When comforts are gotten in a way of believing, then they are free of delusion ; yea, then they are strengthening, and do much good ; *The joy of the Lord is your strength*, Neh. viii. 10.

6. It imports, that these fruits that are so sweet and delicious to the believer's taste, they are still *his* fruits. It was he, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, that from all eternity *decreed* the communication of that fruit : it is he that *purchased* all the fruit : it is he that is the *store-house* in whom it is laid up ; for, *All fulness dwelleth in him*, and out of *his fulness we may receive it* : it is he that is the *donor* and *dispenser* of the fruit, according as his wisdom and love sees meet, he lets it out to them, not as they would, but as they need : it is he that guides the fruit he gives them, otherwise they would misguide it : and it is he that will make a good *account* of it all in due time ; the day comes, when he *will be glorified in the saints, and admired in all that believe.*



*lieve.* You may question, If this fruit be in his hand to give out, how you came to be so scrimped? But, as he is wise, so he will be true to his trust; and will bestow all in due time. In a word, it is *his* fruit, for it *grows* all upon him that is the apple-tree; and this makes the fruit to be ineffably sweet, that it is all his; and, as the water of life is sweetest at the fountain-head; so the fruit is sweetest to the believer's taste that is seen to be growing on the tree of life, and to be all in him who is fulness and sweetness itself.

VI. The *sixth* and *last* thing proposed, was, To deduce some *inferences* for the application. And, in general, from the church's practice here, after her commending of this apple-tree as matchless, her sitting down under his shadow, saying upon the matter, I am an experimental witness of his singular and matchless excellency; my experience is an orator to set forth what Christ is, we may see,

I. That a *commendation* of Christ and an *improvement* of him should go together. For, Christ will accept of no *commendation*, or fair language, as a proof of sincerity and uprightness, unless it be attended with an improvement and use-making of him. Christ is not only fair and beautiful, but also full and bountiful; and therefore he wants not only to be commended but improved, that men may *come to him for life*, John v. 20. And unless they come and *taste and see that he is good*, Psalm xxxiv. 8. he values not, but despises their *flattering him with their mouth*, Psalm lxxviii. 34. He wants not only that you speak good of him, but that you make use of the good that is in him.—Know also that right *improvement* of Christ rises from a due *sight* and *esteem* of him as singular and matchless: they that come and see, will come and share; *We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth*; then it follows, *Out of his fulness have all we received*, John xiv. 16. The knowledge of Christ draws men to improve him; and the improvement of him draws forth commendation of him: these mutually influence one another. Christ is none of these who, the more they are known, the less they

they are esteemed ; no : his half cannot be told nor known : admiration and sitting down speechless as overcome, is the highest pitch they can fly in his commendation. You that are strangers to Christ should try him before you say he is a wilderness ; you cannot judge of colours while you are blind : if you would come and see, or come and taste how good he is, you would, as the Samaritan, John iv. 42. not commend him only from hear-say, but from your own experience : your experience would tell more than we can say. You that know him, and have any experience, see that you bring up no ill report of him ; you owe him a testimony : let him not be to you as other beloveds, but extol him above them all, even from your own experience : and let it be seen that you are at your centre when you meet with him, and that there is no room for a *plus ultra*, that you need go no further, unless it be to grow in your knowledge and esteem of him.

2. Hence see, that all we have ado in the improvement of him, is to *take* of him what he hath to communicate : if we be weary, to sit down and rest ; if scorched, to get under his shadow ; if faint and hungry, to eat of his sweet fruit. It is said, Acts xx. 35. *Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Thus it is Christ's blessedness to give and not to receive ; and it is our blessedness to have to do with such an one, to whom we are called not to come and *give*, but to come and *receive* : we have nothing to give, and he can receive nothing : we have nothing but wants ; and he seeks nothing but necessities and wants to be brought to him : we have nothing but weakness ; and he delights to make his *strength perfect in weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. He delights to be washing and making white these that have lain among the pots, Psalm lxxviii. 13. Yea, he delights to welcome *apostates*, and these that have played the harlot with many lovers, and to heal backslidings, Jer. iii. 1. Hof. xiv. 4. In a word, Christ alone is the only market for poor worthless souls : be thy case what it will, he is even as meet for you as you could with ;

wish ; and be thy case what it will, if you make use of him you are happy, and if you be brought to trade and traffick with him, whose blessedness is to give and not to receive.

3. Hence see, that Christ is to be improv'd in *every case*, as being fully furnished for, not only *some*, but for *all* wants : if you want rest, or want a shadow, or want food and fruit ; he is *a sun and shield*, he gives *grace*, and he gives *glory*, Psalm lxxxiv. 2. And if these be not enough, then it follows, *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*. Coming under his shadow, your grievances may grow, your troubles and difficulties may grow, but they cannot outgrow his all-sufficiency to supply : as your state alters and changes, he can give you change of raiment and change of armour ; for, *They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength* ; and make you able to *do all things through Christ strengthening you* ; and make you content, how to be abas'd, and how to abound. If you be called to suffer and bear heavy reproaches, and heavy burdens that the world lay upon you, he can make your back invincible, so as they shall sooner weary to lay on burdens than he shall weary to support you. In a word, believer, you are so complete in Christ, that it ill becomes you to go to another door ; nay, let all your wants be upon him, and improve him for all. And you should employ him not in *lesser* difficulties only, and then give him over when surpriz'd with *great* troubles, saying, *This evil is of the Lord ; why should I wait on the Lord any longer ?* as that wicked king did, 2 Kings vi. 33. no, by no means. Nor do you employ him in *greater* troubles, and think to wrestle alone with *lesser* ; for the least trouble and temptation will be too hard for you, when you are alone without him ; but, *In all thy ways acknowledge him* ; and, *In every thing make your requests known to him*.

4. Hence see, that closing *with Christ*, and *sitting down under his shadow*, is the way to *taste of his fruits*, and to have *communion* with him : to make use of him in every case is the way to have a pleasant feast with him ;

*In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and then it follows, the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. iv. 6, 7.* Only you are not to choose and use him for adversities only, or to help you in particular exigents, butto sit down under his shadow, and take up your rest in him as your everlasting rest. Hence the bride of Christ runs to no other door, to no other tree, knowing there is no other God, (*though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many ;*) but one, the Father, *of whom we are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* There are many trees that people run to for shelter ; but the believer runs to Christ, and cannot rest any where else. The bride here had the watchmen to go to, *the daughters of Jerusalem*, but none of them her in his absence ; *O tell him I am sick of love : if you find him tell him.* Your company will not please me, pastors, ordinances, public and private, means, duties, and devotions cannot be a shadow to me ; Christ is the only relief to a scorched soul. Mary came to seek Christ in the sepulchre ; she sees two angels in white, pointing out their glory ; one might have thought that sight might have sufficed her, and made her say with Peter, *It is good to be here ;* no : but she wept, and said, *They have taken away my Lord :* the sight of angels could not satisfy her, when Christ was away ; she could not sit down under any other shadow, but that of the apple-tree.

5. Hence see the *folly* of these who have such a shadow as Christ in their offer, and yet trust in a lye, and sit down under the shadow of the *trees of the wood*, &c. that will fail them in the day of their need. I am afraid, that even in this company, there may be some that are expecting relief under some tree of the wood, and not under the shadow of the apple-tree.—Some rest themselves securely under the tree of *civility*, as a sconce from any heat in the world : but remember, though you be civil, and moral, and honest good neighbours,

neighbours, this will be a poor withering gourd that will never shelter you from the wrath of God; the publican that smote upon his breast, and cried, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, went home justified more than the Pharisee, that could say, *He was not as other men, no extortioner, unjust man, or adulterer, but fasted twice a week, and give tithes of all that I possess*, Luke xviii. 9,—13.—Some set themselves under the tree of *legal righteousness*, their good works and good frames joined with Christ's righteousness, which they think reasonable, seeing they do not offer to join with it their sins nor their evil works, but their righteousness; nothing but what the law of God requires, and the gospel of Christ calls for: but there is no other shadow but Christ and his righteousness; for, *If righteousness come by the law, in part or in whole, Christ died in vain*, Gal. ii. 21.—Some trust to the tree of their own *feigned faith*: we read of a *faith unfeigned*; but many have but a feigned faith: they say they trust in God, and believe in Christ; and these are but feigned words, and words of course; and they but sit down under the shadow of their feigned faith, not under the shadow of the apple-tree. Some trust to the tree of *rude repentance*: when they commit a sin, they run away to God, and say, "I have committed this; Lord, pardon me, and I shall never do it again." Many lean much to this tree; but, as Judas repented and cast away his idol silver, and said, *I have betrayed innocent blood*, and yet perished, so will these that trust to any other shadow, but that of the apple-tree; *they walk but in the sparks of their own kindling, and will be down in sorrow*, Isa. l. 11.

But these only are wise and happy that sit down nowhere else but under the shadow of the apple-tree by faith; for, here is the fruit to be reaped, namely, *justification*; being justified by the *faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law*, Gal. ii. 19. *Sanctification*: we read of them that are *sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus*, Acts xxvi. 18. *Adoption* flows from this; *We are the children of God by faith*; and, *to them that believe he gave power to become the children of God*, John

i. 12. *Fellowship* with God flows from this ; for, Christ is said to *dwell in the heart by faith*, Eph. iii. 17.—Here is the door of communion with God in grace and in glory.

6. Hence see, that faith is a *composing grace* ; it is a sitting down under Christ's shadow, under the covert of his blood, under the shadow of his righteousness. And we may try our faith by this improvement it makes of Christ amidst all outward or inward scorings, whether by outward afflictions or inward tossings, from the apprehension of God's wrath, and assaults with the fiery darts of Satan's temptations. It views Christ as a complete shadow and the sovereign cure of all, and makes use of him for that end ; and in this use-making of him just interposes Christ between us and wrath, and between us and whatsoever is troublesome and burdensome to us : this faith is just a man's quieting himself upon this ground ; casting anchor here when tost with tempests and not comforted, saying, *Why art thou discouraged, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God*, Psal. xlii. 11. *Return to thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*, Psal. cxvi. 7.

7. Hence see, that as the exercise of faith is a *pleasant and delightful* exercise ; so there is not only *pleasure and composure* of soul in this employment, of taking the benefit of the apple-tree for a shadow, but also *sweetness and satisfaction* in sharing of the fruits that grow upon that tree : here they eat and feed upon his fruits, that are exceeding sweet to their spiritual taste and experience. What fruit of his ? His words, his works, his manifestations, his communications.

(1.) His *words* are sweet ; hence David cries, *How sweet are thy words to my taste ! sweeter than honey to my mouth*, Psal. cxix. 103. The Jews confessed that *never man spake like this man* ; and Peter says, *Thou hast the words of eternal life*.

(2.) His *works* are sweet ; his incarnation, death, resurrection, and all the fruits of them ; his ascension in our nature, *leading captivity captive, and giving gifts*  
unto

unto men ; his sitting at the right-hand of the Majesty on high, in our nature ; making continual intercession for his people ; his presence in time of trouble, his protection in time of danger, and all the works of his Mediatorship.

(3.) His *manifestations* and *communications* are all sweet. How deliciously entertained is the believing soul, when he manifests himself to him, in another way than he does unto the world ; and communicates of his grace, mercy, and loving-kindness unto him.

8. Hence see the duty of all *sinners* and *believers* both.—It is the duty of *sinners* to come to the Saviour : if they would have a screen and shadow between them and the wrath of God ; they are to come to Christ as the apple-tree, and sit down under his shadow.—It is the duty of *believers*, that have been wandering from their resting place, to return to their rest, and take their seat again under his shadow. As Moses, being a type of Christ, stood in the gap to hold off the wrath of God, Psalm cvi. 23. ; so Christ the Mediator of the new covenant stands betwixt us and the heat of God's wrath, and of the wrath of men and devils. O come under the shadow of this apple-tree. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after other gods,* and that run to other trees for shade and shelter ; but comforts shall be multiplied on them that come to this apple-tree, and sit down under the shadow thereof. Christ is the apple-tree, and he is able to help you ; *A man shall be a hiding place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* Here the weary shall have rest ; the scorched shall have shelter ; and the faint shall have fruit. As he is able, so he is willing to give all comers welcome entertainment ; *I will in no wise cast out : nay, I will be so far from casting him out, that it will never enter into my mind ; I will in no wise cast him out.* Our Lord hath a commission to receive all comers, and to loose all the prisoners of hope ; *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; for he hath appointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison doors to them that are bound, to preach good tidings to the meek,* Isa. lxi. 1. How heartily does

he invite you to come! *On the great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, If any man thirsteth, let him come to me and drink; if any man hunger, let him come to me and eat.* Wherefore are we sent out to you, but to bring you to the apple-tree?

Permit me next to address myself to you by way of *advice*. Let me advise you,

1. To be sensible of your *great need* of this shadow. If any here present be insensible of their need, there are three hands I would send you to for your conviction.

(1.) One is to the *law*: for, *by the law is the knowledge of sin*: hear what the law says to you, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before the Lord*, Rom. iii. 19. *When the command thus comes, sin will revive, and you will die*, Rom. vii. 9.

(2.) Go to the *Spirit of God*, and hear what the Spirit says; *When he is come he will convince the world of sin; Of sin because they believe not on me*, John xvi. 8, 9. As the law shews that you are unrighteous, so the Spirit shews you are an unbeliever; the Spirit, by the law, shews your malady, and by the law and gospel both, shews your aversion from the remedy.

(3.) You are to hear what *conscience* says; when the law condemns you as a transgressor of the law, and the Spirit convinces you of sin, because you believe not the gospel; then the proper work of conscience is to pass the condemnatory sentence against you, and to pronounce it in your bosom, making you to say, *I am the man, I am the woman that hath violated the law of God, and vilified the gospel of God.* But when you are convinced, you must not rest here; for,

2. *Esteem highly* of the apple-tree, and the shadow thereof. How will a scorched, sun-burnt man desire a shadow! and what would a fainting man give for sweet fruit! Such is to be had under the shadow of Christ's righteousness. This is the manner and order of the Spirit's



rit's work ; having *convinced of sin*, he convinces next of *righteousness* ; he brings first to the fiery law, and then to the fair apple-tree. Let your esteem of him be attended with desire after him and delight in him. I told you the words may read, *I delighted, and sat down* ; it supposes some heart-panting after him, *as the heart panteth after the water-brooks*, Psal. xlii. 1.

3. O ! will you *go* to the apple-tree. You should not only be sensible of your lost state and condition, and not only desire to be at him, and highly prize and esteem him ; but just *go* to him. How can you sit down under his shadow, if you go not to him ? That is, being sensible of your need of Christ, and assured of the worth of Christ, you turn your face towards him, and your back upon every thing opposite to him ; to turn your back upon all the trees of the wood, upon all created confidences wherein you was ready to trust, and to go only to the apple-tree for relief.

4. When you come to the apple-tree, then *sit down* under the shadow thereof ; and what is this ? It is just sit down ; and,

1. *Interpose* Christ between you and all things that annoy you : put him between you and all fears ; between you and all temptations ; between you and all hazards ; between you and every scorching sun.

(2.) Sit down and *stay* with Christ, and never part with him, depart who will ; let your language be with Ruth, *Intreat me not to leave, or to return from following after thee ; for whither thou goest, I will go ; where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God*, Ruth i. 16. It is remarkable, Christ says to his disciples, *Will you also go away ?* No says Peter ; *Whither shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life ?*

(3) Sit down and *quiet* yourself in Christ. The poor spouse of Christ was wandering and restless ; she can get no rest without or within doors ; she goes hither and thither : she met with the watchmen, and then with the daughters of Jerusalem ; but no rest till now that she is come to the shadow of the apple-tree.

(4.) Sit down and *take refreshment* to your weary souls ;  
come

come and feast upon the apple-tree ; and, as you come, be convinced you cannot come alone ; Christ hath told you, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him* : therefore, put up your prayer to God, and say, “ The Son of thy love, O Father, hath told me, I cannot come under his shadow, except thou draw me ; therefore, now, O good and gracious God, for the sake of Jesus, draw me : ” and under the influence of this drawing grace, come and sit down and gather apples. *I am the true vine*, said our Lord Jesus, *and my Father is the husbandman* ; even so, he is the true apple-tree, and his Father is the gardener ; and he is now come to shake the tree, to let down the apples about your hands that you may gather, or to bend the branches down to you, that you may pluck what apples you need.

What apples, say you ? Why, we shall tell you of eight sorts of apples. Well here is,

1. The apple of *imputed righteousness* for you that are guilty sinners. Your own righteousness is a rotten apple, good for nothing but to be cast away with all your other idols, to the moles and to the bats ; but the righteousness of Christ is a sweet apple, a fresh apple, a ripe apple, ready for eating ; and if you taste of this apple you shall live a life of justification. By eating the forbidden fruit you was condemned ; but by tasting of this apple you shall be justified : *By one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; but by the righteousness of one, the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life : for, as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous*, Rom. v. 18, 19.

2. Here is the apple of *implanted grace* you may pluck from off this tree of life. Do you want even the grace of *faith* and ability to pluck ? It grows upon this tree ; Christ is the *author of faith*, and the *finisher of it*. Do you want the grace of *repentance* ? It grows also upon this tree, Acts v. 31. *Him hath God exalted, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sin*. Do you want *love* ? It grows upon this tree ; his love is the seed of love ; *We love him, because he first loved us* : his doing, dying,

dying, rising, reigning love is the seed that being sown in your heart, will make heart-love to him grow there. —Whatever grace you need you may get it upon this tree of life; for, *Out of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace*; or, as it may be read, *Love for love*.

3. Here is the apple of *peace*. Is not peace with God and peace of conscience a sweet apple? And does it not grow here? *In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace: He made peace by the blood of his cross*. O! who would not be in hands with this refreshing apple, that will cheer the heart against all the disquiet in the world! This peace in Christ is like a dry house within, in a rainy day without doors. It is like a quiet harbour in stormy weather; or a safe haven in a terrible tempest.

4. Here is the apple of *joy*, joy in the Holy Ghost; and this also grows upon the apple-tree: *Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Peter i. 8. A taste of this apple makes all carnal joy tasteless to you; for, it is *unspeakable joy*, full joy, glorious joy, and unspeakably full of glory; the very dawning of the day of glory.

5. Here is the apple of *contentment* that grows upon this tree of life; contentment with every lot, every cross: *Godliness with contentment is great gain*. When a man tastes of this apple, it makes him say with Paul, *I am poor, yet possessing all things; I am sorrowful, yet always rejoice: I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*. This sweet apple sweetens every lot be it never so bitter.

6. Here is the apple of *communion* with God, and *access* to him that grows upon this tree; for, *through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father*: putting the soul in case to say, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. This makes the soul to invite others sometimes to come and share, saying, *O taste and see that the Lord is good; for, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us*; while we have fellowship with the Father, in his electing love; with the Son,

Son, in his redeeming love; and with the Holy Ghost, in his applying both the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son. This communion is sometimes only in desire; *The desire of our souls is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.* Sometimes in delight; *Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thine heart.*

7. Here is the apple of spiritual liberty that grows upon this apple-tree; *If the Son make you free, you are free indeed.* When we taste of this apple, we preach at liberty, and pray at liberty, and hear at liberty, believe at liberty, and walk at liberty; *I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts,* Psalm cxix. 45. It is a heartsome feast to the soul when all bonds and fetters are loosed, and the heart at liberty to love; the hand at liberty to work; and the feet at liberty to run; *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart.*

8. Here is the apple of assurance that grows upon this tree: assurance of God's everlasting love is one of the sweetest apples that ever was tasted; and a taste of it makes the man to cry out, *I know that my Redeemer liveth,* Job xix. 25; *I know in whom I have believed,* 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,* 2 Cor. i. 5. and, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,* Rom. viii. 38, 39. This apple, being tasted, leads the soul up to the pinnacle of praise, according to that word, Psalm cxl. 13. *Surely the righteous shall give thanks to thy name; the upright shall dwell in thy presence.*

In a word, there is no telling of all the apples that grow on this tree of life: there is no end of the number nor the sweetness of them; because all the treasures of heaven are the apples that grow here; for, *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* All the

the *perfections* of God are the apples that grow upon this tree ; for, he is the *wisdom of God*, and the *power of God* ; and in him dwelleth all the *fulness of the God-head bodily*. All the *graces of the Spirit* are the apples that grow upon this tree ; *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*. All the *promises of the covenant* are the apples that grow upon this tree ; for, *All the promises of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God*.

O my dear friends, if one should throw but a lapfull of green apples among a company of reapers on a harvest field, what a running, and striving, and struggling would there be, who should get their pockets best filled ! Allow me the homely comparison, where yet there is no comparison : only our Lord being here, compared to the *apple-tree among the trees of the wood*, and you being allowed not only to *sit down under his shadow with great delight*, but also to take of the *fruit that shall be sweet to your taste*, Is there no appetite here no disposition to gather the fruit of this apple-tree ; for, *he that eateth of this fruit shall live for ever*, John vi. 5, 8. ? Here you may gather a store of apples, that will be provision for the day of death, and for a long eternity. Now, the great God, the great gardener, is, by this gospel offer, shaking the apple-tree ; O strive who shall get the greatest fill of this fruit ! Which of these apples are you for ? Or rather, are you for them all ? Do you need them all ? Why then, they are designed for the poor and needy ; therefore, *Who-soever will, let him come and take freely* : be what you will, and whatever you have been, or are, if you think that this fruit would do you good, or that these apples would do you service, now when you are under the tree, lay your hands about you. Say not, I dare not put to my hands, my hands and my heart are so polluted ; but if I were so and so prepared and qualified, I would put to my hand. What is this you are saying, O proud sinner ? Are you bringing your money as a price to buy this fruit that comes papping and falling down freely to you ? If you do not humble yourself to take all

freely, you and your money shall perish. Would you bring fruit with you before you come here, where all the fruit is growing or hanging down to your hand, even in him who is made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and every thing : You affront the apple-tree if you come to give, and not to get : nay, you have nothing to give ; and here you have all to get.

QUEST. *How shall I get all the apples of this tree of life ?* I will tell you, the short way is just to take the tree to yourself, and then you get all the apples ; for, here is a wonder, though innumerable apples may fall down amongst your hands, yet they never fall off from the tree : like beams of the sun that fall down upon you, yet you are never separate from the sun, nor fall off from it. Whatever sweet fruits fall down from this apple-tree, yet they never fall off from it ; they are all growing, and growing for ever upon the tree : therefore, take the tree to yourself, and you get all the fruit, and all the apples that grow upon it : take the person, CHRIST, and you have all his benefits and blessings with him.

QUEST. *How shall I take the tree ? And what should I do with it ?* You are just to take it by faith ; *He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life :* and take the tree and plant it in the garden of your heart, *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.* Say not, I am a dead sinner, and can do nothing ; remember it is not *doing* but *believing*, you are called to : and therefore, though you have no life in yourself, yet mind this apple-tree is the tree of life, the living and life-giving tree ; the leaves of that tree which is for the *healing of the nations*, is such as hath power, not only to heal the sick, but to quicken the dead ; and therefore, seeing he is the God that quickens the dead, let the dead hear what he says, even he who by a word could bring all things out of nothing : *I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life,* John xi. 25.

May you see the matchless glory of this apple-tree, and there sit down under his shadow, and his fruit be sweet to your taste.

## A

## PART OF THE DISCOURSE

## BEFORE

## SERVING THE TABLES.

**W**E are now to proceed to the special work of commemorating the death and sufferings of our glorious Redeemer; and to make way for their sitting down at his table, who have sitten down under his shadow. But there are many absolute strangers to this exercise: and such are to be excluded from his table. All therefore that remain securely in a natural state, and are still sitting under any other shadow than that of the apple-tree, and are feeding upon husks, &c. we debar from this holy table. More particularly, we in the Lord's name, exclude all the *impenitent breakers of God's commands*; all Atheists, &c. &c. all that make *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, and that are satisfying themselves with the fruits of the flesh, instead of having the fruit of the apple-tree sweet to their taste. The fruit and works of the flesh are these, Gal. v. 19, &c.\*.

On the other hand, we invite to the Lord's table, all those who, whatever they have been formerly, yet have come to Christ, and upon a view of him in his matchless glory, have *sat down under his shadow with great delight, and have found his fruit sweet to their taste.*

QUEST. *Who are these that have sat down under his shadow?*

\* See these more fully laid open, Vol. I. p. 83,—89.

1. They are such as have seen the *matchlesness* of the apple-tree beyond all the trees of the wood; I mean, the singular excellency of Christ beyond all others; as a Beloved beyond all other beloveds. You will give him his due as above all others: some are called *lords*, but he is the LORD of *lords*; some are called *kings*, but he is the KING of *kings*; some are called *gods*, but he is the GOD of *gods*; some are called *saints*, but he is the KING of *saints*; some are called *angels*, but he is the ANGEL of the covenant; some are called *stars*, but he is the *Bright and Morning Star*. He is matchless in your view.

2. You have been made to see the *great need* of Christ as a shadow and shelter to you from the scorching heat of divine wrath, and of the fiery law; you have been pursued and found yourself weary with toil and trouble, vexation and restlessness, and have found that none of all the trees of the wood could afford you any rest or repast; that they were all bare trees that could not shelter you with a shadow; and barren trees that could not sustain you with fruit, but what was sour and bitter; and that vain was the help of man, and vain the help of creatures, and vain the help of all other trees, so as your confidence in the flesh hath been killed.

3. If you have sat down under this apple-tree, then you have found a shadow *refreshful*. A man that sits down is easy in comparison of what he was before he sat down; now he gets rest to his soul: *Come to me*, says Christ, *all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. You have got some rest to your heart and conscience, rest to your hope, your desire, your care, having *cast all your care upon him*. A man is easy, when a heavy burden is rolled off his back: you have found ease to your mind, and composure upon your closing with Christ.

4. A man that hath sat down under this shadow of the apple-tree, he *loves to keep his seat*, and desires not to rise, but says, *This is my rest, here will I stay*: at least, he is loth to be disturbed, but rather charges all about him, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, not to disturb his rest; and when they that come to



Christ are disturbed by temptations, and put away from their resting-place, they are like Noah's dove, they cannot rest till they return; and they desire to fly as doves to their windows, and to ly as the child in the mother's lap. When the soul is full of restless vexations, fluctuating and tumbling up and down, in a whole ocean of perplexities and fears, and can see no shore, no land, no haven of comfort, then it must get to the ark, and use the soliloquy of the psalmist, *Return to thy rest, O my soul.*

5. The man that hath sat down under this shadow, hath found *inexpressible pleasure* in doing so: *I sat down under his shadow with great delight; I delighted and sat down.* The soul is delighted with the shadow, and delighted with the seat under it: he hath joy and gladness more than the worldling can have when his corn and wine increaseth: you have found *wisdom's ways pleasantness*, and such great delight as disgraces all carnal delights.

6. You have found the fruit of the apple-tree *sweet to your taste*: and not only that it was a *shady* tree for sweet solacement, but a *fruitful* tree for sweet entertainment. Can you not say, You have got such an experimental taste of his goodness, that *his name was as ointment poured forth* to you, and all his garments smelled of *aloes, myrrh, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces*? So sweet that the taste raised your appetite after more and more of it; and sweet, as being a pledge of the love of God, and a foretaste of his glory? O Sirs, you that have taken your seat under the shadow of the apple-tree, the tree of life; see that you take your seat at his table, even though at present you should want the sweet and sensible experience of the deliciousness of his fruits: if you sit down by *faith* under his shadow, you will find *sense* in due time; but, *you are to live by faith, and not by sense*: your life lies in the tree itself; and therefore, let your life be a *life of faith on the Son of God*, and the sweet fruit will drop down in your lap in his time, who hath made every thing beautiful in his season, and who is the tree of righteousness that brings forth his fruit in his own season: he knows the proper

proper season of shaking the tree, and giving you a sweet fill of his fruit; only abide under his shadow by faith and dependance: give evidence of your sitting down under his shadow, by sitting down at his table; do not dishonour him by staying away, when you have so much need, and more need, perhaps, than ever; he hath been speaking to you; yet, may be, you do not know so much, till he make himself known to you in the *breaking of bread*.



T H E  
D I S C O U R S E  
A T T H E  
S E R V I C E O F T H E T A B L E S.

**N**OW, believing communicant, you are come again to sit down under the shadow of the matchless apple-tree, under the shadow of the blood and righteousness of Christ; and as there is no want of protection under such a thick shady tree; so there is no want of provision under the shadow of such a fruitful tree, this tree of life, is also the bread of life, and the water of life.

The *bread of life* is here; for, *in the same night wherein he was betrayed, he took bread, &c.*

Here is also the *water of life*, represented in the communion of the blood of Christ; *After supper he took the cup, &c.*

Now, believer, you are called to eat the fruit, and to drink the juice of the apple-tree, while you sit under the shadow thereof; and you should do it with great pleasure and delight. It pleased the Lord to break and to bruise that tree; the sacrifice Christ offered of himself to satisfy divine justice, was a *sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God*: justice was delighted with

with it ; Christ, whose *delight was with the sons of men from everlasting*, in the prospect of this work of redemption, delighted to do the Father's will in this doing and suffering work ; and when he sees the *travel of his soul*, he is *satisfied and delighted* ; with delight, then should we sit down under the shadow of this tree ; for, Christ's delight lies in seeing poor hell-deserving sinners hiding themselves from the wrath of God under the shadow of his sufferings. Here is one of the grand motives to faith, that you do God a pleasure, you do Christ a pleasure and satisfaction, when you sit down under his shadow with pleasure and delight, and eat the pleasant fruit of his labour, and toil, and death, and resurrection : he seeks no more satisfaction from you, for all his soul-travails, but that you make use of his sufferings, and the sweet fruits thereof. It is a satisfaction to Christ, when that which gave satisfaction to justice, gives also satisfaction to your heart ; and when you that have nothing in yourselves to boast of, are cheering and delighting yourselves in him, and in that which is in him. This day would be a day of the gladness of his heart, and a joyful feast to him, if you be brought joyfully to feast upon his flesh and blood ; that is, his incarnation, that he took on our nature ; and satisfaction, that he gave to justice therein. He takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy venting through this channel, to the glory of justice, and that rest upon his grace reigning through his righteousness to eternal life. *He meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness*, saying, *In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength*. In this manner we are to sit down under his shadow with great delight, giving him employment for pardon of sin, for peace with God, for sanctification, and for consolation. What a delightful communion will this be, if Christ and you be both delighted ! He sees the travel of his soul and is satisfied, and when you see it and are satisfied too. O what a powerful argument is this to excite faith, as it is a sitting down under his shadow with great delight ! namely, That by making use of his death and sufferings

ings for our happiness, holiness, and comfort, we not only satisfy and save ourselves, but make glad the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ ; yea, we cannot please nor satisfy him, but by sitting down with delight and satisfaction under his shadow. We give him satisfaction when we take delight and satisfaction in him for our own good. O what a wonderful Saviour is here, that will not be pleased and satisfied with us, unless we take rest, pleasure, and satisfaction in him ! He is the sovereign Judge ; and the day comes, when if you had all the world you would give it to please him, and who will pronounce the sweetest or the sadest sentence upon you, namely, *Come to me, ye blessed ; or, Depart from me, ye cursed ;* and that according as we have satisfied him in this matter or not, of sitting down under his shadow with great delight, that he may be delighted as well as you, and satisfied for his pains and travails in doing and dying for you. It is as if a physician should say to a sick or dying patient, Here is a healing medicine for you, that will bring you to life and health, and I will not be pleased nor satisfied unless you take it off my hand. Or, as if a parent should say to a child, I have bought such a fine suit of cloaths for you, and I will not be satisfied unless you put it on and adorn yourself with it. It is a feast to him to see a poor soul feeding and feasting upon the fruit of his purchase. The more bills you draw upon him for clearing all your accounts, and paying all your debt, the more you please and glorify him ; the more employment you give him to kill and subdue your sins and corruptions, the more you satisfy him ; the more burdens you cast upon him, and the more weight you lay upon him, you do him the more pleasure ; yea, it is all the compensation he seeks for all the wrong you have done him, and all the satisfaction he requires for all the good turns he hath done to you, that you just sit down under his shadow with great delight, that in this way you may find his fruit sweet to your taste ; for sweetening all the bitter things in your lot in this world, bitter troubles, bitter reproaches, bitter waters of Marah ; and for keep-

ing

ing the taste of your mouth till you eat to the full at the upper table, that shall never be drawn.

Now, though you rise from this table, yet never rise from your seat under his shadow ; the life he calls you to in this wilderness, is a *life of faith on the Son of God*, which is a sitting down, and sitting still under his shadow with great delight ; and there may his fruit be always sweet to your taste.

## S E R M O N C X L I .

The DAY of EFFECTUAL CALLING,  
a LEVELLING DAY ; or, the HEIGHTS from  
which SINNERS COME DOWN in the DAY of  
EFFECTUAL VOCATION\*.

LUKE xix. 5.

—*Zaccheus, make haste, and come down.*—

**O**UR Lord Jesus Christ is such a wonderful Physician, that he has a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady, and a cure for every case, that any sinner on earth can possibly be in. In the close of the preceding chapter we find him miraculously healing Bartimeus of his bodily blindness ; and here, in the beginning of this chapter, we find him curing Zaccheus of his spiritual blindness. Bartimeus was a poor man, sitting by the way side, begging ; and he is mercifully raised up to be effectually cured of his disease. Zaccheus was a rich man, sitting very high on a tree by the way side, gazing ; and he is mercifully brought down to be effectually cured of his disease. Whether people be in low or high circumstances, there is suitable help and relief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this Zaccheus is here described in the context six different ways.

1. By his *nature and nation*, ver 1. He was a *Gentile*, and a man of *Jericho* ; a place once destroyed and

\* This subject was handled in two discourses, on a sacramental solemnity at Falkirk, May 20th, 21st, 1750. The first on the Sabbath, the second on the Monday. This is the second impression.

curfed by Joshua: yet, even in this very place, as there was a Rachab to be faved, fo there was a Zaccheus to be converted, by the Lord Jefus. The baseness of a place does not hinder Chrift from calling his chosen. Heaven is open to one place as well as another: therefore, wherever minifters of Chrift go, they may open up their heavenly commiffion; and preach the gofpel to every rational creature under heaven, not knowing where a bleffing may light. The crofs of Chrift, if we may allude thereunto, had four corners, inviting the four quarters of the world to come to him. If we confider the body of Chrift upon the crofs, we may learn how every part of him bids welcome all comers: his *feet* fixed on the crofs, to wait and expect all paffengers; his *arms* ftretched out and fpread abroad, to embrace all that come to him; his *head* being down to found into finners ears, “Behold the love of a Saviour;” his *blood* gushing out like a ftream, to refresh all that come; and none fhall be excepted, but thofe that except themfelves. But, again,

2 He is defcribed by his *profession* and *occupation*, ver. 2. He was a *publican*, and *the chief among the publicans*. They were perfons detefted by the Jews; for, after the Jews were fubject to the Roman empire, they received the tribute money; and they were Romans and heathens: and he being the chief of the publicans, it is probable alfo that he was a notorious finner; for, we find frequently that *publicans* and *finners* were joined together. When Chrift would defcribe a notorious and incorrigible finner, he fays, Matth. xviii. 17. *Let him be to you as a heathen man, and a publican*. Now, this Zaccheus was a *publican*, and fo hated by the Jews; a *sinner*, and fo hated of God, who is *angry with the wicked every day*; but Chrift came to *call finners to repentance*, and fo bring them into favour with him, as all that belong to Chrift will be, they being loved in him with an everlafting love. Let no finner then defpair of mercy through Chrift. It is true, if they go on in fin, and live and die, in a finful, Chriftlefs ftate, they have ground to defpair; and everlaft-

ing horror and despair will be their latter end : but if they *come down* with Zaccheus to the Lord Jesus, and so leave off their sinful course, as he did, they shall meet with the same welcome. Despair of the mercy of God in Christ, which is infinite and flowing, is one of the most prodigiously aggravated sins : Cain sinned more in despairing of mercy, than in killing his innocent brother. Judas sinned more in hanging himself, through despair, than in betraying his Master, through avarice. It is dangerous to pass a peremptory sentence upon any man's final state : here is a publican called.

3. He was described by his *quality* ; he was *rich*, ver. 2. It is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven, when he makes his wealth his strong tower : and hence, *Not many rich and noble are called* ; but some there are. Riches, in themselves, are not hinderances to Christ. One observes, concerning Joseph of Arimathea, he was a great man in the eyes of the world, but a greater in the eyes of God : the wise men that came out of the east to worship Christ, were both rich and honourable. Neither the *poverty* of blind Bartimeus, nor the *riches* of this man, Zaccheus, did hinder the Lord Jesus Christ from shewing favour and mercy towards them. Let rich and poor, high and low, and all sorts of sinners here, *Look unto him, and be saved*, and seek after a sight of him, as Zaccheus here did ; who is described,

4. By his *present disposition* and *intense inclination*, ver. 3. *He sought to see Jesus*. It would seem, from the event, that it was something more than curiosity that prompted him to seek after a sight of Jesus. It is probable, that by this time, the Spirit of God had convinced Zaccheus that he was a sinner, a great sinner ; and now he hears the report of Christ as a Saviour sent from God : and while the convinced sinner is hearing of a saviour, even before effectual calling, he may be under such impressions, by the common motions of the Spirit of God, as tend to carry him out toward a blind, yet ardent desire after a yet unseen and unknown Jesus ; though yet these convictions, impres-

sions,



sions, and desires may have nothing in their nature saving: however, in the elect of God, they may be saving evidentially, by virtue of the divine decree connecting them in the issue with his saving work. Thus Zaccheus, while other rich men were despising Christ, and would not give a farthing for a sight of him, is filled with an earnest desire after a sight of Christ, even before Christ manifests himself to him. It is a hopeful thing, that some saving good is to follow, when a secret desire is wrought in the heart, after a sight, even of a yet unknown Christ; and when the report of Christ, works in a people a desire of acquaintance with him. But here you may observe the *impediments* which hindered Zaccheus from getting a sight of Christ; and there are two mentioned: the first was outward from the people, namely, the *press*; the second was inward from himself, namely, that he was of *little stature*. Hence we may observe, That when people desire to see Christ, and win near to him, there are manifold impediments to hinder it, both from without, and from within. From *without*, the hinderance may be a *press*: pressing business, pressing company, pressing crouds of worldly incumberances, that tend to divert them from Christ, and spiritual things. From *within*; as Zaccheus was of little stature, and could not get a sight of Christ; so in spirituals, they are of little stature, having little affection to Christ, little conviction of their need of Christ, little sense of sin and wrath, and of the dreadful curse they ly under, while they are without Christ; the stature of the good inclinations may be so little, and low, that they cannot see over the head of the pressing multitude of their outward worldly vocations; yea, from within, there are not only privative but positive impediments, not only little good about them, but much evil, especially an *evil heart of unbelief*. However, Zaccheus pursues his desire to see Christ, notwithstanding of the impediments. And so,

5. He is described by his *endeavours* that backed his desire, and the measures he took for attaining his desire, ver. 4, *He ran before, and climbed up a sycamore-*

*tree, to see Christ; because he was to pass that way.* O but it is good for people to cast themselves in Christ's way! though there be no infallible certain connexion, by divine promise, between natural and saving grace: yet the poor beggar, that keeps the way side, where the king passes, is certainly wiser and nearer his purpose, than the man that should go up to a distant mountain where the king never comes. It is good to be about God's hand in the use of means, even though we should mistake the right manner of using them: for, the Lord may send a word of power to direct them to the right way of entertaining him, as here he did Zaccheus, who here manifests his ardent desires to see Christ, by climbing the tree that was in the way where Christ was to pass: his desires were attended with endeavours; *The sluggard desires, and has not; for, his hands refuse to labour:* but here the desires of Zaccheus set both his hands and feet a-work, to climb up the tree. Rich men are generally proud, and would scorn to climb up upon a tree before a multitude; and reckon it mean and below them to expose themselves at that rate: but here Zaccheus, though he was rich, and a kind of prince, and chief among these that were of his order and office; yet he is not ashamed to climb the tree like a child, which, perhaps he would have blushed to do, had any earthly prince been passing by: but now, he values not the scorn of the multitude, might he get but a sight of Christ.

*Remark,* "That they that truly desire a sight of Christ in ordinances, will not regard the reproach and scorn of a wicked world." Many in our days, especially of the rich sort, think shame to be seen climbing the trees of duties and ordinances, for fear their neighbours gaze and laugh at them, and mock them; but that is an evidence that there is no secret heart desire to see Christ excited within them, otherwise they would despise the reproach of fools.

6. Zaccheus is described, by his *effectual vocation*, ver. 5. where our text lies. Where you may observe two things. 1. The means. 2. The manner of his vocation, or effectual calling.

[1.] The *means* thereof. And here you may observe four powerful means.

(1.) The first mean was *Christ's coming to the place*: and, indeed, the day of effectual calling is the day wherein Christ comes by his gracious presence; it is not running nor climbing, nor using any endeavours that will be effectual, till the Lord himself come to the place. We may say of the place where we are met, What though people are come, and ministers are come; if Christ himself do not come, by his spiritual presence, nothing will be done. As Martha said to Christ, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*: so we may say, if Christ be not here, we will remain dead in sin and security; but if Christ be here, his presence will quicken us to a lively hope, to a lively faith, to a new and spiritual life.

(2.) The next mean was *Christ's looking up*. Zaccheus had climbed up the tree with his hands and feet; and, behold! Christ follows him with his heart and eyes: *He looked up*. Observe here, That whatever any person is, that belongs to Christ, he will surely give a look of love, and cast an eye of pity toward that person, whether he be down among the crowd, or up among the branches of a tree; let him be a cripple on the ground, or a climber on the boughs, Christ will be at him: though he were as far down as Bartimeus, sitting by the way side, begging; or as far up as Zaccheus, sitting on the tree, gazing: Christ will look over thousands, and give a look to him: *He looked up*. Most of these whom Christ is about to call to himself are in such circumstances, that Christ must, in a manner, look up to him: and, O! what amazing grace is this! It is a wonder when Christ condescends to *look down* from heaven to us on earth, but for him to *come down* to earth, to look up to us here, is a wonder of wonders! That he should put himself among the rank of worms, Psa. xxii. 6. *I am a worm, and no man*; and that for this end, that he might look up to men, placing themselves upon, and pleasing themselves in their own heights and altitudes; this is wonderful!

Christ

Christ and sinners are sometimes represented in such a situation, as if the world were turned upside down, as indeed it is by sin; Christ is brought down so low, that, when he looks to the sinner, he must look up; and the sinner exalted so high, that when he looks to Christ, he must look down. High attempts, and lofty endeavours of our own will never do us any saving good, till Christ give us a saving look; and, as it were, look up to us with pity and compassion, so as to cause us to look down with shame and confusion.

3. Another mean was Christ's *seeing* him; *He looked up and saw him*. Christ not only looked up to the tree, but he saw Zaccheus there; he went there to see Christ, and Christ went there to see him: and so they behoved to see one another. Hence observe, That when a poor soul is seeking to see Christ, it is a happy omen that Christ is seeking to see that soul, and that they will not be long asunder. Here is a notable spur and incitement to diligence when we are seeking after Christ, Christ is seeking after us; when we would have communion with Christ, Christ would have communion with us; when we have an eye toward Christ, Christ hath an eye toward us: it is, notwithstanding to be observed here, that as we do not read that Zaccheus saw Christ, till first we are told that Christ saw him; so it is sure, Christ's looking to us prevents our looking to him: no soul can look to him with an eye of faith and hope, till he look to that soul with an eye of pity and mercy. If any seed of spiritual desire after Christ, was now sown in Zaccheus's heart, it was a fruit of Christ's seeing him. Though exercised souls are not always sensible of this, but may be, sometimes, through ignorance, thus speaking with themselves; "O! how willingly would I see Christ! but I know not if he be willing." What, man! this a piece of blasphemy; if you be truly willing, his will has prevented yours; if your eye be toward him, his eye has prevented yours: *He looked up, and saw him*. Zaccheus could not see him till he looked up and shewed his face to him: none can see him savingly till he shews and manifests himself. It is true, Christ saw the multitude

titude about him, and they saw him ; but it was in another manner that Christ and Zaccheus saw one another : Christ conveyed himself into his heart with the look that he gave to him, and the word that he spake to him. Christ saw Nathaniel down below the tree, when he little thought that Christ was looking to him ; *When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* And here, he saw Zaccheus upon the sycomore-tree, when he little thought he would notice him.

(4.) The fourth means of this effectual calling was Christ's *speaking* to him. Hence we may learn, That when Christ gives a merciful look ; he gives a merciful word ; where he gives a look of love, he gives a word of power ; his gracious looks and his gracious words go together : the ordinary means of effectual calling is by the word of Christ accompanied with the power of the Spirit of Christ ; *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* But now, what said Christ to him ? This leads me to the other part of the text, *viz.*

[2.] The *manner* of his vocation, or effectual calling. Here again we may observe these four things, concerning it.

(1.) It was a *particular* call ; he speaks to him by name, ZACCHEUS. It is said of Christ, John x. 3. *He calls his own sheep by name.* Here remark, That the effectual call is a particular call ; they that are thus called are dealt with particularly, as if God were speaking to them by name and surname. I might here observe the signification of the name, ZACCHEUS, which signifies, *pure, clean, and undefiled* ; but surely he was never rightly called *Zaccheus*, till now, that Christ called him so ; and, by the particular call, did effectually sow the seed of holiness and purity in his heart : and that it was effectual appears from the event, his joyful answering the call, ver. 6. ; his repentance and reformation, verse 8 ; and Christ's declaration concerning him, ver. 9.

(2.) It was a *declarative* call ; special direction being given him with respect to his present duty, *Come down* ;

as if he had said, That place, that situation you are in is too high and incommodious for seeing and entertaining me; come down from the height that you may better see me. The neareſt ſight of Chriſt is beſt; while you are too high, you are too far from me; *Come down*. Here obſerve, That theſe who deſire to ſee Chriſt are ready to climb to ſuch heights, and ſo take ſuch ways of their own, as afterwards they will find themſelves obliged to deſcend from, and abandon; ſo it is vain to think of getting a ſaving ſight, or a right view of Chriſt in a way of climbing up by our own natural and legal endeavours. *Come down, Zaccheus*; you muſt deſcend from your own natural heights and legal altitudes, to the goſpel valley, and the low path where Chriſt walks. If Zaccheus had been where he ought to have been, Chriſt would not have called him to come down: it is true, it was a lawful and laudable ſhift for him, conſidering the great preſs and his low ſtature, to climb up to the tree that he might get a ſight of Chriſt; but if he ſhould ſit ſtill and reſt upon the ſycamore-tree, when Chriſt the tree of life was come ſo near, to be the only reſting place of his ſoul, all his pains and labours would have been loſt. There may be very lawful, laudable, and commendable means and endeavours, that people may betake themſelves to, and they may climb very high therein, that they may get a ſight of Chriſt; but if they ſit down and reſt upon the tree of their own duties and endeavours, whatever external, common and paſſing views of Chriſt they may get, yet there is no ſaving ſight, or ſpecial acquaintance with Chriſt they can have, unleſs they come down from all dependence upon means. down to Chriſt himſelf. The call here is directive; and the order and direction he gets is, *Zaccheus, come down*. Whom Chriſt calls, he directs to proper duty; and it is the firſt duty of ſouls that would have communion with Chriſt, to *come down*, that they may meet with him.

(3.) It was a *haſtening* call, *Zaccheus, make HAſTE, and come down*. As you ran before the reſt, and made haſte to get up; ſo you muſt make haſte to be down. The call of Chriſt requires a preſent answer, without delay:

delay: *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation: to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* The outward external call by his word is such a hastening call, that no man ought to delay a moment to come to Christ, at his call; for a delay is dangerous: why, if the next moment should cut his breath, and so cut the thread of his life, before he come to Christ, he is eternally and irrecoverably lost. The internal and effectual call is such a hastening call, that whosoever are the subjects thereof cannot find in their hearts to delay a moment. No sooner did Christ speak the word, than Zaccheus *made haste, and came down.*

(4.) It was a *kindly* and a *loving* call, as appears from the reason of it; *For, to-day I must abide at thy house; come down, for I must be your guest: I will sup with you, and you with me to-day.* Here is a blessed *guest* inviting himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a place of entertainment, *thy house.* Here is the *fulness* of the visit, it was not *passingly* and *transiently*; but he was to *abide* at his house. Here is the *necessity* of it, *I must abide at thy house*: a sweet necessity of love and kindness; *I must do it.* And here is the *time* when this was to be done, *To-day I must abide at thy house*: the time to favour thee with a merciful visit is come. Here is surpassing and preventing love and mercy, Christ kindly calls upon Zaccheus, when Zaccheus was ashamed and afraid to call upon him: Christ invites himself to his home, when Zaccheus was thinking of nothing but a passing view of him by the way. And here it is remarkable, Zaccheus not only gets what he desired, but much more; he gets Christ to be his guest. When Christ calls, he shows his kindness far beyond all our desires and hopes; and whom he calls effectually, he draws with the cords of love: having loved with an everlasting love, he draws with loving-kindness.—So much shall suffice for the explication. I now confine myself to this one doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV. *That there are certain heights people are apt to ascend, from which the Lord Jesus, in the*

*day of effectual calling, causes them to come down, in order to their having communion with him. ZACCHEUS, MAKE HASTE, AND COME DOWN.*

Christ, in the day wherein he manifests himself, speaks to his people, as Joseph did to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9. *God has made me Lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, and tarry not.* So says Christ, *The Father hath put all things into my hands; yea, All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me: come down unto me, and tarry not; make haste, and come down in a way of subjection and submission to me and my righteousness, renouncing all dependence upon other means.* When they would help themselves, and add some cubits to their own little stature, by climbing up to sit on a tree, he calls them to *come down and sit in the dust*: as the expression is, Isa. xlvii. 1.; and to see that in Christ only is their help; and that by no means or endeavours of their own can they add one cubit to their spiritual stature, nor advance their own spiritual welfare, but in a way of coming down from all confidence in the flesh. There is no communion with God in Christ, but in a way of believing, or by faith; and what is faith, but a down-coming grace? It is a quitting grip of all boughs and branches of creature-helps, that we are ready to climb up unto, and rest upon; and of taking hold of the man whose name is the BRANCH, *the tree of life*, under whose shadow alone we can be safe. Our safety lies not in climbing up to any other tree, but in coming down below the shadow and covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ. Here alone communion with God is to be had; hence, says the church, Song ii. 3. *I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

The method we propose for the further opening up this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to countenance, is the following.

- I. To speak of some of these *heights* from which people



people must come down, that would answer the gospel-call.

II. Shew in what *respects* they come down.

III. Offer some *remarks* on the day of effectual calling.

IV. Assign the *reasons* why the Lord calls them to come down, and that with haste.

V. Deduce some *inferences* for the application.

I. We would speak of some of these *heights* and *altitudes*, from which all must come down, that would answer the gospel-call. And,

1. The sinner must come down from his *high thoughts*, and *towering imaginations*; his high and lofty reasonings that *exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ*: for, this is one of the great ends of the gospel, to level these heights: *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Proud reason in man is so far out of reason, that many reason themselves out of all religion, and set up reason against faith, mustering up millions of thoughts and imaginations, and carnal objections against believing in God, and against believing also in Christ.

2. The sinner must come down from the height of his *natural efforts* to save himself, by the strength of his own free-will, or natural power and ability: for, as by nature *we are without strength*, Rom. v. 6. for any spiritual work, not being *sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves*; so, *by strength shall no man prevail*; and, *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*—Hence,

3. Sinners must come down from the height of their own *legal endeavours*, in going about to *establish their own righteousness*, Rom. x. 3. This is a tree that all men naturally attempt to ascend, whenever awakened to a thought of heaven and hell; but in vain do men set their *duties* against their *sin*, as if these could take them away; for it is only *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world*, John i. 29. In vain do they

set their *works* against the *wrath* of God ; that fire will devour them as stubble : it is *Jesus that delivereth from the wrath to come*. Yea, in vain do men set the *strength* of Christ against the *righteousness* of Christ, which they do, when they get strength and enlargement from him to pray, and perform this or the other duty, then they make that a ground of their being justified. From this legal spirit it is that men confound *assistance* with *acceptance* ; and think themselves accepted because assisted ; but men may be assisted to do miracles in Christ's name, and yet never be accepted, Mat. vii. 22. The ground of acceptance is only *in the Beloved*, Eph. i. 6.—From this legal spirit it is also, that men confound the *marks* of faith with the grounds of faith ; and so think they have no ground of believing, while they want the evidences of faith.

4. Men must come down from the height of their *false maxims* concerning God, as if *he were such an one as themselves*, and did approve of their sin, Psalm l. 21. : false maxims concerning CHRIST, as if he were a Saviour to save them *in their sin*, while they want not to be saved *from their sin* : false maxims concerning *themselves*, as if they had *good hearts toward God*, not knowing their hearts to be *deceitful above all things*, and *desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. : false maxims concerning *religion*, as if they could be religious without being regenerate and born again ; whereas Christ says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 3.

5. Men must come down from their heights of *false hopes*, that are withering branches ; for, *The hope of the hypocrite shall perish*, Job viii. 13. Many hope they will mend afterwards, though they give themselves a latitude for the present ; they will get grace between and the grave. Thus multitudes ruin themselves. Many presumptuously hope in the mercy of God, as the devil would have Christ casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple ; for why, *The angels will hold you up*. No, says Christ, *Get thee behind me, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*, Mat. iv. 5, 6, 7. So it is, when Satan, or the  
 flesh,

flesh, say, Plunge yourselves into sin, mercy will help you out : but, the mercy of God should lead to *repentance*, not to *rebellion*.

6. Men must come down from the height of *worldly props* and *carnal confidence* in arms of flesh ; *For the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them*, Jer. ii. 37. These are refuges of lies, as Israel found when they were brought to say, *Asshur shall not save us, neither will we ride upon horses*, Hos. xiv. 3. As if they had said, We have formerly trusted that the Assyrian would save us ; that our horses and cavalry would help us ; but we find them all to be vain confidences : Lord, it is in thee the fatherless find mercy ; in thee the helpless find relief, and in no worldly props.

7. Those that would answer the gospel-call must come down from the heights of *notable attainments*, whether in respect of unsound experiences, natural graces, or gospel advantages. There are *unsound experiences* : some have convictions and awakenings, like these of Cain, Saul, and Judas ; terrors and tremblings, like those of Felix, when Paul preached of *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come* ; fears and sorrows, like these of Esau ; joys and affections moving, like those of the stony ground hearers ; partial reformations, like those who, through the knowledge of Christ, escaped the gross pollutions of the world. These are all slender branches to trust to and rest upon : you must come down from them.—There are *natural* and *common graces* also, that people must quit the hold of, as well as false convictions : some have a cradle faith, that they had all their days ; this is so far from being of a saving nature, that men may have a temporary faith, like Simon Magus, who yet was *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*, Acts viii. 23. They may suspect their graces, who were never humbled for their contraries ; who have *faith*, and yet never were convinced of, nor humbled for their *unbelief* ; who have *love*, but never were convinced of, nor humbled for their *enmity* ; and have

*know-*

knowledge, but were never humbled for their ignorance.—There are *gospel-advantages* that many have and yet abuse; but, in as far as they are abused, they are rotten branches to hold by. Some abuse a *gospel profession*, contenting themselves with the *form*, without the *power of godliness*; they abuse *gospel privileges*; and, in respect of these are *exalted to heaven*, and yet *shall be brought down to hell*. Many abuse *gospel grace*, and *turn the grace of God into wantonness*, and to encourage them in their sin. Many abuse *gospel promises*, by making a loose, carnal application of them; and of the blood of Christ, and of redemption purchased thereby, without seeking after the effectual application of it to us by his holy Spirit. Many abuse *gospel liberty and freedom* from the law, as a covenant, by taking liberty thence to sin, as if they were free from the law as a rule of life too. Many also abuse *gospel principles*, such as this, *That without Christ we can do nothing*: as true a word as in all the Bible, that without him we can do nothing spiritually, formally, and acceptably good: however, men may do things materially good; but hence the carnal heart of many infer, Seeing the whole work is Christ's, in point of *power*; therefore they will do nothing, in point of *means*, but leave all to Christ; and so make Christ a lackey to their idleness, and a pillow to their sloth. Though the use of the means hath no causal influence in obtaining the good promised; yet there is a necessary connexion of order, between using the means and gaining the blessing: thus, though the Lord promises many signal blessings, in absolutely free promises, Ezekiel xxxvi. 25,—29.; yet, *For all these things he will be enquired of by the house of Israel*, ver. 37. That persons ought to be in the use of means, and have reason to expect a blessing in so doing, is evident from many places in scripture, particularly, Prov. viii. 32, 33, 34. Mat. vii. 7, 8. These are wicked abuses of *gospel advantages*, by these who receive the grace of God in vain.—These and the like attainments, experiences, graces and advantages, are vain boughs and branches, from which they must come down.

8. I mention another height that men must come down from, that would answer the gospel-call, and that is the height of *vain apologies* and *excuses* for their sin. There are some shifts and apologies that are very poor, mean, and low ones: but I will name two that are very high and proud apologies. And,

(1.) The one is drawn from the *translation* of sin upon others, as if they were not guilty, but only such as tempt and ensnare them: hence some blame the *devil* only for that which is their *own sin*. But, if you father your sin upon the devil; it may be, indeed, he is the father begetting; but the flesh is the mother conceiving and bringing them forth; *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*, James i. 14. Some father their sin upon *God* himself, as Adam did, when he said, *The woman which thou gavest me, gave me to eat*, Gen iii. 12. As if he had said, "If thou had not given me this companion, "I had not eaten." But, says the apostle, *Let no man say when he is tempted, he is tempted of God*, Jam. i. 13. Yet thus men are ready to justify themselves and condemn others; yea, and God himself.

(2) Another proud and lofty apology is drawn from *false comparisons*; men comparing themselves with others that are worse; like the Pharisee, that compared himself with the Publican; *God, I thank thee, I am not like other men*, Luke xviii. 11. As if he had said, "Lord, I thank thee, I am not so ill as such a man, such a rake, such a debauchee, &c.;" and so hiding themselves under the covert of a comparative righteousness. But, as runners in a race hasten their pace, by looking to those that are before them; but do not slack it, by looking to those that are behind them; what a folly is it, if we be running the Christian race, to look to these that are behind, and reckon we are farther forward than they, and therefore we need make no more speed in religion! But rather we are to look to these that are before us, and be ashamed that we are so far behind, and put the spur to our dull and naughty flesh, that we may *run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of*

our faith, Heb. xii. 1, 2. You do not use to look to a poor beggar, and say, I am richer than he ; and need no more : and will you deceive yourself in the matter of religion, saying, I am better than such a man ; and therefore I am right enough !——From these and the like heights, men are to come down. *Come down, Zaccheus.*

II. The *second* thing proposed, was, To shew in what *respects* they come down, who answer the gospel-call. And here it may be enquired, by what *steps* they come down ; and to what *place* or *situation* they come down.

1<sup>st</sup>, By what *steps* they come down. We name only these four.

1. The first step is *consideration* : none come down from the height of their vain confidences, till they be brought to consideration and thought ; *I thought on my ways, and then I turned my feet to thy testimonies*, Psalm cxix. 59. God complains of men for want of thought and consideration ; *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider*, Isa. i. 3. And it is the first thing God calls people to, when he wills them to *come down* to meet with him, Hag. i. 5. *Now, therefore, saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.*

2. The second step by which they come down is *concern* : people may make a little step by consideration, and presently step back again, and let the thoughts pass away ; like these who are slight hearers of the word, that opens up and discovers their case : but like men beholding their natural face in a glass, and go away, and straightway forget what manner of persons they were ; therefore the next step must be *concern*, deep concern about salvation, saying, with the jaylor, *What shall I do to be saved ?* Or, with Peter's hearers, *Men and brethren, what shall we do ?* The man is awakened to a restless concern, in the use of appointed means, how to get down from that dangerous and dreadful height, whence he is ready to fall into utter ruin.

3. The third step is *despair* and *disappointment* : finding all his legal hopes and expectations failing him ; all his legal endeavours vain and useles ; yea, vanishing, dying, and giving up the ghost. When a man comes down to this step, *viz.* to despair of help in himself, and to despair of relief from creatures and means, of themselves, saying, as it is, Jer. iii. 23. *Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or from the multitude of mountains* : By this step he just quits the grip of all those branches which he had hold on, and trusted to. He finds himself disappointed of these confidences, and that he cannot prosper therein : *The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them*, Jer. ii. 37. Some are *wrathfully* disappointed ; for, the Lord *destroys* them and their confidences both, as the word here will read ; *I will destroy thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them*. But others are *mercifully* disappointed ; when God famishes their false confidences, it is a plague even for a man to prosper in them, and a mercy to be starved out of them, and to be brought down by despair and disappointment.

4. The fourth step I mention is *resolution* : the soul now resolves, through grace, to quit hold of all these lofty to-looks, and to come down and take hold of Christ alone, saying with the prodigal, when he came to himself, *I will arise, and go to my father*, Luke xv. 18. If he had not been starved, but had got bread enough abroad, he would not have risen up to go to his father's house. Thus when the Lord *hedges up our way with thorns, that we may not find our paths*, then we come to say, *I will go and return to my first husband*, Hos. ii. 6, 7. Indeed, none would come to this resolution, if the Lord did not blast their vain confidences, so as to make them ashamed of them : *Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria ; yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head*, Jer. ii. 36, 37. This resolution to come down to Christ, though it be the best, yet it is the last shift that men take : see the disposition of man naturally, Hos. vii. 11. *Ephraim is like a silly dove, without heart* :

*they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.* The dove's young are taken from it every two months ; and yet, like a silly bird, as it is, it builds in the same place, where it was deprived of its young, never remembering it will be robbed again and again, even as oft as it builds there : just so do men build their residence where they cannot but be still bereaved, till God bring them to put in practice this resolution to *come down* and build low, upon the sure foundation. This leads me to the next thing here : as by these and the like steps they come down : so,

2dly, To what *place* or *position* do they come down ? I shall here but name these four things they come down to, when they answer the gospel-call : *Come down, Zaccheus.*

1. They come down to *self-denial*, Mat. vi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*, says Christ. Self must be abased, and Christ exalted : the soul that comes down to Christ, is brought to self-abasement, self-abhorrence, self-judging, and self-condemnation : yea, self-hatred and detestation ; *Now mine eyes see thee*, said Job ; *wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and in ashes*, Job xlii. 5, 6.

2. They come down to the *gospel-terms* of life and salvation ; that is, to the renouncing of all *legal* terms and conditions, to which you can never come up.— You have heard, perhaps, men speak of *coming up to the terms of the gospel*, saying, You must be so and so qualified, humbled and penitent, before you can come to Christ : why, this is, indeed, an *ascending up*, instead of *coming down*. But the call is, *Come down, Zaccheus* ; to the terms of the gospel market : that is, to get all things freely, *without money, and without price* ; all things for nothing, Isa. lv. 1.

3. They come down to *God's righteousness*, and submit to that, quitting all righteousness of their own as *filthy rags*. This, proud man has no will, by nature, to come down or submit to : *They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness*



teousness of God, Rom. x. 3. They that answer the gospel-call, they come down to the sure foundation that God has laid in Zion, disclaiming all confidence in the flesh; all confidence in their duties, prayers, tears, frames, and good affections or actions.

4. They come down to *God's will*, both his commanding and disposing will: to his *commanding* will, saying, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Brought down to an appropriation of the holiness of the law, and to a disapprobation of themselves, for want of conformity to it. They are brought down also to the *disposing* will of God, to a submission to his providence, though he should order poverty, adversity, reproach, and contempt, if it be for his glory and their good. The man is delivered from the power and rule of a murmuring spirit. It is much for proud nature thus to come down.

III. The *third* thing proposed, was, To offer some *remarks* on the DAY of effectual calling. We observe only these things shortly from the context concerning it.

1. "It is a *particular* day, wherein the Lord gives a particular call to such and such a person, as it were, by name; ZACCHEUS, *come down. I have called thee by name.*" Though God, in calling his children, doth not give them all the particular names wherein they were baptized; yet he particularizes them so as they are made to see that they, in particular, are called, as it were, by name: for, God deals with their heart as particularly as if he were speaking to none else; yea, the Spirit of God directs the word as close as Nathan to David, *Thou art the man.*

2. We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a day of *dispatch*: *Make HASTE and come down,* says the text." Much business is done and dispatched in that day: and the Lord does not suffer the soul to linger, but hastens it, as the angels did Lot out of Sodom. When Lot lingered, the angels pulled him out. God cries to us by his word, saying, "Haste you, man, woman; come out of this world, lest  
" you

“ you partake of the judgments thereof.” Men delay and are even averse from coming to God ; but, in the day of effectual calling, Christ, the Angel of the covenant, by his Spirit, pulls them out, and compels them to come down in haste : in the day of effectual calling the soul makes haste. *Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. I made haste ; I delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments.*

3. I remark, “ It is a day of *love and kindness*, where-  
“ in Christ gives a kindly *look*, as well as a kindly  
“ *word.*” It is here said, Christ *LOOKED up to Zac-*  
*cheus, and saw him.* Zaccheus wanted to have a look  
or a sight of Christ ; but he little thought that Christ  
wanted to give a look to him. But as Jesus looked  
down upon Peter, when he was too low, in order to  
bring him up ; so we may say, he looked up upon  
Zaccheus, when he was too high, in order to bring  
him down. In both these cases the look was a kindly  
look. Christ enjoins us to *look unto him and be saved ;*  
but he must give the first look. †

4. We remark, “ That the day of effectual calling  
“ is a day wherein Christ *invites* himself to an interview  
“ with the poor soul : for, *To-day*, says Christ, *must I*  
“ *abide at thy house.*” Here Christ invites himself :  
and, indeed, when he calls effectually, he invites him-  
self to the house, to the home, to the heart of his peo-  
ple. He seeks not our invitation, but prevents it : he  
is said to *prevent us with the blessings of goodness*, Psalm  
xxi. 3. Kindness begins on his side ; he lays himself  
in our way, by promises, and proffers of mercy. O !  
happy these to whom Christ is saying, “ *This day, I*  
“ *must come to your house*, to your family, to your closet,  
“ to your dwelling.”

5. I remark, “ That the day of effectual calling is a  
“ *necessary day ; This day*, says he, *I must abide in*  
“ *thine house.*” There is a blessed necessity he is un-  
der ; as it was with Christ, when he met with the wo-  
man of Samaria, John iv. 4. it is said, *He must needs*  
*go through Samaria.* And, as it is said of his bringing

† See this particular further illustrated in the explication, p. 114,  
115, 116.

in his scattered flock, John x. 16. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.* There was a necessity of purpose, of purchase, of promise, and a necessity of love in the case; and the thing must take effect.

6. We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is an *abiding* day, so to speak: it is a day wherein Christ comes not to make a transient visit, but a designed visit; designing to tarry and abide: *This day I must ABIDE at thy house.*" It is a set day, wherein he designed from all eternity, to meet with such a soul. As it is said of Israel, Psal. cii. 13. *The time to favour her is come; yea, the set time.* A time set and appointed for his stay and abode in order to shew his favour; and though his sensible presence is not still abiding; yet he gives such a visit, as to leave a pledge of his constant abode: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,* John xiv. 16.

7. We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a *meeting* day between Christ and the sinner: a day of communion and fellowship between him and them; wherein he makes homely and free with them and theirs: *To day I must abide at thy house.*" As if he had said, "You and I must be housed together: your house must be my house; your table my table; yea, your heart must be my home: I will not only *stand at the door and knock*, but I will make kings keys; you must *open to me, and I will come in, and sup with you, and you with me.*"

8. I remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a *notable and remarkable* day." The day of effectual calling is a remarkable day, and that in two respects, *viz.* the remarkable *names*, and the remarkable *signs and properties* of it.

[1.] It hath remarkable *names* in scripture; it is called a day of *power*, Psalm cx. 2. A day wherein God exerts his power, for breaking the rebellion of the nature; as he did in the case of Zaccheus the publican.—It is called a day of *espousals*, and a day of the *gladness of Christ's heart*, Song iii. 11. For then the match

is made up, between Christ and the believer.—It is called a day of *salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.* It is true, every gospel-day may be so called; but, in a special manner, the day of effectual calling; for then, as Christ said to Zaccheus, it may be said, *This day is salvation come to thine house.*—Again, it is sometimes called a day of *vengeance*, Isa. lxi. 2. *The day of vengeance is in mine heart; for the year of my redeemed is come.* Then the Lord takes vengeance on all spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and strong corruption; the vengeance of God and the temple pursue them.—Sometimes it is called a day of *small things*? Zech. iv. 10. *Who hath despised the day of small things?* The beginnings are ordinarily small, but the latter end may greatly increase.—It is called a day or *time of love*, Ezek. xvi. 8. *Behold, when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, thy time was a time of love;* for then he gives many a love-token.—It is called a day of *life from the dead*, as the day of the conversion of the Jews shall be, Rom. xi. 15. *Then the hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live,* John v. 25.—In a word, it is called a day of the *Lord's making*, Psal. cxviii. 24. *This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.* All days are of his making, but this especially; ministers cannot make such a day.

[2.] It is remarkable for the *signs* and *properties* of it. I name four. It is remarkable for success, liberty, victories, and discoveries.

(1.) The day of effectual calling is remarkable for *success*, because then the *pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand*, and hearts are drawn to him, as Zaccheus's heart here was; for, *he made haste and came down.* Why, then Christ rides in his majesty, according to Psal. xlv. 3, 4. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty; with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously; because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.* O man, woman, came there ever a word of power to your heart that made you a volunteer to the Son of God? Such a word as went out thro', and in thro' your heart, and opened all the bolted doors

doors thereof to the King of glory? It is a day remarkable for success.

(2.) It is a day remarkable for liberty; *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*, Isa. lxi. 1. Many have come hand and feet bound, tongue and heart bound to preachings and sacraments; but there came a word of power that opened all their prison doors. The entrance of the word gives light, life, and liberty; liberty and freedom from all the threatenings and curses of the law; freedom to enjoy and make use of all the promises of the gospel; freedom to go *in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only*. Then the man is at liberty to walk, to run, to fly, for his strength is renewed; he mounts up on wings as an eagle. Such freedom had Zaccheus, when he not only received Christ joyfully; but frankly forsook his former wicked way of living, and made restitution of all the wrongs he had done, ver. 6th, and 8th, of this chapter, where the text lies. *And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

(3.) It is remarkable for victory; victories over hearts, victories over corruptions, victories over Satan. O Sirs, do any of you remember the day when, though one would have given you all the world, you could not get heart to follow the Lord in duties and worship; yet, lo! quickly you had it to say, *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Aminadab?* When though you were frightened with legions of devils, and legions of lusts, and great regiments of corruptions within you, or ever you was aware, you was made to believe and lay hold on Christ, and so, by faith, to turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and say, *Through God I shall do valiantly: Thanks be to God who giveth the victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 57.

(4.) It is remarkable for *discoveries*; such discoveries of *God*, as makes the soul to say with Job, *Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself*. Such discoveries of *sin* and *self*, as makes one say with Aaph, *So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. Truth, Lord, I am a dog*; I am a devil, a monster. Such discoveries of the *world* and the *vanity* thereof, as makes it appear nothing. Pleasures, and honours, and crowns, and sceptres, all vanishing nothings. Such discoveries of *spiritual* and *eternal things*, as make them appear in their excellency, and makes the man to give transient thoughts to transient things, and permanent thoughts to permanent things. But especially such discoveries of *Christ* by the *Spirit* of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, as makes him to be seen and admired in his infinite worth and excellency, so as all things appear worthless in comparison of him. The man sells his all for this pearl of great price. He is seen in his fulness and sufficiency, as he in whom *dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: in his fulness of merit and Spirit, beauty and bounty, majesty and mercy, grace and glory. He is seen in his wonderful meetness and fitness for glorifying all the perfections of God, and for answering all the needs, straits and wants of the soul. The work of redemption is seen in him to be a work worthy of God's glorious excellencies, and suiting to the soul's lost condition, which is made to go into this method of salvation with wonder and admiration. O Sirs, have you ever *seen the King in his beauty*, and beheld King Solomon with the crown upon his head? Have ever the beams of his glory shined in upon your heart, according to 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?*

Some may think, O! what is that the man is talking of? A sight and discovery of Christ's glory! That must be some wild enthusiastic notion; for our part, we never saw any glory beyond that of the sun, moon, and stars. O poor soul! saw you never any greater glory than that? I tell you, there is an infinitely great-

er beauty to be seen; and if you say you believe the Bible, you must own it. Is not that word in the Bible, *All we beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image; even as by the Spirit of the Lord?* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Is not that word in your Bible, *The word was made flesh; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?* John i. 14.

But may some think, *What do you talk of seeing Christ! Is he not at the right-hand of God in heaven?* It is true, we do not speak of seeing him with the *bodily eye*; *The heavens must retain him, till the time of the restitution of all things.* It is not by any light like that of visionaries, nor light within like that of the Quakers; but we see the God-man by the eye of *faith*, and spiritual understanding, in the glass of the word. We see a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. We see his grace, his glory, his beauty; though yet we cannot express what we see, we cannot explain to the world what we see: words cannot represent the beauty and glory that is in Christ, or the sweetness and comfort that is felt in him, when discovered. They that see him, can say no more but that they see him all grace, all glory, all beauty, *altogether lovely*: and it is no fancy or imagination of him. It is no *imaginary idea of Christ as man*; \* but it is, according to scripture, an *intellectual apprehension of him as God-man*: witness Paul's experience, Gal. i. 16. *He revealed his Son in me*: and David's experience, Psal. lxxiii. 2. *O to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen it in the sanctuary!* In a word, it is just such a discovery of Christ as he was pleased to give of himself to Zaccheus here, ver. 10. *This day, said Christ, is salvation come to this house. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* It is a view of Christ as the Seeker, the Saviour, and Salvation, of the poor lost sinner. — So much concerning the DAY of *effectual calling*.

\* This important distinction is elaborately handled, and satisfyingly cleared up by our Author in his Treatise, intitled, FAITH NO FANCY; or, a Treatise of Mental Images. See Vol. VII. p. 373. 423, 441. Vol. VIII. p. 47, 191.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed was, To give the *reasons* why the Lord calls them to *come down*, and that with haste, in the day when he calls effectually; *Zaccheus, make haste, and come down.* And,

1<sup>st</sup>, Why he calls them to *come down*. He doth so, for the six following reasons, amongst others.

1. We are called to come down because it is God's great end, in the dispensation of the gospel of his grace, that *self* may be abased, and *Christ* may be exalted. See Isaiah ii. 11, 17. *The lofty look: of man shall be HUMBLED, and the haughtiness of man shall be BOWED DOWN; and the Lord alone shall be EXALTED in that day. And the loftiness of man shall be BOWED DOWN, and the haughtiness of man shall be MADE LOW, and the Lord alone shall be EXALTED in that day.* The high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, cannot bear with high and lofty men, who inhabit houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. Men must come down either in a way of judgment or mercy, that the Lord alone may be exalted.

2. The Lord calls men to come down, because, while they ascend too high, they are in a *dangerous* state. Before they be effectually called down, they are in danger of falling down and destroying themselves. If they come not down at God's call, and with his help, they will be brought down with shame and disgrace; for, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*: whereas, they that come down, and *humble themselves under his mighty hand, they shall be exalted*, 1 Pet. v. 5, 9.

3. He calls us to come down, because the farther down we come, in a state of due humiliation and abasement, the *higher* shall we be set up in a way of exaltation and advancement. As it was with the glorious head of the body, the church, his humiliation to the lowest, made way for his exaltation to the highest honour; *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven; even the Son of man, which is in heaven*, John iii. 13. Where, by the bye, we may observe what a wonderful person our Redeemer is. In



one respect he was never out of heaven : for, when he was on earth, he calls himself *the Son of man, which is in heaven* : and yet, in another respect he both descended from heaven, and ascended to heaven : and both this low descent, and high ascent, were necessary for him as our Surety : *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* John xxii. 26. And, indeed, in some conformity to him, all that ascend, must in some respect descend ; and the lower they come down, the higher will they be raised up.

4. They are called to come down, that so Christ may have a *footstool* on which he may mount his throne, and that *free grace* may be exalted in their salvation. While men are proud and lofty, and standing upon their altitudes and eminences, boasting of their own strength, glorying in their own abilities, resting on their own righteousness, and building their hope and confidence in their own excellency, industry, endowments, natural or acquired, Christ is put out of his throne, and free grace, reigning through his righteousness, cannot be exalted. But when once a man begins to come down, he is content to be, as it were, a stepping-stone for Christ to be mounted up ; satisfied to be a debtor to free grace reigning through the blood of Christ to all eternity. *Where is boasting then ? It is excluded.* It is excluded ! *By what law ? Of works ? Nay, but by the law of faith,* Rom. iii. 27. *Christ is made,—wisdom, and righteousness, and all, that no flesh might glory in his presence ; but that he that glorieth, might glory in the Lord.*

5. They are called to come down, that they may be *valley ground* for receiving the seed of the word, and being fruitful, which they cannot be, while they remain on their heights, no more than the tops of high rocks can be expected to prove a fruitful soil. *Christ is the rose of Sharron, and the lily of the valleys,* Song ii. 1. He loves to deck and beautify the low valleys, and make them fruitful and fragrant with his presence.

6. They are called to come down, that they may *meet with Christ*, and be *housed with him*, who loves

to dwell and be housed with the humble : *For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit ; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*, Isa. lvii. 15. This was the reason why Christ called on Zaccheus to come down, that he might meet with Christ, and that Christ, and he may be housed together : *Make haste, says he, and come down ; for to-day I must sup at thy house*. And this comprehends many more reasons, why, in a day of effectual calling, they are called to come down. Why, they must come down to get a better look of Christ, than they can have by climbing upon a tree. They must come down to embrace Christ, and receive him in their arms. Down to entertain him in their house and in their heart. Down to worship at his feet, of whom the Father has said, *And let all the angels of God worship him*. They must come down to tread in his steps, and keep the same ground. And in a word, they must come down to walk with him, Micah vi. 8. *Walk humbly with thy God*. Or, as it is in the Hebrew, HUMBLE THYSELF to walk with God. Proud man scorns to walk with a meek and lowly Jesus ; yea, with the high and glorious God, but wants to be as gods, and above God : but you must come down and humble yourself to walk with God.

2dly, Why must they make *haste* and come down ? What is the haste, say you ? Why, there is need of that haste here which David speaks of, Psalm cxix. 59, 60. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies*. Then it follows, *I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments*. There is need of answering the gospel-call in haste.

1. Because *time* is hastening away ; the wings of time are flying with the utmost speed. O Sirs, time, time ; short and precious : therefore, make haste and close with Christ, while it is the *accepted time, and day of salvation*.

2. Because the *day of salvation* is hastening away : gospel offers, sermons, and sacraments, ministers and ordinances,

ordinances, all are in haste. I have read of the birds of Norway, where the days are shortest, that the birds are swiftest. The day of grace being a short day, there is need of haste : *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*

3. Because *death* is making haste. That black scythe is mowing down old and young, like grass, here and there ; and death shuts the door of gospel-offers for ever : therefore there is need of haste.

4. Because *judgments* are making haste ; temporal judgments and spiritual judgments : and the particular judgment at death, and the general judgment of the great day. All are making haste, and crying to us to make haste to get into the city of refuge before it be too late, and the avenger overtake us.

5. *Eternity* is making haste. *The angel is about to cry, with his hand lift up to heaven, and to swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more,* Rev. x. 5. What then will follow ? Nothing but eternity ; eternity of well or wo.

6. Because *Christ* is calling on us in haste, saying, Come, come ; *Whosoever will, let him come.* His language not only is, *Come to me, poor soul ; but also, Come with me : come with me from Lebanon.* He is making haste to put a close to his work of redemption by power, even as he was in a haste to accomplish the work of redemption by price ; and he will never rest, till he hath it to say of this, as of the former, *It is finished.*

V. The *fifth* thing proposed, was, To deduce some *inferences* for the application. Is it so, *That in the day of effectual calling, there are heights to which men are apt to climb, from which the Lord calls them to come down, and hastily to come down ?* Then hence, I infer these following things.

1. See how *high* and *haughty* men are by nature ; for, as mean and low as they are, yet they affect heights from whence they must come down. The heights to which they aspire are several ways expressed in

in scripture, and whence they, like Zaccheus, need to haste down. Some are as high as the *towers* on which they build their hope; thus it is said, *The rich man's wealth is his strong tower*. Some are as high as the *mountains* on which they confide; but in vain is *salvation looked for from the hills, or multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord only is the salvation of his people*. Some would be as high as the *clouds*: but they are called *clouds without water, and morning clouds that pass away*. Some would be as high as the *stars*; but they are called *wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*. Yea, some are said to be as high as *heaven* in respect of certain privileges; but though they are *exalted unto heaven, they shall be cast down to hell*. What shall I say? Men affect to be even as high as God: *Ye shall be as Gods*, was the first temptation; and this prevailing, men set themselves in the throne of God; yea, would exalt themselves, like so many Antichrists, *Above all that is called God*: and hence spurn at the government of God, and strive with their Maker: and hence no wonder than men seek to be above one another; yea, to be gods over others. The spirit of Diotrephes, and love to have the pre-eminence, and to be Lords over God's heritage, and over men's consciences is too evident in many.

2. Hence see, that the *gospel-market* may be called a *down-coming market*; and *gospel-grace*, down-bringing grace. Men generally have a false notion of the gospel. So much do they affect to be high, that they think, if they see Christ, they must climb up, and be very high, very holy, very good, very penitent; yea, very eminent folk; but know not that they must *come down* from their heights, from their imaginary holiness and goodness, and be laid flat with the ground, and be nothing. They must come down from that thought that they *are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing*. This thought will keep them away from Christ. But they must think, and know, that they are *poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked*: and that they stand in need of every thing.—

Hence,

Hence, I say, the gospel-market may be called a down-coming market, where the price of wares doth not rise but rather fall. It is true, all the gospel wares and riches are bought with the price of blood, blood of infinite value. It was a high price to Christ; but to you in the gospel offer, the price is no price at all; for all the buyers are to buy, *without money, and without price*. Yea, the price falls lower than men can think or imagine. This market is lower than the Popish market, where good works are the price; lower than the legalist's market, where such and such good qualifications are the price. Lower than the Arminian market, where the act of believing, by the power of free-will, is the price. It is not a market of man's free will, but of God's free grace; nor of the power of nature, but of grace. It is a flying on the wings of grace, to the throne of grace: and this sovereign grace brings down all to her footstool, that share of her royal bounties. They are made content to be debtors to free grace.

3. Hence see the reason of God's dispensations towards his people that are of a *bumbling and down-casting nature*. As he calls them by his word, so also by his providence, to come down and ly at his feet. The children of grace have no reason to grudge the want of these things, which they are naturally ready to trust to. It is a mercy to be brought down. It may be, God denies you riches; well, perhaps they would have been your confidence. Perhaps he denies you frames and enlargements; well, it is possible, you would have rested on these, as your refuge and righteousness. People may be mistaken concerning God's way towards them; it may look like wrath, when it is love. God disappoints you in all your own ways and shifts, and that by down pulling dispensations, breaking the branches you hang by. The fiery serpent stings you; why? It is not to kill you, but to make you look to the brazen serpent, Christ, on the pole of the gospel. The avenger of blood pursues the soul out of all his lurking holes; but it is to drive you to the city of refuge. A deluge of heavy judgments may

come; but it is not to drown thee, but force thee to the ark. Personal afflictions, family afflictions, national afflictions, all are levelled for breaking down your false confidences, and bringing you down to Christ. See Hof. ii. 8.—14. The matter is, if God has a mind to convert thee, he will never leave thee, without some one thing or other upon thy soul, tossing thee, wearying thee, vexing thee; that thou shalt never have quiet, till at length thou land upon Christ. Such is the baseness and degeneracy of man's nature; we are like Joab, Absalom sent for him, he will not come; then comes the second summons, no; he will not answer. Well, says he, I will give a summons of another nature, and so he goes, and sets all Joab's corn-fields in a fire: *destroys all his confidences*, as Jer. ii. 37. The corn-field of hopes and props must be set a-fire; thus Manasseh could never be brought down till brought to extremity among the thorns in Babylon, and then he knew that the Lord was God.

4. Hence see the *nature of true faith*; it is a *coming down*. It is sometimes called a *coming out*, when it respects a leaving this world, and the Antichrists therein; *Come out of her, my people*, Rev. xviii. 14.—Sometimes it is called a *coming in*, when it respects a being housed with Christ; *Compel them to come in that my house may be filled*, Luke xiv. 23.—Sometimes it is called a *coming up*, when it respects a mounting heaven-wards; *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?* Song viii. 5.—Sometimes it is called a *coming down*, as here, and elsewhere, particularly, Isa. xlvii. 1. *Come down and sit in the dust*, &c. And thus faith may be designed, as it respects the soul's descending from all these heights men are ready to climb and aspire unto. It is a coming from self-exaltation to self-humiliation. No grace sets a man so high in God's esteem, nor so low in his own esteem, as that grace of faith; which, viewing God's infinite excellency, makes the creature sink to nothing. By unbelief we set ourselves up above God, but by faith we come down.

5. How reproveable are they, who instead of coming down, and sitting in the dust, are setting *themselves* up on such heights as to ascend presumptuously the very throne of God; pretending a zeal for Zion's King, and yet abusing his authority, and prostituting his royal prerogatives, by their pretended censures and excommunications, passed without any power, but what is sinfully arrogated and assumed, without any cause or ground, but what is imaginary and fictitious, as hath been documented unto the world. Yea, persecuted violently to the exposing of the discipline of God's house, and matter of laughter to a vain and profane generation, while exercised against those whom it cannot be executed against by the law of God, or man; nor by any rule of scripture or reason. If any enquire, how the proceedings of the separating Brethren, in these matters, appear to be sinful heights, and unwarrantable extremes, and extravagancies, and a sinful climbing up, instead of coming down to keep upon solid ground? Why, that this work of separatists is not of God's approbation, or agreeable to his word, will appear in these particulars.

(1.) If it is a work that *deviates* from the good old way; Jer. vi. 16. *Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.* Chap. xviii. 15. *Because my people hath forgotten me; they have burnt incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up.*

(2.) If it be supported and carried on with lies, calumnies, and reproach; Isa. xxviii. 17. *Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-places.* Ezek. xiii. 22. *Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad: and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life.*

(3.) If it cover violence with a *mask* of zeal; God hates robbery for burnt-offering: For, I, the Lord

love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering, Isa. lxi. 8. And him that loveth violence, his soul hateth, Psalm xi. 5.

(4) If consequently it turn the *keys* of the temple into *swords* and *staves*, and instruments of fury, and fiery persecutions: *Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders which were come to him; Be ye come out against a thief with swords and staves? Luke xxii. 52. For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, spume shall cover thee; and thou shalt be cut off for ever, Obadiah, ver. 10.*

(5.) If it bear the mark of *madness*, or of men's being plagued in their *prudentials*; *Therefore, behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid, II. xxix. 14. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad; for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred, Hof. ix. 7.*

(6.) If it foster *pride*, *arrogance*, and *lordly pre-eminence*: *Zeph. ii. 10, 11. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts: The Lord will be terrible unto them, for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen. 3 John, ver. 9. I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. And if it lead men to act the part of lords over mens consciences.*

(7) If it shun the *light*. *John iii. 20. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*

(8.) If it make men *unnatural* and *unsociable*; *Rom. i. 31. Without understanding, covenant breakers; without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful †.*—The prodigious heights, that are of such a nature and tenden-

† The Reader will see this affair more fully laid open above, Vol. VIII. page 470, 484.



cy, and have such concomitants, that they that climb them, must come down humbly, otherwise they will fall down headlong.

6. Hence see, that *few* are called *effectually*, because few have come down to entertain Christ in their hearts and houses. They have no will to come from the tree they have climbed; they hold fast by the branches thereof. Many hold so long by some rotten branch, that they are in danger of letting Christ go his way, and call no more, saying, *My Spirit shall no longer strive with them.* But here is a mark of effectual calling, the soul is made gladly and hastily to come down to Christ; down to his school, as a Prophet, to be taught of him; down to his altar, as a Priest, to be accepted in him; down to his footstool, as a King, to be blessed and ruled by him.—Why, say you, must we not come *up* to Christ, and *up* to his terms? Nay, man, you are far enough up already; you are for more terms than he is seeking of you. He seeks that you *come down* from all terms, conditions, and personal qualifications; to a renunciation of your all, which is nothing, and to an embracing of Christ's all, which is *all in all.* The soul, in effectual calling, is made to come down from self-love, to self-loathing; from self-estimation, to self-abhorrence; from self-will, to God's will; from self-ease, to an enduring of hardship, and a taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods, by plunder, and the spoiling of our names, by reproach and calumny: down from self-confidence, to a renouncing of all confidence in the flesh, and a placing our confidence only in God: from self-fulness and sufficiency, to self-emptiness, and contentment to be beggars at the door of grace's all-sufficiency, and daily travellers between creature-emptiness, and Christ's fulness.—Down from self-righteousness, to a counting all our own righteousness but filthy rags. A sight of God, as so glorious in holiness, that this attribute cannot be vindicated without a perfect obedience; and so glorious in justice, that this attribute cannot be satisfied without a condign satisfaction of infinite value; both which are only to be found in Christ. This brings down all  
lofty

lofty thoughts of self-righteousness, and makes the soul cry out, *In the Lord only have I righteousness*. In a word, a day of effectual calling is a down-coming day: the soul that was rich and increased with goods, comes down to his shop to buy his wares, his tried gold, his white raiment, his eye-salve. The soul that was climbing too high, comes down to sit under his shadow, who is the tree of life; down to his pasture who is the good shepherd; down to his wine cellar, to be fed and feasted with him in his banquetting-house; down to his green bed of fellowship with him, in his pleasant fruits.

7. See hence how *unkind* it is to delay when Christ is calling us to haste and come down, and saying, *To-day, even to-day, I must abide at thy house*; I would be in to thy heart: *Now is the accepted time*. The present time is the time wherein God calls you to come down and work in his vineyard. When death comes he will call you no more. The present time is the time wherein he is casting open his door to all beggars, saying, *To-day ye may be saved*; if ye delay till to-morrow, the door may be for ever shut. The present day is the day wherein the judgments of God are begun; his judgments are in the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are to learn righteousness. Come down, and own that ye are yet to learn the lesson of coming down, instead of climbing up.—There are three things should be considered by you that are lingering and putting off the time.

(1.) Your delay *hardens* your heart: *Go thy way*, said Felix, *I will hear thee at a more convenient time*; but that time never came. Time is not at your command.

(2.) Your delay *wearies* God, and not man only; *I am weary with forbearing*, saith God; and with waiting on this generation: *If it be a small thing to weary man*, saith the prophet, *will ye weary my God also?* If you wear out his patience, you are undone for ever.

(3.) Can you tell how long God will *spare* you? Can you tell me that you will be out of your grave till this day eight days? Do you know what a day may  
bring

bring forth? Then, this moment, hearken to his call, when he is saying, *Haste, haste; make haste, and come down.*

8. Hence see the *duty* of all that hear the gospel, namely, to *come down and sit in the dust*, and to quit hold of all the branches by which they are holding, that they may come and take hold of Christ, the righteous branch. Let me here, exhort, excite, and direct you,

[1.] Let me *exhort* you to *come down*, and quit hold of all the branches wherein you confide. What branches?

1. Some hold to the branch of *worldly confidences*, minding only earthly things, and cast anchor there, making earth their heaven; but this world is like a floating island, such as some we read of, where it is folly for sailors to cast anchor, lest the land swim away with the ship. Oh! dangerous trusting to floating and flying things.

2. Some hold by the branch of *carnal excuses*, when invited to come down to the gospel supper with Christ, Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20. *They all made excuse; and, among the rest, one said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.* Augustine made these to represent the *five senses*, which men want to gratify; instead of coming to Christ; called a *yoke*, because we have them, as it were, in pairs; two eyes, for seeing; two ears, for hearing; two nostrils, for smelling; two jaws, for tasting; and a twofold feeling, outward and inward: and a *yoke of oxen*, because occupied about the earth, and earthly things: but, *Come down, Zaccheus; come down from the top of Amana and Hermon*, from these mountains of vanity.

3. Some hold to the branch of *proud self*, setting themselves above all others, and embracing even the *doctrines of devils*, such as that, of *forbidding to marry*, and *commanding to abstain from meats*, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. This, in a literal sense, is applicable to Papists; but, in a spiritual sense, applicable to those, who so far are *forbidding marriage*, as they are pretending to *loose the marriage relation* between pastor and people; whom  
God

God hath joined, they would put afunder by their pretended sentences of *deposition* and *excommunication*: and hence fo far *commanding to abstain from meats*, as to be discharging people to feed upon these green pastures, wherein their souls have been formerly nourished †. If it be the *doctrine of devils* to forbid marriage, and command to abstain from meats, in a temporal and literal sense, how dangerous and deadly must the doctrine be, that doth so, in a spiritual sense! However, so it is, that these who are caught in such a snare, after their credit is engaged, their pride holds them like a chain, and makes them ashamed to return and acknowledge their folly. But pride must down, for it is abominable in the sight of God.

I have read a pretty story, or a pretty fable, “ of an  
“ angel and a hermit travelling together: the first thing  
“ they met with, on their way, was a stinking carrion;  
“ at which the hermit stopped his nose, but the angel  
“ smiled; afterwards they saw a strumpet decking her-  
“ self proudly and pompously, at which the hermit  
“ smiled, and the angel stopped his nose.” The moral teaches us, That nothing is more abominable to God, and his holy angels, than pride and vanity; and of all pride, none more hateful to God than religious pride; men’s saying, *Stand by, for I am holier than you: these are a smoke in his nose, a fire that burneth all the day*, Isa. lxv. 5.

4. Some hold by the branch of *human precepts and examples*; their fear towards God is taught by the *precepts of men*, Isa. xxix. 13; for which God there threatens to make *wisdom of their wise men to depart, and vanish into folly*, ver. 14. When people make the precepts and examples of men, be they never so good, their rule, their Bible, no wonder that they turn aside into crooked paths, and be led forth with the workers of iniquity. I mentioned some heights formerly, that men attempt to climb in vain, and from which they must come down: I do not here resume them.

† Alluding chiefly to the conduct of the separating Brethren, formerly laid open, Vol. VII. p. 470,—484.

5. Some, I may add, hold by the branch of their own *good purposes* and *resolutions*; some by the branch of their own *good duties* and *earnest prayers*; but these confidences will fail you: therefore, *Come down, Zaccheus*; come down to Christ; for, *many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able*, because they come not down to Christ, and to the strait and narrow way; so strait and narrow is the gate, that you cannot enter with the bunch upon your back, whether the bunch of sin and wickedness, or the bunch of your legal services and righteousness.

6. Some hold by the bunch of their *good affections*: they have been so and so affected in hearing and communicating; they have shed tears at ordinances sometimes, and wept abundantly; and therefore may they not expect that this will do them good, and render them the more acceptable to God? Nay, man, what a tender twig is that you are lippening to. You may be as joyfully affected at a comedy, or dreadfully affected with a tragedy: is there any religion in these affections? or any thing beyond nature? or any real mark of grace therein? Nay: come down, *Zaccheus*, to the Jordan of the blood of Christ, and wash there, and not in the puddle of thy own tears, otherwise thou hast no part in Christ. Come down, and let him wash you, who says, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me*.

7. Some, again, hold by the branch of their own *home-bred faith*, saying, "We believe as well as we can; and may we not hold there?" Nay, nay: come down, *Zaccheus*; the *object* of faith is the *author* of faith, and the *all* of faith; yea, the *act* of faith, whereof we are the subject acting, is an owning Christ to be all, itself to be nothing. The faith of God's operation quits its hold of all things; and of itself too; and throws itself into Christ's arms, that he may take and keep hold of it.

Finally, Some hold by the branch of *legal hopes* and *expectations*, saying, "Why, if I cannot believe of myself, I will wait;" not doubting but this they can do: still some twig of old Adam they will hold by.

But, come down, Zaccheus ; and know that you are not sufficient of yourself to think any thing as of yourself ; your sufficiency must be of God in Christ ; therefore, come down.

[2.] I shall endeavour to *excite* you by a few *motives*. Meantime, this call concerns finners and saints both ; for, as unregenerate, proud nature, that is still aspiring to climb and clasp about the forbidden tree, needs to come down, so the remains of proud nature, in the regenerate, makes it the duty of saints to be still coming down. Honest communicants, though they have communicate never so worthily and acceptably, and have come down to entertain Christ in their house, and heart ; yet, through the remaining power of natural pride and self, being ready always to put confidence, even in received graces, frames, enlargements, attainments, or some old-covenant twig : some good thing done by them, or wrought in them, instead of trusting only to the righteousness of Christ, and living wholly upon the grace that is in him ; therefore, they need daily to be coming down, and walking humbly with their God, and keeping themselves down with him in the low valley.

The exhortation then concerns *finners* and *saints* both : and for motives consider,

1. That the *market of grace* is as *low* as ever it was ; therefore, come down, if you would buy the pearl of great price. Here you may buy cheap, and sell dear : *Buy the truth, and sell it not*. You are to buy the pearl for nothing, by taking it freely ; but you may not sell it for a thousand worlds. Here is the richest pearl, for the lowest price. It is to be had at a lower rate than ever you, or any mortal could have expected. If you bid high, you cannot have it ; the market is as low as your heart could wish. Christ offers himself freely to the vilest and blackest sinner here ; and if you cannot think or imagine it is so, then I must tell you, that the market of grace is lower than you can imagine it is, or than your proud heart can think it is. Your lofty spirit thinks always there must be some terms or conditions required of you as the price ; but come down, for  
the

the market is fallen far below your price. For, as all things are ready to your hand; so all things are to be had *without money, and without price*, Isa. lv. 1. It is lower than you can think it; therefore, come down with *every high thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ*.

2. Come down; for, while you are climbing too high, you are in danger of *falling*, and *breaking your neck*. It was by climbing too high at first that our first parents fell down to the pit of ruin. The prevalence of that temptation, *Ye shall be as Gods*, made them fall into such a low state, that instead of being as *Gods*, they became as *devils*. Again,

3. Consider further, That you must come down with a *vengeance*, if you come not down by choice to Christ, when he calls you. *God has sworn by himself, that every knee shall bow to him*, Isaiah xlv. 23. Rom. xiv. 11. If you come not down to *kiss the Son*, voluntarily, with a kiss of subjection; you must be brought down violently and wrathfully; therefore, come down, *lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little*, Psalm ii. 12.

4. Consider, That God hath come down already in *many tokens* of his wrath, against us, and the generation, because of our delaying and refusing to come down to Christ, to give him entertainment in our hearts and houses: unbelief, in refusing the kind offers of Christ in the gospel, is the mother sin, that is fertile and productive of all other sins, in so far as it is a refusing subjection to Zion's King, and setting ourselves above him, and above his word and will. For this the wrath of God is come down in many respects, in so much that wrath is upon all ranks. Signs of his anger and absence are upon nobility, gentry, and commonalty; signs of it upon the Judicatories of the established Church; and signs of it upon Seceders, and professed witnesses for truth. The anger of the Lord hath gone forth against all ranks.

5. Down-coming days seem to be *hastening*; and therefore, make haste, and come down. It may be these instances of divine wrath are but the *beginning of*

sorrows : and, indeed, if judgments begin at the house of God, where will they end ? Days of great tribulation seem to be hastening on ; church trouble, national trouble, family trouble, and personal trouble ; and whether you will or not, you must come down to the gates of death and the grave. The day of death is hastening ; therefore make haste, and come down to Christ.

6. If ye do not come down, ye cannot come speed. Many come up to ordinances, they come up to communion solemnities ; but they do not come speed, they reap no success, because they do not come down.— They come best speed who come down to Jesus' feet, to wash them, and wipe them with the hair of their head.

7. Consider that to come down is the way to come up, even as humiliation is the way to exaltation : *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you.* Yea, the farther down you come, the farther up will you mount. The deeper root you take down ward, the more fruit will ye bring forth upward, to the praise and glory of God. For,

8. Consider, the great and high God *loves* to come down, and dwell with those who come down : *Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place ; with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,* Isa. lvii. 15. He loves to come down to be all in them, that come down to be nothing in their own eyes. He loves to come down and dwell with those that dwell low ; and to come down and sit with those who sit in the dust. His voice is, *Come down, and sit in the dust,* Isa. xlvii. 1. And afterwards his voice will be, *Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust,* Isa. xxvi. 19. He will go down with them, and dwell with them, till he bring them up, even down to the grave with them, from thence to bring them up : *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you ; he that raised up Christ from the dead,*

*shall*



shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you, Rom. viii. 11.

[3.] We shall now close with a word of *direction*. Would you fall in with this call, to make haste, and come down to Christ; there are two advices I would give. 1. Study, through grace, to open your eyes to see him. 2. To open your ears to hear him; for, if ye but see his face, and hear his voice, you will quickly come down to him.

1. Study to *open your eyes to see him*; and there is a twofold look you are to take of him. 1. To look *down*, and see how *low* he was. 2. To look *up*, and see how *high* he is.

(1.) Look *down*, and see how *low* he was in his state of humiliation. Christ came down to you, and for you, that you might come down to him: he came down to this earth, in assuming your nature; down to the womb of a virgin; down to a manger; down to a sorrowful life: down to a shameful death; down to the grave!—O Sirs, has God come so far down to you, and will you not come down to him? O proud sinner, it well becomes you to come down to his feet, down to the dust, down to nothing before him. Yea, he has not given over coming down to you; for, now he comes down by his word, and down by his Spirit, to deal with you to come down to him.

(2.) Look *up*, and see how *high* he is, in his state of exaltation at the Father's right-hand. The higher he is, the lower doth he look down towards you; and the lower he looks down, and designs to cast his eye upon you, the more will you hasten down to hide yourself in the dust; especially if you look up, and see how high and lofty his throne is, and what a glorious, rich, and opulent Lord he is. Here I may allude to what Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9. *Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all-Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not.* O Sirs, look up, and see how high Christ is now: *God hath made himself both Lord and Christ: Lord of heaven and earth, and*  
all

all things ; therefore, down to him, and tarry not. *Make haste, Zaccheus, and come down.*

2. Study to *open your ears and hear him* ; hear him calling you, as he did Zaccheus, *Make haste, and come down* ; and hear him *promising*, as he did to Zaccheus, *To-day I must abide at thy house.*

(1.) Hear him *calling* you particularly, as he did Zaccheus, *Make haste, and come down*, who, whenever he heard Christ calling on him in particular, then he came down. O then, hear him calling you man, you woman, whether old or young, though he does not give you your particular name, *John, James, or Mary* ; yet, if your general name, a *guilty Sinner*, be also your particular name, then you guilty sinner, in particular, are called upon to make haste, and come down to him, quitting hold of all your vain confidences, and false rests, and carnal refuges. On these heights you will not see Christ, so as to entertain him in your heart and house. Therefore, hear the call ; O hear him calling on you in particular, and then you will come down. And, again,

(2.) Hear him *promising*, as he did to Zaccheus, *To-day I must abide at thy house.* O Sirs, whenever Zaccheus heard him thus promising, he speedily came down ; and so will you, if you hear him promising, and found your faith upon his promise. Well, Sirs, the Lord is in haste, speaking to you ; *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* Why, to-day, I must be in your house, in your hearts ; there is a blessed necessity on my part and yours both. I must be in, and you must make open doors unto me. Another promise of this sort you have, John x. 16. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.* I must bring them, and they shall hear my voice. O Sirs, hear then a promise with a promise, importing the necessity of the accomplishment. Do you hear him saying in effect, O poor sinful creature, many a call you have bitten and slighted ; but now I will not take one refusal more ; to-day I must be in : this day, this hour, this moment, I must be in : I must have your heart.

Well,

Well, if Christ's necessity and your necessity meet together; that he must have you, and you must have him, then you will come down joyfully to him. —Hear him then in his promise; and let your faith be founded upon his word of promise, and not upon this or that good in you; for this is to stay up, instead of coming down. It is a piece of pride, as if you scorned to come to him in rags, like beggars; but down, down, man, upon your knees, before him: be content to come to him in rags, that he may clothe you; in your poverty, that he may enrich you; and with all your plagues, that he may heal you.

Faith must stand upon God's great and precious promise. Some will say, If I had faith, I would believe. But, what sense is here? This were to build your faith upon your faith. O my dear friends, consider this, for your eternal good; is it not more reasonable to say, If I had good security, I would believe; if I had God's bond, his word, his promise, I would believe? Now, God has given to the whole visible church many gracious promises: *To them belongs the covenant. The promise is to you, and to your children*: and your right thereto is sealed in baptism; and upon these promises you are to build your faith and hope. And if thus you hear him calling, and hear him promising, then it is impossible you can stay any longer away from him. You will come down speedily, and entertain him in your heart, and house; and walk humbly with him all your days, till he take you up to walk with him in white, in the higher house.

May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be praise.

## S E R M O N CXLIII.

MOUNTAINS OVERLEAPED; or,  
CHRIST'S coming to his PEOPLE, LEAPING  
and SKIPPING on the MOUNTAINS and HILLS in  
his WAY.\*

SONG ii. 8.

*The voice of my Beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills!*

**M**Y friends, if we shall have any communion with God this day, it will be only in Christ who is the way to the Father; for, *no man cometh to the Father but by him.* If we have communion it will be by two means, namely, by his *voice* and by his *visit*; that is, by his word and by his Spirit.

1. If we have communion with him by his *voice*, it will readily be such a kindly voice, such a kindly word, as to surprize your heart with the sweetness of it, and to make you break silence with such an abrupt speech of soul as this, *The voice of my Beloved!* The voice of Christ in the gospel is the voice of a friend, a beloved, of whom God says, *This is my beloved Son*; and of whom the believer says, *This is my Beloved, this is my friend*; I hear his voice.

2. If we have communion with him by his *visit*, and by his coming in the power of his Spirit, his motions will readily be so remarkable, that the sense of the great distance that hath been betwixt him and you, will

\* This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Dunfermline, July 8. 1756. To which is subjoined, the DISCOURSES before and at the Service of the first table, and at the Conclusion of the Solemnity.

make his gracious approach to be very welcome and wonderful, so as to produce such language as that of the church and spouse of Christ here; *Behold, he cometh! leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills!*

In the preceding part of this chapter, we have the bride of Christ, feasting sweetly under his shadow, brought to the banquetting-house, with his banner of love over her, and her soul wrapt up in his kindest embraces, and in all circumstances of happiness; and evidencing the deepest concern to be safely kept from every thing that might create disturbance to her Beloved, or marr the sweet communion she had with him, from verse 3. to this. But here, there seems to be a distance between him and her, and such a distance as that there are *hills* and *mountains* interveening betwixt them. The sweetest circumstances the Lord's people can be in here, are not permanent, but variable; just now they may think their *mountain stands strong*; by and by, the *Lord may hide his face*, and *they are troubled*.

But now, in the words of the text, there is a blessed *discovery* she gets of his return to her; and that, 1. By hearing his voice; and, 2. By observing his motion: *The voice of my Behold! behold, he cometh!*

(1.) She *hears his voice*, in his word and ordinances. Indeed; the voice of Christ must be heard believingly, before we can have communion with him; *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me*, Rev. iii. 20. So here, she did not see him coming, till she heard his voice. The word and voice of Christ never failed any that heard and trusted to it; it never put a lye in their right hand. If the bride of Christ hear his voice, and thereupon look out, she will see himself: hence, after she hears his voice,

(2.) She *observes his motion*; for, says she, *Behold, he cometh!* And, *blessed are they that hear and believe, for they shall see: Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?* The word rightly understood, will deceive none that trust to it.

It is a *sure word of prophecy*, more sure than a *voice from heaven*, and more free from the hazard of delusion than if we had an extraordinary revelation on every emergent ; what men or angels say, may put a cursed cheat upon us ; but what the word says, we may venture our souls upon, Romans x. 8. 1 Pet. iv. 19. *Behold, he cometh !*

Here, more particularly, we may observe these three things. 1. The motion ; *He cometh*. 2. The notice she takes of it ; *Behold, he cometh !* 3. The manner of it ; *Leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*.

1<sup>st</sup>, The *motion* itself ; *He cometh*. There are several sorts of Christ's comings that we read of in scripture.

1. His coming in the *flesh*, in his incarnation ; *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem ; Behold, thy King cometh !* Zech. ix. 9.—Some are of opinion, that the Old-testament church here hath a respect to Christ's coming in the flesh, rejoicing to see his day afar off, as Abraham did.

2. His coming in the *clouds*, or unto judgment, called his *second coming* ; *Behold, he cometh with clouds ! and every eye shall see him*, Revelation i. 7. This is not the coming here spoken of ; but our communicating this day is to be in the faith of it : for, by the sacramental supper, *we shew forth his death till he come again*.

3. His coming in the *word*, and in his *ordinances* and *providences* : These are the outward means and *chariots of salvation*, Hab. iii. 8. wherein he comes for the support and comfort of his people : hence he says, *Fear not, be strong ; why ? your God cometh with salvation ; I will come and save you*, Isa. xxxv. 4.

4. His coming in the *Spirit*, which seems here to be spoken of. Concerning this coming, see John xiv. 18. *I will not leave you comfortless : I will come unto you ; I will send the Comforter \**. And it is his coming in the

\* This fourfold coming of Christ is more fully laid open, Vol. VI. pag. 65, — 67.

power of the Spirit that I take to be especially here understood.

2dly, The notice she takes of it; *Behold, he cometh!* Here remark, what effect the word had, after she hears his voice; it rouses her to a *BEHOLD, he cometh!* As his word is a sure word, as I said, so it is a rousing word; yea, the word received and believed, is but the fore-runner of a more near manifestation or approach.

QUEST. *But does every one that hears his word, see him coming?*

ANSW. It is not the *naked* word of Christ that rouses us up, or affects us duly; but the word *received* and *believed*; and therefore many never see him, because they do not hear his voice believably, nor observe it as the voice of their Beloved. His near approaches are the fruit of a tender and loving entertainment, and observation of his word, and not of a coldrife bare hearing, without understanding and concern. Her *Behold* here, is not only,

1. A note of *certainty*, denoting the reality of the thing, as when it is said, Jude, ver. 14. *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints*; it is sure and certain: But,

2. It is a note of *observation*; *Behold, he cometh!* She was no idle hearer of the word; but the voice which she knew led her to the person of Christ: in the glass of the word she sees himself by faith; *Behold, he cometh!* And not only so, but,

3. It is a note of *wonder* and *admiration*, as when it is said, *Behold, a virgin shall conceive!* &c.; it is matter of wonder: the believing soul, after distance and desertion, is always filled with wonder and amazement at his return: Yea,

4. It is a note of *joy* and *exaltation*; *Behold, he cometh, to seek and save!* The soul cannot but rejoice in his salvation. Such as by saving acquaintance with Christ know his voice, and his approaches, are exceedingly filled with joy and gladness at even the distant sound, or small whisper of his voice, or noise of his feet upon the mountains: hence the bride here breaks

forth abruptly, *The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh !* From these parts of the text, I have, for some time bygone, deduced and spoken to several observations, before this occasion, and particularly from that middle clause, *Behold, he cometh !* But it remains that I consider,

3dly, *The manner of his coming, that is, Leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills.* This is spoken evidently, in allusion to the roe and young hart, spoken of in the beginning of the following verse, *My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart,* which nimbly skips over the hills and mountains, and so points out Christ's cheerfulness in coming ; his swiftness and celerity, speed and dispatch, in coming seasonably to his people's help ; together with his power in surmounting all difficulties in his way ; of which more afterwards. I need not then here stand to enquire what is to be understood by the *mountains and hills*, nor what is the *distinction* between mountains and hills ; what is mainly aimed at thereby, according to interpreters, is, that they signify *difficulties and impediments*, greater or lesser, over which he comes leaping and skipping, so as, be what they will, they shall not be able to hinder him ; so easy is it for him to remove them all. That this is no forced explication, appears from Isaiah xl. 3, 4. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert, a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. Every difficulty shall be removed.*

From this last clause of the text, which I now propose to speak upon, the only doctrine I offer, is as follows.

OBSERV. *That however strange and wonderful it be, yet it is sure and certain, that when Christ hath a mind to come to his people, no mountains of difficulties standing in the way, shall be able to hinder him.*



In the opening up of this subject, as favoured by divine pity, we incline to observe the following order.

- I. We would offer some remarks concerning Christ's *coming* to his people.
- II. Touch at some of these *mountains* and *hills* over which he comes.
- III. Speak a little of the *manner* of his coming, imported in his *leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills.*
- IV. Consider the *strangeness* of his coming, and yet the *certainty* of it ; together with the *reasons* why no mountainous difficulties shall be able to hinder him.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We return then to the *first* thing proposed, which was, To offer some *remarks* concerning Christ's *coming.* And,

1. You may remark, " That Christ's coming to his people, particularly in the ordinances of his appointment, is a *spiritual*, not a *bodily* approach. It is by " his Spirit, not in the flesh." Thus, indeed, he came in his incarnation, when *the Word was made flesh* ; and thus he will come at the last day, when *every eye shall see him.* But till then we cannot expect a bodily sight of him ; for, *the heavens must receive him, till the time of the restitution of all things.* But we may expect his spiritual presence, which is better for us than his bodily presence ; for, *it was expedient for us, that he should go away, because if he had not gone, the Comforter would not have come, but seeing he is gone, he will send him unto us,* John xvii. 7. See John xiv. 16, 17. *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come ; how ? I will pray the Father, and he will send another Comforter, &c.*— Now, if it be enquired, *How Christ comes by his Spirit ?* Why,

(1.) He comes by his Spirit, when he brings sinners under humbling *convictions* of sin, and of God's anger and absence because of sin : hence Christ says, *When the*  
*the*

*the Spirit cometh, he will convince the world of sin*: and hence when Christ begins to appear to his people, they not only see a far way, but a ragged way of mountains and hills between him and them; and not only distance, but impediments that are insuperable for them to get over, if he himself comes not over them.

(2.) He comes by his Spirit, when he *reproves* them for their sin, that procured his absence, or made the distance. Though they are ready to look on this, as no evidence of his coming to their souls, yet it is even a merciful dealing, when he does not *cease to be a re-prover*; yea, be the instruments of reproof who will, they have reason to say, *Let the righteous reprove me, and it shall be a kindness and an excellent oil*, Psalm cxli. 5.

(3.) He comes by his Spirit, when he turns their *darkness to light*, and when after they have gone mourning without the Sun, he comes and scatters the thick clouds, and *makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*.

(4.) He comes by his Spirit, when he *revives* them, and *quickens* them who were like dead and dry bones, scattered about the grave's mouth; when he sanctifies, seals and comforts them, and makes *the joy of the Lord their strength*, who before were sunk in sorrow, and drooping in discouragement; when he sends his word, and heals them, and rouzes and awakens them, so as they have ground to say, *This is my comfort in affliction, thy word hath quickened me*.

Remark, 2. "That his gracious coming is sometimes *more*, and sometimes *less* discernable." There is a difference between his real coming to his people, and his doing so sensibly. Jacob, at Bethel, had much of the divine presence; and yet, for a time, understood not so much; he had no distinct reflection on it; which made him say, *Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not*. Christ may deny his sensible presence for a long time; hence such complaints as that, Psalm xiii. 1. *How long wilt thou forget, O Lord? how long wilt thou hide thy face?* &c.; yet he is not wholly or really away, when he is helping them to look af-

ter him, and lament his absence ; and to seek him from ordinance to ordinance, from communion to communion : *Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee ; nay, he is nigh to all that call upon him, all that call upon him in truth.* Notwithstanding they may be complaining of the want of his sensible presence, and saying with Job, *I go forward, but he is not there, backward, but I cannot perceive him ;* yet he is really present in his ordinances, his glory is to be seen there, although a cloud cover their eyes, that they do not apprehend him ; for he says, *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee,* Exod. xx. 4. His sensible approaches depend upon his own will and good pleasure ; they are arbitrary, he is absolute sovereign of his visits.

*Remark 3.* “ That Christ’s sensible approach to his people, is sometimes very *sudden* and surprising “ when they are not looking for it.” Or ever they are aware, he bows the heavens and comes down ; Jacob found this : he never dreamed of a vision when he laid his head upon a stone for a pillow ; *Surely this is none else but the house of God.* Thus the bride is here surprised ; mountains interveened between him and her : she is suddenly surprised, both with his voice and his visit ; *The voice of my Beloved ! behold he cometh !* Where also it is to be remarked, That however great the distance betwixt Christ and the believer is apprehended to be, yet still they are in speaking terms : Christ can easily and quickly reach the soul by his voice, which ushers in his visit. He speaks to them by his ordinances, and sometimes by his providences ; sometimes by a voice of consolation, sometimes by a rod of correction : and the believer hears the voice, hears the rod, hears the sound of his feet upon the interveening mountains. And as they hear *his* voice, so he hears *their* voice ; his ears are open to their cry, and their ears are open to his call, as well as their eyes to his approach : hence he no sooner speaks than with surprize, he says, *The voice of my Beloved !* and no sooner appears, than she cries out, *Behold, he cometh ! &c.*

*Remark 4.* “ That there are different *kinds* of his gra-  
“ cious

“ cious comings and approaches to his people ; such as “ by communication, manifestation, and operation.” He comes by *communications* ; such as the communications of *light*, scattering the darkness and making noon-day, so as in his light we see light clearly. Communications of *life*, quickening the soul : no minister, no sermon, no sacrament can quicken till the communication come, and then the man steers to his feet, and duties become sweet and easy. Communications of *strength*, making the man *strong in the Lord* ; the soul’s weakness is a patch to set of the Mediator’s strength, when it is made perfect in our weakness. There are communications of *joy* ; hence, *I will go to the altar of God*, says David, *to God my exceeding joy* ; my superlative and top joy. He comes also by *manifestations* ; he manifests his everlasting love, saying, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee*. Thus he is said to *manifest himself to his people*, as he does not *manifest himself to the world*, John xiv. 22, 23. ; he *manifests the secret of his covenant*, Psalm xxv. 14.—He comes likewise by his *operations*, and the vital influences of his grace, setting the graces of his Spirit aloft : he gives the former and the latter rain. Perhaps after the soul has been long without these influences, then he *pours water on the thirsty*, and *floods upon the dry ground* ; then the operation is powerful, subduing sin, weakening corruption, healing diseases : then comes sweet intercourse and familiarity between him and them ; mutual embracements, mutual love, mutual care and concern.

*Remark 5.* “ That there are different *degrees* of his “ comings and approaches to his people.” He some times comes and shews himself through the lattices ; and sometimes is said to walk with them in the galleries : sometimes he makes them ride in state, as it were, and in his chariot, paved with love : sometimes they are represented as sitting at one table, like husband and wife : how are they feasted there, when the King sits at his table ? O wonder, that we who fed upon the devil’s husks, should be invited by the King of glory, to sit down at the table with him ! Yea, it may be spoke  
with

with astonishment, that the fellowship he allows, is such, as that they are said to bed as well as board with him; *Behold, our bed, which is king Solomon's*; also, *our bed is green*: representing, the greatest communion with God in Christ, by smiles drawn from the marriage-supper, and the marriage-bed; but it is strawed with the green flowers of holiness, which forbids vain and vile thoughts. His coming to allow the highest degree of fellowship, brings in the highest strains of holiness, as well as comfort.

*Remark 6.* "That the Lord, in his comings, exercises *sovereignty* in many respects." Sovereignty, with respect to the *persons*; some being admitted to the inner court, while others are but in the outer court all their days. Sovereignty is exercised with respect unto the *frequency* of his comings; to some he comes and visits them once a day, or once a month they will get a discovery of him, or a meeting with him; others may, for many years, go mourning without the Sun, so as it may be twenty years betwixt the sweet Bethel and the Peniel-visit: some may go from year to year, and from communion to communion; yet, like Absalom, never see the King's face. He exercises sovereignty with respect to the *time* and *season* of his coming: his first sweet visit he makes, is in the day of espousals; this is the day wherein the man is changed, and brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, from sin to holiness, from hell to heaven, and to the contrary of what he was. When he retires inward, and looks to the hell of lusts he was troubled with, he finds them disappearing for a time, at least lying, as it were, expiring, during the sweet impressions of the Lord's presence; the new nature, the joy and peace in believing: but afterward, through the remains of corruptions, beginning to work and war against him, he needs the Lord's coming again and again with new succour and relief; and the Lord exercises a sovereignty in the season of his new visit. I shall mention some of the special times and seasons. We cannot limit the holy One of Israel; but there are

these following times, wherein he is pleased to come in a sweet and satisfying way to his people.

(1.) After the *fadeſt* and *darkeſt* night, as it was with Job, after he was made to cry, *O that I knew where I might find him!* And after all the thick and black clouds he was under, what a blessed viſit got he? And what a glorious diſcovery, that made him ſay, *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye hath ſeen thee; wherefore I loath and abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes?* Yea, ſometimes the Lord comes in a ſweet manner, when they are at the point of giving over, and ready to deſpair, and to think he will be favourable no more, then he comes ſkipping on the mountains; *When I ſaid my foot ſlippeth, thy mercy held me up:* ſee Pſal. xxxi. 22. *I ſaid in my haſte, I am cut off from thine eye; nevertheless, thou heardſt the voice of my ſupplication when I cried unto thee.* He may come when their *ſtrength is gone*, Deut. xxxii. 36.

(2.) He comes when the ſprings of *ſublunary enjoyments* are quite dried up, and they ſee nothing but emptineſs and vanity of vanities written upon them; then he may bow the heavens and come down. Thus, when Elijah was obliged to retire to the wilderneſs, and hide himſelf from Jezebel, God viſited him there, and provided him with meat and drink, in the ſtrength whereof he travelled forward.

(3.) He comes, ſometimes remarkably, when they are, or before they be engaged in *great duty* or *danger*, that they may be in the better caſe to perform duty, and bear up under danger. Joshua was to lead forth the armies of Iſrael, againſt the armies of Canaan. God comes to him, and ſays, *Fear not, I will not fail thee, nor forſake thee.* Thus before Paul was expoſed to his ſhipwreck, Chriſt came and comforted him by his angel; *Fear not, Paul, for thou muſt be brought before Cæſar; and lo, I have given thee all theſe that ſail with thee.*

(4.) Sometimes he comes very ſweetly, when they are, or have been expoſed to *ſuffering* for his ſake: when

when the fury of devils and the wrath of men have been let loose, then the Lord hath been pleased to make good that promise, Isa. xliii. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee, &c.* This was accomplished literally in the three children, cast into the fiery furnace; because they would not worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, then they had the sweet presence of Christ himself. This care the Lord many times takes of his children, when men cast their names into the black furnace of reproach and calumny; because they will not bow to the idol of their usurped authority, or arbitrary dictates and dogmatisms, instead of the institutions of Christ: this care he expresseth, by granting his spiritual presence in that case; *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory, and of God resteth on you,* 1 Peter iv. 14.

(5.) He cometh sometimes when they are attending upon him in *solemn ordinances*; there they use to hear the voice of their Beloved, in the preaching of the word, and especially in commemorating his death in this sacrament we have in view; he hath made himself known in the breaking of bread: some have got so much of his presence there sometimes, as to be content to be carried in a death-chariot to the communion-table above. But then, to add no more on this head,

(6.) He comes sometimes to his people at *death*; when expiring breath is sitting upon their lips, he hath bowed his heaven, and stood by comforting them; though herein also he exerciseth sovereignty, hiding himself from some of his dear saints, at their last moments, yet sometimes he makes them sing sweetly of his presence, in the midst of the dark trance between time and eternity, saying with David, *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me,* Psal. xxiii. 4. And when a believer finds him thus coming, well may he say, *O*

death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?  
1 Cor. xv. 55. † But I proceed,

II. To the *second* head of the method, *viz.* To speak of some of these *mountains* and *hills* over which he comes: and here the text gives occasion to observe, 1. The *nature* and *kind* of these mountains in general, that stand up and intervene betwixt Christ and us. 2. The *multitude* of them, they are mountains and hills, in the plural number. 3. The *qualities* of them, both mountains and hills. 4. The *impassibility* of them as insuperable by us, and such as could be overleaped by none but himself, our Beloved who is like a roe, or a young hart, leaping and skipping upon them.

*Ist,* As to the *nature* and *kind* of these mountains in general, they may be all reduced to one kind, and that is, they are mountains of *distance* and *separation* betwixt God and us; and they are therefore all called the *mountains of Bether*, in the last verse of this chapter. Now, the mountain of *distance* is manifold, in respect of the various tops, and heads, and risings of the vast mount of distance between God and us, both natural and moral. O how great is the distance betwixt God and the *creature*; betwixt him who is infinite, and us who are finite nothings! O what a distance is there betwixt his high and lofty habitation, and the dust of which we are, and in which we crawl! What a distance does *sin* and *guilt* make, betwixt a holy just God, and us sinful wretches! What a distance, on account of our *unworthiness*, that we should be taken notice of by him; for, what are we that the blessed and self-sufficient God should look after us! What a distance, on account of *justice requiring satisfaction*, which we cannot give, nor ever shall be able to do! What a distance between God and our *nature*, in which the satisfaction is to be made, if ever the distance be made up! Such is the distance betwixt God and us as dust, and vile dust, as creatures, and sinful creatures: may it not be a wonder of wonders, if ever there shall be a meeting betwixt God and dust, betwixt a holy

† The Reader will find many other remarks concerning the Lord's coming to his people, by consulting Vol. VI. pag. 181, — 184.



God and sinful creatures, betwixt a just God and guilty creatures!—When the mountain of sin, and of a broken law, the mountain of the law-curse, the mountain of incensed justice, and divine wrath, are standing in the way, who can come and overleap these mountains? *Who is sufficient for these things? The voice of our Beloved! Behold, he cometh!* And, in his condescension, is said to *bow the heavens and come down*, Psa. xviii. 9. : he is said to *rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains may flow down at his presence*, Isa. lxiv. 1.—He overleaps the mountain of *sin and guilt*, by *becoming sin for us*, and paying our debt, and undergoing the punishment that was due to us.—He overleaped the mountain of a *broken covenant*, by coming to *fulfil all righteousness* in our room; the mountain of *incensed justice*, by coming to give condign satisfaction: as to the curse of the law, he *was made a curse for us*: as to the *wrath of God*, he bore this mountain on his back, and was in an agony, that we might feast on love: as for our *unworthiness*, he paves the way by these means fore-mentioned, for magnifying his mercy and free grace, in justifying the ungodly: and as to the vast mountain of distance betwixt God and our *nature*, he leaps over this, by stooping to take on our nature, and subjecting himself to the common miseries of mankind.

And as our Beloved leaps over MOUNTAINS of *distance* between God and us, so his love skips over HILLS of *separation* between us and him. He overleaps and overcomes our *enmity and unwillingness*, when he makes us *willing in the day of his power*. He overleaps and overcomes our *natural willingness* to depart from him, by establishing with us a covenant of grace, wherein he promises, to *put his fear in our hearts, that we shall not depart from him*, Jer. xxxii. 40.—Such as these, then, are the mountains of distance and difficulties, that love comes skipping over.

These great mountains of distance between God and us are made by sin, which causes the great distance, as it is a violation of the law of the most high God; *Your iniquities have separate betwixt you and your God;*  
and

and your sins have hid his face from you, Isa. lix. 2. Oh! what mountains of original and actual sins hath Christ to come over? What mountains came he over to Manassah, Mary Magdalene, and thousands of others.—  
But,

2dly, As to the *multitude* of these mountains: indeed there would be no end of speaking of them in particular, they are more than can be numbered; for, every one may join issue with David, saying, *Innumerable evils compass me about*; and, indeed, these innumerable mountains which Christ had to come over. These mountains I have mentioned, produce many other mountains and hills, which the Lord Jesus hath to come over, and which cannot hinder him when he hath a mind to come. The mountains of *sin and guilt* cannot hinder his coming, when he says, *I, even I, am he that blot out thy transgressions for my name's sake*, Isa. xliii. 25. You are, it may be, ready to cry out, “Oh! a vile and abominable guilty creature that I am! I cannot think Christ will come to the like of me:” but let the mountains be never so great and many, they can never hinder his coming, though you have gone *on forwardly in the way of your own heart*, which might provoke him to *tear you in pieces*, when there is *none to deliver you*; instead of that, how wonderful is the word, *I have seen his ways, and will heal him; and I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him!* Isa. lvii. 17, 18. But further, to name some more of the many mountains he will come over.

1. He comes over all the mountains of *unbelief*, when his people, under the prevalency thereof, may be crying that they are forsaken and forgotten of God, he comes over these, saying, *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee*, &c. Isa. xlix. 15.

2. He comes over all the mountains of *perplexing fears and faintings*, on account of outward violence, when his people are brought under apprehensions that the rage of men will swallow them up, and the reproach of men will ruin them; see how the Lord levels this moun-

mountain, Isa. li. 7. *Fear ye not the reproach of men ; neither be ye afraid of their revilings : for the moth shall eat them like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool.* Verse 12. *I, even I am he that comforteth you ; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man, that shall die ? and the son of man, which shall be made as grass ?*

3. He comes over mountains of *deadness* and *indisposition* in his people : when they are quite unable to apply themselves to duty, he by his Spirit breathes upon them, and quickens them, according to his promise, Hof. vi. 2. *After two days he will revive us ; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, &c.*

4. He comes over mountains of *temptations* ; when the devil assaults and bathes his fiery darts in some one poison or another, and when the soul thinks it will be overcome, and buried under this mountain, then the Lord sweetly comes and manifests himself by such a promise as that, *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,* Rom. xvi. 20.

5. He comes over the mountains of *backslidings* ; when they have, by the power of temptation, and of indwelling sin and corruption, fallen again into the mire of sin and pollution, he will not suffer them to ly there ; but will, in his own time, return and restore them, according to his word, Jer. iii. 1, 14. *Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers ; yet return again to me, saith the Lord : turn ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you.* Hof. xiv. 4. *I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely ; &c.*

6. He comes to them over all the mountains of *external tribulations* and *afflictions* : when they are sore broken and heavily oppressed with calamities, so as heart and hope begin to sink and fail, even then he rejoices over them to do them good, saying, *Fear not, for I am with thee ; fear not, worm Jacob.* Many times his people have both a heavy sense of sin, and a heavy load of trouble at the same time, and then the dispensations of providence, that are awfully dark and dismal, may make them cry out, *O great mountains !* For, mountains in scripture being also emblems of enemies and

opposition: when the Lord withdraws, not only guilt and unbelief heightens the distance, but sad dispensations follow upon both: when he smites, and is wroth, and hides his face; when he chastens them *with the chastisement of a cruel one*, Jer. xxx. 14. how vast then do the mountains of distance appear, when there is such a range of mountains, sin and guilt, and heavy dispensations, all interveening betwixt God and them? But, O how soon can he melt the mountains, saying, *Who art thou, O great mountain, before our Zerubbabel? thou shalt become a plain*, Zech. iv. 7. Yea, he will turn the world upside down, before he want a way for driving his chariot of love to his people. So that when we have viewed the mountains, in their greatest height and altitude, we must extol his all-sufficiency above them, and see love leaping on the mountains.—  
Hence,

7. He comes to his people sometimes, over all the mountains of *discouragements*: when their souls are cast down within them, and their spirits are ready to sink like a stone, and ready to cry out, *There is no sorrow like my sorrow*; then he comes with such a word as that, Isa. liv. 11, 12. *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee.*

8. He comes over all the black mountains of *desertion*, God's hiding himself under a cloud: this makes a great distance betwixt Christ and the soul in two respects, 1. If we consider the *guilt* procuring desertion. 2. The *sense* of the deserted soul when awakened.

(1.) The *guilt* procuring desertion. It is the sin of the saints, which is a sinning against love, and a sinning after they have smarted under the folly of former wanderings, and a sinning after the Lord hath come over many mountains and impediments they laid in his way, and been kind to them, and after he hath come through a great storm, *his head being filled with the dew,*

dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, and they put him to the back of the door when he called for entry, Song v. 2. A sin so circumstantiated and aggravated, doth justly procure great distance. A deserted soul, when it tampers with temptation and folly, may think little of it; yea, the bride of Christ may think she will *sleep*, and have her *heart waking*; yea, but this carriage holds him out, and keeps him at the door, Song v. 2, 3. Samson may think he will sleep in the lap of Delilah; and imagine when the Philistines come upon him, to bestir himself as at other times: but when he awakes, he finds his *locks cut*, and *God departed from him*, Judges xvi. 19, 20. The sluggard, may think he will take a *little sleep*; if that be too much, he will take a *little slumber*; if that be too much, he will take a *little folding of the hands to sleep*; but he considers not that that brings *poverty upon him, as one that travels, and his want as an armed man*, Prov. vi. 10.

(2.) The *sense* of the deserted soul when awakened to apprehend the distance, partly by love, and partly by unbelief, will make the mount of distance appear the more. Partly, I say, by *love*, and affection, and languor to be at Christ; and this languor checked and choaked with the sense of guilt, that caused the desertion, O this makes the distance and impediment seem the greater. Why, much affection and languor will make every hour a day to be at him; and the least distance a journey of a lifetime. Whatever reality of distance and impediments guilt makes, love will look upon that distance in a magnifying glass, and upon the mountains in a multiplying glass, it would so willingly be at that which it loves. Partly also by *unbelief*, the sense of the deserted soul will magnify the distance, and multiply the impediments: conscience of guilt, magnified by unbelief, makes the distance very great, and the mountains many, unbelief itself being a great mountain, in the Lord's way, Mat. xiii. 58.; yet even over all this range of mountains, that appear betwixt him and the deserted soul, he comes, while for the abounding of sin and guilt, he hath superabounding grace, to make grace much more abound; for fre-

quently renewed provocations, he hath endless compassions that fail not. When he hath a mind to *rend the heavens and come down*, mountains of guilt and provocation flow down before him, Isa. lxiv. 1. And for unbelief and despondency, he hath invincible and strong consolations, to bear in against both; *For, who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice*, Zech. iv. 10.

3dly, As to the *qualities* of these mountains, I shall observe shortly,

1. That some of them are *greater* and some *less*; hence called *mountains* and *hills*. David saw the mountains of his sins to be great mountains; *For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*. High aggravated sins are great mountains; and it is a great matter when love comes skipping over them.

2. They are *high* mountains, in respect that the guilt of sin and the cry of it reaches to the very heavens; and if mercy were not higher than the heavens, it would never come over such high mountains of sin and guilt, heaped up above the clouds.

3. They are some of them *lofty* mountains: not only high, in respect of sin's heinousness; but lofty, in respect of its haughtiness and pride. The pride of man is as hard to level as a mighty mountain; but when the Lord comes graciously, *the loftiness of man is brought down, and the haughtiness of man laid low, that the Lord alone may be exalted*, Isa. ii. 17.

4. Some of them are *fiery-burning* mountains. Christ had the burning mountains of God's wrath and of the fiery law to come over, which could not be done without quenching that fire with his precious blood, which is the *blood of God*. He had the burning mountain of the wrath of men and devils to come over, in this conflict; *He came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah*, Isa. lxiii. 1. He hath still men's fiery passions and burning lusts in his way to impede him in his coming; but that that may not hinder him, he brings water in his hand to quench that fire: he opens the fountain of living waters; and, as it were, the

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fountains of the great deep, to drown a world of burning lusts and corruptions in his way ; and he *pours water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground* ; such powerful floods, as to cover or carry down the mountains with them.

5. Some of the mountains are *dark mountains*, such as we read of, Jer. xiii. 16. *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darknes, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains ; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darknes.* Our Lord Jesus, in coming over these mountains, to redeem by *price*, had the dark valley of the shadow of death to go through, which may be called a mountain as well as a valley, as it was an impediment in his way ; and when he comes to redeem by *power*, he hath the gross darknes of ignorance to come over, and in this mountain, he hath *the face of the covering cast over all people to destroy, and the veil cast over all nations*, Isa. xxv. 7. So dark and misty are the mountains at the best, that even his bride cannot see him upon the top of them, till he come very near, so as she may hear his voice, and the found of his feet upon the mountains ; *The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills.*

6. They are *strong, mighty, and unmoveable mountains*, so as no power of angels or men can move or remove them ; they are *strong-holds* that cannot be cast down with *carnal weapons*, but by such as are *mighty through God*. It is only the coming of Christ, the presence of the Lord, the presence of the God of Jacob, that can make these *mountains to skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs*, Psal. cxiv. 4. Which leads me to the last thing on this head, *viz.*

4thly, The *impassibility* of these mountains, as insuperable by us, and such as none can overleap but himself, who is like a roe, or a young hart, leaping and skipping upon them. The bride of Christ here admires his grace and love, in coming over these difficulties, that were impossible for her to surmount. And, indeed, his discovering them to be such to us, is but a preparing of his way to coming over them. It is with

the believer, at a distance from Christ; when brought to a discerning of that distance, as it is with a weak person, that hath a journey before it, and is not only weak, but clogged with impediments, and hath mountains and hills in the way, that it is impossible for it to get over; therefore the poor creature is ready to ly down and give over. Whence, indeed, four things here are to be observed,

1. That all should beware of laying *impediments* in the way betwixt Christ and them; for, in the time of security, and spiritual sleep, men are ready to think that but a mote, which, when God reckons with them, in order to recovery, they will see to be a mountain; therefore, there should be no boarding or dallying with that which may provoke him to withdraw and abstract his company. You that know any thing of fellowship with Christ, entertain it tenderly, as you would not raise a mountain betwixt Christ and you; and, as you would not, with Samson, have your eyes put out, and be put to grind in the prison: little do many mind this, till they be brought to lose Christ's company in the croud, and be put to *seek him sorrowing*, and to many sad thoughts, whether he and they shall ever meet together again.

2. Whence, likewise, here is a touch-stone for shewing your *awakened* and *sensible* condition. They that are at a distance from Christ, and see many mountains betwixt him and them, if they would know whether there be a token for good in it, let them see,

(1.) If they *discern* the distance, and the *reason* of it; and that they be not, like Samson, that know not when the Lord was departed from them: see if they can say, as Isa. lix. 12. *Our iniquities are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them.* And,

(2.) See whether or not distance be *bitter*, even as impassible mountains are afflictive to a traveller; and when you cannot possibly recover former proofs of the Lord's kindness, *when thy wickedness corrects thee*, and  
thy



*thy backslidings reprove thee*, then thou art finding it to be an *evil and bitter thing*, that thou hast *forsaken the Lord thy God*, and that his *fear was not in thee*, Jerem. ii. 19.

3. Yet after all, though it is justly humbling, when we usually raise mountains between Christ and us, that are impassible and insuperable by us; yet it is also *encouraging*, and contributes to the reviving of hope, that when he shews the mountains to be insuperable, he is so far on his way to *come over them*, and preparing us for his coming, and making out that word, Zechariah viii. 6. that what is *marvellous in our eyes*, *should not be marvellous in his eyes*. His discovering and holding out the insurmountable difficulties and impediments that we can never get over, is but to make way for the magnifying of his free grace and mercy in removing them, and remedying what is hopeless as to us, and desperate. Therefore,

4. We would still be encouraged to give him the *glory* of what he can make out of our hopeless conditions, and to put them in his hand, in expectation of a good issue: when you are so difficulted with a multitude of mountains and impediments, that you have given over hopes of meeting with him, upon your part, the mountains and hills being so many and so high, that you see you will never win over them; yet leave room for what he can do, leave room to him and his power, and pity, and promise: give him this glory that he can get over them to you, though you cannot get over them to him: put the case that is desperate in itself, and as to what you can make of it, over upon him, who can soon come *leaping on the mountains*, and *skipping on the hills*. This leads me,

III. To the *third* general head of method, *viz.* To speak a little of the *manner* of his coming, imported in his leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills. Much of the beauty and sweetness of the text lies here; and therefore, I shall endeavour to hint at the *import* of this manner of his coming. And,

1. It seems to import his coming *gradually* and *progressively* : leaping and skipping are gradual and progressive motions ; and, as it were, from mountain to mountain : one leap after another : hence his *going forth* is said to be *prepared as the morning*. The Lord's gracious approach to his people is regular and gradual. He first enlightens the understanding, and strikes out a window in that dark dungeon ; then, having convinced the conscience, the will is prevailed with to yield to Christ. Herein Christ's saving work differs from Satan's deceitful operations : Christ works upon the understanding and will ; and then the rest of the faculties, the heart and affections, follow : but Satan's work is counter to, and the opposite of this ; he begins with the lower faculties, allures the carnal appetites, wins in upon the affections, and either charms or amuses, and so abuses them, and carries them headlong, darkening the judgment that ought to be first well informed : thus Eve first was tempted with the sight of the fruit ; and without any more, loved it, and took it : so also Achan did the golden wedge. But the bride of Christ here is first taught by the word, *The voice of my Beloved !* And then she sees him coming, *Behold he cometh !* And observes his gradual approach, *Leaping upon the mountains, and skipping on the hills.*

2. His coming thus imports his *kind, loving, and affectionate* approach. Love makes him lift up his feet upon the dark mountains, and come leaping into the embraces of his bride, who here espies him as her Beloved, and as a loving roe, or young hart, upon the mountains. The love of Christ, made him think nothing of all the mountainous difficulties, that were in the way of his coming to seek and save poor sinners ; *He loved me, and gave himself for me*, says Paul : *He loved us, and washed us in his blood*, says the church. A bloody spouse hath she been to him ; but his great affection appears, in making all impediments but stepping-stones, so to speak, to advance his way to us.—  
Hence,

3. It imports his coming, not only with love and affection, but with *joy, pleasure, and delight*. O how delightfully did he come over the highest mountain, saying, *Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God!* What he doth for his Father, and for his Bride, he doth with pleasure, *He rejoices over his people to do them good*; and he does it with his whole soul. O how evident is his delight with the sons of men, that when we cast up mountains and hills, he not only comes over them, but comes leaping and skipping! It is no heavy task to him, but a sweet and joyful service, wherein *he sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied*, Isa. liii. 11.

4. His leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills, imports the *activity and celerity*, the speediness and swiftness of his motion to his bride: he does not come creeping like a snail; but, as it were, in full flight, with great speed, as well as with great affection and delight. A life-time would be little enough, for some weak people, to crawl over a number of steep mountains and hills; but a swift roe, or hart, can swiftly come over them: even so, Christ will not be long of coming; when he pleases, he can in a moment make a sudden change in the condition of his people: that which, if their duty and diligence should take it in task, would be insuperable, he can effect in a trice; even when they come to duty, even in a desperate case, under their difficulties; he can meet with them in an instant, and make them like the chariot of Aminadab; he can, from the height of heaven, his holy habitation, come down to the lowest pit of discouragement in haste; *Behold, he cometh quickly*. He loses no time, when he comes, however his poor people, under darkness may be crying, *How long, O Lord? how long?* Yet he is on his way, and will come in the season, and in the time of need.

5. When he is said to come *leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*, it imports, his eminent and conspicuous way of coming, even in *state and in majesty*. As one upon the top of a mountain, running with speed, is well seen, and conspicuous; so

Christ makes his coming evident and eminent sometimes : when the highest One, is seen upon the highest mountains in his way, how does his glory appear ! The higher the mountains are that he comes over, the more doth the glory of his grace appear : we make the distance, and he makes it up ; we raise the mountains and he comes over them. O the majesty of his grace and mercy !

6. His *leaping on the mountains*, and *skipping on the hills*, imports, the *easiness* of his approach ; that what ever impediments we lay in the way betwixt him and us, and however insuperable they be to us, yet it is easy for Christ to come over them : he comes with a conquering power ; mountains and hills cannot hinder him ; his motion is irresistible and unobstructable : with great ease, he removes all difficulties that are lying in the way. In his quick and nimble motion, he leaves all the mountains and hills behind him, turning his back upon the mountains and his face upon the poor sinner, that his sins may no more stand like mountains betwixt them ; *Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back*, Isa. xxxviii. 17. Yea, it is not only a leaping *over* the mountains and hills, that is here spoke of, so as to leave them untouched with his feet, and untrod upon ; but his leaping *upon* the mountains, seems to import, his treading on them, and treading them down in his way ; and how far down may we suppose he treads them, when, by another metaphor, he is said, to *cast all our sins into the depths of the sea* ? Micah vii. 19. Yea, it is such a leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills, as seems to import, his leaping over the *valleys*, and making nothing of them, he treads down the mountains of sin and guilt in his way ; but as to the deep valleys of grief, shame, sorrow, discouragement, and fears, that his people had on the account of sin, these he kindly overlooks, or rather fills up these deep valleys, when he treads down the mountains, as it is said, Luke iii. 5, 6. *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought down ; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough*  
ways

*ways shall be made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God* — So much shall suffice concerning the manner of his coming on the mountains; he cometh in majesty over principalities and powers. †

IV. The *fourth* head proposed was, To speak a little of the *strangeness* of his coming thus, and yet the *certainty* of it, together with the *reasons* why no mountain or hill shall be able to hinder him. And,

1st, As to the *strangeness* and *wonderfulness* of it. It may justly be reckoned strange and wonderful, as in all the respects already mentioned; so,

1. If we consider the *person thus coming*; who is he, but the *king of glory*, the *heir of all things*, the *eternal Son of God*, the *holy one of Israel*, the *infinitely holy God*, so as the *heavens are not pure in his sight*, and he *charges the angels with folly*, is of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity*? How stupenduous is his condescension, that he should come to us leaping and skipping on all the hills and mountains of sin and provocation! Is not this wonderful!

2. If we consider the *persons to whom he comes* this way; even to these that have busied themselves in raising mountains, and heaping up hills between him and them: even the bride of Christ was but a base harlot; *Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers*. O! will he come again leaping over mountains and hills to her? It is vastly wonderful!

3. If we consider how *high* and how *many* the mountains are which he comes skipping over. Did justice break out against the old world in a deluge of water; against Sodom in flames of fire: against Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, by making the earth open, and swallow them up alive? And instead of treating you in that manner, shall love and mercy come leaping and skipping toward you, over all these mountains of sin, that ruin the rest of the world? O surprisingly wonderful!

† The Reader will find a great many other topics concerning the manner of Christ's coming to his people, and the reception his approach meets with, by consulting Vol. VI. p. 65.—67.

4. If we consider how *kindly* he comes to his *unkindly* and *uncomely* bride, lifting up his feet over all the ragged rocks in his way. O the heart-hardness, heart-deadness, heart-enmity, heart-rebellion, heart-aversion from, and opposition to the way of God! the formality, selfishness, hypocrisy, deceit and desperate wickedness of our hearts! If we see that rugged path he hath to come, we cannot but admire and wonder at his coming, and coming in such infinite kindness, as may ashame and confound us for our unkindness. He that came over the mountain of divine vengeance, due to us, and trode the vine-press of infinite wrath alone, he comes skipping over all these lesser mountains: they are no bigger then motes beneath the feet of love coming over them. Again,

5. It is wonderful, if you consider how often and how *frequently* he comes leaping over all these mountains. That he should come again and again, as he says to his disciples when he left them; *Now you have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice*; and especially when we have sinned him away, that ever he should come again, is a wonder. But as coming is his trade, so he is a daily comer to his bride; coming by his word, by his Spirit, by his providence, by his daily supports. And he never comes, but he hath new mountains and hills laid in his way, if he could be hindered by them. And hence,

6. It is wonderful and strange, if you consider the *bad reception* he meets with, when he comes, even leaping and skipping on the mountains. No wonder that the bride say with astonishment, *Behold he cometh leaping*, notwithstanding all the ill-treatment he met with! Does he not often come to a sleepy, drouzy bride? The spouse was asleep in the bed of security, Song v. 2, 3. And is he not often put to the pains of much knocking, before he get entrance to our hearts? *I have put off my coat, said she, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* He knocks at every one's door by the gospel-call: and the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, may be asleep, but with this twofold difference.

(1.) Christ

(1.) Christ and believers are always in *speaking terms*; *I sleep, but my heart waketh*: she hears, as it were, through her sleep, even the voice of her Beloved.

(2.) In the believer's heart there is always a *hole of communication*; *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him*, Song v. 4. However, his coming is always wonderful, whether he come to strangers, to make a hole in their hearts, for communicating himself to them: or to his friends to put in his hand by the hole that was already made in their hearts, for him. His coming to strangers and aliens, must be leaping over the high mountains of an unregenerate state, and an unrenewed heart and nature to level that mountain in his way: and his coming to his unkind friends, must be in a way of leaping over such sins against love, as are yet higher mountains, and and more highly aggravated sins, than the unrenewed and unregenerate are capable of. O then, in this respect his coming thus is wonderful, and far different from the way of creatures one with another! How unwilling are they to forgive injuries, and come over any affronts done them by men, like themselves, and especially if they be above them in their worldly station? If any such shall freely forgive you an injury, you have done him, you reckon it an act of marvellous generosity, and condescension in such a person: how much more, when the great JEHOVAH, who inhabits eternity, is pleased to come over the mountains of all your provocations, and to forgive and forget all the affronts and indignities you have done to him! Yet, *zdy*, I come to shew the *certainty* of his coming thus; and why no mountain or hill shall be able to hinder him. Now, that however strange and wonderful it be, yet it is sure and certain, that when he hath a mind to come to his people, no mountain or hill shall be able to hinder, but he will come leaping and skipping over them: why, this is sure,

1. Because of his *promise*, who is the true and faithful witness, that cannot lye; he hath said, *He that*

*shall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb. x. 37. He hath said, Now ye have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you, John xvi. 22. And that he will come over all mountainous impediments that intervene between him and them, appears from his promise, particularly to his deserted and distressed church; In a little wrath I hid myself from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, &c. Isa. liv. 8, 11,—14.*

2. It is sure, because of the perpetuity of his love and mercy, which surmounts all the mountains in his way: *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, Isa. liv. 10. He is God, and changeth not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed, Mal. iii. 6. He remembers them in their low estate, because his mercy endureth for ever, Psal. cxxxvi. 23. See also Psal. lxxxix. 30, 33.*

3. It is sure, because it is his ordinary and usual way of coming to his people, in answer to their prayers, that he would *rend the heavens and come down, and that the mountains may flow down at his presence, Isa. lxiv. 1. See how it was answered, ver. 3. When thou didst terrible things, that we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. It is his way to bring them to difficulties, and then to bring them out: Thou broughtest us into the net: thou hast laid affliction on our loins; thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire, and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, Psal. lxvi. 11, 12.*

4. It is sure, from the encouragements he gives us, for checking all our unbelieving fears, lest the mountains never be overleaped; *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Fear not, only believe. And again, Fear not, for I am with thee, Isa. xli. 10, 11. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee, shall be ashamed and confounded. And again, ver. 13, 14, 15. Fear not, I wil*



*I will help thee. Fear not, worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing-instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff.*

5. It is sure, from the *strong desire* that he hath created in his people after his presence, that he will come over all impediments. Where he creates a desire, he will give satisfaction to it? for, *He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things.* Their cry is, *O how long, how long wilt thou hide thy face? As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after God, the living God,* Psal. xlii. 1, 2. The hart is of a dry constitution, and hath a great thirst, especially after it hath been hunted upon the hills; such is the spiritual constitution of God's children, especially after being hotly pursued by the fury of men and devils. O how do they pant for a drink! and he that gives them a drought, will give them a drink, and not let them starve; *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them,* Isa. xli. 17.

6. It is sure, from the *experience* the Lord's people have of his coming, that when he comes, it is always leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills of sin and guilt in his way, and over the mountains of difficulties; all his remarkable approaches, are ordinarily experienced to be, when they are brought low, and, as it were, buried below the mountains of distance and distress; then he knows their souls in adversities; *I was brought low, and he helped me:* and these experiences work hope of his coming again, and encourage their faith of his delivering them out of the depths; hence says the Psalmist, *Thou which has shewed me great and sore troubles, will quicken me again, and shall bring me up from the depths of the earth: thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side,* Psal. lxxi. 20. 21. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me,—and thy right-hand shall save me,* Psal. cxxxviii. 6.

7. It is sure and certain, from the *office* of the promised Spirit. It is the office of the Holy Ghost, to discover the mountains of sin, and guilt, and unbelief, that stand betwixt Christ and us, *When he is come, says Christ, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me, John xvi. 8, 9.* It is his office, also, to discover Christ to be the roe and the young hart, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills ; for, it is his work to *testify of Christ, and glorify him.* Yea, it is the work of the Spirit of God to remove the mountains and plain them ; *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts ; who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain, Zech. iv. 6.*

8. It is sure, that when he hath a mind to come, no interveening mountain or hill shall be able to hinder him, because he is the *power of God* ; and to him, as Mediator, *all power in heaven and earth is given.* He is able to *save to the uttermost*, and to level the highest mountain. Whenever he comes leaping and skipping on the mountains and hills, he makes them *leap and skip like rams and lambs, Psal. cxiv. 4.* Yea, the touch of his feet upon the mountains, makes them vanish like smoke, as it is said, *Psal. civ. 32. He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*—So much for the doctrinal part. I go on now,

V. To the *fifth* head proposed, namely, *The application.* Is it so, *That however strange and wonderful it be, yet it is sure and certain, that when Christ hath a mind to come graciously to his people, no mountains of difficulty in the way, will be able to hinder him ?* Then, hence see,

1. That *gospel-grace* is *surmounting grace*, and herein we may learn the difference betwixt the *law* and the *gospel.* The law, as a broken covenant of works, shews nothing but mountains of sin, and guilt, and wrath betwixt God and us ; for, *by the law is the knowledge of sin* : but the gospel shews Christ to be the *nimble roe*, and the *young hart, skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills.*—The law shews the mountains and hills

to be *impassible*, and *insuperable* by us, or by men, or angels: the gospel shews how easily they are *surmountable* by grace, and the great leaps that grace makes: O the strange leaps that Christ hath made, and does make! such as, his leaping from heaven to earth, in his incarnation and humiliation! from earth to heaven, in his ascension and exaltation! from thence down again, in the communications of his promised Spirit! and just from mountain to mountain, in the operations of his grace, coming over all impediments in his way.—In a word, the law shews the mountains to be *before* us, and in our way betwixt God and us: but the gospel shews the mountains and hills all left *behind* Christ's back; or, if they seem to remain interveening betwixt him and us, the gospel shews Christ coming leaping and skipping upon them, and making nothing of them.

2. Hence we may see, what is Christ's *business*, even when he is not present with his people; yet he is coming again to them. When he removes from his people, it is in that posture, wherein he went from his disciples, with his face towards them; *I go away, but I will come again*, John xiv 3. His name is the Comer; and, *blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, Psal. cxviii. 26. When he goes, he is on his way to return; and all that he doth, in his real or seeming absence, is in order to his coming. And, indeed, we ought to construct well of Christ in his absence; for, though he be not present, he is coming; and though he be not always seen upon the top of the mountains, yet when he is out of sight, he is but down to the valley; and when he comes in sight again, he is pleased to tell where he was, Song vi. 11. *I went down to the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded*; q. d. I was on my way, but only down in the valley; nor was I idle there, but observing what fruits were produced in my absence; and it was to try your behaviour, and make preparation for another visit. O but this should learn us, to beware of misapprehensions of him, and jealousy of his kindness when he is away, and out of sight! and to remember, that though these difficulties

culties be insuperable to us, he can soon get over them. Amidst darkness and distress, we should learn the prophet's language, Micah vii. 8. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.*

3. Hence see, that the *love of Christ*, which we are to commemorate this day, is a *strong love*, that levels mountains, be they never so strong and high; that is *active love*, that comes leaping over all the fiery mountains of God's wrath, due for our sin, and over all the fearful mountains of sin and guilt, that we have reared up betwixt him and us. O! the freedom of the grace of God in Christ, that cannot be stopped in its course by any lets or hinderances! If we be allowed any sweet communion with him on this occasion, whatever enjoyment or allowances we attain to, it must be wholly attributed to his condescension and his activity, and not to our diligence and activity; *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto his name be the glory*, Psal. cxv. 1. If you get a sight of the King's face, and if God be not a terror to you, but your hope in the day of evil, and your help, and comfort, and support, in such a day of absence and anger, it comes not from thy activity, but from the activity of Christ, in coming to bestow his purchased blessings, and overleaping all the mountains and hills in his way. To be crying down ourselves, and crying up his active grace and pains in all enjoyments, is the way to have them blessed, and increased, and continued.

4. Hence see, with what *wonder* and *admiration* we should entertain the *activity* of the love of Christ. His coming is wonderful, and much more coming in such a manner. His presence was a wonder to the wisest man; *Will God in very deed dwell with man on earth! Will the infinitely wise God come down to a company of fools? a holy God to a carnal wretch? the Creator to a bit of clay?* But will he come in such a manner, with such celerity, dispatch, and delight, leaping and skipping over all the mountains in his way? O how should we entertain his coming and overcoming kindness with wonder and admiration, as the bride here

doth, *Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills!* What a great iniquity were it, to entertain this kindness in a coldrife and carelefs way; David, when he got a proof of divine love, fat down, and wondered, faying, *Who am I, and what is my Father's houfe, that thou haft brought me hitherto?*

5. Hence fee, how *contrary* the way of Chrift is to the way of men in this world. Men will not come over motes and atoms; but Chrift comes over mountains. Men will not come over the leaft affront or injury, real or fupposed, that is done to them; but Chrift comes over mountains of injuries and affronts done to him. Mens work is to caft up mountains in the way betwixt God and men, and alfo between man and man, to hinder their fellowship with one another; but it is Chrift's work to caft down fuch mountains, or to come leaping over them.

Some are, and have been, for fome time by-gone, ftrangely occupied in raifing up mountains of ungodly and ungrounded censures, and pretended excommunications; mountains of open and shamelefs prohibitions, difcharging people to hear and join with thefe, from whom they have fo finfully difjoined themfelves; mountains of public stratagems, profanely pretended to be in the great name of God, whofe authority is thus abused and trampled upon, and fome poor blindfolded people frighted with thefe terrible temptations of Satan, transforming himfelf into an angel of light, and a zealot for reformation; fome frighted, I fay, by thefe means, from their wonted food, and former fellowship with minifters and people, with whom they *took fweet counfel together*, and *walked to the houfe of God in company*, mountains, I fay, of unlawful means are ufed, to hinder the former communion of faints, and communion with God in ordinances. The wrath of God, for the fin of professed witnefses, juftly procures fuch awful tokens of his difpleafure: but on man's part, thefe things are the fiery mountains of mens wrath, which *works not the righteousnefs of God*: but, if our Lord hath a mind to come, none of thefe mountains fhall be able to hinder him, or to impede our fellowship and

communion with him, and with one another in the Lord. He can soon make the *wrath of man to praise him*; and, in spite of earth and hell, grant a glorious communion-day, giving ground to say with the bride here, *Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills* \*.

6. Hence see, in the glass of this text and doctrine, what a *beautiful person* our Lord Jesus Christ is, from head to foot. The glory of Christ, who is *white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousands*, is described, as it were, from head to foot, Song v. 11,—16. But my present subject leads me especially, to notice the beauty of his feet, when leaping and skipping upon the mountains: and here may we not say with the prophet, Isa. lii. 7. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!* Hence may be drawn a mark of a believer and beholder of Christ, namely, he is brought to a *nonplus* in his heart, to tell how beautiful his feet are upon the mount of ordinances: when his people see his stately steppings in the sanctuary, they find it impossible for them to tell how beautiful his feet are upon the mountains of Bether, and on the hills of sin, and guilt, and separation, when he comes leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills; for then he comes with the good news of peace and reconciliation with God, the good tidings of salvation from sin and wrath. O! his feet are so beautiful, that the sight of them makes the poor creature, that was lying half dead, start to his feet, that he may go out and meet him. These tidings of peace and salvation that he brings, makes him say, *The voice of my Beloved!* And the noise of his feet upon the mountains, makes him say, *Behold, he cometh!* And here may we not allude at least to Psalm

\* The edge of this paragraph is levelled directly against the unaccountable conduct of the separating Brethren; who, not satisfied with sinfully withdrawing themselves from their Brethren, for having different sentiments about the burgess oath, but pretended to pass the highest censures of the Church against them, and otherwise calumniate and preach them. See above, Vol. VII. pag. 470,—484.

xcvi. 11, 12, 13. *Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad. &c. before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh!* Christ's coming is so sweet a morsel to the psalmist, that he cannot let it out of his mouth; *He comes, he comes!* Beautiful are his feet upon the mountains.

7. Hence see the good reason why the *sacramental feast* should be kept, and a communion-table should be thronged, by all that love to hear the joyful sound of Christ's feet upon the mountains! See how the Spirit of God joins this duty with this argument, Nahum i. 15. *Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts.* Behold then upon the mountains may I say, the feet of him that cometh leaping and skipping upon them! and therefore, O thou beholder, *keep thy solemn feast, and do this in remembrance of me.* Every leap that his feet make upon the mountains, may make your heart leap within you for joy; and your feet go leaping and skipping to the feast of love, joyfully to commemorate the wonderful, fair, and fast travail of his feet, which was the travail of his soul over all the high mountains that were between him and you. There is a door of communion opened to all believers and beholders of Christ by faith; and a door that the great God hath opened, and no man on earth can shut it, or if they pretend to do it, they are but running in madness upon the thick bosses of his buckler, and counteracting his orders. Therefore, let no proud mortals pretended excommunications, tempt any poor souls here, to slight the orders of the God of heaven; *O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts*: let no poor souls, that love to hear of Christ's feet upon the mountains, excommunicate themselves from the rights of the Christian church; *O Judah, O believing soul, and friend of Jesus, keep your solemn feasts; do this in remembrance of me.*

8. Hence see the door of *faith* and *hope* cast open, both to sinners and saints: to sinners, at the greatest real distance, and yet know it not; to saints, at the greatest sensible distance, that see and know it.

(1.) To *sinners* at the greatest *real distance*, and yet do not see what mountains of sin and guilt are between Christ and you, and are insensible of the distance.— Though that be thy case, yet I dare not say that the door of faith and hope is shut against you, we know not where sovereign grace may light; and since *faith cometh by hearing*, and particularly, by hearing what mountains Christ can and will come over, know that he can come leaping over that mountain of darkness, ignorance, stupidity, and insensibleness about thy soul, wherein thou knowest not that thou art poor, miserable, wretched, blind and naked; and though thou knowest not thy need of Christ, yet the door of faith and hope is open to thee. *This is the command of God, that thou believe in his Son Christ*; and this is the counsel of Christ, that thou, even thou, come to him for *eye-salve that thou mayst see*, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Come to him, believing that he can overcome and overleap that dark mountain, and give thee light and sight to see the mountains that stand between him and thee, and to see how he can come leaping over them. Art thou in a state of enmity against God, in an unregenerate state, wherein thou art in danger every moment of hell and everlasting wrath? O! who can leap over that mountain, and save thee out of that state? Who but God's Beloved and ours; the heavenly roe, the young hind? Doth the word say, *Behold, he cometh*? O look to him in the word; and let your heart say, *Even so come*; and invite him to come leaping on that mountain. The doctrine you have heard leaves no room for unbelief and despair, but casts open wide to the walls the door of faith and hope; and there would be *some hope in Israel concerning you*, if you were brought to see and complain heartily and heavily to God, of the many and massy mountains that are between him and you, *viz.* the atheism, enmity, ignorance, hardness, deadness, and desperate wickedness of your heart. O tell him of the great mountains that stand between him and your soul, and that you have been heaping up between him and you since you was born; that they are such as you cannot remove, and therefore he must come



come over them ; that your sins are such as nothing but infinite and omnipotent power and grace can subdue ; your guilt such as nothing but sovereign grace and mercy, reigning through the righteousness of Christ, can pardon, it is so great. It is true, mountains of sin and guilt cannot be grounds of hope, nor arguments for faith, when in themselves they are rather grounds of despair ; but all the encouragement is to be drawn from Christ's ability and agility to leap and skip over them all ; and that it will inance the glory of the heavenly Røe, that he is able and willing to overleap such high mountains. You may, and ought, indeed to aggravate your sins as much as you can, and not diminish them ; magnify them, by acknowledging that they are very great and heinous, very high and impassible to you ; and argue from your own weakness, impotency, and insufficiency : but never think them so great and high, as if he were not able to overleap and overcome them ; nor magnify them above the mercy of God ; for, *as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts high above your thoughts,* and his mercy above all the mountains of your sins. The acts of faith that this doctrine, therefore, calls for, are soul-humbling, self-emptying, and God-exalting acts : that is, a putting work in Christ's hand, which Omnipotency only can effect, *viz.* to level mountains that are insuperable by men and angels, to invite him to come over them, and to welcome him when he says, *Lo, I come ! &c.*

(2.) To *saints* that may be at the greatest *sensible distance.* May I not say, What do you hear, poor soul ; do you hear nothing to make you say, *The voice of my Beloved ?* What do you see, poor soul, through the glass of this word ? Do you see nothing to make your heart cry out, *Behold, he cometh ! leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills ?* If no such thing is to be heard or seen, O where are you ? And where are your ears and eyes ? Where is your faith and hope ? Be the distance never so great betwixt Christ and you, and the mountains of Bether, and hills of separation never so great, and high, and many, is there not a door of  
faith

faith and hope opened wide to you? For, *Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills.*

Some, it is like, are allowed his sensible presence; and may be in case to say, *Behold, he is come!* he is come to my heart, he is come in to my arms. Let such be humble and thankful; and we wish them much joy in their Beloved, so as *the joy of the Lord may be their strength*, and so as they may *hold him, and not let him go*. But his visits of this sort are usually seldom and short; he no sooner comes than he is away: *I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.*

But most part of believers at this day, and perhaps, most of them in this house, are complaining of *sensible absence*, and of great mountains of distance between him and them: let such, from this doctrine see, that though they cannot say, *Behold, he is come to feed their sense*; yet their faith and hope, may have good feeding upon this, *Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills*. Let it satisfy you for the present, that when he hath a mind to come, mountains and hills shall not be able to hinder him; nay, his active motion upon the mountains, should excite you to the active exercise of faith: let his activity encourage your motion to be setting out to meet him. It is true, the mountains and hills are insuperable to you; but when, through grace, you stir up yourself, and crawl to be at him, who knows how soon he will make your *feet like hinds feet*, and make you *walk upon your high places*? Hab. iii. 19. *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him* in his ordinances, and to meet him at his table. *Behold, he cometh towards you, leaping on the mountains, go ye out leaping to meet him*. Who knows but activity set about, not only from a sense of duty, at his call and command, saying, *Rise my love, my fair one, and come away*; but set about from a sight of his condescension, and a view of his hastening towards you, on the top of all the high mountains, may quickly elevate you above yourself, and your ordinary frame, and set your heart a leaping

to meet him ; for, he can soon *make the lame man leap as an hart* ; or, if you want feet he can give you wings, and make you mount up on wings as eagles, and meet him on the top of the mountains ; for, *Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills ?*



## A

## PART OF THE DISCOURSE

## BEFORE

## SERVING THE FIRST TABLE.

**W**E are now to celebrate the memorials of Christ's marvellous love, in coming over the great mountains of the fiery law, and flaming justice of God, by his doing and dying, his obedience and satisfaction in our room. Christ hath come a far way, over many mountains to pay you a visit, and give you a feast, if you be now friends with him, and have welcomed him in to your heart. But enemies are to be excluded, who were never charmed with his voice, as the voice of their Beloved ; and who never saw their sins, like mountains, between him and them, nor his feet beautiful upon them, as a Saviour to save them from their sin, and remove these mountains ; and who remain contentedly at a distance from him : such, therefore, we must in the name of the Lord, debar doctrinally ; and we tell you, that the word of God debars all the impenitent breakers of the moral law ; such as, &c. See that black catalogue, Rom. i. 29,—32. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21\*.

But on the other hand, I invite to this table of the Lord, all the friends of Christ, that are acquaint with

\* If the Reader inclines to see a specimen of the manner in which the tables are usually fenced, he may consult Vol. I. p. 83,—89.

his voice, as the voice of their Beloved; and acquaint with his visit, so as they have joyfully welcomed him, with a *behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills*; and who, with a glad heart have met him, saying, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* O believer, even come again and again; come and lay your weary head in his bosom; and his *left hand shall be under your head, and his right-hand shall embrace you.* He enjoins you to *do this in remembrance of me.* Therefore, in coming to the elements of bread and wine, come to him by faith, to eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ, believing his incarnation and satisfaction, with application to yourself.

Come and put your heart in his hand; though it be a hard stony heart, he can *take away the heart of stone, and give you an heart of flesh.* Come with all your doubts and difficulties to him; he is our true Daniel, that can answer all our doubts and difficult questions; yea, a greater than Daniel is here. What perplexities are you under? Be what they will, lay them all in one balance, and Christ in another, and then see if you dare stay away. The devil and his instruments, of one sort and another, have been busy to raise mountains of perplexities in the minds of the Lord's people, that, perhaps, have hindered you, before this from coming to him in these ordinances, wherein you have formerly been feasted; and the design of his temptations is to damp the hearts of God's children, and discourage from their duty. But as Christ said, even to a Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me:* even so say you; and never suffer the devil to get his will of you, though he appear in Samuel's mantle; yea, as an angel of light. His false light, is a damping and discouraging light; yea, a darkening, confusing, disordering and perplexing light, leading to new and by-ways, and out of the good old way. But these mountains the enemy hath been raising, are not able to hinder Christ's coming to us, leaping and skipping over them. Therefore, come leaping to him.

O come

O come to him, though you want good qualifications that you may get them from him. It is all the better you see your want of them; for your qualifications will not buy mercy. His counsel is, Art thou poor? Buy of me gold; art thou naked? Buy of me white raiment. He invites you to come to him, because you want. If you were not a wanter, you needed not come to Christ. But if you are so poor, that you want all good things, then behold he is saying, *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor*, Isa. lxvi. 2. Whatever be your case, and whatever be your objection, let just necessity put you on it, to come to him; For, *to whom will you go?*

O poor drooping believer, if you cannot see him for the mountains of sin and guilt, that you see yet standing betwixt him and you, are you saying, I dare not draw near to him at his table; for, I seldom went to a communion-table, but I fear I betrayed him, and I fear I do so again; my distance from him hath been great, and of a long continuance; he will never bestow a look on the like of me? But, O poor soul, though with Jonah you were in the *belly of hell*, yet *look again to his holy temple*; look to him who says, *Look unto me all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else*. When the ark and Jerusalem were far from Daniel, he opened his window and looked towards them: so do you; open your heart, and send sighs and groans to him. In the third of the Lamentations and fifty fifth, the church is in a low dungeon, and prays, *Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry*. Your neighbour that sits nearest you, doth not hear your breathing; but God hears it.

Come, O poor believer, whatever great mountains you see in your way, that are insurmountable by you, yet if you believe, that he is able to surmount them, come to him and you will see him leaping over them. If you see any mountain between him and you, to be higher than he can overleap, then I must tell you, that you are looking at it through the devil's spectacles: but, O Sirs, cast away these glasses that magnify too much: and look to Christ, through the glass of his own

word of grace and promise, and you will see not only that no mountain is insuperable to him, but see him leaping over the highest hill between him and you ; *Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel ? Thou shalt become a plain.*

Though you have raised up devils that you cannot lay, and reared up mountains that you cannot level ; yet, O Sirs, forget not the property of the heavenly Roe ; *Our Beloved is like a roe or a young hart.* It is his property and pleasure to come *leaping on the mountains and skipping on the hills.* And when he hath a mind to come, no mountain can stop his motion toward you. Therefore, come to his table, inviting him to his delightful work, to come over the great mountains in his way. And as nothing can hinder his coming to you ; so let nothing impede your drawing near to him. May the Lord himself draw you, and powerfully persuade you.



THE  
DISCOURSE  
AT THE  
SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

CHRIST having leaped over the mountain of sin and separation, comes now to feed on the mountain of myrrh ; and hath said of it, that *in this mountain he will make a feast of fat things and wines on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined,* namely to feed us on his flesh and his blood.

It is a part of the song of Debora, Judges v. 5. *The mountains melted before the Lord.* It is all one to Christ to leap over mountains and to make them melt down at his presence. O ! his gracious presence can soon dissolve

dissolve all mountainous difficulties, and make them disappear and vanish. It is no wonder that his presence makes them skip like rams, when the faith of his operation is able to remove them; *If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and cast into the midst of the sea, and it shall be done.* To that faith which lays hold on omnipotency, all things are possible.

Now, my friends, we may well suppose, that the faith of the old-testament church, had a higher mountain to climb than we under the new-testament dispensation; I mean, the mountain of infinite distance betwixt God's nature and ours, by believing that God was to become man, that the Word was to be made flesh, and therein to be made a sacrifice for our sins, and to yield obedience to death, even the death of the cross. Now, what they believed we see; for, we have his flesh and blood amongst our hands, in the symbols thereof. They, with Abraham, rejoiced to see his day afar off, and they saw it, and were glad; they believed it as firmly as if they had seen it with their eyes; and therefore said, *Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping upon the hills!* Their faith saw him coming in the flesh as a Saviour, and so leaping over that mountain of infinite distance betwixt God's nature and our's; this is called his first coming. The faith of the new testament-church, relates especially to his coming in the clouds as a Judge, which is called his second coming; and our communicating at this table hath such a concern in it, that it is a shewing forth of his death till he come again. Him that was crucified at Jerusalem *actually*, we have crucified before our eyes *sacramentally*; and we are now shewing forth his death. He came in our nature, and died in our room, and so we are shewing forth the truth, and accomplishment of what the old-testament-church believed; the object of their faith is so far made the object of our sight and sense; and as this is to be shewn forth under the New-Testament till he come the second time without sin unto salvation, so our faith in his second coming hath no such high mountain to ascend as theirs;

for the incarnation of the Son of God, for these purposes which we commemorate, was not only a leaping over that infinitely great mountain of distance that was betwixt God and us, which to the conception of men and angels, would have been for ever insuperable and impassible, but also was a pledge and evidence, that no other mountain could stand in the way, nor be able to hinder him when he is pleased to come.

The faith, therefore, of his second coming hath no such difficulty to surmount. He that said of his coming in the flesh of old, *Lo, I come*; he hath said of his coming in the clouds, *Behold, I come quickly*. The first being accomplished, secures the second. There is no such mountain now in his way as this; and yet he was able to come leaping over it: all the other mountains he hath to overleap, for the accomplishment of his other promises, are but little hills in comparison of this. His coming in the flesh not only makes a plain and evident way for his second coming at the great day to judge the world in righteousness, but for all his other gracious approaches and promised comings, that intervene between the first and second; and particularly for his promised coming in the Spirit, over all the mountains of sin and guilt that stand in his way. Why Christ hath not only come in the flesh to our earth, and finished his work there; but he hath taken our flesh to heaven with him, under promise that he will send the Spirit; *If I go, I will send him, and he shall come and testify of me, and glorify me*: and may we not now expect his coming thus, and say, in the faith of it, *The voice of our Beloved! behold he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*? He that came over the greater mountains, can speedily come over lesser. Did it cost him but a leap or two to come over the mountain of infinite distance betwixt God and us, God's nature and our nature, God's holiness and our sin, God's justice and our guilt, and mountains of God's flaming wrath? O then, how easily may you think can he come over all the mountains of your sin and provocations? If he has come by his Spirit with pardon and healing, O bless him for his hastening to your help.



If the Spirit is not yet come as a Comforter, bless him if he be come to convince you of sin; to pave the way for his comforting you afterward. Is he convincing you of your aggravated sins and mountains that you have raised up between him and you? O invite him to come and undo the mischief you have done, to dissolve the mountains that you have reared, and to skip over the hills that you have heaped up; for, he can come at a leap, like a nimble roe, or a young hart upon the mountains; his name is called Wonderful: miracles of mercy are no strange or marvellous things to him.

If, therefore, he does not come just at your time, but to your apprehension delays his coming; yet wait upon him, as knowing what he can do. Mind, Believer, even at your lowest case, when you are at the bottom of the mountains of separation, when you cannot see him coming over them, you would be very low indeed, before you give over waiting on him, who can in a moment leap over them. Indeed, put a carnal heart to it, it would say, *What! should I wait on the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 33. Yea, put a Believer hard to it, and he will say with the church, Lam. iii. 18. *My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.* But in believing how speedily he can come, you are not to lose hope, but to *wait on him*, Psal. lxi. 2. There the Psalmist, as to his outward lot, is at the end of the earth, far from the sanctuary; and as to his inward frame, his heart is overwhelmed within him, yet in that extremity he cries, *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.* And so he finds afterward, Psal. xciv. 18. *When I said, my foot slippeth,* (like a man on the brink of a pit, and his foot slipping, and he ready to fall down into it) *thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.* Hence also Job professes that God's slaying him should not crush his confidence; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* He can soon make a motion amongst the dry bones, and seek out the free among the dead. Though the mountains in your way be such as you cannot come over, do not give over waiting, so long as they

they do not pass his power, or surmount his ability to leap, and agility to skip over them.

It is not come to that, say you; I think he is able to save to the utmost, and to come over all the mountains of sin and guilt betwixt him and me. What, man! dost thou believe he can come over such high mountains as you have raised between you and him, even between him and you! Then there is not a great distance, now, between him and you; according to your faith of his ability, so be it unto you: You see him higher than the highest mountain, stronger than the strongest mountain, greater than the greatest mountain; you see him above them all; why then, he is near to your faith, that sees him on the top of the mountains; therefore, now say, *The voice of my Beloved! Behold, he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills!*

Seek him now also, to melt down the mountains between him and the church of Scotland, between him and the generation, between him and witnessing ministers and people; to level mountains of temptation: also, to melt the mountains that separate between him and your family. O pray him to come leaping to you and them: and may you come leaping to him; and may you go from this table, with hearts leaping after him, and meeting with him on the mountains.



T H E

D I S C O U R S E

A T T H E

C O N C L U S I O N O F T H E S O L E M N W O R K .

**N**OW, my friends, when you are about to go away, I shall dismiss you with a few *advices*, in consequence of the doctrine I was delivering, concerning Christ's coming, in the manner described in these words,

words, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh! leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills.*

In general, the *advice* I would give to these that came here *strangers* to our Lord Jesus, and are like to go away so, having never yet heard the voice of Christ in his word, so as to believe it; nor got a visit of him by his Spirit, so as to behold how he cometh, *leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*; O go not away, supposing that there was nothing for you at this occasion; and that the word of this salvation was not sent to you. What! was not the door of hope opened to you in this word, *Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains*? If you be sinners, that have been heaping up mountains of sin and guilt between him and you, was there no good news here for you, that he comes as a Saviour to save you from your sin, and to melt down these mountains! And does not faith come by hearing such good tidings? How do you expect that Christ should come to you, or that you should meet with him, but in such a word? For, you need not say, *Who will ascend to heaven, to bring him down; or, descend to the deep, to bring him up? The word is nigh, even in your heart, and mouth: That is, the word of faith which we preach, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8.* If you live and die, slighting this *word of salvation*, you perish in your unbelief. And therefore, I advise you, as you would not lose the benefit of this solemn occasion, to retire to some secret corner, and plead with God, that what you have heard and seen may be blessed to you, and when the word says, *Behold, he cometh*, even to save such sinners as you are, that have great and high mountains standing betwixt them and him, and that therefore, according to that word, he would come to you, and glorify his grace, in leaping over them to you, to visit you with his salvation, and to set your heart a leaping after him, whose word says, *Behold, he cometh*, so as to meet him, by saying to him, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

But the advices that I would more particularly offer to all the *Lord's people*, especially *communicants*, are these following.

1. Seeing the communications of the love of Christ are so *eminent* and *conspicuous*, in his coming and leaping over mountains and hills towards you, O *study his love*, so as it may beget more love in you to him. He loves, notwithstanding all difficulties we put in his way of coming to us : he loves the most unworthy. O what a shame is it for us, that we love him so little, who is most worthy ; *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain !* He loves them whom he corrects and chastises : and ought we not to love him when he corrects ? But, alas ! our love decays, when we get a rod or a cross to bear. His love is constant love ; *Whom he loves, he loves to the end* : but how small a matter interrupts our love, and creates mistakes and jealousies ? This is a sad requital we give him, when so little of our love is kindled by his to us.

2. Seeing our Lord Jesus, though he comes so kindly, yet comes *sovereignly* when he pleases, O beware of *tampering with temptations*, and *raising up mountains and hills* between him and you ; for, though when he comes, he leaps and skips over them, yet he may in righteousness hide himself, and withdraw, you know not how long ; and it may cost you many a long look, before you see him again on the top of the mountain ; yea, it may cost you many a troubled heart, lest he should never come again, and lest his absence should be a perpetual absence ; *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever ?* Psal. xiii. 1. What a sad thought is that, to be forgotten for ever ?

3. Seeing Christ, when he comes, comes *speedily*, like a roe upon the mountains, then, O *wait his coming* without complaining ; and wait on him *dutifully*, in hope of his coming *speedily* ; the bride here sees him coming and skipping.

QUEST. *How does his speedy coming appear, when the complaint is, " O why tarry the wheels of his chariot ? " and how long does he hide himself ?*

ANSW. That in his speedy coming, he does not respect our flesh, nor regard the foolishness of Nabal ; the flesh indeed it is, when quarreling at his delay, which is a provoking him to stay away the longer : the  
most

most compendious way to enjoy his speedy approach, is not to make haste, but to wait in the use of means ; *He that believeth maketh not haste.* Our impatient haste is our unbelief, which tends to retard his motion ; and yet he comes speedily whenever he comes, and that in three respects, wherein it may be said the vision does not tarry.

(1.) Because he comes *long before* we be ready for his coming. If you consider the task he puts in your hand in his absence ; such as, the discovery of the wild beasts, that creep out of their dens and lurking places in the night of absence ; the humbling of the uncircumcised heart, to accept of the punishment of its iniquity ; the bearing of the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him ; the kindly taking with chastisement, and with the rod of correction, and submission to a sovereign God, his providential and preceptive will. Does he not come speedily, when he comes before that task be done ? If he staid away till thou didst perfect that work, it would not only be long before he come, but there would be a continual separation between him and thee. In this respect then he comes speedily.

(2.) He comes speedily, notwithstanding thy *complaint* ; because he never comes out of time when he comes. A physician may come out of time to a sick person ; he may come, and find him past cure when he comes. A friend may come out of time to another friend, so as he cannot help him when he comes. But when Christ comes, he can make all things as well, as if he had come the first moment he was sought after. It is all one, whether he comes to Lazarus when he is sick, or when he is dead ; for, when he comes, he raises him from the dead, and gets the greater glory. Hence,

(3.) He comes speedily, because he comes always in the most *acceptable* and *fit* time. A particular consideration of times and circumstances, makes out this from time to time, that he is a *present help in trouble* : therefore, we should learn to believe, and not to quarrel his delay. Let us study that faith of the saints,

which is conspicuous in the *patience of the saints*, Rev. xiii. 10. ; for, amongst other means, the way of winning to a speedy outgate from under desertion, or any difficulty, is to leave off quarreling, and to rest satisfied with, and submit to his dealing; and when you put a blank in his hand, saying, *Thy will be done*, this were the way to a speedy outgate. Here it is to be observed, that the quarreler is ordinarily an idler, and neglecter of duty; therefore, if such were turning their quarreling to diligence, they would come the better speed. It is the Lord's complaint against complainers, Hosea viii. 5. *How long will it be ere you attain to innocence?* We should turn our complaint against ourselves, and not charge God foolishly; this would hasten his coming.

4. The manner of Christ's coming should commend him to you, and make you commend him to others. The bride here commends him who thus comes, and apprehends the excellency of his person. Many would have Christ coming speedily to help and save them, saying, *Arise, and save us*, Jer. ii. 27. in the time of their trouble; but whenever they have got what they wanted, they have done with him, and with any more correspondence with him. This is the sad temper of many in the visible church; they receive favours from Christ, as Jonathan said to Saul, *Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice*, 1 Sam. xix. 5. They will take a good turn from Christ, if they can get it; but they will have no more ado with him. All the favours that such meet with from Christ, that lead them not to an estimation of himself, are the saddest of snares and plagues; and therefore to be dreaded; this is a case to be trembled under. But let the favours of Christ commend the person of Christ to you; for so it is with the bride here, *Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*. Whereupon she commends him, saying, *My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart*.

O commend him by your walk and conversation; by your talk and communication: commend him by imitating him, by being like a roe or a young hind in following him, whithersoever he goes; whatever moun-  
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tain of tribulation it be on which he calls you to follow him ; let it be the mountain of perfecution or reproach, yet follow him leaping and skipping upon the mountains, that are in the way. You that would be faithful witnesses for God and reformation at this day, have mountains on every hand of you : the growing mountains of backsliding and defection in the Judicatories, on the one hand ; and the hideous mountains of delusion, and extravagance among Separatists, on the other hand : I know not how you can follow Christ, or imitate him, if you suffer your feet to rest on any of these mountains ; nay, if you tarry there, you will stay to your hurt, or stumble on the dark mountains ; but if you follow Christ, it will be in a way of leaping and skipping joyfully, *Counting it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, or tribulations*, in following him : yea, *Rejoicing that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake*, were it even the shame of men's curses and anathemas, their hideous excommunications ; for, *The wrath of man shall praise him*. And little do some men consider what honour they have been putting upon us, and what shame upon themselves, as instruments of putting on our Master's crown of thorns upon our heads ; and, *God forbid that we should not glory in the cross of Christ*. We were never worthy to suffer shame for his sake.

5. The next advice I offer, is, O learn with the church and bride of Christ here, to be still *observing* his coming ; *Behold, he cometh leaping*. It is not expressed in the præterit, *He did come* ; nor in the future, *He will come* ; but in the present tense, *Behold, he cometh* : intimating, that he is always coming ; it is his trade, it is his work, his daily constant business, even as much as it is the property of the roe, or young hind, to be daily leaping and skipping on the mountains. Though Christ be not still coming *sensibly*, to comfort you ; yet even in his real or seeming absence, he is always coming, either *wisely*, to try you ; or *fatherly*, to correct you ; or *mercifully*, to humble you : by the dispensations of his providence, be what they will, he is always coming therein upon some love de-

sign ; and *whofo is wife, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* Therefore, as he is still a comer, be you still an observer of his motions.

6. The sixth advice, to add no more, is, that you remember that his coming is still *over some mountain* or other, and with a design to move or melt down some mountain between him and you. When he comes, in a smiling way to you, it is to level some mountain of despair, despondency, or discouragement. And when he comes in any frowning dispensation, it is to level some mountain of pride, presumption, or ingratitude. Our Lord Jesus, when he came in the flesh to the work of our redemption, he came leaping and skipping over the mountains of the wrath of God, and the wrath of men and devils ; and indeed, when he comes in the Spirit, to visit with his salvation, he still comes over mountains of one sort or another ; and sometimes over the mountain of wrathful-like dispensations. As to the mountain of man's wrath, it is not a mote in his way, even when they have gone to their uttermost, and made the objects of their wrath as odious as they can, and the mountain of separation between them and us, as high as they can ; yet there is no danger, if the mountain of sin and separation betwixt God and you be removed ; he can soon make you thresh all the other mountains ; yea, beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. However, mind that his coming is still to level some mountain or other. And therefore, the believer, whose spiritual ears and eyes are open, may still have occasion to say, *The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh ! leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills.*



## S E R M O N CXLIV.

CHRIST'S LOVE-SUIT REINFORCED  
and REPEATED; or, his kindly GOSPEL-  
CALL RENEWED\*.

SONG ii. 13.

*Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

**I**F our Lord Jesus Christ is come here this day to court a bride, in the terms of this text, they show, that never was there such an affectionate or importunate Suitor: his *affection* will appear in the kindly names he here gives her, which show what a loving and kind heart he has; *My love, my fair one*; his *importunity* appears in the suitable call and invitation he gives her, which shows what a lazy and loitering case she is in; *Rise, and come away*. More sweet *compellations* cannot be given to a loathsome bride; *My love, my fair one*: more meet *invitations* cannot be given to a lingering and backward bride; *Arise, and come away*: and more *documents* of his being in good earnest cannot be given, than in his repeating these kindly words, and ending his arguments with them here: so he begins with, ver. 10. *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away*; where the church and spouse of Christ relates the gracious words he spoke to her, and is a faithful recorder of what he said to her soul, and a faithful relater thereof, for the encouragement of others; *My Be-*

\* This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, on Sabbath, July 21. 1751. The fourth impression.

*loved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.* And having told how kindly he invited her, she next tells how strongly he urged the invitation, with motives and arguments, saying, *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape, give a good smell,* ver. 11, 12, 13. *g. d.* If thou wilt hearken to my call, and come to me, thou shalt be *delivered* from that sad winter-like case and condition thou hast been in, and have a pleasant delightful life, a flourishing spring-tide of spiritual joys, which shall be still on the growing hand, until it end in a harvest of glory: thou shalt have advantages beyond all the rest of the world; thy walk shall be in the garden of the Lord, where the sweet promises, and the precious blessings thereof, are as so many faithful trees, pleasant to the eye, savoury to the taste, delightful to the ear, with the *singing of birds* upon the branches thereof; and in all respects, ravishing, melodious, and commodious. I now invite thee to come, and share of the sweet spring I have brought along with me. It is a *pleasant season*; *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land, the flowers appear on the earth: a fragrant and fruitful season, The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape, give a good smell,* ver. 12, 13. The spiritual flourishing and fruitfulness is represented by these various similitudes; all which show how, that as Christ's absence makes a winter, his presence makes a summer: yea, he brings a spring with him, were it even in the midst of winter. Sad and heavy times may pass over the Lord's people; yet his approach and return can make a winter-like dispensation heartsome, with abundant up-making.

Our Lord having given the call, and urged it with motives drawn from the heartsome spring-time he brought along with him, in so many parts of it, (all which I have formerly spoke to at large,) he comes, in the close of this verse, to renew the former invitation, saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

In which words you have three things to be considered: 1. The kindly compellation; *My love, my fair one.* 2. The earnest invitation; *Arise, and come away.* 3. The words considered in connexion with ver. 10; and the arguments intermixed between that verse and this, are a repetition of the same call from this affectionate Suitor, who will not take a refusal, nor a nay-say: *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away;* and again, *Arise my love, my fair one and come away.*

Having spoke formerly to the context, and particularly some months ago to these words as they stand in the 10th verse \*, as I need not enlarge upon them now; so my especial design is to consider them as a repeated call, and a renewed invitation, a courtship earnestly insisted upon; *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.* From which words we may observe the following doctrine.

OBSERV. *That the repeated call, and renewed invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to his drowsy and disconsolate people, whom he names his LOVE and FAIR ONE, is, that they RISE, and COME AWAY with him.*

You see here, that the vision is doubled; the truth of the doctrine is established, by the repetition of the same words, and the renovation of the same suit.

In speaking to it, I would, through supernatural aid, observe the following method and order.

- I. Premise a few things with relation to the party here, to whom the invitation is directed.
- II. I would open up a little the import of the titles here given to that party; *My love, my fair one.*
- III. The import of these calls; *Rise, and come away.*
- IV. I would point out what may be implied in the

\* What our Author delivered on the context, and this verse, was never emitted into the public.

repetition of these words; and why the call and invitation is thus renewed:—and then,

V. Deduce some *inferences* for the *application*.

I. We would premise a few things relative to the *party* to whom the call and invitation is directed—  
And,

1<sup>st</sup>, In some sense it may be viewed as directed even to *sinners* who are *dead in trespasses and sins*, whom Christ hath a mind to quicken by his kindly voice in the gospel: *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. It is true, it is not the immediate intent of this text to call the unconverted; yet it may be useful for engaging and bringing in strangers to Christ, as well as for recovering and rousing these that are brought in already. He speaks to sinners, that are the objects of his benevolence and good-will, as well as he speaks to saints, that are already the objects of his complacence and delight. Even as the sacramental supper, though it is not, in its immediate design, a converting ordinance, for bringing in sinners; but a confirming one, for establishing saints; yet God may bless a sacramental occasion, as often he has done, for bringing in strangers to a saving acquaintance with Christ. Thus the call given to Christ's dull and drowsy bride, to rise and come away to him, may be useful for rousing dead sinners out of their natural security: yea, the general call of God in the gospel being directed to mankind sinners, on account of his *φιλανθρωπία*, *Philanthropy*, or *mankind love*, Tit. iii. 4. may be supposed to be in these terms, *My love, my fair one, rise, and come away*: for he calls them by names which are not their natural names, when he is courting their heart; but courting them by kindly and winning names, which will be truly applicable to them, whenever they answer his call.

There are two sorts of names he gives men whom he courts: 1. Some names from what they are in themselves; 2. Some names from what they are in his purpose and design.

1. The names he gives them as *secure sinners*, lying sleeping

sleeping in their natural estate. In this respect he calls them *children of disobedience*; *children of wrath*; *a generation of vipers*; *stout hearted sinners and far from righteousness*; ignorant creatures, *not knowing that they are poor and miserable, wretched, blind, and naked.*— By many such names as these they are called in scripture, pointing out what they are by nature; and what a dreadful wrath they are obnoxious to, by the curse of the law they are under.

2. He names them sometimes from what they are in his *desire* toward them, or his decree and design about them; which, though it be a secret, as it relates to eternal election, yet it is no secret as it is laid out in the word of grace, for sinners of mankind to train and apprehend in the gospel order; that is, by apprehending Christ himself, and the promise in him; and consequently that very name, *My love, my fair one*: for, though in themselves they are not his love, nor the objects of his love, but rather of his hatred, as *enemies in their minds by wicked works*; and though in themselves they are not fair, but foul, black, and deformed; yet, in a way of rising and coming at his call, and laying hold on Christ, they will evidence that in Christ, they were from all eternity his love, his fair one, *Chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and now saved in him according to his purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ before the world began,* Ephesians i. 4. 2 Timothy i. 9. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,* Jer. xxxi. 3. And, indeed, it cannot but be most astonishing to a sensible sinner, if in a day of conversion, the cord of love be let down in such surprising compellations as these, *My love, my fair one; rise, and come away*; for, how can either these that are dead in sins and trespasses, or believers themselves, while they are in this world, lying among the pots, all defiled with the spots and leprosy of sin, be honoured with these titles, *My love, my fair one*? But the matter is, Christ speaks of them and to them, not with respect only to what they are at present, but with respect to what he intends to make them to all

eternity: yea, even at present, when he makes the call effectual, his word of power, by that call, makes them to be what he calls them, namely, his *love*, his *fair one*; for there needs no more to make them so, than his calling them so, as Rom. ix. 25. *I will call them my people; and her beloved, that was not beloved:* of which more perhaps afterwards.

2dly, The call and invitation here is directed immediately and of purpose to the *converted bride*; and that as she is considered either,

1. In a *secure, sleepy, and up-sitten* condition; laid by from duty, being asleep, and unmindful of her duty till, he, by his voice, rouse her up as he had done before, when she started, as it were to her feet, saying, ver. 8. *The voice of my Beloved! Behold he cometh!*  
Or,

2. In a *disconsolate and discouraged* condition; like a disconsolate wife, in the absence of her husband, sitting solitary, till he comes and invites her to rise up, and go with him to the field, to refresh herself with the pleasant spring and fair weather, that are so charming when the winter storms are all over.

The nature of the invitation, *Rise, and come away*, supposes to be her present case, that either she is in a dull and sleepy, or in a damped and discouraged condition, or both: and, I think, both are here intended; as appears both from the motives drawn from the sweetness of the spring-time she is invited to come to, and share of; and also from this renewed call, prosecuted ver. 14. that she should come out of her lurking holes, and appear with confidence before him. He speaks to her, partly as secure and dead, to quicken her, and set her to her duty; and partly as discouraged, in order to encourage and cheer her up: of which more afterwards.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, To open up the import of the *titles* here given to her, *My love, my fair one*. There are four things imported therein.

1. It

1. It imports, an *interest* and *propriety* that Christ has in his people: they are mine, says he; *My love, my fair one.* They are his peculiar treasure: they are set a part for him from all eternity. For them he became man, and died, and suffered, and rose again; for them he made and upholds the world. They are his flock; *The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance,* Deut. xxxii. 9. Thus he concerns himself in them as his all: they are mine, says he; even my peculiar portion. O! how should we meet him, and make him our peculiar portion, and boast of him, and of this relation, saying, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his?*

2. These titles, *my love, my fair one,* import the strong *affection* that he has to his people: being his peculiar portion, they are the objects of his peculiar affection, and his special love and delight. He had a love of *choice* and *designation* for them, as in Christ, from eternity; but he has now a love of *delight* and *complacency* in them, as united to Christ by faith, even to him in whom God is well pleased; yea, he loves them *because he loves them.* It is a consideration that may put an end to all debate on this head; he set his love upon them, not because they were *more in number than others,* for they were the *fewest of all people;* but *because he loved them,* Deut. vii. 7, 8. His love to his people must not be looked upon as the result of *merit* in them; nay, on that account, they are the objects of his indignation, as meriting hell: but we must look upon it as the result of *interest:* they are his, and therefore he loves them.

3. These titles, *my love, my fair one,* import, not only his warm affection towards them, but his high *estimation* of them, as perfect beauties in his sight, his love is his *fair one:* thus he says, chap. iv. 7. *Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee.* On what account doth he give this verdict of them? and in what respects are they perfect beauties in his sight? They are so,

(1.) In respect of *imputed righteousness,* which is a

solid ground of reckoning; for, *the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them*, Rom. viii. 5. through the imputed righteousness of Christ; and so they are accepted, as righteous in his sight, through the doing and dying, and perfect righteousness of Christ; yea, hence said to be *the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. O how fair are they who are clothed with the Sun, the Sun of Righteousness!

(2.) In respect of *communicated holiness*. They are perfect beauties, as to the perfection of *parts*: as we say a new-born child is perfect, having all the parts; so are his people, having all the parts of the new man, in regeneration; hence called *new creatures in Christ*, 2 Cor. v. 17. This will at last resolve in a greater beauty of holiness; that is, a perfection of *degrees* in heaven, when they *shall be like him, by seeing him as he is*. This may encourage saints against all the deformities they now see in themselves, while they see but in part him from whom they derive all their beauty.

(3.) In respect of their *Head and Husband, CHRIST*, in whom God looks upon them: they are all fair; and hence they are said to be *complete in him*, Col. ii. 10. *And you are complete in him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*.

(4.) In respect of their *desire, and endeavour, and aim*: though their desire itself is not perfect, yet the object of their desire, as new creatures, is perfection; *the desire of their souls is to his name*, Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Their endeavour also, through grace, is to press after perfection: hence, though they count themselves imperfect, and not to have apprehended; yet, *forgetting the things that are behind, they press towards the mark*, Phil. iii. 12. They approve themselves in no want of holiness, and indulge themselves in no sin. Their upright desires and endeavours are set down in Christ's count book, for that which is desired and endeavoured; and however spotted they are, yet a mourned-over spot is a beauty in his sight. Therefore he says, ver. 14. *O my dove,*  
*that*



that art in the clefts of the rock, and secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, for it is comely.

(5.) In respect of the *divine design* and *determination*; or in respect of his *purpose* and *promise* to make them perfect beauties. They are his *fair ones*: he resolves to *present them to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that they should be holy, and without blemish*, Eph. v. 27. And God names his people many times from what they are in their desire, and his design; *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*. Their future perfection is present to him. And,

(6.) In respect of *his love* they are fair and perfect beauties: being his *love*, they cannot but be his *fair one*; for, love covers all infirmities, and esteems its object beautiful, be what it will. Isa. xliii. 4. *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable; and therefore beautiful too*. And if thus he esteems our borrowed beauty, how should we be ashamed that we esteem not more his infinite beauty?

4. These titles here, *my love, my fair one*, import the *intimation* of his high esteem of her: and that as Christ observes the beauty of believers, amidst all the spots that are upon them; so he is pleased to let them know so much: he does not think it enough behind their back to tell it, but in her face he says, *Thou art my love, and my fair one*. It is true, this is not his ordinary; he is a wise lover, that knows when to keep up the intimation of love, and when to let it out: but there are times when he will make no secret of it; times when he will put it beyond all dispute or debate in the souls of his people. The times and seasons when he makes such intimations are in the Father's hand, and in his power: he is sovereign in the grant thereof.—Some have got the intimation at their *first* conversion, as the woman of Samaria, to whom Christ said, *I that speak unto thee am he*, John vi. 26.—Some have got it at a *second* conversion, even after backslidings and returnings into folly, through the remains of corruption in them: when they have gone a whoring after their old lovers; yet the Lord has pitied for his name's

name's sake, and intimated his love in such words as these; *Return, backsliding children; for I am married unto you. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return. Return to thy first husband; for then it was better with thee than now.*—Some, again, have got intimation, when they have been *humbling* themselves by fasting and prayer, and diligently seeking the Lord; as Daniel got, to whom it was said, *O man, greatly beloved, Dan. x. 19.*—Sometimes he lets out his love when he brings them to a wilderness of affliction, distress, and tribulation, *I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her; yea, he ordinarily makes the valley of Achor a door of hope, that they may sing there: yet, after all, his Bethel visits and Peniel views, that he gives his people, when he intimates his love to them, and esteem of them, saying, My love, my fair one, are but rare enjoyments.*—I shall say no more thereof; only, when those are withheld in a sensible way, live by the faith of it, that you, believer, are still his *love* and his *fair one*; and when you get any such intimations, improve it aright; if he commends you, so surely it sets and becomes you infinitely more to commend him.

III. The *third* thing proposed, is to speak of the import of his *call* and *invitation* here; *Rise and come away.*

There are these following things seem plainly supposed and imported here. In general the *terms* of the call and invitation suppose the case of his people to be a sleepy, secure, and drowsy case; and hence also a discouraged, disheartned, and disconsolate case. Notwithstanding, these titles he here gives her imply, that she is very beautiful in his esteem, and that he has a great affection toward her, as well as a near relation to her; yet there are several defects and disorders about her; that he would and must have amended, by his repeated calls and invitations.

1. This call and invitation, *Rise, and come away*, supposes and imports, that *great security*, and love to carnal

nal rest and ease, is an usual fault among the people of God; they are ready to sit up, without making the progress they should make heaven-wards, like the sluggard, Prov. vi. 9. *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?* Like Jonah chap. i. 6. *Arise thou sleeper, and call upon thy God.* Like even the wise virgins, Matth. xxv. 5. that were fast asleep as well as the foolish: and like the disciples, Luke xxii. 46. *Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* This is the sin of the generation, which is sadly evident, by the little due improvement of mercies or judgments, and by the great neglect of duty and the great formality in the use of means, and by the many black spots that stain the face of professors. If sorrow fill their hearts on account of sad things in their lot, they are like discontented and ill-natured infants, who weep themselves asleep, and like the disciples who sorrowed themselves asleep, Luke xxii. 45. If even the disciples of Christ be found sleeping in times of stormy dispensations, it is a sign that they should look upon themselves as the Jonah, that has contrived to raise the storm; and if they do not awake, and arise when Christ calls them, it may be a sign that he will awaken them to their cost. Profane people may fall into a lethargy, and get leave to sleep the sleep unto death, and may meet with nothing to awaken them, till the flames of hell do it, as it fell out with the foolish virgins; but for the wise, though God should save them as by fire, and pluck them out of the burning, he will have them awakened: and it may be with a dreadful storm they were not expecting.

2. This call, *Rise, and come away*, imports, that when Christ comes to his people, he contents not himself to intimate, that they are *wrong*, but he wants that what is wrong be *mended*; and that lazy and careless saints be roused and raised out of that secure state and condition, and be set to their feet again: and though nothing will awaken secure souls, that man or angel can say, yet if God breathe upon a call, he can make it prevail; for, says Christ, *Every one that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me*, John vi. 45.

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Christ's errand to his church and people, in coming over mountains, is to raise them up to their duty: and if they be but raised to seek him, let them not complain of desertion; Christ is not far off from them, whom he will not suffer to sleep in a bed of security, but stirs up to be spiritually busy; for, *Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee*, Psal. ix. 10. *The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth*, Psal. cxlv. 18. The rising and seeking soul, is not a forsaken soul.

3. *Rise up, and come away*, it imports, that as *conviction of sloth* is not enough without *uprising and diligence*; so *diligence* is not enough without *constancy*; not only must we *rise up*, but *come away*, and proceed in our motion: convictions may make people rise, and get to their feet; but it comes to little account, if it be but a flash, and away again: Some may *begin in the Spirit*, and *end in the flesh*, Gal. iii. 3. Some may *run well*, but *who hinders them*? The call of Christ is, that we *rise and come away*; that being set on our feet, we sit not down again: this call is directly levelled against the upfitten case of God's people at this day.

4. *Rise up, and come away*, is a call importing something the Lord would have his people *leave, relinquish and turn their back upon*. There are terms from which we must rise and come away. As the gospel-call concerns unconverted sinners, it requires them to come out of a state of nature and unregeneracy out of a Christless state unto Christ, and to a gracious state in him: for, it is the call of that God who *quickeneth the dead*; and he can make his call effectual to *bring them from death to life*. But then, as it concerns believers, who were once quickened, and made alive in Christ, and have relapsed into a deadness of disposition, there are many things they are called to abandon and leave behind them: they are called to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*, Tit. ii. 12. Particularly, there are four things they are called to leave, and are to relinquish, or come away from, namely,

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(1.) The *world*, and the *things of time*; and that not only in *judgment*, apprehending them to be vain and vanished, yea, nothing but *vexation of spirit*; but also in *affection* and *esteem*, counting *all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord*, so as to be delivered from the plague of minding earthly things: and likewise in *practice* by a moderate, sober, and mortifying walk, *making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

(6.) The *unrenewed frame of spirit*, the remainders of the world, and the lusts thereof, are what they are called to relinquish and come away from. They must forget their *own people and their father's house*, Psalm xlv. 10. They are called daily to be leaving and lamenting over a *body of sin and death*, Romans vii. 24. We need to be always turning our back upon ourselves with *loathing*, Job xlii. 6. Christ's disciples must *deny themselves*, Luke ix. 13. And hence,

(3.) From their *own righteousness* they must rise and come away to the *Lord their righteousness*; being dead to and divorced from the law, and being cloathed with the Sun of righteousness, they must seek, with Paul, more and more to be found in him, *not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God through faith*, Phil. iii. 9; and saying with the church, *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*, Isa. lxiv. 6.

(4.) They must relinquish their *attainments*, Phil. iii. 13. *Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, and pressing towards the mark.* When people make the things they have attained to their sleeping bed, and their pillow, then their attainments are ready to be their neck-break: but from all these, and the like things, the call is, *Rise, and come away.* To beware of claiming new acquaintance with their renounced delights; like Lot's wife, glad to be out of Sodom, but very quickly looking back again; and like Israel, glad to be out of Egypt, but soon they made a captain to return back again.

5. *Rise, and come away*, the call imports something to which they are called to come; leaving the things that are *behind*, there must be a coming to what is *before* them. There are some professors let out a devil at one door, but let in seven worse at another. It is not enough to turn from what is evil, but there must be a turning to what is good; a *turning from darkneſs to light*, and *from the power of Satan unto God*: it is a coming away to CHRIST, the glorious Bridegroom, shaking off every thing that may hinder you from following after your Husband, Christ Jesus; and removing every impediment that may obstruct your fellowship and communion with him. Rise, and come away with me, to share of my righteousness, for justification; my grace and holiness, for sanctification. The two extremes here *from which* and *to which* we are to rise and come away, are *from sin*, and every thing that may marr communion with God; *to Christ*, and every thing that tends to further this fellowship with him. And then,

6. *Rise, and come away*, imports, a looking to the *motion* that is made between these two extremes, that it be a speedy and an honest motion, and also an affectionate motion, as it were on the wings of love. Though a slow and simple motion, if it be but real and upright, is what has the promise, *Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out*; yet the scripture speaks of a hasting, striving, running, fighting, and wrestling that should be aimed at. A man that is running from the greatest misery to the greatest happiness, would endeavour to have his motion such as would evidence his hatred at the one, and his love to the other; his great loathing of the one, and his great liking to the other. *Rise up, and come away*, then, imports such a progressive motion towards Christ, as may witness our abhorrence of what we come from, and our delight in what we come to; and particularly, our love and estimation of Christ, and our earnest desire to come to him at his call, with a *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God*.

In a word, the strain of the call and invitation, taken altogether, imports the *notice* our Lord Jesus takes  
both

both of the *good state* and *bad frame* of his bride: her *good state* is noticed in the compellation he gives her; *My love, my fair one*: her *bad frame*, or her dead, dull, and discouraged case, is noticed and imported in the invitation; *Rise, and come away*. Our Lord takes notice of every thing about his children; and while he shows his love and approbation of their persons, he will show his disapprobation of their sins. The same word that bears an intimation of their *loveliness* in Christ, bears also a reproof of their *laziness*; *Rise and come away*. But while he takes notice of the dull and disconsolate case of the believer, it is with pity and compassion; for, as it is, Psal. ciii. 15. *As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him*; for, *he knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust*: therefore, in such a call as this, he shows his design of recovering them from their security, distress and distrust; and his design of making the call effectual, and bringing them to communion and fellowship with him; and by this call signifying his will, that they may come away with all holy and humble boldness and confidence to him.

IV. The *fourth* head proposed was, To enquire, why the call and invitation given, ver. 10. is *renewed*; or the import of the *repetition* thereof.

Between that verse and this he had used a good many motives and encouragements, showing, that he had removed the winter storms of the law, and the heavy rain of the curse and bondage thereof, and that he had brought along with him a sweet spring-time; *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear, &c.* ver. 11, 12, 13. And now, upon the back of all this, Christ *resumes* and *repeats* the exhortation, which he had given before, that his bride might not abuse these encouragements; but remember, that all of them are afforded her for this very end that she might be roused from her security, and raised from her discouragements, to come to him and with him; *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*. Now,

the import of this *repetition* may be opened in the following remarks.

*Remark 1.* “That Christ is very *true* and *constant* in his love to, and esteem of his people; and therefore doth repeat over again, that the bride is his *love* and his *fair one*.” Lest any should think that his calling her so in the 10th verse, was but the result of inadvertency, or that unawares such a commendation had fallen from his mouth; therefore, he repeats it here, to show, that there is a rooted love and fixed esteem of his people in his heart; and that when he repeats the *exhortation*, he remembers what he had called her, and so repeats also the *compellation* and *commendation* he had given her. This may encourage the bride of Christ, to lean unto, and rely upon his declared and manifested love in his word, as a thing that is true and constant, and may be trusted unto. Much flattery and many fair words, we may get from men, that common prudence will not suffer us to lay weight upon, because they flow from some design, dissimulation, or inadvertency: but our Lord Jesus Christ ponders every word that he speaks to the advantage of his bride, and will never retract any of his words again, on which he has caused his people to hope. Isa. xi. 6, 7, 8. *The voice said, Cry: and he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.* Therefore, they may well lean to all the expressions of his love.

*Remark 2.* “That Christ Jesus is *real* and *serious* in seeking the welfare of his people.” He doth not make a fashion of dealing with them, for his exoneration; but when they are out of the road, in a dead and discouraged case, he follows them with call after call, saying, *Arise*; and again, *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*. He is serious and instant in desiring and seeking the good and welfare of his church and people. Hence comes his constant affording the means to them, to set them right when they are wrong; and his

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*sending his messengers, rising up early, and sending them, because he had compassion on them, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15. till it is said (viz. of the most part of the visible church, thus privileged) they mocked his messengers, despised his word, and misused his prophets, and his wrath rose against them, that there was no remedy, ver. 16. Hence also are his heavy complaints of, and lamentations over, people that will not hear his repeated calls, Psalm lxxxi. 11, 13. My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.—O that my people had hearkened unto me; and Israel had hearkened unto my way! Isa. xlviii. 18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Thus Christ, in the midst of his triumph, when all were crying HOSANNA to him, fell a weeping, when he beheld Jerusalem, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes! Luke xix. 41, 42.*

*Remark 3. That sloth and security in the people of “ God, once given way to is very hard to cure; and, “ when discouragements and deadness are encouraged, it “ will require call upon call, and stand a pull, before “ ever these evils can be shaken off again ”* When the bride of Christ is lying drooping within doors, and not at her work, not in his company, he must call upon her once and again; *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come*; and again, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*, before ever he gets an answer. When crushing discouragement is given way to, it will not need another cross to be joined to it, to make them sad; for then, though a man would comfort himself, it will not do: Jeremiah was crushed, chapter viii. 18. *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.* Discouraged souls are like wounded persons; if you bring a surgeon, and offer to launce or paunce their wounds, they are ready to fall into a swoon under the surgeon's hands: and the bonds of security are no less strong; when one has laid himself down on a bed of security, then you may cry, *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard, when wilt thou arise out of*

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of thy sleep? Nay his best answer will be, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep*, Prov. vi. 10. And of all security, that is the strongest which is the product of discouragements: he that is fallen asleep in the bosom of an idol, when God blasts that idol, he may see his folly, and creep to his feet again: but he that is fallen asleep in discouragements whatever providences or ordinances and orders come to call him to rise, and even though he essay to get up to his feet, discouragement knocks him down again, and crushes all endeavours and resolutions in the bud: discouragement tells him, that all will be to no purpose. So that these evils given way to, are not easily shaken off: these bonds are not soon broken.

*Remark 4.* Concerning the import of the repetition here, is, "That Christ's love to his people, and to their company, is so great, that he will bear with their *unthankfulness*, and carry on his suit, till he get their consent." If his first call will not do the turn, he will renew it; yea, if neither first nor second will do, he will triple it. So he does here, ver. 10, 13, 14. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* He will follow his bride till he bring her to himself, and make her claim her relation to him, and the old kindness, saying, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his; I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine*, Song ii. 16. chap. vi. 3. O Sirs! if we should get our will, every outcast between Christ and us would be an everlasting discord, and irreparable breach; every fit of darkness and discouragement, that we take, would sink us to the pit: but, glory to him, his love to us will not let him quit us so. If security be indulged by his people, he will not only follow them by repeated calls, as here he does, but he will pluck them out of the burning, saying, *Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* Zech. iii. 2. *He will famish all the gods of the earth, and make men worship every one from his place*, Zeph. ii. 11. He will bring his people into the wilderness, and there speak into their hearts, Hos. ii. 14.

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You have a notable word to churches and saints, that we should pray may be made out to both as they need, Ezek. xx. 32—37. *Ye have said, You will be as the heathen, to serve wood and stone; but that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all—I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. I will cause you to pass under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the covenant.* As if he had said, “You shall not get leave to make the apostasy you would gladly make; I will pluck you out of the burning, and reclaim you.” Again, as thus he deals with his church and children when in security; so when under discouragements she is saying, *Labour not to comfort me, I will weep bitterly,* Isa. xxii. 4. and as it is, Psal. lxxviii. 2. *My soul refused to be comforted;* it is even then in his heart to make out that word, Zech. iv. 10. *Despise not the day of small things, for they shall rejoice;* he undertakes that they will rejoice: though, through unbelief, they may be ready to cast out themselves as *castaways*; and though men too may presume to cast them out with a profane abuse of God’s name, saying, *Let the Lord be glorified;* yet *he will appear to their joy, and their persecutors shall be ashamed,* Isaiah lxvi. 5.

*Remark 5.* From the repetition of the call here, is, “That there is enough in Christ’s company to invite souls to get up and follow him.” Hence this exhortation, begun verse 10th, is now subjoined to the former motives; showing, there is a sweet spring he brings with him, to be enjoyed by them that will rise up and come away with him. Any other condition, compared with that of being in his company, is like a person drooping within doors, compared with being abroad in the open field, or in gardens among sweet smelling flowers. There is enough in Christ’s company, to out-bid all the vanities of time. Saul said to his servants, *Can the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?* 1 Sam. xvii. 7. What can this world give you, in comparison of that which is to be had in the company of Christ? The light of his coun-

countenance is preferable to all things else, and will give you a more glad heart than the world can have, when their *corn and wine increaseth*, P<sup>sa</sup>l. iv. 6, 7. In him there is enough, not only to make up all wants; but also to comfort against all sorrows: a drink of the blood of this vine will make a man, that has a heavy heart, to *forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more*, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.

*Remark 6.* “That opportunities of enjoying Christ’s company, and of a time of love, should not be *slighted*.” And therefore, when he brings a *sweet spring, a time of love, a time of the singing of birds, when the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*, the exhortation is again repeated, *Rise up, and come away*; that we may not quench the Spirit, and lose the opportunity, we should listen to the call: we will not always get a spring time; therefore, *To-day if we will hear his voice, let us not harden our hearts*. Let us *remember now the things that belong to our peace*. The enemy threw a trench about Jerusalem, and laid her even with the ground, because she knew not the time of her visitation, according to Christ’s words foretelling it, Luke xix. 43, 44. Precious seasons misimproved, and the greatest mercies neglected, leave the saddest guilt behind them; and when they are removed, men will be made to remember them with sorrow, for not improving them, Lam. i. 7. O may we, through grace, improve present mercies, present calls, considering our former *pleasant things*, that once we have had, and are stript off! and that the further abuse of present blessings we yet enjoy, may not be followed too with a sad after-game.

*Remark 2.* “That our Lord Jesus Christ wants that his people should have a *full feast* of love, and a comfortable enjoyment of him.” His heart is much set upon this; and therefore he calls them again and again to rise and come away with him, and share of the precious fruits of his purchase, to enjoy the benefits of the spring that he has brought with him, and to rejoice in his goodness, and in the fair weather that his presence makes. It is unbelief that makes the church to  
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figh and sob, when he is calling her to sing: this was the fault of Zion, Isa. xlix. 13, 14. When he is bidding all sing, saying, *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy on his afflicted;* but instead of that, Zion said, *The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me.* We should shake off the rags of discouragement and drooping, when the Lord calls us to put on our beautiful garments: for, as it is, Neh. viii. 10. *The joy of the Lord is your strength.* And it is a great sin, when Christ is kind, and when his gracious returns makes winters to vanish, and the spring to return, not to study encouragement and cheerfulness, in joining company with him at his repeated calls; *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Remark 8. "That it is a *pleasure and delight* to our Lord Jesus Christ to have his people with him, feeding and feasting upon the provision he has made for them." And this pleasure and delight he shows, both by the repeating of this call, and the repeating it in this manner; he does not bid her *rise and go*, and be refreshed with the spring; but *rise, and come away with me.* When he feasts his people, he feasts himself also with them, Song v. 1. *I am come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.* And thus, Song vii. from ver. 11th, when he and the bride goes out to the *village*, and to the *vineyards*, to view the *vines flourishing*, and the *tender grapes*, &c. it is a feast laid up by her for her Beloved. He loves then to go along with them and to feast them and himself both; and therefore importunes them to go along with him, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

V. The *fifth* thing proposed was, To deduce some inferences for the application of the subject.

Is it so, that *That the repeated call, and renewed invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to his drowsy and*

*disconsolate bride and people, whom he names his LOVE and his FAIR ONE, is, that they RISE, and COME AWAY with him?* Hence see,

1. That no *change of frame or condition* in God's people, and no change of his dealing with them, can alter the state of their persons before him. Whatever he has to say to them, and whatever he does to them, they are still his *love* and his *fair one*; whatever be between him and his bride, he speaks always in relative and affectionate terms, *My love, my sister, my spouse*, in several places through this Song. Yea, thus he speaks to her when she is fallen asleep, and ready to hold him out, when he calls to be let in, Song v. 2, 3. Why this? Even because he is an unchangeable God; *I am the Lord, I change not*; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed, Mal. iii. 6. And as he is unchangeable, so the marriage-relation between him and her is indissoluble, notwithstanding she has many faults that deserve reproof and correction, and though she meet with them both: let this, therefore be a cordial to the children of God, amidst the various lots and changes that time produces within you, or without you, that nothing shall be able to separate from his love: the faith of this would keep all fast in the greatest storm.

And is she still his *love* and his *fair one*? Why does she, through unbelief, daily lose the faith of her reconciled state, upon every change of her frame and condition? This is a great fault among believers. Though real guilt should found a quarrel between God and a saint; faults are things to be repented of and amended; they are things that may and will be reprov'd, and chasten'd of God: but still the relation stands; and faith should keep fast hold of it, saying, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his*. For where the faith of this relation is cast loose, upon falling into faults, and feeling of changes in God's way of dealing, the reproofs that should fall upon our corruption, to correct that; do light upon our grace to weaken it. We serve Satan's design, when we fall a razing the foundation of our state; while, instead of that, we should be mourning over our faults, and amending them: whereas when we  
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tamper with the foundation, and at the same time fall a mending our faults, we put away that which should fortify us, and encourage us to amend them: for, though God says, *There is hope in Israel concerning this thing*; yet unbelief says, *There is no hope*; all is gone, the foundation is fapt: then corruption is strengthened, grace is weakened, while the faith of this relation is dashed.

2. Hence see, that a *secure, sleepy, and up-sitten* case in the people of God, is very opposite to his *will* and their *well*. Christ is at vast pains, by his calls, to bring them out of that case, which tends so much to reproach *Christ* and *religion*: it says, in effect, that his consolations are small, that his allowances are little worth; it says, that he is a *barren wilderness*, and a *land of darkness*, Jer. ii. 31. Which makes us say, as in the following words, *We are lords, we will come no more unto thee*.—By this up-sitten case, professors bring a reproach upon *themselves*. They were sometime on their feet and alive, and now it may be said to them, *Where is the blessedness you spake of?* Gal. iv. 15. *Where is the sweetness you said you found in the Lord's way?* *Where is the gain of godliness, you made a great noise about?* *You did run well; who hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?* They bring a reproach on themselves, that have been active and diligent, and now are loitering. The children of God cannot expect to prosper in such an up-sitten way; God will *hedge up your way with thorns, that you shall not find your path*, Hos. ii. 6. It is the mercy of God's people, that they shall not prosper in a way of hardening themselves against God, and his word and rod. Meantime, their security stands in the way of many mercies, which otherwise they might enjoy: while they do not rise, and come away, they lose the benefit of the spring time of gospel-ordinances; the Lord is there, and they are not aware; he is shewing his glory, and they are sleeping it over: they loose many a sweet proof of God's love, and many a sweet hour that is between Christ and the lively uprisen believer, does the up-sitten soul

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3. Hence see, the wonderful *condescension* of the Lord Jesus, that he is at pains to give a kind visit to a secure and upstitten bride, lying drooping and idle within doors, that he should miss her company: and when, by her sin and security she is laid by from coming to him, yet he will come to her, and give her a call to rise, and come away to him. O how may we wonder at the constancy of his love amidst all his people's vicissitudes and changes, and estrangements of affection from him, that he breaks not up with us quite at every miscarriage, but is constant in his love, even to these in his family that are crushed and broken, and upstitten in security? O what encouragement lies in this, that we are prevented with his calls, as it was said to the blind man, Mark. x. 49. *Be of good comfort! rise, he calls thee*; They who would willingly get up to their feet, may read a strong encouragement from a preventing call of God to them, to rise, and come away. Why, he that is able to draw you to him, is showing his will to have you with him, by letting down this cord of love, wrapt about this repeated invitation, *Rise, my love; rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*. O poor souls, do not suspect his love, though you be under a temptation to sit still, and resist his call; for here you see, that even she would fain have lain still, saying, in effect, I cannot rise; and she, who, in the following verse, would gladly have hid herself in the *clefts of the rocks, and secret places of the stairs*, is yet invited to come forth and show herself: however black and vile she is in herself, and in her own eyes, and however ill set in her mind against the call, yet she is encouraged with an *O my dove*, and here with an *O my love, my fair one; rise, and come away*. O see and admire his wonderful condescension, designed to conquer you!

4. Hence see, that the children of grace have good reason to *lean unto* and *rely upon* the words of grace, that proceed out of Christ's mouth; and to depend upon the expressions of his love and esteem, seeing he never takes back his word, but repeats it: and as he



repeats these commendations frequently, so we should think and ruminare upon them frequently. He spares not to call her his *love*, and his *fair one*; O Sirs, we should not spare to think upon that, so as thereby to be led, not only to admire his condescension, and wonder at his esteem of them who are nothing, yea, less and worse than nothing; but also to be conformed and confirmed in the faith of it. He that *knows all things*, knows what we are in ourselves, even vile treacherous ones, that *played the harlot with many lovers*; yet he that knows all things, knows what we are in him, and in his love and esteem, that courts us back again to him, not with a single word only, saying, *Return, for I am married to you*; but with so many repeated calls, *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return*; with so many expressions of his loving-kindness, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*. O could we read the kindness of his heart, in the kind repetition of his words, our hearts would be caught with his loving-kindness!

5. Hence see ground to *justify God* when matters go not well with his church and people, and when he seems not to deal kindly, but severely with them: surely he takes no delight in striking them; the strokes are forced from him, by their slighting his kindness, who seeks so earnestly the prosperity and welfare of his people. He sometimes says of the visible church, *What could I have done more to to my vineyard?* Isa. v. 3, 4. His outward pains with them, and his repeated calls to them to come to him, will not only justify him, but show that their destruction is of themselves, Hos. xiii. 9. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*; and that, therefore, instead of murmuring and quarrelling him and his providence when sad things befall us, we should mourn over ourselves and our provocations: and it may aggravate our sorrow, that we have not him and his kindness to blame, but our own rebellion against his kind calls and invitations; for he may justly say to us, as he did, Matth. xxiii. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which*  
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are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Many calls has God given to the professors of Scotland, and particularly to some that seem eminent professors, by some of his servants; and for which of these, may it not be said, do they now stone them with slanders, and kill them in their offices and characters? But who knows what desolation will be the issue? *Behold your house is left unto you desolate.* But withal, seeing Christ is so instant and serious in seeking again and again the welfare of his people, how should this encourage and excite them to be serious and instant in promoting the same design? You that are serious, either in praying for the peace of Jerusalem, or for your own true welfare, you may be encouraged herein from this, that you have one joining with you, that is serious and instant in promoting the same design with you; for, would you have a character of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is one that *takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*, Psal. xxxv. 27. more than you can take; and he taking pleasure in it, will promote that design in which you take part with him; yea, our Lord *takes pleasure in his people*, Psalm cxlix. 4. And what follows? *He will beautify the meek with salvation*: he will make it visible and evident, in some adorning proofs of his love to them, that carry on the same design with him. We have reason then to justify him when he strikes, because his heaviest rod comes to resent our slighting of his kindness; and we have reason and encouragement to plead for his pity and favour, because this is what he takes pleasure to show.

6. Hence see what great need the children of God have to take care how they draw on upon themselves the bonds of *security* or *discouragement*, seeing nothing but Christ's word of power repeated can break these bands of death and disorder. Little do God's people consider, that when they give way to these evils, they not only sin against God, but make chains for their own neck, and setters for their own feet, that will not be got easily broken. Yea, God may give up his people to take their fill of carnal security, when they give way

way to it, and to discouragements; to try that trade which they have chosen; and though no judicial plague be inflicted, yet these bonds are fearful bindings, and may make you go many days with a bowed down back. However, let it commend the mercy of Christ to you, that ever he brake such bonds; for it was not so great a wonder that the Babylonish captivity came to a period, that the *captives of the mighty should be taken away*, and the *prey of the terrible should be delivered*, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. as to see the bands of security and discouragement broken off, and to see the *weak hand strengthened*, and the *feeble knee confirmed*, Isa. xxxv. 3. O how should it be looked on as a matchless mercy, when as the Lord plucked Lot out of Sodom, he plucks any poor soul out of the bands of security, out of the pit, the horrible pit of darkness and discouragement, and out of the miry clay of corruption, wherein they are sunk, and that he shews such good-will to this work; *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!*

7. Hence see, if Christ thus follows his people with call upon call, till he get their consent; as we would beware of abusing this, by lying by (without *firring up ourselves to take hold of him*, as the word is, Isa. lxiv. 7. by neglecting the means, the word, sacrament, and prayer) till he prevail with us, whether we will or not; for, this is to abuse his goodness, that should lead us to lay hold upon him; so it may teach the Lord's people the *folly* of their wandering: for, seeing he will reclaim them from their wandering, it is surely great folly to sit his summons that he is giving them, to rise and come away; because, by sitting his summons, they lay a foundation for more sorrow than yet has befallen them, before he bring them back again; for, *their sorrow shall be multiplied, while they follow after other gods*, and multiplied more and more, till they be willingly disposed to return to their first Husband: yea, they may come to see, what an evil and bitter thing their apostasy was, when he recovers them. And, indeed, we may say, O how great is the mercy showed to them in whose hands apostasy thrives not! O what a  
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proof of love is in that, when, though they walk on *frowardly in the ways of their own heart*, notwithstanding his being wroth, and smiting, and hiding himself; yet *he sees their ways and heals them!* O! is there not here some encouraging ground of hope of recovery out of a case that is hopeless in itself; that when you are laid by, he has not done with you; and that, like *Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not, she shall come again from the land of her captivity; and there is hope in her end*, Jerem. xxxi. 15, 16, 17. O what encouragement is in this, that irrecoverable conditions may be recovered, and helpless cases helped by him! O how should it endear Christ to us, and how should his kindness be magnified that bears thus with the untowardness of his people, and will not leave off dealing with them, till he get their consent, but will help self-destroyers, saying, *In me is thy help!* Though thou hast been doing all thou canst to undo thyself; yet I will not suffer thee thus to ruin thyself: Come, come, then; *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

8. Hence see, (omitting many other inferences,) that our Lord Jesus allows no *objections* to be made against his calls and invitations, and will admit no *excuse*, nor will accept of any *refusal* at the hands either of sinners or saints whom he courts this day: he will be so far from allowing any objection, admitting any excuse, or accepting of any refusals of his repeated calls and renewed invitations, that the final refuser and rejecter thereof shall perish; for, *he that believes not, shall be damned*: he that now calls, saying, *Come to me, and be blessed*; shall say to the refusers, *Depart from me, ye cursed*; and will frown them down to the pit of perdition, and frown upon them for ever! But the day of judgment is not yet, it is to come; the day of grace is present, wherein the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; and that voice is saying, *Come, come; Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Let me, therefore, before I close, urge this *exhortation* upon sinners and saints.

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*1st*, Upon *sinners*, who never yet came to our Beloved, to be joined in marriage with this wonderful match, but have sitted all the numerous calls and offers of his love and grace to this day, and remain at a total distance from Christ, and never rose up to come at his call, To you I would say, what God says, Eph. v. 15. *Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* For motives to excite your compliance, know and consider,

1. You are certainly sleeping in the arms of some idol or other; *Your hearts are going out after your lovers, and you forget me, saith the Lord*, Hof. ii. 13. You are surely married to something else: either to the world, to sin, or Satan. And alas! it is a black bargain, to be married to the devil, the *god of this world*, that is bewitching you with the lusts of the world! He is a black husband for you. You cannot live in this world, without being wedded to some thing or other. But,

2. Consider, a *King* from heaven makes suit for your love; a *great King*, who has upon his *vesture and thigh a name written, KING of kings, and LORD of lords*; even the *King of glory, the Lord of glory*, Psal. xxlv. 10. He is pleading with you to rise up, and come away, and match with him who is the *Lord of life*.

3. Consider, that if you keep at a distance from him, you shall *die in your sins*; for, you are not only dead in law, but dying sinners, ready to die the second death; your damnation is every day nearer and nearer! the sentence of death is already past by the law; *He that believeth not is condemned already*.

4. Consider, that there is *life* to be had in Christ; the life of grace here, and of glory hereafter: it is all in him to be communicated to dead sinners; and even dead sinners are called to rise out of their graves, as Lazarus, and come away to Christ. It is no absurdity to tell you, that the God who quickens the dead, calls you to rise out of that dead state, and come to him, that complains on sinners, saying, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* He that calls you

can make the call effectual; and we order you to come at his call, and rise at his command. It is necessary you believe that it is God who calls you, saying, *Look unto me, and be saved, for I am God*; and that is Christ who invites you, saying, *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*. Some have been quickened with such a word as that, *The Master is come, and calls for you*: the Master calls you, the Lord of life calls you.

5. Consider, that though this may be the *last* call you shall get, yet it is not the *first* you have got; he has called you again and again: and to show his good-will to men on the earth, and his good-will to the worst of sinners in this company, the repetition of the text is another call to you; he is renewing his calls, that you may believe. I allude to that word, Exodus iv. 8. where it is said, *If they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign; they will believe the voice of the latter sign*. Well, if you have not come at the voice of the first; then will you come at the voice of the latter call? He is renewing his call to *backsliding* sinners; *Return, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you*, Jer. iii. 12. To the *straying* sinner, that has *played the harlot with many lovers*, ver. 1. To the most *polluted* sinner, whose sins are of a deep dye, *as scarlet and crimson*, Isa. i. 18. To the *eldest* sinner here, to whom he may be saying, *Forty years long have I been grieved with you in this generation*; yet now, *to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*. God has dealt with some here it may be twenty, thirty, forty, and it may be sixty years; and you have one offer more, and then it may be the door of mercy may be shut. Therefore, take this caution, because Christ continues to call, take heed you do not continue to refuse; renewed calls are doubled mercies, but renewed refusals are tripled sins. It is dangerous, if Christ should pass by you, without giving you a call; but it is more dangerous if you pass by him, and refuse his call, when he comes to give and renew it. Take heed also of this, that because you have enjoyed many offers,

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ware of presuming you shall have more. Christ has said to some, *How often would I have gathered you, to share of my bounties, and you would not? but now they are hid from your eyes.*

6. Consider, that Christ's calls to you admit of no excuse, drawn either from your present circumstances, or the present times.

[1.] As to your *present circumstances*. If any sinners here, that never came to Christ before, understand the present circumstances that they are in, namely, That they are *without God, and without Christ*, undone and unconverted, it is possible they may think this call cannot be to them; because the tenor of it is, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*: and how can these titles be given to such as cannot be named, either *his love, or his fair one?* and therefore the call cannot be to me. To this it might be replied, Though this call be properly to *believers, and converted ones*, that are married to Christ, to return to their Husband, Christ Jesus; yet, consider,

(1.) That as Christ may be called, and is really the *Head and Husband* of the *visible church*, that are by profession and federally married unto him, which relation Christ frequently owns, as Jer. iii. 14. speaks of their departure from him, to other lovers, as a real adultery, which declares a real marriage between him and them, even though most of them were never savingly united to Christ; so, when God is pleased to own the relation, and not to put a bill of divorce into their hands, he may speak to them lovingly in the terms that are suitable to that relation: for, though these terms, *My love, my fair one*, are unsuitable to them as they are vile *harlots*, committing adultery with other lovers; yet, they may be suitably applied to them, as they are his *bride*, especially when he is courting them back to him, saying, *Return, for I am married to you, though you have scattered your ways to strangers, under every green tree, and have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord: return, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you*, Jerem. iii. 13, 14. It is one thing what a visible church may be called, as to their *moral characters*, namely, *back-*

*sliders and harlots*, as in the scripture here cited; and it is another thing what they may be called as to their *married relation*, or as the bride of Christ, that in this respect is *his love*, and *his fair and spotless one*: hence he is said, to *behold no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel*, Numb. xxii. 21.; and yet it was their character, a *stiff-necked and rebellious people*, as their fathers had been. God, as a loving husband, will see no faults in his bride; but overlooks them, and courts her, with a *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away*.

(2.) Though you cannot be called *his love*, and *his fair one*, while, and as you are in a state of black nature and unregeneracy; yet God has two glasses thro' which he looks to sinners; the one is his *law-glass*; and in that he sees them to be what they are in themselves, *Transgressors from the womb*, and calls them *children of disobedience*, and *children of wrath*. The other is a *gospel-glass*; that is, the glass of his own grace and goodness through Jesus Christ, in which he sees you to be what you are, in his present desire and design by this call; and calls you by what he wills you to be, even *his love*, and *his fair one*. They are titles of serious courtship, showing both what you *should be*, namely, his *lovers* and his *beauties*; and what you *shall be*, if you be brought to take with these titles, and so believe his love and kindness therein, and be drawn with these cords of love. What was his purpose from eternity is none of your immediate concern, till once you fall in with his revealed will, and present design, in courting you in these kindly terms. He is not flattering you with fair words, nor needs he, but is in good earnest calling you to him, as death and judgment will be in good earnest shortly with you; and if you cannot take with such kindly calls and invitations, nor believe *his good will towards men on earth*, and towards you in particular; but remain an enemy to him, because you look upon him as an enemy to you; your ruin will be of yourself, and of your own enmity and unbelief. But if you can hear him saying, even to you in particular, *Rise, my love, my fair one,*  
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and come away, and wonder at such kindly words of God to such a polluted creature as you; for this is not the manner of men, but the manner of God, to catch the hearts of rebels with kindness; and if your heart be touched, and taken, and drawn towards him, whose name is *Wonderful*, and that by the means of such love-cords, then you may come to see there was need of such strong expressions of love and esteem of you, to gain your love and esteem of him: and may come to see also, by falling in with his promise, desire, and design by this call, what was his eternal purpose before the world began; for now, being drawn by this cord of love, the decree is declared, Jer. xxxi. 3. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness will I draw thee.*

He allows, therefore, no soul here to object against his call, from their present circumstances, as if they were excluded by these titles, *My love, my fair one, rise, and come away*; for even in these terms he calls all and every one, and you in particular, that cannot think them applicable to you, that are so vile and black like hell; *To you, O man, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men.* If I should design you by the name you deserve, and by no other name, I would frighten you away from me, but I invite you by names that show my love to you, and my desire towards you, and your eternal happiness and welfare, however these names do not become you to have, yet they become me to give in sovereign favour to you; therefore, let me allure you, *Rise then, my love, my fair one, and come away.* Make no objections, therefore, from your present state and circumstances; nor yet,

[2.] From the *present time.* If any sinner here says, This is not the *fit* time; let them remember, the call here is in the *present* time: *Rise my love*: this is the call of Christ from heaven to you to-day; remember, therefore, that every moment's delay to come to Christ, is an *affront* done to him, as if his will was not to be regarded, nor his company worth your while. Remember also, that every moment's delay of coming to him, makes you the more unfit to come; therefore,

it is that the call is here repeated, *Rise, rise; come away*: which imports haste. Delays here are the most dangerous delays; for none knows what a day may bring forth: life is passing away, time is running, death and judgment are halting on, eternity is at the door, the present season is the gospel spring-time, the winter is past, the legal dispensation over, Christ is come and away again, but he has sent his Spirit to call you to come after him: the voice of the turtle is heard: now is the time: all impediments are removed; the way is paved, the law, and justice, and holiness of God are satisfied, by the doing and dying of him that now calls you to rise. O sinners, come to a Saviour; rise and come, for he calls you: though you were the vilest sinner on earth, if he calls you, even you *his love*, and *his fair one*, he calls you nothing but what he will instantly make you to be, whenever your heart listens to his call, and comes away to him: you shall no sooner have a heart to rise and come to him, but that moment you are *his love*, and *his fair one*, though you was as black as hell before: he is the God that *quickens the dead*, and *calls things that are not as though they were*, Rom. iv. 17. And he has no more ado to make you *his love*, and *his fair one*; but to call you so: *I will call them my people, that were not my people, and her beloved, that was not beloved*, Romans xi. 25. Therefore, give way to the word of God, and it shall be a word of power; let him call you *his love*, and *his fair one*, and welcome his change of names; his powerful call can soon rattle hell, and herry the devil's nest, and make it a holy temple for himself. And now, if your heart and soul gives way to these alluring names and designations, with an "Even so be it, Lord; let me be thy love and fair one, according to thy word; then I am sure your heart will give way also to his exhortations, that accompany these sweet names, *Arise, and come away*. You will not be able to resist his love; but be ready to resign yourself to it, saying, "Lord, seeing such love and grace towards the most unlovely come wholly of thyself, the power also is wholly  
 " thine;

“thine; therefore, Lord, *Draw me, and I will run; raise me, and I will rise; help me, and I will come away.*” Well, if even in this way he makes you willing, he makes you welcome too; for, *Him that cometh to me, says Christ, I will in no wise cast out.*

2dly, I come now to urge this call upon *saints*, that have some time a day been raised and quickened by the voice of Christ, and the grace of the gospel; but now are fallen under security or discouragements, by reason of some weary winters that have past over them, and some nipping storms of sad dispensations without, and deadness and carnality within, that have brought on a dreadful decay; so as they are not what they have been, either as to the lively exercise of grace, or the lovely diligence of duty, that some time formerly took place: *How is your gold become dim, and your most fine gold changed!* Your case, now it is like, is a weary case, a winter case, a withered case, so as you are quit laid by; that you cannot *rise*, but are lying among the pots, and loitering in security: well, this call comes particularly to you, poor souls; and it is the call of your loving Lord, saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

He that has formerly called and quickened you by such a kindly invitation, is now repeating and renewing his call, that you may renew your old acquaintance with him, and regain that communion and fellowship with him, which you have been deprived of, since you fell into such a sad and upfitten case; his repeated call then to you is, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.* O poor believer, that art in such a drooping and upfitten case, I call you, in his great name, to rise and come away to him, and then to his table. In order to persuade you to this, consider,

1. None else can *remedy* your case; who can help you? who can ease you? but he that says, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Mat. xi. 28.

2. Consider, that the *love* of Christ is still the same to thee that ever it was. There is still the same love  
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in his heart, whatever frowns have been or are in his dispensations; and whatever changes have been in your case and frame, yet he has never changed your name; notwithstanding all your faults and follies, you are still *his love* and *his fair one*; therefore, he calls you thus, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

3. Consider, that you are expressly called by your *marriage name* to communion and fellowship with him, as his bride, the Lamb's wife, saying, *Return, for I am married unto you.* It is true, there is a relation between Christ and the visible church, as he is their Head and Husband, as I said above; but this general marriage-covenant and relation infers no saving benefit to any, but such as make particular application thereof to themselves, which is done when God makes a soul to lay claim to God, as his God and Father; or to Christ, as his Head and Husband. I name two instances of this particular application of that general relation, whereby the special relation is constituted; one is, Jer. iii. 19. *How shall I put thee among the children?* &c. God only can answer the question, and he does it in the following words, *Thou shalt call me Father, and shalt not turn away from me.* Another instance is, Hof. ii. 16. *And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, thou shalt call me, ISHI; that is, my Husband; or as it may be read, my MAN: O wonderful homely appropriation of faith here, that makes of God man, my man, my Husband: thou shalt call me ISHI.* To the same purpose it is said, in the last verse of that same second chapter of Hosea, *I will say unto them that were not my people, Thou art my God.* This is once and again said, by the church in this book of the Song, *My beloved is mine, and I am his; I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine,* Song ii. 16. chap. iii. 6. Now, believer, his calling you to rise and come away to him by that name, *My love, my fair one,* is a call to fellowship with him as one married unto you, not only in a general, but in a particular and special manner, by your having given your heart and hand to him, some time a day, and your having called him by faith your own *God*, yea, your own *Man*, your own  
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*Husband*, your own and only *Beloved*; and now, tho' you have been by a whorish heart, playing the harlot with other lovers, and laying yourself by from fellowship with him; yet in infinite kindness and pity towards you, he wants you to *return to your first husband*, for then it was better with you, than since you left his company.

4. Consider, that our Lord Jesus is *instant* and *earnest* in showing himself to be so; not only by repeating and renewing his call, but also urging and pressing it with the strongest motives and arguments, drawn from the sweetness of the season, that he brings along with him, when he comes to court you back to him: see these from the tenth verse of this chapter where the text is; and they are every way suited to the remedying of your sad circumstances. And,

(1.) Are you a *frighted* bride, that has been terrified with the dangers of the dismal winters that have gone over your head? Then, behold, he brings *safety* with him, saying, *Lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone*; therefore, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*.

(2.) Are you a *black* bride, all deformed and withered? Then, behold! he brings *beauty* with him; therefore, he says, *The flowers appear on the earth*: the flourishing beauty of holiness comes along with him when he comes; therefore, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*.

(3.) Are you a *dejected* and *down-cast* bride, sunk in the depths of melancholly? Behold! he brings *joy* and *melodious music* with him; therefore it follows, *The time of the singing of birds is come*; and *the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*: here is the joyful sound; therefore, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*.

(4.) Are you a *barren* bride, like a barren tree that has fallen into a decay, and has lost its sap and substance? behold, he brings *fruit* with him, and *greenness* and *favoryness* to these that have lost their former freshness and fragrancy; for, behold! *The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs*; and *the vines with the tender grapes, give a good smell*: *Rise then, my love, my fair*

*one, and come away* with me to share of the blessings and benefits I bring along with me.—Thus our Lord is urging you with arguments, that answers all the great needs and sad cases that your soul can be in.

Therefore know, believer, that he allows no objection to be made against your yielding to his earnest call, and loving invitation. Object not then the badness of the time, or the *sadness* of the season; for our Lord brings a spring-time with him, as appears in all these parts of the description of the gospel-spring. O! he can make a sweet spring in the heart, and that in the very midst of winter, though it should be just now a dead winter case with you: is it not enough to make instantly a pleasant heartsome spring, for him to say, *Rise, my love; for, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the storm of law curses, and the shower of God's wrath is over your head, and it has lighted upon my head with a vengeance, that you might escape? Rise then, my love.*—Again, object not that others are giving you no example, but lying in carnal security, as well as you. Let this be no excuse to you; for the call here, (as has been formerly observed to run in the original,) is, *Rise up FOR THYSELF*, ver. 10. Every one is to rise up and come away for himself, tho' none should join you; though no-body should rise up with you, yet say thou with Joshua, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* The multitude of sleepers will not be a shelter to any that follow the croud in that woful trade. Yea, though other wise virgins, as well as the foolish, be slumbering and sleeping at this day, the more need you have to be awake: *Rise up for thyself*, and for thy own *profit and advantage*, which the word also imports. It is thy interest and happiness to rise up and come away to Christ.—Again, object not that you are but a *single one* by yourself; can he be speaking to me? Yea, man, woman, to thee, even to thee he is speaking. Though Christ speaks to all and every one that is here, yet he sometimes has a secret word to one soul by itself, as he had to the woman of Samaria by herself: yea, when he is speaking to thousands

sands at once; yet he is sometimes speaking to the heart of one among them; and only to the ear of the rest. However, though thou art one by thyself, yet he is speaking to thee in the singular number, *my love, my fair one*; and calling thee by name, a poor and pitiful one, that has been *lying among the pots*, but thou shalt be *like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold*; therefore, *Rise, my dove, my love, my fair one*: it is thee I am wanting to have, and I will by no means want thee; *Rise up, and come away*.—Again, object not against coming to him, because of the *former slights* you have put upon him; for he makes not that, nor any other objection against you; and therefore is renewing and repeating his call.—Make not your present security and discouragement an objection; for the call is to you to arise out of that case: he wants to deliver you out of that horrible pit and miry clay—Object not, that he has no *favour or kindness* for thee, when he is saying the contrary; *Rise, my love*.—Object not against coming, because of your *deformity and defilement*, when he is saying, *Rise, my fair one*. O happy soul that art black in thine own eyes but comely in Christ's eye!—Object not, that your sin has broken up the *relation* between him and you; when yet he is claiming the relation over and over again; *My love, my fair one; Rise, and come away*.—Object not, that you *cannot* rise and go to him; for, he is not calling you to rise and go your alone, but his call is, *Rise and come away with me*, in my company, and by my help to be continually with me, that I may hold thee by thy right-hand.

O then, Sirs, has his word captivated your heart? has his kindly call made your heart rise out of the hollow and depths you were in, out of the damps and discouragements you was under, and made you glad at the heart, at the bottom of your soul, to rise and come away with him, that is such a mighty Lord, and such a matchless Lover? Then his next call to you is to come and take your Supper with him, that you may *sup with him*, and *be with you* at his table, to which he invites

you; not to go without him, but to come away hand in hand with him: for still his sweet call is, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*



## A

## PART OF THE DISCOURSE .

## BEFORE THE

## SERVING OF THE TABLES.

**M**Y friends, our kind Lord has been courting the hearts of sinners here, to come with him, and share of the great benefits of redemption purchased by his blood: which benefits are represented in the context, as I formerly observed, by the blessings of the spring; and are laid out as so many arguments to move souls to embrace that glorious Lover, who is the Father's Beloved, and the Church's Beloved. Some souls I hope, are gained; and some hearts have been by his kindly call quickened, who before were dead in sins and trespasses; and quickened to an ardent desire to rise at his kindly call, and to come away with him, and to bid farewell to all other Lords and Lovers: these are to be invited to the table of communion and fellowship with him.

But there is a generation of rejecters of Christ, whose hearts were never moved, with any of his sweet and kindly calls, to rise out of their beds of sin and sloth, and to come away with Christ, and chuse his company; but on the contrary, chuse rather to stay away from him, and to maintain fellowship with his enemies, these base lusts and idols; these must be excluded from the table of the Lord; for it is said, 1 Cor. x. 20, 21. *Ye cannot have fellowship with God, and fellowship with the devil; ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table*  
of



of devils : And therefore in the Lord's name, we excommunicate all the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, who show their enmity, by their disobedience to the call of the gospel, and consequently to all the commands of the law : more particularly, we exclude all impenitent breakers of any of the ten commands, such as, &c. In a word, all the flighters of that great command of God, 1 John iii. 23. that we should *believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another* ; these have no right to the Lord's table, that are not Lovers of God, and of his saints, and that are not disapprovers of sin in sinners, in saints and in themselves. These that are approvers of personal, national, public, private, or secret sins : these ought to be excluded, that are approvers of the corruptions and defections of the Judicatories at this day on the one hand, and approvers of the delusions and disorders of new Separatists on the other hand. [And sure they exclude themselves from this communion-table, that are approvers of the pretended and profane censures and sentences past against a number of *ministers and elders*, because of their maintaining of their *old Reformation and Revolution principles and profession*, and adhering to the *true religion presently professed and authorized by the law in this land*. The approvers of these sinful sentences, founded upon libels of lies and calumnies, what are they doing but rashly and ignorantly crucifying Christ in his members, killing the prophets and stoning these that are sent to them, fiercely thrusting their old ministers and messengers of Christ, through the heart, with drawn swords of rage and reproach, and dipping their hands in the blood of their sacred ministry, under pretence of doing God service, and under the conduct of some leaders that cause them to err, and leaders that are not able to answer the public refutations of their horrid extravagancies ; and far less will ever be able to answer to God and conscience for their conduct ? Our hearts should pity the poor weaklings of the flock of Christ, that are caught in these deceitful snares ; and we pray the Lord may re-

store and recover them from these crooked ways, to which they have turned aside; and that the Lord may avert the awful and desolating judgments that such dreadful profanation of the name of God, under the mask of zeal, doth portend\*.] But we use to sum up the doctrinal excommunication, by reading some catalogues of such whom God excludes; such as, Rom. i. 29,—31. Gal. v. 19,—21.

But, on the other hand, we come to invite the friends of Christ, to whom he says, *Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved*: and I call them all friends of Christ, whatever they have been before, who have, through grace, been made to answer Christ's call and invitation, saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away*. You know, that as Christ calls his people by opening their eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; so the manner of his calling is, 1. *Externally*, by ministers, ordinances, and providences. 2. *Internally*, by his Spirit, when he speaks to their hearts, which he does by four ways. (1.) By *conviction* of sin and misery. (2.) By *illumination* of a God in Christ, the Saviour. (3.) By *excitation*, and raising the soul to spiritual life. (4.) By *determination*, inclining and enabling the quickened soul to rise actively and come voluntarily at his call, with a *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief*. Lord, I come at thy call; O help me up, and draw me to thee.

I offer a few of the *marks* and *properties* of the call, when it is effectual, that believers in Christ, and comers to him, may know that they are so; and may be distinguished from these that are excluded.

1. The call has been a *preventing* call: when you was in a sad and dismal case, and when you was ready to think all hope was gone; yet he prevented you mercifully with the  *blessing of his goodness*, Psal. xxi. 3.

2. It is a *particular* call he gives you, like that of Christ to Mary, John xi. 28. *The master is come, and*

\* This matter may be seen more fully laid open above, Vol. VII. p. 470, 484.

calleth for thee. He calls his sheep by name, and leads them out, John x. 3.

3. It is a *penetrating* call, that pierces the heart, and moves the bowels, Song v. 4. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him; or, moved in me, as it may be read.*

4. It is a *discernable* call; the believer can distinguish it from all other calls; *My sheep know my voice, says Christ, and they follow me, John x. 4. 5. They know not the voice of strangers, so as to follow them; they know the difference between his voice and theirs: his call makes them say, The voice of my Beloved! Behold, he cometh!*

5. It is a *conquering* call; it reaches farther than the ear: the drowsy soul is awakened with it; the hard and stony heart is sweetly wounded and kindly melted with it, according to the promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* The hard stone is softened, and the rebellious will is conquered and captivated; for, the weapons of the gospel warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 4 5. And hence,

6. It is a *quicken*ing and *enliven*ing call; *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1.* This call brings life and warmth to the soul, that was dead and cold. It is true, great partial deadness and coldness may be contracted after this quickening and warming call, and that to such a degree, as nothing but like a *swinking flax* may be to the fore; yet it is what our Lord Jesus will not quench, but quickens again by his repeated calls †.

And now, you that have been thus called effectually to himself, he calls you again to his table, saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.* O wonder men and angels! that his language to a loveless bride should

† The Reader will find several other properties of the effectual call which Christ gives, by consulting, p. 117, 132.

be, *Rise, my love*; and his language to a black bride, *Rise, my fair one!* O can you find in your hearts to resist such a kind and wonderful call, accompanying his sweet command, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Come with an *appetite*; he *satisfies the longing soul.* Come with *boldness*, like the King's bride. Come *affectionately*; all lovely things are in him. Come with *hope and expectation*; he is a God in Christ.

Remember, withal, he is not calling you to rise and go alone, or upon your own legs that are but lame; nay, he is calling you to rise and come away with him: he is ready to *gather you with his arms*, and *carry you in his bosom*, Isa. xl. 11.; and therefore, just allow him to take you in his arms to his table. Why, say you; what mean you by allowing him? Or, how shall I manifest my allowance? O shew it, 1. By not *resisting* him; for your wicked hearts are ready always to *resist the Holy Ghost*, and his holy motions. 2. Show it more actively, by inviting him in to your heart, saying, *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord*; *wherefore standest thou without doors*, knocking and calling? Open the everlasting doors, and come in thou King of glory. Well, do you allow him thus, and would you be glad at your hearts to be carried in his arms? Why, he wants no more but your heart and hand: though your heart be a *worthless* heart, and your hand a *withered* hand; yet his day of power has made you willing, and given you a willing heart to stretch forth the withered hand: therefore, be your heart never so worthless, and your hand never so withered, he is bidding you welcome, welcome; welcome, with a thousand good wills; and saying, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*



T H E

## D I S C O U R S E

A T T H E

S E R V I C E O F T H E F I R S T T A B L E.

**N**OW, communicants, I hope your coming here to this table is the effect of Christ's calling you first to himself; and then to his table, by his word and Spirit. Has he courted you with his kindness? Has he said to you, *Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away,* and drawn you so as to cast the marriage-knot between Christ and you? Why then, it is fit you share of the marriage feast; and now he is ready to feed your soul with wonders of the most substantial nature. There are three great wonders that eternity will never unriddle, and they are all to be seen in this sacramental table:

1. That God feeds our *bodies* with bread, and our *souls* with the flesh and blood of his own Son. O! how he loved you, to give you his own flesh!

2. The next wonder is, That his love was *stronger than death*: for, love held him on the cross, when death could not hold him in the grave: he burnt between two fires; the fire of his love and affection for us, and the fire of his suffering and affliction for us; yea, all the wrath of God could not quench this love,

3. The third wonder is, That he should *die* for us, when on earth, and *nourish* or *feed* us, with himself now when he is in heaven. O! wonder that the *author of life* should become the *bread of life*. The sacrament is the shadow and representation of these substantial things: it is the *presence* of things distant, the *sight*

of things absent, and a *taste* of things inconceivable. O the miracles of Christ's love, that is now represented under these elements!

In the same night wherein Christ was betrayed, he left us a supper to feed upon, till he should come again; *He took bread, and having blessed it, he brake it, &c.* That God should dwell in flesh, and that this flesh should be our food, is wonderful; yea, that he should do more than die for us; for he not only desired to die for us, when he had this bloody *baptism to be baptized with*, and *was straitened till it was accomplished*; but he also desired to live for us, and to live for ever in heaven for us. O Sirs, there was never such a fire of love in any breast! O! who can freeze and be cold over such a fire! Ah! our carnality, that spends our thoughts so much upon other things, who have such a Saviour to take them up.

Here is not only his flesh to eat, but his blood to drink: *After supper he took the cup, &c.* O what love was this, to take the cup of trembling and wrath, that he might give you the cup of mercy and blessing! O his loving work flowed from his loving heart; and his loving heart vented itself also in loving words! What a wonder is it, that ever his love should have made him call the like of you *his love*, and *his fair one*; you a spotted leopard, a black Ethiopian, yet his love, his fair one, his beautiful and comely bride; when he makes you comely, through his comeliness, and beautiful through his beauty put upon you, and looks to you, not through the glass of your vile and sinful nature, but the glass of his own grace and love! And since he, by a miracle of grace and condescension, calls you his *love*, his *fair one*, his beautiful bride; O tell me, what should you call him? What names does he deserve at your hand? O Sirs, may you not call him your fair, fair, fair, infinitely fair Head and Husband? Ought you not to call him what he calls himself, by virtue of the marriage-relation between him and you, which you are now getting the seal of, Isa. liv. 5. *Thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel,*  
*the*

*the God of the whole earth shall be called!* Here is a wonder in every word, as that text may be read, and particularly five wonders for your faith to feed with wonder upon. 1. Thy *Maker* is thy Husband, there is one wonder. 2. The *Lord of hosts* is thy Husband; there is another wonder. 3. Thy *Redeemer* is thy Husband; there is a third wonder. 4. The *Holy one of Israel* is thy Husband; there is a fourth wonder. 5. The *God of the whole earth* is thy Husband; there is a fifth wonder. O believer, why does he claim his marriage-relation to you, by so many names, may you say? I answer it is partly to prevent your *fear* and *jealousy*; partly to show what *great things* you have to expect from him, that is clothed with all glorious perfections; and and partly to magnify his *condescension* in coming under this relation to mortal worms. But if you ask again, wherein lies the wonder? Why,

1. *Thy Maker is thy Husband*: Where is the wonder here? Why, he that brought thee out of nothing, and breathed into thee the breath of life, and made thee a living soul, capable to enjoy himself; O astonishing! He that made thee, has become thy Husband: he that advanced thee from nothing to a rational being, and after thou hadst made thyself worse than nothing by thy sin, he made thee over again a new creature, and matched with thee: it is great for a servant to match with her master: but for a creature to match with his Maker, O! *What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?*

2. *The Lord of hosts is thy Husband*: he that is Lord of all the hosts of angels, another sort of beings than man; he that is Lord of all power, and commands, so as the winds and seas obey him; he that can raise children to himself elsewhere, though he had destroyed all the posterity of fallen men; yet he has matched with thee; though he is a God of infinite power, to whom are subject all the hosts of men and devils, O the wonder!

3. *Thy Maker is thy Husband*. Who is that? Even he that has all grace to bestow, and has thought good to bestow it on the like of you and me, by whom he can never be the better; he that has all *merit*, and has

bought you with his blood, and bought your beautiful robes, wherein he sees you to be his love, and his fair one, and loved you when lying in your blood.

4. *The holy One of Israel is thy Husband.* What is that? O! it is even he that cannot look upon sin, but is of purer eyes than to behold it; and he that cannot dwell with sinners, but of whom it is said, *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee*, Psalm v. 4. God and Belial cannot dwell together; yet he dwells with men, and sanctifies them for himself.

5. *The God of the whole earth is thy Husband.* He that has all things to give, and puts down one, and puts up another; he that has all things at his command and nod, and that needs none of our services or sacrifices; to whom all nations are but as the drop of a bucket, and as the small dust in the ballance; who sits upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him; and of whom it is said, *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*. This God of the whole earth, is thy Husband †. O wonder of wonders!

And what art thou, a monster of sin and guilt, that he should call thee *his love*, and *his fair one*, and himself thy Husband? Behold! the *Maker of all things* is pleased to become a Husband to them that are nothing and have nothing, and can do nothing, and are worse than nothing; the *Lord of hosts* is pleased to become a Husband to a poor insect; the glorious Redeemer, *the holy One of Israel*, a Husband to a vile polluted and unholy creature; the *God of the whole earth* a Husband to a grain of animated dust, that was an heir of hell, but now matched with the Heir of all things. Surely *God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts*. Does he commend thee as his love, and his fair one? What commendation wilt thou give him? O had you all the tongues of men and angels, you would not be able to speak out

† What sort of a Husband Christ is to his people, may be seen, by consulting Vol. I. Sermon III. See also, Vol. V. p. 389.



his praise! O wonder! wonder! that ever he invited thee to rise and come away with him. Is it not now highly incumbent on you to abide with him, and keep his company? Whoever turns aside to any crooked way, he will take it ill, if you do so. What! *Will ye also go away?* says Christ, when many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him, John vi. 66. Some of his disciples in our day have gone back and turned aside to many strange ways; some to terrible and horrible ways; and you, believers, are in danger of turning aside to your old lusts and lovers: but, O believer, that art so highly honoured, and so well matched why should you be as *one that turneth aside by the flocks of his companions?* O tell your Husband this, that he may keep his everlasting arms about you, and keep you back from presumptuous sins: O tell him, never to suffer you to turn aside out of his company. Lord, why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

Now, when you rise and go away from this table, see that you abide close with him in a way of duty and dependence on him, till he call you to rise and come away to the upper-table, that shall never be drawn. When I spake to this text some time ago, as it is laid down verse 10th, some that were then hearers found it a sweet summons given them to rise and come away to heaven. I heard of two Christians in this congregation, going into eternity about that time, who got these words applied to them at their dying moments, as their last invitation, *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.* And who knows, believer, but this may be the next explication and application of the text to you? For you must away out of this world as well as others: and happy these that shall drink no more of the fruit of the vine, till they drink it new in their Father's kingdom; and that shall go away to be for ever with the Lord, at the upper-table of full and everlasting communion, after this low communion-table is drawn. Therefore, O abide close with him by faith, and love, and praise, till he repeat this invitation again to you in

another manner; saying, Now, I will not want your company any longer, nor shall you want mine any more; for now the time of your departure is at hand, and you shall have finished your course in this world: *I went to prepare a place for you*; and I said, I would *come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also*, John xiv. 3. And now I will not let you tarry any longer in this weary land, this vain and wicked world; *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amanah, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, and from the lions dens, and from the mountains of the leopards. Come away from this noxious place of sins and snares.*

We read of a trumpet, Rev. iv. 1. that said, *Come up hither*; when behold a door was opened in heaven. Let this text be like a trumpet to you, believer, where-in you may hear the voice of Christ saying to you, *Come up hither*; and in this sense take his sweet call and invitation along with you to your death-bed, that the king of terrors may be no terror to you, but rather a trumpet of triumph, when the King of glory shall be saying, in effect, *Come up hither to me; Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

S E R M O N

## S E R M O N CXLV.

PRAYER for MERCY, a SEASONABLE  
DUTY in TIMES of SIN and WRATH\*.

HABAKKUK ii. 13.

— O Lord, — in wrath remember mercy.

**I** HOPE we are come to this place to seek mercy at the hand of God and to compass his altar of mercy. There is no hope for miserable sinners, but in a merciful God; a God sitting upon a mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Christ. But yet it is hard and very rare to see any rays of mercy in a dark day, wherein the sky is covered with clouds of wrath. And indeed, if we expect a merciful meeting with God to day, or at this occasion, we need that clear eye of faith, that can look through the dark clouds of wrath, and say, with the prophet here, *O Lord, in wrath remember mercy.*

This text is a branch of the first part of Habakkuk's *Prayer* here; wherein this good prophet is making intercession for the church in his day, which was a day of great sin, a day of great anger.—The first part of this verse points at the *report* made by God to the prophet, concerning the destruction to be brought upon them by Babylon. This had a double effect upon him.

\* This subject was handled in two Sermons. The first was preached on Sabbath, October 12. 1735. at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Queen's-ferry; and enlarged upon at Or-wall, on the Tuesday thereafter, at the meeting of a Presbytery. The next was delivered at Abbot's-hall, on Saturday the 18th of said month, being the preparation before the sacrament. The second impression.

1. It made him *tremble* at the thoughts of it; *O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid.* God's wrath, even at a distance, is terrible to a tender soul. 2. It puts him to his *prayer*; and so should all the tokens of divine anger. Here you have his prayer and his plea.

1. You have his *Prayer*; *O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.* By *God's work* here, we may understand his *church* and *people*. All people are God's workmanship: but the true members of his church invisible, are his work in a peculiar manner, and his work by way of eminency: but here they are fallen into a dead sleep; *Revive thy work*; the work of grace in the hearts of thy people, and thy work of reformation in thy church. *Revive it in the midst of the years.* By *the years*, may be understood any time within the term of the seventy years captivity. In the midst of these dark and dreadful years, *make known thy name*, for, *verily thou art a God that hideth thyself.* Make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence in the safety and welfare of the church.

This prayer was several ways answered: particularly by God's owning the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbling Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of the years of the captivity.

2. We have his *Plea*; containing also a sum of his prayer, here again resumed in short, *viz. In wrath remember mercy.* The plea is *mercy*, not *merit*. These words comprehend as many purposes as there are words.

(1.) The *sad case* they were in, held out by the word *wrath*; they were under the heavy tokens of God's wrath.

(2.) The *suitable remedy* or *cure*: the only cure for that case is *mercy*; the mercy of God in Christ.

(3.) The *application* of that cure here sued for; *Remember mercy.* The prayer of faith is a putting God in remembrance of his mercy in Christ; and, in this way, the remedy is applied.

(4.) The *season* wherein this remedy is sought, and  
his

this plea is used, *In wrath*; in a time when wrathful dispensations compass us about, and fearful tokens of his anger.

We propose to speak to this last branch of the text, because I think it comprehends the former petition, *In the midst of the years*; that is, in this wrathful time *revive thy work and make it known*: that is, *Remember mercy*; and make it known in reviving and restoring us.

OBSERV. *That in wrathful times, wherein God's church and people are under many tokens of his anger and displeasure, it is most reasonable for them to plead with him, that he would REMEMBER MERCY.*

This we find was the constant practice of the church and people of God: *Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindness; for they have been of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: but according to thy mercies, remember thou me; for thy goodness sake, O Lord, Psal. xxv. 6, 7.* In a day of wrath, when it is said of enemies, *They devoured Jacob and laid waste his dwelling-place*, we have this petition, *O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low, Psal. lxxix. 7, 8.* Thus Daniel, chap. ix. 17, 18. prays, that God's anger and fury might be taken away from Jerusalem; and that the Lord would *cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary*: he adds, *O my God, incline thine ear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousness; but for thy great mercies.* Thus David also, Psal. xlii. 7, 8. *When deep called unto deep, and all his waves and billows had gone over him; he adds, Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time; and in the night my song shall be with him, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* And, when out of the depths he cries to the Lord, he looks to mercy, saying, *There is forgiveness with thee; yea, with the Lord there is mercy: let Israel hope in the Lord, Psal. cxxx. 1, 4, 7.*

When God calls his people to the prayer of faith, he enjoins them to put him in remembrance; *Put me in re-*  
 VOL. IX. K k *membrance,*

*membrance, let us plead together, Isa. xliii. 26.* When God is pleading against us, by his dispensations, he allows us to plead with him, by supplication; and to put him in remembrance even of his mercy: *In wrath remember mercy.* Not that God is capable of forgetfulness: but when we put him in mind, we put work in his hand; and he loves to be employed: and when he shews mercy, he is said to remember his holy promise, and covenant, and mercy; *He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies, Psal. cv. 8, 42. chap. cvi. 45.*—But to offer all the instances to this purpose, would take up too much time.

The method we propose, for illustrating this proposition, through divine aid, shall be as follows.

- I. Enquire when may a time be said to be *wrathful*?
- II. What are the *instances of mercy* we need to seek, at such a time?
- III. What is imported in the Lord *remembering mercy*; and in our *praying* that he would do so?
- IV. Shew that it is both *seasonable* and *reasonable* to plead that he would remember mercy in wrathful times.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We are to enquire when may a time be said to be *wrathful-like*? *In wrath remember mercy.* What are the tokens of God's wrath that a people may be under that denominates it a wrathful time? I only premise, That wrath is either to be considered as *vindictive*, towards all the *enemies of God*; and thus it comes for demanding satisfaction of the Christless soul, and as so many drops of vengeance, before the deluge of wrath be poured out: or, it is to be considered as *fatherly* towards the *children of God*; and so it comes for correction, chastisement, or trial. When wrath comes upon a *visible church*, towards the wicked therein, it is *judicial*; but toward the *invisible church*, it is *paternal*, and for chastisement. Now, we might give many instances of a wrathful-like time; such as,

1. A *sinning* time is a time of wrath; when *iniquity* abounds, and the *love* of many is *waxen cold*; when the Lord gives up a generation to their lusts, saying, *They are joined to their idols, let them alone. My people would not hearken; Israel would have none of me; therefore I gave them up to the lusts of their own heart.*

2. A *sleeping* time is a time of wrath; when wise and foolish virgins are slumbering and sleeping; and security is universal; as in the days of Noah, when *they were eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, till the deluge of wrath came upon them.*

3. An *erring* time is a time of wrath; a time wherein errors of all sorts abound, and God gives up men to *strong delusions, to believe a lye*: because they receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, they are left to receive and embrace error, that they may be damned; that *all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.* When grievous wolves enter in to destroy the church of Christ not sparing the flock: and when little foxes as well as great ones, spoil the vines and the vineyards; and yet no due care exercised to take the foxes, and to try and cast them out, that say, *They are apostles, and are not; but are found liars.*

4. A time of *apostasy* and falling away of professors, when the pillars of the house of God, are, as it were, bowing and bending: when Christ is saying to his few followers, in effect, *Will ye also go away?* And when there are few to *stand in the breach, and to put hand to the Lord's work,* as it is said, Jer. x. 20, 21.

5. An *hiding* time, wherein there is occasion to say, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, &c.* When his people go forward but he is not there; backward, but they cannot see him, *on the right and left hand but they cannot behold him.* When, not only in a little wrath, he hideth himself, for a small moment; but in great wrath he hideth himself for a long time: and standeth not behind our wall, near at hand, and ready to come in; but standeth at a great distance, and as it were, at the back of the mountains. When *the Comforter that is to relieve our soul, is far away.* When we see not our

signs, nor see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary. When he seems to cast off his people, to forsake and forget them. When he withholds his Spirit, his enlightening, quickening, nourishing, and cherishing grace; and says, in effect, *Behold, your house is left to you desolate.* When he lets loose the evil spirit, and Satan's temptations and delusions, saying, *I will go, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets.* When he leaves a people so far, as that they forsake him, and break his covenant; and then he forsakes them, and his anger breaks forth; that they have occasion to say, *Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us?* Deuter. xxxi. 16, 17.

6. A *dead* time is a time of wrath; a time wherein the work of God is under a dreadful decay, and the things that remain are ready to die. This especially seems to be that token of God's wrath, intended here in the text, where the prayer is, *Lord, revive thy work.* And if it is enquired, *How doth this death and spiritual deadness appear?* Why this deadness is evident when the word and rod of God doth not *awaken* us; but we remain stupid both under mercies and judgments.—This deadness is evident, when sin doth not *affect* or *afflict* us; but we go on securely in an evil course, and make a sport of sin.—This deadness is evident from our *unconcernedness* for the future, and taking no care to be delivered from impending wrath.—This deadness is evident from our being *regardless* of all religion, and religious duties; careless whether we hear and pray, or not; and begin to entertain contemptible thoughts of religion and religious persons; and have no exercise of spiritual senses, no motion heaven-ward or God-ward.

These are some evidences and effects of the Lord's anger and absence †: for, as *his favour is life*, and *his loving-kindness is better than life*; so his fury and anger is death, and worse than death. Death among the wicked and deadness among the godly, are the sad fruit

† Besides these instances of *wrathful like times*, the Reader will find several others, of the same kind, by consulting Vol. V. p. 407, —415.



of his anger and our sin: for, as *the wages of sin is death*, either of body or soul, or both: so, *if we live after the flesh, we shall die*. In a word, as it is the anger of the Lord that weakens and *kills* us; kills our souls, kills our comforts, and kills our zeal and concern about spiritual matters: so it is the anger of the Lord that divides us; divides our hearts, divides our tongues, divides our judgment, divides our counsels. And it is the anger of the Lord that *wastes* us; it wastes our souls, wastes our bodies, wastes our substance, wastes our days and years, and consumes us insensibly; as well as exposes us to terrible outward calamities, confusions and disorders, in church and state.

II. The next thing proposed in the method was, To enquire what are the *tokens* of mercy we need to seek, amidst such tokens of anger; *In wrath remember mercy*. What *mercy*? I am of opinion, that the mercy here, especially intended, is the *reviving* mercy sought after, in the preceding part of the verse; *O Lord, revive thy work*. Now, there is a twofold reviving that is here imported; and hence a twofold mercy that a dead languishing church and people need to seek after. 1. Sin-subduing mercy, in order to a life of peace with God, in opposition to his wrath and anger. 2. Soul-healing mercy, in order to a life of fellowship with God, in opposition to his absence and hiding.

1. People need, in a time of wrath and anger, to seek *sin pardoning* mercy, in order to a *life of peace* with God, *whose favour is better than life*. Hence we find, in a time of great wrath and indignation, this pardoning mercy implored; *O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small*, Amos vii. 2. Here the prophet makes pardon his great petition, in a time of judgment; *O Lord, forgive*: it is not *remove* the stroke, but *forgive* the guilt that brings it on, and provokes God to smite; especially to smite with spiritual judgments. Let our punishment be what it will, it is our wisdom to get the sense of the guilt of sin: till guilt be set home, and imprest upon the conscience, we will never pray to purpose. To tell a story of the divisions, errors, heresies and evil of the land;  
and

and the danger it is exposed to, by a foreign enemy, will be to little purpose, if we are never sensible of the guilt of them, so as to cry for the removal of national and personal guilt. And if any enquire, *Why should pardon and forgiveness be sought, in times of wrath and judgment?* Why, because *pardon of sin* speaks a man in favour with God; and a *sense of pardon* speaks a man's assurance of divine favour: and his favour is life; yea, it is worth ten thousand worlds: *Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven*, Psal. xxxii. 1.—Because also *safety* is secured when forgiveness is granted; *Lift up the light of thy countenance, cause thy face to shine, and so we shall be safe*, Psal. iv. 6.—Because the *sting* of all afflictions is removed, when pardon is granted; yea, the sting of death too, and the sting of wrath, in so much that it is not vindictive wrath, but fatherly.—And hence, in that case, the soul can conclude, that *affliction* is kept upon him for good; *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is the fruit of all to take away sin*.—Therefore pardoning mercy is to be sought; *In wrath remember mercy*

2. *Soul-healing* mercy is another part of the reviving to be sought for, to a sinful land and people, in a time of wrath and anger. As we cannot have peace with God, without forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus: so we cannot have fellowship with God, without healing; particularly the healing of holiness and conformity to him, in some degree; and the healing of comfort and satisfaction in him, in some measure. This healing mercy is the great thing that the Lord's children use to seek after, in a time of wrath and judgment; *Heal me, O Lord; for I have sinned against thee*, Psal. xli. 6. *O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble, thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh*, Psalm lx. 1, 2. This is one of the greatest mercies can be shewed, in the midst of wrath, when the Lord saith, as it is, Isa lxxvii. 17. *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; but yet I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also and restore comfort to him*

*him and to his mourners.*—There are many promises of this healing mercy to encourage prayer for it; *I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord, Jerem. xxx. 17.*

—He takes his name from this healing work of mercy *I am the Lord that healeth thee. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all his wounds.*—And this healing mercy brings in a train of other mercies with it; *Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound, Isa. xxx. 26.* Therefore, the great suit and supplication, in such a time of wrath should be, that the *Sun of righteousness may arise with healing in his wings*: then life and health comes in to the soul.

When this healing mercy comes, then cometh a *sense* of our dead condition. If ever God revive us, he will make us know our deadness: if he put sap in our dry bones, he will make us know our driness: if he pardon, he will make us know our guilt.—When this merciful reviving comes, then cometh a *longing* after him: he prepares his way into the soul, by creating a longing in his peoples heart, and a *panting after him*, Psalm xlii. 1.—When this reviving comes, then cometh a *spirit of mourning*: he makes them meet him weeping; *They shall come with weeping, Jer. xxxi. 9. Going and weeping, Jer. l. 4, 5.* Weeping for their old and late sins; weeping for their bold and daring sins, their sins against light and conscience, their sins upon small temptations, and their sins that are accounted small in the world—When this reviving comes, then cometh a *spirit of supplication*, Zech. xii. 10. And thereupon follows the *opening of the fountain*, and the *purging of his house*, and *causing the false prophet, and the unclean spirit to cease out of the land.*—When this reviving comes, then cometh a *stop* to the tokens of his wrath; *He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind. Isa. xxvii. 8.* He casteth away the rod that he smote withal.—When this reviving comes, then cometh many tokens of his *love*, instead of wrath. Sweet embraces; *his left-hand being*

being under their head, and his right-hand embracing them. Sweet intimations of peace and pardon; *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Sweet cordials, with kindly words, looks, and smiles; *He speaks comfortably to Jerusalem.* Sweet communications of his mind, and of the secrets of his covenant; *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do;* He speaks no more in parables but plainly; giving them to know *the mysteries of the kingdom.*—Then *the righteousness of Zion goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.* Then his people, being brought out of the horrible, and miry clay, have their feet set upon a rock, and their goings established, and a new song put in their mouth, even praises to their God, Psa. xl. 2, 3.—Then doth the day break, and the shadows fly away, in a great measure, and the tabernacle of God is with men. Holiness and comforts take place, instead of sin and sorrow.

These are the effects of his remembering mercy, by pardoning, healing, and reviving his people; and also reasons for seeking this mercy.

III. The next general head of method was, To enquire what is imported in the Lord's remembering mercy, and our praying that he would do so. Here we may consider the import of it in a threefold view. 1. Actively, as it is God's act. 2. Objectively, as it is our plea. 3. With reference to the season, viz. God's remembering mercy in the midst of wrath.

1<sup>st</sup>, We may view the import of it actively considered, as it is God's act. What is it for God to remember mercy? It doth not suppose oblivion, or forgetfulness in God, as if he was capable of forgetting the perfection of his nature; no: he can no more forget mercy than he can forget himself. But there are three ways he may be said to remember mercy.

1. When he hath thoughts of mercy; *I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.* And then it follows also, *Ye shall call upon me, and ye shall*

*shall go and pray unto me; and I will hearken unto you,* Jer. xxix. 11, 12. In time of wrathful dispensations, we are ready to think that God hath no thoughts of mercy: but even then he saith, *My thoughts are not your thoughts,* Isa. lv. 8. *For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion whom no man seeketh after,* Jer. xxx. 17.

2. He may be said to remember mercy, when he *speaketh words* of mercy: though he *bringeth to the wilderness,* yet he *speaketh comfortably,* Hof. ii. 14. He remembers when he *speaks comfortably to Jerusalem, and cries to her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned,* Isa. xl 2. When the Lord remembers mercy he speaks it both outwardly into the ear, and inwardly into the heart; *God hath spoken once; yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God: also unto thee, O Lord belongeth mercy,* Psal. lxii. 11, 12. He speaks it once into the ear, by the word; but he speaks it again, and that is twice, when, by his Spirit, he speaketh it into the heart: then, indeed, the heart rejoiceth; *God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice.*

3. He may be said to remember mercy, when he doth *acts* of mercy; such as these I have mentioned already, in the instances of his pardoning and healing mercy. Thus he remembers mercy when he *shewes or manifests* mercy; and when he *exercises* mercy in manifold acts, fruits, and effects of his mercy. Now then, the prayer, that he would *remember mercy,* respects his merciful thoughts, merciful words, and merciful acts in the midst of wrath.

2dly, We may consider the import of it *objectively;* as it is *our plea; Remember mercy.* Many deceive themselves with a false hope in the general mercy of God, and are ignorant of mercy, as it is the plea of faith. There are these twelve things contained in the plea of faith, when we plead that God would remember mercy.

1. We plead he would remember the *place* of mercy; what place it hath in his heart, and what place it hath

in his Christ.—Hath it not such a place in his heart, that it is his delight? *He retaineth not his anger for ever because he delighteth in mercy*, Micah vii. 18. As we are by nature children of wrath; so he is by nature merciful: his mercies are called *his bowels*, Luke i. 78. *Through the tender mercies of our God*; in the margin it is, through the *bowels of God*. Thus James v. 11. he is called *πολύσπλαγχνος*, full of bowels. Mercy is most natural to him; and therefore it is most natural for him to shew mercy.—Hath it not such a place in Christ, that he is said to be the *store-house* of mercy and grace? *My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him*, Psal. lxxxix. 24. *God was in Christ*, 2 Cor. i. 19. And of all the attributes of God in Christ, mercy is mentioned as the most triumphant, rejoicing over judgment: *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself mercifully. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, or merciful, and mercifully appeased*, Mat. iii. 16.—When we plead he would remember mercy, in his heart and in his Christ, who is the darling of his heart, in whom his soul delights.

2. We plead he would remember the *ground* and *reason* of mercy; and that is mercy itself: *God saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*, Rom. ix. 15. Though the immediate ground of God's manifesting mercy, is for *Christ's* sake; yet the primary and original ground is for *mercy's* sake; for mercy provided a Christ, a Saviour, a Redeemer: he shews mercy for *mercy's* sake. The supreme cause of divine love, is divine love itself; so God saith to Israel, *The Lord loved Israel, because he loved them*, Deuter. vii. 7, 8.

3. We plead he would remember the *channel* of mercy, and how it vents through a propitiation, to the honour of justice, Romans iii. 25, 26. We may plead that he cannot wrong his justice by shewing mercy, since he hath *found a ransom, and set forth Christ to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin*. Hence when we plead he would remember mercy, we plead he would remember Christ, and a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Christ is called

led *the mercy*, by way of eminency; *The mercy promised to our fathers*, Luke i. 72. And it is a strong plea for faith, when pleading that he would remember mercy, that he would remember Christ, and not forget what he hath done; and how he hath done and suffered, and satisfied, and finished his work; and what he is still doing: and so that he would both remember mercy for mercy's sake, and remember mercy for Jesus' sake; yea, mercy in Jesus, so as to accept in the Beloved; since mercy, in this channel, brings glory to every other attribute: here is *grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life*.

4. In pleading he would remember mercy, we plead he would remember the *covenant* of mercy, and the *promise* of mercy, sealed by the blood of mercy, the Mediator of the covenant; and how he hath *made a covenant with his chosen*, and said, *Mercy shall be built up for ever*, Psalm lxxxix. 2, 3. Though indeed, if *his children break his law, he will visit their iniquities with rods*, &c.; yet nevertheless he hath said, *My loving-kindness will I not take from him*, nor consequently from his seed; *nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break; nor alter the word that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lye unto David*, ver. 30,—37. And hence, when he performed *the mercy promised to the fathers*, he is said to *remember his holy covenant*, Luke i. 72. O sirs, it is a strong plea, in the midst of wrath, that he would remember his covenant and promise; remember the word on which he hath caused us to hope, as a word sealed by the blood of Christ, and Yea and Amen in him. And, indeed, you cannot go safely to a communion-table, without the plea in your mouth, in your heart. For Christ saith of the sacramental cup, *This cup is the new-testament in my blood*. It is a cup of promised mercy, purchased and secured by my blood.

5. In pleading this mercy, we plead he would remember the dignity of mercy, and the *glory* and *grandeur* of it, as what he exalts and magnifies, above every other letter of his name; Psal. cxxxviii. 2. *I will*

*praise thy name for thy loving kindness and thy truth ; for, thou hast magnified thy word above thy name : that is, thy word of grace, mercy, and loving kindness : which truth is engaged to accomplish this mercy thou hast magnified above all thy name and dignity ; as it were above all thy perfections. Though the Lord consults the honour of all his perfections, in the method of salvation through Christ ; yet he consults their honour with this view, that especially mercy may be manifested, dignified, magnified, and aggrandized : therefore, faith faith, Lord remember the dignity and grandeur of mercy.*

6. In pleading this mercy, we plead the *dimensions* of mercy ; the heighth, depth, length, and breadth of *mercy*, as well as *love*, spoken of, Eph. iii. 18. The dimensions of our sins are great ; and we cannot magnify sin too much, unless we magnify it above the mercy of God in Christ. O Sirs, this divine mercy is as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as time, and as long as eternity ! Here is an ocean without bank or bottom.

7. In pleading this mercy, we plead he would remember the *associates* of mercy ; or its *companions* and *concomitants*, with whom it hath struck hands and made up a blessed agreement ; *Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*, Psal. lxxxv. 10. There was a seeming odds and contrariety between mercy and justice : Mercy saying, Pity and save the sinner ; Justice saying, Damn and destroy the him : but now, in the death and satisfaction of Christ, the Surety, the bloody-thirsty sword of justice hath drunk to infinite satisfaction, and hath no more blood to demand. The truth of God, in the threatening of the law, denouncing death and damnation to the sinner, is vindicated, by this substitution of Jesus in our room. Mercy and truth having met and kissed each other. We have not only mercy to plead, but the associates of mercy, and so may plead mercy for justice's sake, mercy for the sake of truth and holiness, mercy for the sake of all her associates and neighbour attributes, that they may be glorified with her.



8. In pleading his remembering mercy, we plead he would remember the *riches* of his mercy : the Lord is said to be *rich in mercy*, and to *shew the exceeding riches of his grace*, Eph. ii. 4, 7. O what a strong plea is it that God accounts mercy, beyond all things else, to be his riches, the men of this world count gold and silver their riches : but God accounts his being merciful, his being rich, and being communicative of his mercy to poor sinners.

9. In pleading his mercy, we plead he would remember the *multitude* of his mercy : this is frequently the church's plea ; *According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions*, Psal. li. 1. And in Psal. cvi. 7. Israel is challenged for their not *remembering the multitude of his tender mercy* : and v. 45. it is said, *He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercy*. We may as soon number the stars of heaven, as the multitude of divine mercy : and this we may set against the multitude of our sins, when we plead, that *in wrath he would remember mercy*.

10. In this prayer, we plead that he would remember the *objects* of mercy. It is not himself that is the object of his mercy ; but man, miserable and sinful man : *The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared*, Tit. iii. 4. But the *love* of God and the *mercy* of God in this differs : that whereas God himself as well as man is the object of his love ; for he loves himself, and so is the greatest object of his love : but God himself is not the object of his own mercy ; God hath no need of mercy, and is incapable of mercy for himself. What a comfortable plea is this, that the mercy which God accounts his chief riches and treasure, is what peculiarly concerns us, and our good and salvation ! Hence we may make our own misery a plea in prayer ; because this is the proper object of divine mercy : therefore, it is called, *His kindness towards us through Christ*, Eph. ii. 7.

11. In this prayer, we plead that he would remember the *qualities* of his mercy : that his mercy is like himself, *great* and *infinite* mercy ; hence the church so

frequently in scripture pleads the greatness of his mercy, and sets it against the greatness of their sins; *For his merciful kindness is great toward us*, Psal. cxvii. 2. *Thy mercy is great unto the heaven*, Psal. lvii. 10. Nay, *Thy mercy is great above the heaven*, Psalm cviii. 4.—We may plead that his mercy is *free* mercy: and, indeed, if it did not exclude merit, and were not free, it could not be so properly mercy.—We may plead that his mercy is *sovereign* mercy; regarding neither the worthiness nor unworthiness of the creature.—We may plead that it is *antient* mercy: with reference to *eternity*, that it is *from everlasting*; and with reference to *time*, that it is *of old*; saying, *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations; thou hast been favourable to thy land*: and so we may plead upon former mercies, saying, *Where is the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained?* Isa. lxiii. 15.—We may plead not only the antiquity, but the *perpetuity* of his mercy; that *his mercy endures for ever*: he hath commanded the house of Israel and the house of Aaron to say, *His mercy endureth for ever*.—We may plead the *immutability* of his mercy. Whatever changes befall us: yet *he is God, and changeth not; therefore the Sons of Jacob are not consumed. He is the same yesterday, to day and for ever*.

12. In this prayer we plead the *kinds* of mercy; the various sorts of mercy. We may plead that he would remember his *conquering* and *overcoming* mercy; that can conquer our enmity, conquer our guilt, conquer the curse of the law, and all the wrath we deserve.—That it is *preventing* mercy; that can and must prevent our faith, prevent our repentance, and prevent our prayers; otherwise we will never believe, or repent or pray: hence, as it is mercy that comes *over mountains*, so it is called *mercy found of them that sought him not*.—That it is *following* and *pursuing* mercy; still following those whom it prevents and prevails upon: *Goodness and mercy shall follow me*, Psal. xxiii. 6. Even when the soul forsakes God, grace and mercy will follow the soul, and bring it back, otherwise it would run to ruin.—Again, that is *forgiving* mercy, saying, *I will be*  
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merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.—And that it is a forthcoming mercy, saying, *My grace shall be made sufficient for thee; and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness.*—In a word, all kinds of mercy are with God; and we are to plead the variety of his mercy. There is no sin or misery, but God hath mercy for it, mercy of every kind; and among others, *uniting* mercy; *I will give them one heart, and one way.* Jer. xxxi. 39.—And as there is no disease but God hath a remedy for it; so there is no misery but God hath a mercy for it. He hath in himself a treasure of all sorts of mercies, divided into several promises in scripture, which are but so many boxes or chests of this treasury. If thy heart be hard and untender, he hath tender mercies and melting mercies: if thy heart be dead, he hath quickening mercy: if polluted, he hath purifying mercy: if thou art sick, he hath healing mercy: if sinful, he hath all-sanctifying mercy: if sorrowful, he hath all-comforting mercy: if lost and miserable, he hath all-saving mercy.—As large and various as your wants are, more large and various are his mercies; so that we may *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,* and according to our need, Heb. iv. 16. O what a rich product is to be had out of the womb of mercy! And, O how many powerful pleas and arguments are there in this one, *Remember mercy!* All the mercies that are in his heart, he hath transplanted them, as it were into several beds, in the garden of the promises, where they grow; and we are allowed to pluck these flowers, by pleading the mercies contained in these promises which are *Yea and Amen* in Christ Jesus to the glory of God. O Sirs, be intreated to come to the mercy of God in Christ.

3dly, We may view the import with reference to the *season* of God's remembering mercy, *viz. In the midst of wrath remember mercy.* Now, *what is it for God to remember mercy in the midst of wrath?* Why, the Lord may be said to remember mercy in the midst of wrath, in the following respects.

I. When

1. When he *imbitters sin* to his people, which is the procuring cause of wrath, and weans their hearts from it : *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is the fruit of all to take away sin.*

2. When he *humbles* them under his mighty hand ; makes the rod of correction drive away the *folly* that is bound up in their hearts ; and brings them to confess that it is an *evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God.*

3. When he makes them search and *try their ways* ; to enquire what meaneth the *heat of his great anger* ; and induces them to *turn to the hand that smiteth them* : to *seek the Lord of hosts while he may be found* ; and to *pour out a prayer when his chastning hand is upon them.*

4. When he enables them to *exercise faith* and *patience*, and other graces in the time of anger and wrath, and to *justify God* in all his procedure ; for, *tribulation and the trial of faith worketh patience* ; and to acknowledge that he *punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve* ; and therefore to *bear the indignation of the Lord because we have sinned.*

5. In a word, God may be said to remember mercy in in the midst of wrath, when he only corrects them in *measure* ; when he *stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind* : when he grants them some *little reviving* in their bondage, and *supporting cordials* in these wrath-like dispensations ; and favours them with any *secret interview* with his gracious presence, and lets them see any *love-designs* that he has in these afflictions †.

Thus much may suffice for the third thing proposed. *viz.* the import of the Lord's remembering mercy in the midst of wrath, and our praying that he would do so.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To shew that it is both *seasonable* and *reasonable* to plead, that he would remember mercy in the midst of wrath, and wrathful

† Those who incline to see further what mercy and love-designs the Lord may have in affliction and wrathful-like dispensations, may consult Vol. VI. p. 112, — 117.

times. This will appear evident, if we consider these six particulars.

1. It is both seasonable and reasonable to do so, because we are warranted of God to plead his promised mercy, at all times, and especially in the midst of wrath; *For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 27.* compared with Psal. l. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* There needs be no other reason; and there can be no higher reason, than the will and authority of God; his command obliging us to plead with him, and *put him in remembrance, Isa. xliii. 26.*

2. It is seasonable and reasonable, in the midst of wrath to plead he would remember mercy, because wrathful dispensations are *ordered of God*, for this very cause, to stir up his people to seek after him, and plead for his merciful return; *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face: in their affliction they shall seek me early, Hosea v. 15.* And, indeed, seldom do we seek him in earnest, till the rod be made use of, and the way be hedged up with thorns; then we begin to say, *I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now, Hof. ii. 7.*

3. It is seasonable, because as this hath been the way of God's people, in their distress and under wrathful dispensations, to fly to his mercy; so it is God's way toward his people, to shew mercy to them in their greatest extremity of distress. He makes their time of need his time of love; their time of misery his time of mercy: *I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a large place, Ps. cxviii. 5.* Their experience hath it to say, *Many a time I was brought low, and he helped me. He brought me out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

4. *Necessity* makes it both seasonable and reasonable: in the midst of wrath the people of God see their need of mercy; and see mercy to be mercy indeed: when all the waves and billows of God's wrath are flying over them, then it is time for the Lord to work, for his

church and people, as the psalmist saith, Psalm cxix. 126. *It is time for thee, O Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law.* It is time for us to pray and plead for mercy; and it is time for God to work mercifully, when clouds of wrath are gathering, and showers of wrath are falling.

5. It is then reasonable and seasonable to plead he would remember mercy, because, in the midst of wrath, we are apt to conclude, that he hath *forgotten* mercy, and to say with Zion, *The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me,* Isa. xlix. 14. Then it is that unbelief is ready to affront and deny the mercy of God; and to conclude he hath laid aside his merciful nature, saying, *will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath he forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?* Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. In time of affliction and wrathful days, they are ready to think mercy is drowned in the ocean of wrath: therefore it is seasonable, in time of wrath, to plead he may remember mercy.

6. It is seasonable, because then faith hath sure and *clean ground* to go upon, when in wrath we plead mercy. A time of wrathful dispensations, and killing and slaying providence, is a proper time for faith to step in and say, *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* To believe mercy in the midst of mercy, is no great matter; but to believe mercy in the midst of wrath, is a great matter and argues strong faith. A time of contradiction is a time for faith. If we believe the promise, when providence seems to contradict the promise in appearance, is, like Abraham to be *strong in the faith, giving glory to God.* Under a sense of guilt, to believe pardon; under a sense and feeling of wrath, to believe mercy, and plead that God would remember mercy, is the very season for faith to act; and then God gets the glory of his mercy, and we the good of it.

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To make *application* of the subject; which we shall essay with all possible brevity.

Is it so, as has been said, *That in the midst of wrath, or wrathful-like dispensations, it is seasonable to plead mercy, and that the Lord would remember it?* Then hence we may see,

1<sup>st</sup>, That it is now a *fit time, and proper season* for us to plead mercy, and a merciful visit from the Lord, notwithstanding that it is a time of divine and great wrath, in many respects: a time of great sin and security, great error and blasphemy, of great backsliding and apostasy: a time wherein God hideth himself, and we are dead and senseless through want of the presence of the living Spirit of the living God. Many are the tokens of the Lord's anger and absence. How far hath he left ministers and people, ordinances and judicatories, church and state? How much is the glory departed, our strength gone, our zeal blunted, and black clouds of wrath above our head? And, indeed, there are more tokens of wrath, towards the generation, than I have either time or ability to tell. And many of us, even here, under the sad effects of the Lord's anger, surrounded with symptoms of wrath: witness our deadness and lukewarmness; our coldness hearing, praying, and praising; our strong and prevalent corruption; our weak and languishing grace, if we have any at all: it may be heavy affliction on the bodies of some, on their friends, families, or concerns: perhaps heavy distress upon the minds of others, through temptations, confusions, fears, damps, and discouragements of many sorts. Well, what shall we do in this case? Shall we turn desperate, and reckon that now no merciful meeting with God is to be expected? Indeed, if God had revealed nothing from heaven but wrath, we might be hopeless: but now is the fit time to plead he would remember mercy. Now is a fit time to pray for mercy, to cry for mercy, to plead mercy, to believe mercy, to lay hold on mercy, to remember mercy, and to wrestle with God that he would remember mercy: mercy towards ourselves, towards our families, towards the land in general, and to the church of Christ in particular,

2dly, If we may pray and plead for mercy in the midst of wrath, then we may *hopefully* plead mercy in the face of all other discouragements whatsoever.— Here is a door of mercy opened in the midst of wrath.

Some, perhaps, may be ready to say, “ Many things discourage me in prayer, blinds my confidence, and mars my hope.” Why, but here is encouragement to sue for mercy, and to hope and plead for it, in the face of all opposition whatsoever, since we ought to plead mercy even in the face of wrath. This plea will stand good against all deadly, if faith take it up. I shall offer some instances here.

1. You may *hopefully* plead mercy in the face of *old sins, former transgressions, and great iniquities*: this we find the Psalmist did, Psalm xxv. 7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake.* Here old sins came in view; yet here is faith pleading mercy. Unbelief may tell you so and so you have sinned; and therefore there is no hope, nothing but wrath to be expected? Nay, but faith may look to the mercy of God in Christ, and say, as ver. 11. *For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.* Great sin should lead to plead great mercy.

2. You may plead mercy in the face of *present guilt* staring you in the face; as the prophet Jeremiah did, chapter xiv. 7. *Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake.* Present guilt cannot blot out the remembrance of mercy.

3. You may plead mercy in the face of *present indisposition* for duty, Present deadness and incapacity is the case here: *O revive thy work; in wrath remember mercy.* Expect not that in yourself which only mercy can afford. It may be afflicting that you have no suitable frame of heart. But how soon can mercy frame your heart to holy worship? Quickening mercy is with him.

4. You may plead mercy in the face of *dark and angry dispensations*; as Psal. lxxix. 5. *How long wilt thou be angry? shall thy jealousy for ever burn like a fire?* Psalm lxxx. 4. *How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer*



of thy people? The storm of wrath cannot blow away mercy: therefore plead, *in wrath remember mercy.*

5. You may plead mercy in the face of *great unworthiness*, and fears of *communicating unworthily*; because mercy regards not our unworthiness, nor waits for our worth; but vents through the worthiness of the Lamb: and therefore you may say, *He is worthy for whom thou shouldest do this.*

6. You may plead mercy in the face of *many challenges*, for omissions and commissions. You may take with the charge of the law, and the challenge of conscience against yourself; and yet hold your plea, and maintain your argument for mercy: *In wrath remember mercy.*

7. You may plead mercy in the face of *strong unbelief* and *weak faith*; in the face of living unbelief and languishing faith: for, though this way be saddening to your soul, and sinking to your heart, even unto fainting; yet the mercy of God in Christ being a root, cause, and spring of faith, when he remembers mercy, he revives every languishing grace: *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine.*

8. You may plead mercy in the face of *manifold miscarriages* in duty; such as want of faith, freedom, fervour, love, liberty, fixedness of heart, and the like: for though this should be afflicting and humbling; yet the ground of hope and confidence is, in the free mercy of God through Christ.

9. You may plead mercy in the face of *seeming refusals* and *harsh answers*: when he not only delays to give you the mercy you seek; but seems to deny you, and call you a dog to whom the childrens bread doth not belong, yet he allows for all that, to press in at the door of mercy, saying, *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.*

10. You may plead mercy in the face of *real refusals*, *rejections*, and *reproofs*: for though the door of mercy seem to be shut and barred, and though he may justly reject you for ever, and keep you long at the back of the door; yet he can soon open the door, and grant you  
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access to his presence. And tho' he should not, it becomes you to wait on him who saith, *He will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth: lest the spirits should fail before him, and the souls that he hath made.*

11. You may plead mercy in the face of *improbabilities*; yea, and seeming *impossibilities*, when there is no appearance of his shewing mercy; yet, like Abraham, *against hope* you are to *believe in hope*. Dispensations seeming to contradict the promised mercy, must not stop our mouth from speaking, nor embarrass our faith; but rather set our prayer on proper edge, and your faith on exercise.

12. You may plead mercy in the face of *prevailing iniquity*. Surely this should humble and afflict you; and wo to them that live in sin, and presume upon mercy: but when prevailing iniquity begins to discourage you from pleading mercy, shake off that discouraging temptation, and plead pardoning and purifying mercy the more earnestly; for, mercy hath been pled and should be pled, in the face of prevailing sin: *Iniquities prevail against us; but yet as for our transgressions thou wilt purge them away*, Psalm lxxv. 3.

In a word, you may plead mercy in the face of all *temptations* to the contrary, from whatever airth.— Though the devil should suggest to you that your pleading will bring a curse instead of a blessing, and that God hath decreed the contrary to what you ask; yet God's revealed will being the rule of your duty; and his revealed mercy, through Christ, being the ground of your hope, you are to have no regard to these wicked suggestions: *In the midst of wrath*, in the midst of woes, in the midst of all the sin and misery you can be surrounded with, as long as you are out of hell, there is ground to plead, *Lord, remember mercy.*

But possibly one may say, *What if I do not plead regularly and successfully so as to prevail?* Why, if you plead so as your plea shall be regarded,

(1.) Your pleading for mercy will exclude your *presuming* upon mercy. The presumptuous sinner pleads mercy as an excuse for his sin; this is not pleading for mercy to his soul, but mercy to his sin: whereas they  
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that duly plead mercy, they plead for vengeance upon their sins.

(2.) The pleading for mercy supposes a *sense* of sin and misery, and of wrath deserved. They who have no apprehensions of wrath, will have no due apprehensions of wrath, will have no due apprehensions of mercy.

(3.) True pleading for mercy excludes *all other* pleas; the man hath nothing to plead but mercy: he hath no merit of his own to plead, but the merit of hell. If he pleads the merit of Christ, this is the same with pleading mercy; for mercy vents no other way but through the merit of Jesus. The soul dares not plead his duties, prayers, or tears; his frames, affections, enlargements, or good qualifications; no: he hath nothing to plead but mercy.

(4) The true pleader for mercy pleads it at the *mercy-seat*, sprinkled with the blood of Christ; where he sees mercy secured by the blood of the covenant, which makes them *the sure mercies of David*. Now, would you share of this mercy of God to eternal life? Then, while you plead for mercy, plead upon Christ's plea, and come in upon his right; and you shall be sure to obtain.

Now, what shall I say to you who never yet truly pleaded mercy, nor fled to the mercy of God in Christ? Alas! how miserable are you, that never yet saw your need of mercy! and that are to this day despisers of mercy! What will become of you, if you remain in that case, when death and judgment comes! O Sirs, will you come in yet at the open door of mercy? Would you wish to share of the mercy of God, and avoid the vengeance of God, when grim death stares you in the face, and the awful tribunal appears? Then fly to the mercy of God now. But, say you, *Where is the mercy of God?* Why, all his mercy is in Christ; *God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself*. There is no mercy in God, out of Christ, to any guilty sinner. O then, Sirs, come to Christ for the mercy of God; for all the kinds of mercy that you need is in Christ. All the

*saving* mercy of God is in Christ, as a Saviour: all the *healing* mercy of God is in Christ, as a Physician: all the *teaching* mercy of God is in Christ, as a Priest: all the *soul-sanctifying, sin-subduing, and conquering* mercy of God is in Christ, as a King: all the *rich and supplying* mercy of God is in Christ, as the store-house and treasury of grace, that *out of his fulness you may receive, and grace for grace*; *My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him*, faith God, Psal. lxxxix. 24. **And** since all the mercy of God is with him, O then, Sirs, come; come to Jesus; and so you will share of the mercy of God. If you say, you cannot come; I tell you among the rest, the *drawing* mercy of God is with him; and therefore he says, *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me*: and if when he says in his word, *I will draw*, your heart was saying, *Lord draw; draw me*; I hope drawing mercy is not far away. O may power accompany the call and offer of mercy in Christ.

Again, As for you who have *fled* to the mercy of God in Christ, and know what it is to *plead mercy, even in the midst of wrath*; O Sirs, go on to plead that he would *remember mercy*, and to plead it joyfully; whatever tokens of wrath you are encompassed with, it is but fatherly wrath, and mercy is in the midst of it: mercy is in the midst of your afflictions; mercy is in the midst of your temptations; mercy is in the midst of desertions; mercy is in the midst of your reproofs; mercy is in the midst of your sickness and sorrows; mercy is in the midst of your wants and poverty; mercy is in the midst of all your losses and crosses; mercy is in the midst of all the wrath you are under: and hence, in the midst of wrath he will remember mercy; and therefore in the midst of wrath remember ye his mercy, and do not forget it, though you should see nothing but wrath, Hab. iii. 17, 18. But possibly one may say, *Why shall I not believe that he is in earnest, when I perceive nothing but wrath in his providence and dealing with me?* Yes; you are to believe that he is in earnest correcting you, in earnest chastising you; he is in earnest trying you, or he is in earnest visiting your iniquities with rods, and may be taking vengeance on  
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your inventions : but for all that, never dream that he has forgotten mercy ; for, *his loving-kindness will he not take away, nor alter the word that has gone out of his mouth.* *The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed,* Isa. liv. 10. Therefore, upon the strongest ground, you may still plead mercy, and with holy confidence expect it.

2. I would advise you, not only to plead he would remember mercy to yourselves, but mercy toward *others*. Plead his mercy to all his *churches* : plead mercy to the church of *Scotland*, in the midst of wrathful days : though you should see no particular promise in all the Bible to it, yet if faith can take a general promise, and apply it to a particular church, it will speak mercy to it, because the author of faith never creates any useless act of faith.—Plead mercy to the *rising generation*, that they may not be carried down the stream of impiety, profanity, and immorality ; nor drowned in the deluge of error and infidelity that is like to overflow the present generation.—Plead mercy to your concerns, to your children, family, relatives, friends, acquaintances, and to all your neighbours about you.—Plead mercy to *young communicants*, who never trode that path before, that from this time the foundation of the spiritual temple may be laid, the building raised, and the promise made out, Hag. ii. 19. *From this day will I bless you.*—Let mercy also be pled for *old communicants*, who are turned in to an easy way of communicating by course, in a carnal, formal, customary manner, for the most part ; and who are not at suitable pains to stir up the grace of faith, love, repentance, and other graces, to a lively exercise.—Plead mercy for *unworthy communicants*, who have approached to God's altar, and yet have not been prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary, that the blood they have trampled upon may wash away the sin of unworthy communicating.—Yea, let mercy also be pled for *worthy communicants*, that *goodness and mercy may follow them*, and that they may follow the Lord with full purpose of heart, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour

*in all things* ; and that they may never be left to be a stain to their profession, nor a reproach to their holy religion. Again,

3. While you plead that the Lord would remember mercy in the midst of wrath, do you *yourselves* also remember mercy in the midst of wrath. Are you tempted to wrath, and wrathful resentment against your friends, neighbours, brethren, and acquaintances? O Sirs, remember mercy in the midst of wrath; remember pardoning and forgiving mercy. With what confidence can you expect that God should remember mercy towards you, notwithstanding your innumerable sins and provocations, if you cannot remember mercy towards others, notwithstanding some real or supposed injuries? How can you pray that God would forgive your sins, if you forgive not those that sin against you, as you are taught both in your Bible and Catechism? *To the merciful he will shew himself merciful: Be ye therefore merciful as your heavenly father is merciful.* If you have beheld the glory of his mercy to you, you will be *changed into the same image, from glory to glory*; and may I not say, *From mercy to mercy*?—O remember mercy to all that are about you: mercy to the poor and needy; mercy to the destitute and afflicted; mercy to the souls and bodies of men: not only mercy to their *bodies*, by acts of bounty, alms, charity, and benevolence, as you know their circumstances require, especially if they be of the *household of faith*; but also mercy to their *souls*, by your acts of piety, by your prayers, and counsels, suitable reproofs, and religious example. And even though you should see them surrounded with the tokens of God's wrath; yet remember mercy towards them; because you expect that, *in the midst of wrath*, he will *remember mercy* towards you. If you remember mercy towards men, it is a good evidence that he is remembering mercy towards you.

3. I would advise you to fill your *memories* with the mercy of God in Christ, and let your mind be a storehouse to treasure up his mercy in. One of the great reasons why the Lord saith, *Put me in remembrance*, and allows you to plead he may remember mercy, is not that

that he can forget mercy; but because you are in danger of forgetting it: and by putting him in remembrance of it, you put yourselves in remembrance of it. Unbelief is ready to say, especially in the midst of wrath, O! *hath he forgotten to be gracious? will he be favourable no more? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* But faith is a reminding the soul of the love and mercy of God, a recognition of his grace and goodness in Christ Jesus. Faith is acted to great advantage by a sanctified remembrance of the mercy of God in Christ: and whenever mercy comes into the believer's mind, the believer puts God in mind of his mercy, saying, "Lord, remember what thou didst for me at such a time; remember what thou saidst to me: remember thy word on which thou hast caused me to hope: remember thy promise, remember thy name, remember thy Son's name, remember thy covenant, remember thy goodness." If you forget mercy, you will not plead with God to remember mercy: therefore let mercy be much in your heart and memory, that you may be still ready to plead and prevail, even when surrounded with the floods of wrath, saying, *Lord, in wrath remember mercy.*



## S E R M O N CXLVI.

HABAKKUK iii. 2.

*O Lord, in wrath remember mercy.*

[ The second Sermon on this Text. ]

**W**E entered upon these words elsewhere; explained them, and illustrated the following proposition from them, namely, *That in wrathful times to the church and people of God, it is most seasonable to plead,*

that he would remember mercy. We shewed when a time may be said to be *wrathful*; enquired what instances of *mercy* we need at such a time; opened up the import of the Lord's *remembering* mercy, and our *praying* that he would do so; and shewed that it is both *seasonable* and *reasonable* to plead that he would remember mercy in *wrathful* times; and also made some *improvement* of the point.—

We shall now, at this time, add a *Lesson* deducible from the text and doctrine so clearly, that it might be viewed as another doctrine.

LESSON. *That God has terrible and wrathful ways of saving his people, while in wrath he remembers mercy, and allows them to plead mercy in the midst of wrath.*

In opening up and illustrating this lesson, we shall endeavour to do these five things.

- I. We shall clear this lesson from *scripture*.
- II. Observe some terrible and *wrathful ways* wherein he saves his people.
- III. Consider in what *cases* and *seasons* he brings them under these tokens of wrath.
- IV. Offer some *reasons* why he shews mercy in such *wrathful ways*.
- V. Deduce some *inferences* for the application.

I. For clearing and confirming this lesson from *scripture*, you may consult the following passages. Psal. xlv. 4. *His right-hand teacheth him terrible things.* Psal. lxxv. 5. *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.* Psal. lxxvi. 11, 12. *Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins; thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us into a wealthy place.* Psal. lxxxv. 7. *Thou calledst in trouble and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of*



of Meribah. Jacob saith, *All these things are against me ; but God meant it for good*, Gen. xlii. 26. See Deuter. viii. 15, 16. and chap. x. 21. Psal. lxxviii- 35. Though we may apprehend God designs evil against us, and against his church ; yet the Lord means it for good. *The Lord is with me*, saith the prophet, *as a mighty terrible one*, Jer. xx. 11. *I will bring her into the wilderness, there will I speak comfortably*, Hof. ii. 14. *Thou shalt go to Babylon, there shalt thou be delivered*, Mic. iv. 10. See Ezek. xxii. 14, 15. Isa. lxiv. 3, 4.

II. We proposed next to observe some *terrible and wrathful ways* wherein he saves. Some of these have been mentioned in the scriptures cited.—He sheweth mercy to them by terrible ways, while he doth it sometimes by terrible *providences* ; such as heavy afflictions, grievous rods upon their bodies, families, names, estates, children and relations ; of all which I might give instances, were it needful. They are *chastened of the Lord*, that they be not *condemned with the world* : and their *light affliction worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.—By terrible *temptations* ; so Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him that *he might not be exalted above measure*. By terrible *falls* into the mire ; so Peter fell into the horrible pit of cursing, swearing, and denying his master.—By terrible *words* : as when he tells them, in a manner, that he has *no commission to save them* : and that they are *dogs*, to whom the *childrens bread does not belong*.—By terrible *commotions, disorders, and confusions* upon their minds ; *I am full of confusion, see thou mine affliction*, Job x. 15. Thus the *arrows of the Almighty may be within them*, chap. vi. 4.—By terrible *commands*, like that to Abraham, Genesis xxii. 2. *Go sacrifice Isaac*.—By terrible *threatenings*, like that to Israel, Judges x. 14. *Go to the Gods whom ye have served ; I will deliver you no more*.—By terrible *challenges* like that, Isa. xliii. 23, 24. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel, &c.*—By terrible *descriptions* of them, like that, Isa. lvii. 17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him, &c.*—By terrible *fears*

fears and perplexing thoughts; so the psalmist, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul*: and apprehensions of utter *relinquishing*; *When my foot nigh slipt, thy mercy held me up*, Psal. xciv. 18.—By terrible storms and tempests of *angry dispensations*, like that towards Jonah, chap. ii. 6. *I went down to the bottom of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever*.—By terrible *disappointments*, making them say, *I sought him, but I found him not; I go forward, but he is not there*.—By a terrible *confluence* of trouble and mixture of adversity; troubled on every side with troubles of every sort, outward and inward trouble, *deep calling unto deep*.—By terrible *questions*; such as that, *How shall I put thee among the children?* Jer. iii. 19. *How shall I pardon thee for this?* chap. v. 7. *How shall I do for the daughter of my people?* chap. ix. 7.—By terrible *delays* making them cry, *How long? how long?* Psal. xiii. 1.—By terrible *tidings*; *I will not be afraid of evil tidings*; importing that they are terrible. They may be *scarred with dreams, and terrified with night visions*.—By terrible *turns*, and various changes and vicissitudes; *Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down again*, Psal. cii. 9, 10.—By terrible *extremities*, even to the *sentence of death*, 2 Cor. i. 9.; yea, to the *grave*, and the *grave-stone*, Lam. iii. 53.; yea more, to be as *dead and dry bones scattered about the grave's mouth*.—These are some of the *terrible ways* wherein the Lord sheweth mercy, or saves his people, while he hideth his face from, and sheweth his *wrath* against them.

III. The third thing proposed was, To consider in what *cases* and *seasons* he sheweth himself in arms and in wrath against them.

1. When they *degenerate* and make apostasy from him, and from his truth, and their zeal for it, Jerem. ix. 1, 2, 3, 7. Hence he saves them, yet so as *by fire*, 1 Corinth. iii. 14, To this purpose see Ezek. xx. 33, —37.

2. When his people become *careless* and *negligent* in known duty. Thus God met Moses, and sought to kill

kill him, for his neglect to circumcise his child, Exod. iv. 24. You read of Eli's neglecting to punish and chastise his sons, 1 Sam. ii. 12,—26 wherefore God breaks his neck, and slays his two sons in one day, ch. iv. 10,—18.

3. When the people of God break out into any *scandalous sins*, whereby the name of God is blasphemed. You see David's murder and adultery severely chastised; *The sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Urriah to be thy wife, and hast slain him: behold, I will raise up evil against thee, in thine own house.—Thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun,* 2 Sam. xii. 10,—14.

4. When the people of God *undervalue their mercies*, and do not observe the kindness of God that conveys their mercies to them: *She did not know that I gave her corn, wine, and oil, and multiplied her mercies; therefore I will take away my corn, wine, oil, and flax, and none shall deliver her out of my hand,* Hof. ii. 8, 9. How can we expect God should remember mercy towards us, when we do not remember, but forget his mercy?

5. When the people of God grow *wilful and obstinate*, and will not hear the call of God; as it was even with good Josiah, who will needs go and fight with Necho king of Egypt, contrary to the call of God; and so he got his death's wounds, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20, 22. When they will not obey his voice, but walk after the imagination of their own heart, going after Baalim; then he is provoked to say, *Behold! I will feed this people with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink,* Jer. ix. 15. When they desert the call of God, and the cause of God, then he is exceedingly provoked. Jonah will not go the errand God sent him; and how terribly doth God deal with him!

6. When the people of God fall a *doating* upon what God hath bestowed upon them, then God deals sharply with them: thus when David falls a doating upon Absalom, what a grieved heart got he with him both in  
his

his life, and in his death ! Beware of doating too much upon your children, or idolizing your enjoyments, lest God break your idols, and break your hearts with them too.

7. When the people of God grow full of *animosity*, and fall out by the way : I mean, when even the friends of truth, and of the cause of God, are rent one from another. Many of God's faints, who could agree well enough in a prison, and at a stake, yet could not agree when at liberty. Sharp persecutions have been occasioned by the divisions of the faints, by the dissentions of Luther and Calvin. *Whereas there is among you envying, strife and division ; are ye not carnal ?* 1 Cor. iii. 3. And particularly when, through pride or selfishness, a faithful remnant that would witness the best way they can for God, are left alone, and few or none will join them, to *set up the curtains of the tabernacle* ; this tends to divide the pastors and scatter the flock See Jer. x. 20, 21.

8. When the people of God turn *carnally confident*, still justifying themselves : *How canst thou say, I am not polluted ? Thou sayest, Behold I am innocent : I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned,* Jer. ii. 23, 35. This is quite the reverse of the precept, *Judge yourselves and ye shall not be judged,* 1 Corinthians xi. 30.

9. When they break out into *intemperate zeal*, zeal without knowledge ; this provokes God to bring terrible things upon them, to cure this distemper, and to calm and sober them. Thus it was with Uzza, when he gave a touch to the ark : and with the Jews, Rom. x. 2. *I bear them record,* saith the apostle, *that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* Zeal without knowledge, is heat without light : and let there be never so great a zeal for God, and a good cause, if it be grounded upon ignorance, and want of understanding, it comes to little account ; yea, it brings to ruin : so it was with the Jews. Light and heat should bear a proportion to one another.

10. When they *rashly approach* to God in duties and ordinances, and worship him in a carnal, formal way ;  
and

and particularly when they profane the table of the Lord, by unworthy communicating: *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body: for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,* 1 Cor. xi. 30. Many are punished with sudden death for their sinful way of shewing forth the Lord's death: yet all in mercy to his own; for, though he *pardon their sin,* he *takes vengeance on their inventions.*

IV. The *fourth* thing we proposed was, To give the *reasons* why he saves and shews mercy in such terrible and wrathful ways.

1, It is out of a *gracious* design; particularly to cause them to seek his face: *In their affliction they shall seek me early,* Hosea v. 15. God's own people are sometimes ready to carry strangely towards him: and he saith of them, Jer xii. 9. *Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird: the birds round about are against her. Come up, assemble all the beasts of the field: come to devour.* He bringeth them into captivity. But notice how he speaks of them elsewhere, Song ii. 4. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs: let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* He makes his speckled bird fly to the clefts of the rock.

2. It is to *instruct* them, that they may have experimental knowledge, what it is to want him, and what it is to enjoy him: *Then mine anger shall be kindled against them in that day; and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall besal them, so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us,* Deut. xxxi. 17. It is said, Hosea viii. 2. *Israel shall say unto me, My God, we know thee,* namely, experimentally know. It is to instruct them of the evil of sin, so as to be purged from it; *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away sin,* Isa. xxvii. 9.

3. That his people may understand more fully the *love* of our Lord Jesus Christ toward them; and that they may know or guess at the greatness of the affliction and trouble that the Lord Jesus underwent; who suffered the wrath of God for our sake, and in our room: *He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.*

4. That all may know that God will not *spare sin*, even in his own: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities*, Amos iii. 7. And this he doth in a conformity to his promise, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—34. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that is gone out of my lips.* See Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

5 He saves and shews mercy in ways terrible and wrathful, that his mercy towards them may be *wonderful* and *astonishing*. When they are brought to the mouth of the pit, to the brink of destruction, to the midst of the furnace of wrath, and then plucked as brands out of the burning, how wonderful and astonishing is his mercy! And how do they stand amazed, crying, *Is this the manner of man!* Then he gives them *beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

6. He shews mercy in ways terrible, that his mercy may appear the more *amiable*. Mercy at any rate is desirable and lovely; but mercy in the midst of wrath and terrible tempests, O how sweet is it! Light is precious when it shines out of darkness; so is mercy when it arises out of wrath.

V. The fifth thing proposed was the *application* of this point; which we shall essay in a few inferences.

1. Hence see with what *awful reference* we ought to compass the altar of God, and to approach to a communion

munion table ; our God is a consuming fire ; a God of terrible majesty, as well as of tender mercy, *Let a man examine himself*, and prepare himself, that he provoke not God, by unworthy communicating, to display his wrath instead of mercy.

2. Let all the children of God be *cautious* and *circumspect* : though the Lord will save them ; yet he hath terrible ways of doing it. If they provoke their Father to anger, he may write bitter things against them, run upon them like a lion, and break them with breach upon breach : *You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities*, Amos iii. 7. \* You walk upon pinacles ; none in all the world have more need to walk exactly.— You are exposed to dangerous temptations, both from yourselves and from the devil : in yourselves, from the corruption and pride of your nature : and the lion of hell will be upon you with his utmost violence ; for *he constantly goes about seeking whom he may devour*.

3. Let the *wicked tremble* to meet with the great and terrible God. If he be so terrible to his own, what may they expect who are his enemies ! *If the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear ?* When God comes even in mercy to his people, they have not been able to bear it, Exodus xx. 19. Thus Moses said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*, Hebrews xii. 21. *John fell down dead*, Rev. i. 17. When God appears in mercy to his people, if there be but one bright beam of his majesty shining forth, it cannot be borne, it is so terrible ; if that bright beam of his majesty make them tremble, what will become of you when he appears in his wrath, when the terrible stream of fire and brimstone shall issue from his awful throne ! It is said of him, even when he sits as a refiner and purifier, *Who shall abide the day of his coming !* Mal. iii. 2. How will he then burn up the chaff ! O but *sinners in Zion shall be afraid, fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites*, Isaiah xxxiii. 14. If the saints may have the *sentence of death in themselves*, 2 Cor. i. 8. ; and if this be terrible, how will the *execution* of the sentence of

death everlasting terribly torment the wicked for ever!

4. Since the door of hope is yet open, hence let not *terrible times*, and *terrible dispensations*, create *desperate thoughts*; since God *saves in terrible ways*, look to *mercy in the midst of wrath*: for, *he multiplies to pardon, and keeps mercy for thousands.*

S E R M O N



## S E R M O N CXLVII.

WISDOM'S WAYS PLEASANTNESS, and  
her P A T H S P E A C E \*.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Wisdom's ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

**A**S the way of religion is a *safe* and *sure* way, Prov. x. 9. ; so here it is described to be a *sweet* and *pleasant* way. Several other characters are given of *Wisdom's ways*, in the preceding verses, which are as so many arguments to seek after *true wisdom*, and after **CHRIST**, the *essential wisdom* of the Father. The happiness of these who find wisdom is *transcendent* happiness; far exceeding all that can be found in this world, ver. 14, 15. It is *true* happiness, including all those things which are supposed to make man happy, ver. 16, 17. **WISDOM** is here represented as a bright and beautiful queen, distributing gifts to her loving subjects; such as *length of days*, even everlasting life; *riches and honours*. Here are true riches, *the unsearchable riches of Christ*; true honours, *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*; yea, though they were in this world buried in obscurity, they will in the next, *shine forth as the sun*. Here is true pleasure; *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*.

\* This Subject was prosecuted in five Discourses, It was begun in the Author's own church, at Dunfermline, on Thursday the 24th of September, 1730; and afterwards enlarged on, we are told, and finished at a sacramental occasion, a little before his death. This is only the second impression of these Sermons.

It is no argument against this subject, that the wicked world can find no pleasure in Wisdom's ways: for, as that food is delightful to a beast, which would be lothsome, like death, to a man; so, to an unrenewed man, these things are delightful, which, to a sanctified soul, would be lothsome: no wonder, therefore, that these things that are most pleasant to a renewed soul, are disrelished by these whose beastly nature was never changed, or who have no spiritual health. If we would prove that wine is pleasanter than vinegar, or bread than ashes, we would not appeal to the appetite of the sick or diseased; it is the sound and healthful that must be judges. Those who have base thoughts of God himself, cannot love him, or delight in him; but all that honour him in Christ know and acknowledge, that *Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

Such as men are, such are their delights. We are naturally filled with malignant enmity against God and godliness; and therefore, no reason will persuade them that God and godliness are the most pleasant delights: no reason, I say, but what persuades them from that enmity. No reason will persuade a slothful man, that labour is better than sleep and idleness: no reason will persuade a drunkard, glutton, or voluptuous person, that abstinence and moderation are the sweetest life — Till God change their hearts, they will not change their pleasures.

In the words we have a twofold doctrine: the one is, *That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness*; the other is, *That all her paths are peace.*

Here several questions may be propounded and solved, for a more accurate explication of the words, and clear uptaking of their meaning.

QUEST. I. *What are we to understand by WISDOM'S WAYS?*

ANSW. As by *Wisdom* we are especially to understand CHRIST, who is the *Wisdom of God*, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; so, by *Wisdom's ways*, we may understand, either the way wherein Wisdom walketh towards us, which are summed

med up in *mercy and truth*, Micah vii. 20. Psalm xcvi. 3. MERCY lays the *foundation*; TRUTH puts on the *cape-stone*: or the ways wherein Wisdom *directeth us to walk*, which are summed up in *faith and love*; FAITH *sees and flies* to Christ; and LOVE takes *pleasure* in him: by faith we come to Christ, by love we walk in his pleasant way.

QUEST. 2. *Why are Wisdom's ways said to be PLEASANTNESS?* It is not only *pleasant*, but *pleasantness*, in the abstract.

ANSW. Why, it is to shew, that Wisdom's ways are such wherein abundant delight and satisfaction are to be found: all the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasures which the gracious soul finds in communion and fellowship with God, and in the course of holy gospel service and obedience: yea, it is not this or that *way* of Wisdom, but her *ways* are all strowed with roses and pleasures.

QUEST. 3. *What is understood by Wisdom's PATHS?*

ANSW. If this has any other meaning than Wisdom's *ways*, and be not a different expression of the same thing; then it seems to import that not only the *ways* of religion in general, but all the particular *paths* of that way are pleasant; every act of grace, every instance of duty, every particular piece of spiritual service, the very secret path of religious duties, as well as the open ways of divine worship, are all pleasantness.

QUEST. 4. *What is to be understood by PEACE?*

ANSW. Why, Wisdom's paths are not only *peaceable* but *peace* itself: not only peace in the end; *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace*: but they also bring in, advance, and increase *peace of reconciliation*, between God and man; *peace of conscience*, between man and himself; and *peace of concord*, between man and man; of the first you read, Rom. v. 1.; of the second, Proverbs xv. 15.; and of the third, Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

The words themselves are a doctrinal proposition;  
and,

and, in discoursing from them, we adduce no other, namely,

DOCT. *That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

The method we lay down, for the illustration of this point of doctrine, through divine assistance, shall be the following.

- I. We shall demonstrate the *truth* of this proposition, *That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness.*
- II. Consider the *quality* of that pleasure that is to be found in Wisdom's ways.
- III. Speak of the particular *paths* of Wisdom which are all *peace*.
- IV. Open up the *nature* and *qualities* of that peace.
- V. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We shall essay to demonstrate the *truth* of this proposition, *viz. That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness.* And this we may do, 1. By an induction of particulars, representing some of Wisdom's ways that are pleasantness. 2. By opening up some of the springs of pleasure which Wisdom's children, who keep her ways, draw her pleasures and comforts from.

1<sup>st</sup>, We may demonstrate the truth of the observation by an *induction of particulars*, shewing some of Wisdom's ways that are pleasantness. And here there are four ways of Wisdom I shall mention; there are, 1. Providential administrations. 2. Doctrinal principles. 3. Evangelical graces. 4. Spiritual benefits and works of God, in and towards Wisdom's children, which are all pleasantness.

[1.] There are *providential administrations* that are part of Wisdom's ways; these are wonderfully pleasant and unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33. Rev. xv. 3. The Lord gives his people cause to praise him daily for his mercy, Psalm xxxv. 27.

OBJECT. *But what shall be said of his* RODS and AFFLIC-

AFFLICTIONS? *No affliction is joyous, but grievous,* Heb. xii. 11.

ANSW. Let it be considered, that it is not said they are grievous, but only *seem* to be so: *No chastisement seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.* They are not truly grievous, but truly joyous: for, there may be *much joy in affliction*, 1 Theff. i. 7. If we consult the prophet Habakkuk, chapter iii. 16, 17, 18. we will find extreme affliction, yet joy. Thus David, 1 Samuel xxx. 6. was greatly distressed: Saul was driving him about like a partridge, and persecuting him; the Philistines are suspecting him; his friends, who should have comforted him, are taken captive; the *people are speaking of stoning him*; yet, *David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* See Jam. i. 2. 2 Cor. xii. 10. They went away rejoicing in their affliction. *They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods*, Heb. x. 34. Many examples we have to this purpose; and even of martyrs rejoicing in the flames. Why did that martyr cry out, “That the fire and torture he endured was more pleasant than a bed of roses? Why did Paul and Silas sing so merrily and cheerfully in the stocks, amidst the dark prison? Why, they sealed this by their experience, that *Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness*, even in providential administrations, and most afflictive dispensations, as well as prosperous.

[2.] There are *doctrinal propositions* that are part of Wisdom’s ways; and these also are all pleasantness.—The truths and doctrines of his word are *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*, Psal xix. 10. *Thy testimonies are my delight*, says David, Psal cxix. 24. *Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it; and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart*, Jer. xv. 16; intimating, that his words must be eaten and digested, before the sweetness of them can be relished. There is especially a singular pleasure in the *doctrines of Christ’s gospel*.—The doctrine of his *incarnation*; O how pleasant! See the angels singing of it to the shepherds, Luke ii. 10, 11, 13, 14.—From his incarnation go to his *active obedience*; O how pleasant! It is the *righteousness of God*.

Christ's human nature had never any existence separate from the divine: no sooner was it, than it was united to God. Thus *he magnified the law*, Isaiah xlii. 21.—Let us proceed from his doing to his *dying*; How pleasant is the doctrine of his *passive obedience*; Isaiah liii. 5. *wounded for our transgressions*; satisfied the justice of God; gave himself a *sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God*, Eph. v. 2. O what a pleasant and a favourable doctrine may it be to us! But, from his passion, let us go to his *resurrection*: how pleasant is the doctrine of Christ's resurrection! Here is the foundation of our joyful hope; we *are begotten thereto by his resurrection*, 1 Pet. i. 3.—From his resurrection let us pass to his *ascension*: how pleasant is the doctrine of Christ's ascension into heaven! See Eph. iv. 8. Acts v. 31. Psalm lxxviii. 18 The words are emphatic; *He hath ascended up on high; he hath received gifts for men*.—From his ascension, look to his *intercession*: how pleasant is the doctrine of his intercession in heaven! Of this we read, 1 John ii. 1, 2. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father*, Hebrews vii. 25. *He is able to save to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*. He is God in our nature; nothing can be nearer unto man, than manhood. Christ is our kindred; and he is God's *eternal Son*; his *beloved Son*: whatever he asks, he shall obtain; *The Father hears him always*.—These doctrinal principles are so many wells from which true believers may draw much comfort and sweetness.

Upon this head of *doctrinal principles*, I might bring in a multitude of pleasant things: such as, the pleasant counsels of Christ, the pleasant invitations, the pleasant promises, and the pleasant records of the word.

1. The pleasant *counsels of Christ* in the word; such as, Rev. iii. 17, 18. *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 eye-salve that thou mayest see*. O what a pleasant counsellor is Christ, the *Wisdom of God*! He *will guide by his counsel, and afterwards receive to his glory*.

2. The

2. The pleasant *invitations of the word*; such as these, Isa. lv. 1. *Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c.* Mat. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* See also Hosea xiv. 1. Jer. iii. 4, 14, 22. And how sweetly will he invite them at the last day, who accept of his invitation here? *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.*

3. The pleasant *promises of the word*, which are great and precious, and *Yea and Amen in Christ*; such as the promise of *regeneration*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*—The promise of *justification and pardon*; Heb. viii. 12. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*—The promise of *adoption*; 2 Cor. vi. 18. *And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty*—The promise of *sanctification*; Ezekiel xxxvi. 27. *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.*—The promise of the *Spirit* for this end plentifully; *For I will pour water upon the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine off-spring*, Isaiah xlv. 3.—The promise of *renewed communications* out of his fulness; John i. 16. *And out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*—The promise of *peace and comfort*; John xvi. 33. *These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.*—The promise of *strength, and support, and of furniture* for active and passive duty, for doing and suffering; *He will give power to the faint and to them that have no might he increaseth strength*, Isaiah xl. 29.—The promise of his *constant presence*; Hebrews xiii. 5. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*—The promise of *perseverance*; Jer. xxxii. 40. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put*

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*my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

4. The pleasant *records* of the word, with reference to many other things, besides what I have just now mentioned; such as,

(1.) A record of pleasant *parables*: among others, that of the *lost goat*, and what joy there was at the finding of it; representing the value that the Lord puts upon the *lost soul*, when found, as if it were a treasure wherein he takes peculiar pleasure.—The parable of the *lost sheep*, such as we are; and what joy there was upon the finding of it.—The parable of the *lost son*; and what joy there was upon his returning.—All these three are recorded, Luke xv.

(2.) A record of pleasant *providences*; such as, the providence concerning *Joseph*; the providence concerning *Esther*; all the providences relative to *Israel*; the providence about the *three children*; and *Daniel* himself recorded in the book of Daniel. What a field of pleasant meditation is here!

(3.) A record of pleasant *experiences* of the faints; such as, the experience that *David* had of the Lord's delivering him out of the *paw of the lion*; out of the *horrible pit*; his experience of *communion with God*; Psalm lxxxiv. and lxiii. *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand, &c. O to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary!*—The experience of the *Spouse*, Song ii. 3. *I sat down under his shadow with great delight. He brought me into the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love.*—Yea, for our comfort we have experiences recorded of their *desertion and darkness*; as Psalm lxxvii. 7. *Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? And Isaiah xlix. 14. Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me; and my Lord hath forgotten me, &c.*

(4.) A record of pleasant *titles* which are given to God, to Christ, to the Spirit, and to the Saints.

1. Many pleasant titles are given to God; such as, he is called, the *Father of mercies*; the *God of all consolations*; the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; the *Father of the fatherless*. O! let poor fatherless, help-



helpless sinners see a well of sweet pleasure here, at their head. See Psalm x. 14. and ciii. 15. Hosea xiv. 3. He is called *the Fountain of living water*, Jer. ii. 13. A fountain always flowing and overflowing. See Isaiah xxxv. 6, 7. He is called *the Hope of Israel*, Jer. xiv. 8. *O the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble!* He is called a *sin pardoning God*; Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* He is called a *prayer hearing God*; Psalm lxxv. 2. *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.*

2. Many pleasant titles are given to CHRIST. He is called the *Shepherd*, John x. the *faithful Shepherd*, the *chief Shepherd*, the *good Shepherd*, who will not suffer his people to want; they shall not want provision, protection, direction, counsel, &c; and also a *tender-hearted shepherd*, Isaiah xl. 11. He is called the *Physician*, the *good Samaritan*, the *Lord that healeth us*. He is called the *Redeemer* who pays our ransom. He is called the *Desire of all nations*, a *Friend*, a *Husband*, a *Bridegroom*, a *Brother*, an *Advocate*, the *Wonderful Counsellor*, the *mighty God*, the *everlasting Father*, the *Prince of peace*, the *Sun of righteousness*, the *Saviour of sinners*: every one of these *relative* titles are full of pleasure and sweetness. Beside, his *comparative* titles are full of pleasure: he is *fairer than the Sons of men*; *more glorious than the mountains of prey*; *the bright and morning Star*; *the Rose of Sharon*; *the Apple-tree among the trees of the wood*. Besides all these, his *absolute* titles are all full of pleasure; for, he is *God over all*, *blesed for ever*; even the *true God and eternal life*.—O what a delicious field of meditation is here for the gracious soul!

3. Many pleasant titles are given to the HOLY GHOST. He is called the *Remembrancer*, John xiv. 26.; the *Helper*, that *helpeth our infirmities*, Romans viii. 26.; the *Teacher*, 1 John ii. 2.; the *Revealer* of deep and hidden things; for *he searcheth all things, even the deep things of God*; the *Convincer and Reprover*, John xvi. 8.; the *Sanctifier*, Romans xv. 16. *The Gentiles were sanctified by the Holy Ghost*; therefore he

is called the *Spirit of holiness*; the *Comforter*, John xiv. 26; the *Witness*, John xv. 26. *He shall testify of me*; the *Advocate*, that maketh *intercession within us*, Rom. viii. 26. The same word rendered *Comforter*, signifies an *Advocate*. O what pleasant things are here!

4. Many pleasant titles are given to the *children of God*. They are called the *temples of God*, 1 Corinth. iii. 16.; his *portion and treasure*, Jer. xii. 10.; his *ransomed ones*, Isaiah xxxv. 10. he hath been at great charges with them; the *members of his body*; every believer may call him his *head*, &c. They are his *beloved*; the *beloved of the Lord shall dwell safely*: the *dearly beloved of his soul*, Jer. xii. 10; the *bride the Lamb's wife*, Rev. xxi. 9. O what a pleasant relation is this! They are his *crown*; *They shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*, Song iii. 11; his *jewels*, Mal. iii. 16; his *little flock*, yea, the very *apple of his eye*, which he will not suffer to be touched; *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye*.

All these pleasant things, and a vast variety of others, are to be found in the *doctrines* of his holy word, which are a part of Wisdom's ways: Surely then they are *pleasantness*.

OBJECT. *But what say you of the COMMANDS and THREATENINGS of the word? Is there any pleasure there?*

ANSW. Why, the word is a magazine of delight; the *precepts* appoint us a pleasant work; the strictest do but remain from our own calamities, and keep out of our hands the knife by which we would cut our fingers, if not our own throat, The severest *threatenings* do but deter us from running into the consuming fire, and running away from our only pleasure. And thus, even the bitterest parts of God's holy word contribute to true delight and real pleasure. But,

[3.] Besides providential administrations, and doctrinal principles, there are *evangelical graces*, that are part of Wisdom's ways. Every act of grace carries complacency and delight with it. Instance in knowledge, faith, love and hope.

1. *Knowledge*, which is a part of Wisdom's ways, which

which we are called to walk in, is pleasant. What a pleasant thing is it to know God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel! This is a looking-glass wherein so many excellent things are to be seen.—The pleasure of *natural* knowledge is great; but the pleasure of *saving* knowledge is much greater. The pleasure that *great men* have in courts, and grandeur, and pomp, and splendor, is not comparable to the pleasure which an *honest student* hath in his books; and yet this pleasure is nothing to that which a *believer* hath in the knowledge of God and Christ. If you compare that pleasure and this together, we disdain the comparison; but if you compare the pleasure that *drunkards, whore-mongers, and voluptuous persons* have in their carnal ways, with the pleasure of Wisdom's ways, we not only disdain the comparison but detest it. Wisdom gives us the knowledge of the best things; the knowledge of things to come; the knowledge of things that are most sweet: what sweeter than salvation, God, and glory? The delights of sense are base and brutish; yea, nauseous in comparison of the heavenly delights of a renewed mind—How pleasant is the knowledge of the things that most concern our *souls*, and everlasting *happiness*! This must be a feast to the mind of wise men. Ask one who is groaning under the weight of sin, and fear of God's wrath, whether the satisfying knowledge of pardon and reconciliation, and acceptance with God, would be more pleasant to him, than all your carnal merriment can be to you? Ask a soul that hath lost his evidence of grace, and walks in darkness, whether the discovery of his interest in Christ, and the assurance of God's love, and the return of the light of his countenance, would be more pleasant to him than any pleasure or contentment that earth can afford? Ask any man, at the hour of death, if he be not stupid, whether now the knowledge of his salvation would not be better, and more pleasant to him, than all the lustful sports and honours of the world?—How pleasant is the knowledge that is certain and *infallible*! Such is the knowledge here. It is grounded on the infallible word of God that *endureth*

*for ever*.—How pleasant is the knowledge that is *experimental*! The soul, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and tasted the sweetness of his love, this is more delicious knowledge than the most learned men in the world can have, who are ungodly.

2. *Faith*; what a pleasant grace is this! To find that we stand upon a rock, and that underneath us are everlasting arms, and that we have as full security for our salvation, as the immutable oath of the unchangeable God, what a pleasure must it be to the believing soul! The trouble of the godly is most from their unbelief; but the more they believe, the more they are comforted, John xiv. 1. The life of faith is a pleasant life; *Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Peter i. 5, 6. There is *joy and peace in believing*, Romans xv. 13. O how pleasant is the faith of *things not seen*! Hebrews xi. 1. To see him who is invisible! How pleasant is the faith of everlasting love? Faith's retrospect, and faith's prospect of everlasting love?

3. *Love* is a pleasant grace; the love of God. Alas! all the pleasures of the world are but trifles, and like the sports of a child, in comparison of the pleasures of the love of God. There is a sweetness in the soul's out-going after such an object. If the lustful have a pleasure in their vile and unlawful desires, and the ambitious world have a pleasure in their vain desires; surely the godly must have another kind of pleasures in their spiritual desires, and much more in their love. And, if every love have, in its own nature, a pleasure in the object beloved, what unspeakable pleasure must be in the love of God! How sweet are the services of love! as that of Jacob's for Rachel. How pleasant are the *pains* of love! There is a sweetness in the *sickness of love*! Song ii. 4.

4. *Hope* is a pleasant grace: what joy is there in the *hope of glory*! Romans v. 2. It is not the hope of corruptible riches, but of an incorruptible crown. It is not a hope in the promise of a deceitful man, but in the word of the everlasting God. This hope will never  
*make*

make us ashamed. How pleasant is it to be *begotten again to a lively hope* of that heavenly inheritance! 1 Peter i. 3. O what is the pleasure of meat and drink, of mirth and jolity, of pride and bravery? Nothing but mere vanishing dreams. *If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable*; but, having this hope, in the life to come, we are of all men the most happy.

Thus I might speak of all the graces of the Spirit. Every act of grace carries pleasure in the bosom of it; even these spiritual actings of *repentance* and *godly sorrow*, and *mortification*, which seem to be most troublesome and bitter. *Spiritual fasting* carries *spiritual feasting* with it: see Zech. viii. 19. How could their fast be a feast? Why, there is pleasure in gospel penitence. The tears of godly sorrow are tears of joy. Never hath the believer more pleasure than when looking to Christ, with the tear in his eye. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy*, Psalm cxxxvi. 5, 6. They reap when they are sowing as well as afterwards: and if the very *seed-time* be a reaping time, what will the *harvest* be?— Thus you see *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness*.

[4.] There are *spiritual benefits* and *works of God*, in and towards Wisdom's children, which are part of Wisdom's ways, and are all pleasantness. The *works of God* are the *ways of God*, Rev. xv. 3, 4. And I mention four beneficial works of his that are full of pleasure, namely, illumination, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

1. *Illumination* is the work of Christ, the *Wisdom of God*, as he is a Prophet; and, O how pleasant is this divine light! *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. It is a light shining into the soul, whereby not only the head is informed, but the heart satisfied and transformed. If the light of the natural sun be pleasant, what must the light of the Sun of righteousness be?

2. *Justification* is the work of Christ, as he is a Priest; and, O what pleasure is there in this work, this way

of Wisdom, Romans v. 1, 2, 11. *Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.* See how David rejoices in this work, Psalm ciii. 3, 4, 5. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed as the eagle's.* What peace doth an intimation of pardon bring to the soul! *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

3. *Sanctification* is the work of Christ, as he is a King; for herein he sets up his throne in the heart: and, O what pleasure is there here! for, according to the measure of sanctity, so are the spiritual senses exercised. As the eye is pleased with the beloved object, and the ear pleased with harmony, and the taste pleased with food, and the smell with odour: what must the pleasure be of seeing the glory, hearing the voice, tasting the goodness, feeling the power, and smelling the odour of Christ! If there be any pleasure in ornament, any pleasure in beauty, what must be the pleasure of this adorning with the beautiful image of God! The fruits of this work are pleasant to God, and to the soul both, Song iv. 16. v. 1. and ii. 14.

4. *Glorification* and *complete salvation* is the work of Christ, and therein is the pleasure of the saints consummate; *He is the author of eternal salvation to them,* Hebrews v. 9. And it is his work to call them to his joy, saying, *Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord,* Matth. xxv. 2. The fullest persuasion of this; *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right-hand are pleasures for evermore,* Psalm xvi. 11.—Surely then, *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness.*

2dly, To demonstrate this truth, *viz.* that *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness*, by opening up some of the *springs* of pleasure that Wisdom's children who keep her ways, draw their comfort from. I shall mention a fourfold source

source and spring from whence the believer may derive his pleasure, *viz*, God and his attributes, Christ and his fulness, the Spirit and his operations, the covenant and its promises.

1. GOD, and his *attributes*, is the source and spring of the believers pleasure: and, O what an ocean of delight is here! He is a God of infinite power, wisdom and goodness: here is wisdom to direct, power to protect, holiness to sanctify, justice to satisfy, goodness to pity, and faithfulness to make good all that he hath said, Where shall we find comfort, if not in God? What a poor portion is the world? But God is the everlasting and unchangeable portion of his people. There is more ground of comfort in that one word, *I will be thy God*, than there is in a thousand of worlds, What can they want who have a God to go to? Can he want water who hath the ocean? Can he want light, that hath the sun?

2. CHRIST, and his *fulness*, is the spring and source of his pleasure; the store-house of his delight, from whom he may daily bring his comfort; for, what great things he doth for his spouse are unspeakable. It is he that pays all their debt: supplies all their wants: *All their springs are in him*; and *out of his fulness they receive and grace for grace*, John i. 16 *In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. And they are *complete in him*, chapter ii. 9, 10. And he is *made of God to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30.

3. The SPIRIT, and his *operations*, is the spring and source of their comfort. He is the *Comforter*, John xvi. 7.; and he gives sometimes *strong consolation*, Heb. vi. 18. They who have the spirit of faith and conversion, have the promise of the Spirit for consolation; and in all his various operations there are manifold consolations. The Spirit in his working is compared to *wind*, Song vi. 16.; to *water*, John iii. 5.; to *fire*, Matthew iii. 11.; to *oyl*, Psalm xlv. 7. 1 John ii. 27. Now, this is the *wind* that pleasantly fills their sails, and forwards their voyage to the heavenly harbour: this is

the well of water within them that springs up to everlasting life; and the streams of this river make glad the city of God: this is the fire that makes their hearts burn within them: and this is the oyl of joy that anoints the wheels of their soul for running the Christian race; the joy of the Lord being their strength.

4. The COVENANT, and its promises, are springs and sources of their pleasure. They have the whole treasure of the gospel to go to for delight; and little doth the sensual, ignorant world know what sweetness and supporting pleasures are from thence derived.—What comfort did this afford to David? *Though my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow,* 2 Samuel xxiii. 5. God's covenant of promise, which stands fast in Christ, is the comfort of the Christian in all his distresses: *This is my comfort in my affliction; thy word hath quickened me.*—One scripture promise of the love of God, and the life to come, is of infinitely more worth than all the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world: these vanish, but *the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* We have promises suiting every state, and every strait. O Sirs, what comfort can we find without a promise?—What but a promise can comfort them that are short of the possession? We may have more joy in sickness, with a promise, than others can have in their health, without a promise: a promise in prison, is more than liberty; a promise in poverty, is more than riches; a promise in death, is better than life. All that you have, without a promise, you may lose in a moment, and your souls and hopes with; but all that you have, with a promise you may be sure of; yea, believer you are vastly more sure of that which you have in promise than of that which you have in possession. The comfort that you have in possession is the stream-comfort, that may soon be cut off; but the comfort that you have in promise, is the fountain-comfort, which cannot be cut off. We are called, therefore, to *live by faith,* and *not by sense.* Sensible comforts are not sure here; but the



the promise, the ground of faith, is sure and immutable. We may go through death rejoicing with a promise of life in our hand, while infidels ly down in in the dust with desperation: and though we should stagger at the promise of God, through unbelief, yet that shall not make the promise of none effect; for, *the foundation of God standeth sure. Though heaven and earth should pass away, his word shall not pass, till all be fulfilled* †.



## S E R M O N CXLVIII.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

[ The second Sermon on this Text. ]

**O**UR blessed Redeemer is frequently represented in the sacred volume under the name of WISDOM, particularly in this book of Proverbs: not only in this chapter where our text lies, from ver. 13.—18.; but also in chap. iv. 7, viii. ix. i. &c. And under this name, in many of the above places, his glorious excellence is pointed out in a very striking light, as being *better and more precious than rubies, and all things desirable are not to be compared with him, &c.* What is elegantly and sublimely said in praise of Wisdom by Job, chapter xxviii. 12,—20. might with great propriety be said concerning him. As Christ the essential Wisdom of God, is so transcendently excellent in and of himself so every thing about him and appertaining to him,

† These four springs of the believer's pleasure, with some others, may be seen set forth in a more copious light above, Vol. VIII. p. 326.

bears an impress of his glorious dignity. He himself is the *brightness of the Father's glory*, and the *express image of his person*: and his disciples, in virtue of their union to him, have the divine image drawn upon them, made *partakers of the divine nature*, and are accounted the *excellent ones in the earth*, the *righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, the King's daughter being made *all glorious within*. The religion of the blessed Jesus is a glorious, excellent, and divine thing; and the distinguishing badge of all the candidates for glory: the profession of it, highly expedient and truly ornamental; and the sincere and devout exercise thereof, evidential of the true Christian, and of a divine principle of life being inlaid in the soul. In a word, every thing about God is amiable and lovely, and yields the greatest delight and satisfaction; for, *Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*.

We have already finished what we intended on the first general head of the method, which was to demonstrate the *truth* of the proposition, *viz. That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness*: and this we did by an induction of particulars, condescending on some of the *ways* of Wisdom which are pleasantness; and then opening up some of the *springs* of pleasure that Zion's children have, who keep her ways. We now proceed,

II. To the second thing we proposed, which was, To speak of the *qualities* of that pleasure that is in Wisdom's ways. And here we may have occasion to observe the *excellency* of Wisdom's pleasures, above all worldly pleasure whatsoever.

1. The pleasure of Wisdom's way is *real and solid*; it is called *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Peter i. 8. Whereas, sensual delights are like childrens laughter, slight and fleeting: as children laugh in one breath, and cry in the next; so are worldly joys followed at the heels with sorrow; for they lie not deep, and fortify not the heart against distress, as the delights of faith do. Hence worldly pleasures, when compared with spiritual, are said to be like the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, Eccl. vii. 6. *So is the laughter of a fool*; it is

nothing but a blaze and it is gone. Hence also worldly delights are compared to Jonah's gourd, Jonah iv. 6, 7. We are apt to rejoice in creature-comforts, but God prepares a worm to destroy them. When a person promises most in them, then a worm eats them up root and branch; they are such comforts as either the wind can wither them, or the water can drown them, or the fire can burn them, the moth can consume them, or the thief steal them; sickness can sink them, or death can destroy them; some worm or other can eat them out, and eat them up: but the joy of godliness is so solid and substantial, that they can defy *fire and water*, Isa. xliii. 1, 2. they can defy *trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword*: they can defy *death, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present or things to come*, Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

2. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are *rational pleasures, and well-grounded, and safe*: they are not grounded upon mistakes and fancies; they are warranted by the promise and oath of God, *The two immutable things by which it is impossible for God to lye*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. None but a lying devil, or an unbelieving heart full of blasphemy against God, will call in question the foundation of their faith and comfort; but the wicked rejoice in their own delusion: it is ignorance and error that they are beholden to for their mirth; they but laugh in their sleep, and, like madmen, in their distraction. If they knew the shortness of their pleasures, and the length of their sorrows; if they knew how much God is offended at their carnal merriment, how much the devil rejoices in their joys, and how near they are to hell, and eternal wo and howling, it would turn their laughter into lamentation: so that they rejoice upon a mere mistake; *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness*, Prov. xiv. 13. *How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her*, Rev. xviii. 7. I have read of a certain weed, which makes the creatures that eat it, give up their lives laughing: such

such a weed do the wicked of the world eat, that they go laughing to hell.

3. The pleasure of Wisdom's ways is *spiritual, pure, and holy*: the devil is an enemy to it; and it is contrary to sin, and commanded; *Rejoice evermore*, 1 Thessalonians v. 16. It is the gift of God, the fruit of the Spirit of God, and accompanied with the fear of God; *They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*, Acts ix. 31. It is warranted by his command, and promoted by his promise: but the pleasures of the godly are impure, and sinful; they are forbidden pleasures condemned by God, and confounded by his terrible threatenings: *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*, Isa. xlvi. 22. He forbids joy to a rebellious people; *Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people; for thou hast gone a-whoring from thy God*, Hosea ix. 1. He calls them to *weeping, and mourning, renting of heart*, Joel ii. 12, 13. See James v. 1,—5. God protests against their peace, and sentences them to sorrow.

4. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are *relieving*; they give rest in the middle of trouble and perplexity; *In the multitude of thy thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul*, Psalm xciv. 19. They give relief from present fears of danger and distress; and relief from future fears of death and judgment: but worldly pleasures, instead of giving relief, increase trouble; yea, the thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity, will quickly marr all their mirth, and put a final period to their rejoicing.

5. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are *purifying* pleasures, as well as pure; they are *meliorating*, and make us better; they are so far from disordering the mind, and leading it to sin, that they compose and purify the mind, and make sin more odious than ever. No man hates sin so much as he that hath tasted most of the sweetness of divine grace, and hath most of the joy of God's salvation. They are not taken with the snares of the flesh, till once they lose the relish of divine pleasures, and suffer their delights in Christ to fade. So long as we maintain our delight in God, the world

is but dung, honour is a smoke, and lust is a stink to us. He is the best and highest Christian that hath most of spiritual delight and pleasure; why, they *rejoice and work righteousness*, Isaiah lxiv. 5.: but fleshly pleasures are putrifying, instead of purifying; they make men worse and not better. They are snares to entrap men; and to bewitch and defile their souls, that should be chaste for God. The noise of sensual pleasures drowns the voice of God and reason. Oh! how little of God is in the midst of mens hunting and hawking, diceing and carding, drinking, dancing, ranting, and reveling! How little of heaven is in their mind, when the heart is quite sunk and drenched in sensual delights! It is there petrified and hardened against the word and warning of God. Then it is that they are *foolish, disobedient, deceived*, when they are serving *divers lusts and pleasures*, Titus iii. 3. Such are unwilling soberly and seriously to consider the things that belong to their everlasting peace; and hence so frequently grow up to be slights and scorers of the means of their salvation.

6. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are *honourable and heavenly*; they are of the same nature with these that saints and angels have with God: whatever their gradual difference be, yet they are of the same kind. It is the same God and glory that now delights the believer, as seen by vision and intuition with open face. If heaven be the state of greatest joy and pleasure; the state of grace that is next to it, must be a pleasant state. But sensual pleasures are fordid and earthly: so far unlike to the joys of heaven, that nothing more withdraws the heart, and makes it unfit for heaven. Hence,

7. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are *high and lofty* pleasures: here the soul delights in things of the greatest worth. The delights of holiness are glorious and sublime delights, brought from the most great and glorious things, and fed by God, and his grace, and everlasting glory: whereas the delights of sense are fed with trifles and swines husks. The carnal man's pleasures in the world are like these of children, playing

with toys and trifles, bables and butterflies. We may judge by the matter that feeds their pleasures which of the two is the more pleasant life, to sport in their own shame, and lie at the brink of misery, with the ungodly; or to delight ourselves in the love of God, and rejoice in the assured hope of the glory of God, with the true believer. The proper delight of believers is, with angels, to delight in God, and in the glory of God in Christ: but the delight of sinners is, as swine, in wallowing in the mire of sin; and, as the dog to eat his own vomit, 2 Pet. ii. 22.

8. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are *lasting*, yea, and *everlasting*. It is not a mutable good we rejoice in; but in an immutable good, in the immutable God; in the immutable love of God, in the immutable promise of the covenant, and in the hope of a kingdom that cannot be moved. These pleasures are *pleasures for evermore*, Psalm xvi. 11. Indeed, the believer's joy here, in this world, is oft interrupted by the neighbourhood of the flesh, and prevalence of sin, and the hidings of God's face; but yet still God keeps their comforts alive, at least, in the root, and will make them spring forth, as we need them, and are fit for them; and their *joy no man taketh from them*, John xvi. 22. Death cannot kill the joys of the believer; the grave cannot bury them, millions of ages shall not end them: God hath given us *everlasting consolation*, and *good hope through grace*, 2 Thess. ii. 16.; but worldly pleasures are but of a short duration; they are gone before we will feel that we have had them, and the worldlings are therein sowing the seeds of everlasting sorrow; Satan is but scratching them as the butcher shaves the throat of the swine before he kills them. He that hath had many days, and months, and years in sinful pleasures, hath no relish of it when it is past; but is as if it had never been, and much worse. The bones and dust of many thousands lie in the church yard that have tasted many a sweet morsel, and that have had many a merry wanton day; and now what the better are they of it? What have they more than those

those that spent their time in sorrow? The poor and sorrowful are their equals. Their souls have as little of these pleasures as their dust. In heaven these carnal delights are abhorred; and in hell they are turned to everlasting flames, and remembered as fuel for the devouring fire. Alas! how foolish is it to choose the pleasures of sin that is but for a season? Heb. xi. 25. The joy of the wicked is quickly drowned in everlasting sorrow, Job xx. 4,—9. xxi. 12, 13. and the momentary sorrows of the godly are forgotten in everlasting joy, John xvi. 20. O Sirs, who can value the pleasures of the wicked, that do foresee their end? If folly and stupidity were any wonder, it were a wonder that ungodly men can be merry, when their consciences tell them that they are not sure if they shall stay one hour longer out of hell; for, while they are saying, *Soul, take thy rest; eat, drink, and be merry;* they may suddenly be told from God, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee;* and then to whom appertains thy wealth; and where is thy sport and mirth! As a paper wall cannot stand before consuming fire; no more can your fading pleasures stand before the frowns of God, or the face of death; nay, scarce can they endure or stand before a serious forethought of the day of death and judgment, that is approaching: they are beholden to their folly, security and stupidity for their ease and pleasure; and their temporal pleasure mars and hinders their everlasting pleasure; but the pleasure of saints is eternal.

III. The third thing was, To speak of some of the particular *paths* of Wisdom, which are *peace* and *pleasure* both; for peace and pleasure are so near a kin, that peace is like the fire, and pleasure the flame. Peace is the root of pleasure, and pleasure is the fruit of peace. Now, as I said in the explication, the paths of Wisdom are either such as Wisdom walks in towards us, or such as Wisdom directs us to walk in. Upon the first general head, I have especially touched at these ways wherein Wisdom walks towards us; particularly, his pleasant providential administrations, which

we with pleasure submit to, and acquiesce in; pleasant doctrinal principles which we are, with pleasure, to believe, and cleave unto; pleasant evangelical graces, which we are with pleasure, to receive and exercise; and pleasant spiritual benefits, and works of God towards us, which we are, with pleasure to entertain, and adore him for.

But now, beside the *general ways* of Wisdom, there are *particular paths*, especially such as Wisdom directs us to walk in, which will be found to be pleasantness and peace both; and those paths are either internal, such as concern graces to be exercised; or external, such as concern duties to be performed.

1<sup>st</sup>, There are *internal paths* of Wisdom that relate to *graces to be exercised*: this is what I have already touched at, on the first general head, wherein I spoke of *evangelical graces*; and therefore I shall not enlarge on this, neither recapitulate what was said, but only add a few things; particularly these two.

1. *Joy*; internal joy itself is a grace that believers are called to exercise: for, *The kingdom of God consisteth as in righteousness, so in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. *They receive not the spirit of fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, ABBA, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. O Sirs, how pleasant must this be to be enabled with boldness, love, and confidence, to call God, *Father*, and to fly to him for succour and supply, in every danger and necessity! They only know the pleasure of this, that enjoy it: *The fruit of Spirit, is joy, love, and peace*, Gal. v. 22. Now, if joy itself be a part of the state of grace, you may see that it is the most pleasant path.

2. Internal *sorrow, fears, cares, and disquietments* are forbidden to the children of God, Wisdom's children; and therefore Wisdom's ways must surely be pleasantness and peace. God hath commanded us, to *cast all our cares upon him*; and hath promised to *care for us*, 1 Pet. v. 7. He hath called us to *be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto him, with thanksgiving*, Philip. iv. 6. And can there be a more pleasant course than that,



that, which excludes all inordinate cares, and fears, and sorrows, as much as health, excludes sickness! Here it is made unlawful to be miserable and sorrowful; no sorrow being allowed, but that which tends to our joy; yea, God hath forbidden care, and fear, and disquietment of mind; for his command is, *Care not, fear not*, Isa. xxxv. 4. xlv. 10. What do you fear then? Do you fear reproach? You do it contrary to the will of God, who says, *Fear not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings*, Isa. li. 7. Do you fear the fury of men? the power and rage of enemies! [See Isa. li. 12.] Why, it is contrary to your religion so to do; for God says, *Fear them not*, Isaiah xliii. 5, 13, 14. and xliv. 2, 8. Do you fear persecution or death from the hand of cruel violence? Why, it is contrary to the will of God that you do so: *Fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, Matth. x. 26, 28. O then, what a pleasant peaceable path must this be, where all that is annoying and grievous is forbidden, and all that is delightful and joyous is commanded! It is here made our work and duty to rejoice in the Lord; yea, *always to rejoice*, Phil. iv. 3. Now, O poor deluded sinner, that would be free of care, fear, and sorrow, if you will give up yourself to Christ, and choose Wisdom's ways, you shall be free of all those, except such as are necessary to your joy. Pleasure and peace is the very work and employment of the righteous: see Psalm xxxii. 1. xcvi. 11. *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And Psalm xxxii. 11. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. And cxxxii. 9, 16. Let thy saints shout for joy, her saints shall shout aloud for joy. And v. 11. But let all them that put their trust in thee, rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. Phil. iii. 11. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.* You that love no life but a life of mirth and pleasure, here it is to be had; if you will have

God to be your God, Christ your master, and Wisdom's ways your choice, then holy mirth, and spiritual pleasure will be your work, your employment. But again.

2dly, There are *external paths* of Wisdom that relate to *duties to be performed*, which are also full of pleasure and peace. I shall mention some of these.

1. The duty of *hearing* and *reading* the word; how pleasant is it to be exercised herein! This is plain from the experience of all that have been revived, renewed, refreshed by the word. If you who feel no sweetness in it, will not believe them that say they feel it, at least believe the word of God, and the declarations of his ancient saints, Psalm cxix. 14, 16, 24, 47, 92, 93, 72, 97, 103, 111, 127, 162, 165. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in thy statutes. Thy testimonies are my delight: and I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my afflictions. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. O! how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! more than honey to my mouth. Thy testimonies have I taken for my heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them. It is the work and mark of a blessed man, that his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night, Psalm i. 1, 2.*

QUEST. *What is there in the WORD that affords such pleasure?*

ANSW. There are many pleasant *things* therein to feed the delight of the child of God: besides the pleasant *doctrines* of the word, there are pleasant counsels, invitations, promises, records, as I noticed above\*.

\* See all these formerly taken notice of above, p. 302, — 306.

2. The duty of *prayer*, both secret and social, how pleasant is it to them that are exercised therein! Jer. xxxiii. 3. *Call upon me, and I will answer thee; and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.* We may say in this, as with reference to the former head, what makes hearing so unpleasant to many? Why, because, *in hearing, they do not hear*; for, if indeed they heard the voice of God, it would be the most pleasant thing in the world to them, it being a quickening voice, a heart-rousing, and raising voice. So what makes prayer unpleasant? Why, because in praying, they do not pray. If people knew what it were, with Jacob, *to wrestle with God in prayer*, they would call the name of the place BETHEL, *The house of God, the gate of heaven*; they would call it PENIEL, where they *saw God face to face*, Gen. xxviii. 17. xxxii. 30. Can any think it a grievous work for the guilty soul, to pray for pardon; or the polluted soul, to pray for cleansing; for a loving child to converse with his father, and speak to him? True, the atheistical heart says, *It is in vain to serve the Lord: and what a weariness is it?* Mal. iii. 14. and i. 13. such will give him but a lame and lifeless service. But the time cometh, when they who now despise prayer, will betake themselves to prayer; sickness, and death, and terror, will teach you to pray earnestly, who now put off with a few dead formal, and heartless words.

3. The duty of *praise and thanksgiving*, how pleasant it is, to them that are exercised therein! Surely they are not acquainted with this work, who know not the pleasure of it. If there be any thing pleasant in the world, it is the praise of God that flow from a loving, believing heart, filled with the majesty, mercy, goodness, and excellency of God in Christ, to remember his great and wonderful works, to mention his glorious and adorable attributes, shining in the face of Jesus, with a light that infinitely surpasses the sun in its brightness. O! how pleasant is it, to see and adore the Father in the Son, and the Godhead in the manhood of our Lord Jesus, and the riches of grace in the glass of the gospel, the manifold wisdom of God! There is not  
a per-

a perfection of God, nor a promise of the covenant, nor a passage of the gospel, nor a part of the Spirit's work upon the soul, but contains such matter of praise to God, as might fill believing souls with pleasure and find them most delightful work. Surely they never knew the life of religion, who never took any pleasure in praise: they must have a dangerous disease that makes them loath the sweetest things. See how the Spirit of God represents the sweetness of this exercise, Psal. cxlviii. 1. cxlix. 1, 2. xc. 1, 2, 3. xcvi. 1, 2, 3. *Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. Praise ye the Lord: sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. O! come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King, above all gods. O sing unto the Lord, a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth: sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. O what a joyful thing is it, when the force of love doth open our lips that our mouth may shew forth his praise!* Psalm cxxxv. 2, 3. This is the recreation of saints and angels. How are they to be pitied who know no better diversion, nor cure of melancholly, than in a bumper of ale, a stock of cards, a company of profane swearers, drunkards, or debauchees! Whoever will surfeit on the pleasures of the flesh, there are a few happy souls that are for David's *one thing*: *One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire into his temple,* Psal. xxvii. 4. *For in the times of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock: and now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies, round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle, sacrifici-*

*ces of joy ; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord, ver. 5, 6.*

4. The duty of partaking in the *sacramental supper*, how pleasant is this to be worthy communicants ! They that know what it is to meet with God at such occasions, will know that there is no *pleasure* on earth comparable to that which is sometimes found at this solemn feast. This holy feast is purposely provided by the King of saints, for the pleasant entertainment of his family. Therein the slain Lamb of God, *our Passover sacrificed for us*, to take away our sins, is the pleasant food : as our sinful pleasures were his sorrows ; so his sorrows are our joys ; his pain, our pleasure ; his death our life ; his suffering our feasting. See John vi. 33, 50, 51. *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Here we have communion with God, as a reconciled God in Christ, his eternal Son, whom he, the offended Majesty, sent to be our Redeemer, Saviour, and Surety : here we have communion with Christ, as crucified and glorified for us, offered and exhibited to us, as our quickening and strengthening Head : and here we have communion with the Holy Ghost, applying to our souls the benefit of redemption, drawing us to the Son, and communicating light, life, strength, and comfort from him to us : here we have communion with the body of Christ, his sanctified people, heirs of eternal life in Christ : here we have pardon and salvation sealed, and the greatest mercies in the world brought down to us, in sensible representations, that the means may be suited to the frailty and infirmity of our present state.—If you could never find any pleasure in these things, it is because you are alive to sin, and dead to God, and want spiritual sense ; insomuch that heaven itself would not be pleasant to you, unless your nature be changed, to make you

change your pleasure. If the children of God, find at any time, little pleasure in that ordinance, it is only when some disease doth corrupt the appetite, and make the sweetest things seem bitter, when faith is not in exercise, and their spiritual senses are dulled.

5. The duties of *Sabbath-days service*, or of the work of the Lord's day. How pleasant is it to all that *call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable!* Isa. lviii. 13. How sweetly doth the exercised believer, then go, from flower, to flower, gathering honey to his soul, and so preparing for winter! How sweetly doth he go from promise to promise, from duty to duty, from prayer, to reading and hearing, from reading and hearing to prayer again; and from prayer to praise; from public to private worship, and from private to public; from one edifying employment to another, from one edifying lesson to another, gathering honey and sweetness to their soul, and laying in provision for death and eternity! Alas! Sirs, if brutish wantons, who make the Sabbath but a play-day, an idle day, knew the ineffable delights that exercised souls find in some of their Sabbath-days public and private worship, how would they blush at their own folly and madness, that prefer a day in an ale-house, before a day in God's house! How confounded might they be to hear king David saying, *A day in thy courts, is better than a thousand?* O carnal brutish sinner! that Sabbath-work, which is your toil, is the saints recreation; and these follies which are your sport, and recreation, would be their prison, and stocks, and toil; for they are delighted in waiting on that Lord, whom you know not.

6. The duty of *holy conference* is another pleasant portion of the work: however much this is worn out amongst the people of God, yet, as the duty is always binding, so the exercise is pleasant to all that are engaged in it, who converse with one another, not by hear-say, but by experience, about the communion they have had with God, the prayers he hath heard, the deliverances he hath granted, and the support and comfort in distress that he hath allowed; their conflicts

with

with temptation, and their conquests over it: they can direct each other in their difficulties, and *comfort each other with the same comfort, wherein they themselves have been comforted by the Lord*; and so edifying one another by their spiritual communication. O Christians! if your graces did not languish, and your soul lose the relish of heavenly things, you would be more fond of and frequent in fellowship meetings, and holy converse with the godly; according to Mal. iii. 16. Heb. x. 24, 25. iii. 13. *Then they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works; not forgetting the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* O Sirs, you who never could take pleasure in the converse of the godly, upon spiritual subjects, what is the subject of your communication, with these with whom you confer? Do you talk of better things than God? or higher things than heaven? or things that more nearly concern you, than the matters of everlasting consequence? Go to a company of merry fellows, as you call them, and to a company of serious godly people, and secretly write down all their words that you hear, from both companies, and read them over together, and see which is the pleasantest or sweetest. What a hotch-potch of non-sense, impertinence, levity, worldliness, pride, and folly, and perhaps impurity and profanity too, shall you find in the one? and what savory, necessary, edifying, discourse will you find in the other? It is far pleasanter to be among bleating, sweet, and singing birds, than among idle, prattling, foolish companions: for, with the former, you shall have some natural good, without any mixture of sinful evil; but, in wicked, foolish company, what will you perceive, but how much nature is depraved? how sinners are beside themselves, how Satan doth beset them, and how God is forgotten, while

he is present with them, and they are lying in the devil's chains, and at the very brink of death and hell? Surely, holy converse with the godly is, in itself, more delightful, than all the poor merriment and idle drolleries of the ungodly. If you think not so, it is because your relish is depraved, the devil hath deluded you, and sin hath bereaved you of your wits.—Thus you see some of the *paths* that Wisdom directs us to walk in, that are peace. I come now,

IV. To the *fourth* thing proposed, *viz.* To touch at the *nature* and *qualities* of that *peace* that is to be found in Wisdom's paths. It is a peace that differs vastly from the peace that the wicked may have. I shall therefore,

1. Describe the peace *negatively*, by shewing what sort of a peace that of the wicked is.
2. I shall describe this peace *positively*, by shewing what kind of a peace is to be found in Wisdom's paths.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, Let us take a view of this peace *negatively*, by shewing what kind of a peace that of the *wicked* is.

1. It is a peace that cannot endure a *scriptural trial*; the man cannot endure to be searched, but *hates the light*, John iii. 19, 20.; whereas true peace loves to be *searched by the rule of the word*, Psal. xxvi. 1, 2, 3. and cxxxix. 23, 24.

2. It is a peace that stands not upon *scriptural evidences*; whatever pretences to truth and reality one's peace may have, yea, though it pretend to a great deal of the Spirit, it is false peace, if it have not full evidence from the word, Isa. viii. 20. and lix. 24.

3. It is a peace that consists with *sin* and *sloth*. It consists with the maintainance of *known sin*; whereas true peace keeps the soul at war with *every evil*, Psalm lxvi. 18, 19.—It consists with *sloth* and *security*; whereas true peace *kills sloth*, and stirs up to *spiritual exercise*, Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 4. Phil. iv. 6, 7, 8. Psalm cxix. 32.

4. It is a peace which pleases the *devil*, and which raises no opposition to him; whereas true peace is opposed by all the power and policy of hell. See Luke xi. 21. Eph. vi. 11, 12. *When a strong man armed keeps his*



*his palace, his goods are in peace. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

5. The peace of the wicked is a *profane* peace, Deut. xxix. 19. *I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of my own heart.* They think they may lye, and steal, and swear, and commit adultery, and break the Sabbath, and yet have peace; that is a profane peace: better have a conscience roaring, and full of the terrors of the Almighty.

6. It is a *deluded* peace; *He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lye in my right-hand,* Isa. xlv. 20. It is as if a man were sleeping on a top-mast, ready to be flung into the ocean, with every pire of wind, and yet dreaming that he is an universal monarch. Would any man envy him? This is the case of the profane; they are in all circumstances of danger, exposed to the loudest thunder of heaven, yet dreaming of nothing but ease and quiet, while ready to plump into the ocean of God's wrath; for they have no shelter, no defence: who would envy them?

7. It is a *dangerous and destructive* peace, Isa. l. 11. 1 Thess. v. 3. *They say, Peace, peace, when sudden destruction cometh,* and is at the door. *The prosperity of fools destroys them; and so doth the peace of the wicked destroy them: They look for peace; and behold trouble.* They think they are safe, when they are just at the perishing for ever.

8. It is a *sacrilegious* peace; for God allows no peace to his enemies: *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,* Isa. lvii. 21. If thou art an unconverted man, living in a state of enmity against God, he doth not allow you one moments quiet of mind; and if you take it, it is theft, it is a taking what is not yours. Consider this, man, in your jovial and revelling hours: your mind should be upon the rack, till the enmity between God and you be taken away, and you be interested in the blessed Peace-maker. And the more so, in regard that there are bars on God's part, and on yours both, that

that exclude you from that peace which is only the privilege of those that are in Wisdom's ways.

[1.] On God's part, there are four bars which exclude you from this peace.

(1.) The *power* of God is a bar that excludes; God only hath authority to give peace: all the angels in heaven cannot speak a comfortable word to a sinner, if God be against him. It is he that *createth the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh*, Isa. lvii. 19. It is not men or angels that can create, it is a work peculiar to God alone. Carnal men look upon pardoning grace as an easy thing, that it is easy to give pardon, and easy to take it; yea, but take a guilty conscience, that sees itself, as it were, hanging over hell, ready to drop in, then all the ministers in the world can do this person no good, except the Lord encourage him. Alas! this is such a hard lock, that no hand, but that of the Spirit of God, can turn.

(2.) The *holiness* of God is a bar that excludes the wicked from peace. His holiness manifested in the *precepts* of the law, says, "Before you have peace, I must have perfect obedience: what have you to do with peace, as long as your spiritual whoredom doth remain?" Again,

(3.) The *justice* of God is a bar; for, his justice, in the *threatening*, says, "Before you have peace, I must have satisfaction, Gal. iii. 10.; *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,*" Isa. lvii. 21.

(4.) Yea, the *mercy* of God is a bar: for, as mercy will not vent to the dishonour of justice; so slighted mercy brings on the forest vengeance, Rom. ii. 4, 5, Heb. ii. 3. and x. 28, 29. and xii. 25.

[2.] On the *sinner's* own part, there are also four bars, that exclude them from peace.

(1.) Their own *corruption* is a bar: one sin making way for another; and different lusts make great disturbance. See Isa. lvii. 20. *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

(2.) Their

(2.) Their own *conscience* is a bar that impedes their peace. Conscience will not be satisfied without keeping the law. God's deputy is a terror to the man. It is a Rebecca, feeling the child struggling in her womb. Conscience condemns, and casts daggers at the heart of a sinner.

(3.) Their own *crosses* are a bar that keep them from peace. As the Israelites, when they were in the wilderness, and in Egypt, though God stopped their mouths, it could not stop their murmurings: they cannot *learn in every state to be content*. They fret against God. The cross galls them; and every thing fears them: whereas, it is said of the righteous, *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*. It is not so with the wicked.

(4.) Their own *comforts* are a bar that exclude them from this peace. As they cannot serve God without distraction; so they cannot live in prosperity, without distraction; *The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep*, Eccl. v. 12. A good man can sleep quietly, because he lays his head upon the pillows of God's providence and promise: whereas the wicked, when they pretend to trust their soul with God, yet cannot trust their riches with him: they cannot trust him with their temporal concerns; their comforts keep them from peace.

2dly, We would now describe this peace *positively*, shewing what that peace is that is to be found in *Wisdom's paths*.

1. It is an *internal* peace. There is an outward external peace in the world, between man and man, as I observed in the explication of the words: but *worldly* peace is oft-times denied unto the godly; for Christ says, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*: but he hath promised them peace of a spiritual nature, saying, *In me ye shall have peace*, John xvi. 33. This internal peace is either peace above us with God; or peace within us, in our heart: the one is the cause, and the other is the effect. *Peace with God*, is what all true believers have in the first moments of their justification,

Rom. v. 1. and viii. 1. And this *inward peace*, resulting from peace with God, may be considered, either as it hath a relation to sin, or to affliction—As it hath a relation to *sin*, it hath a threefold aspect. It looks to sin, and the guilt thereof; it looks to God, and his wrath, the desert of sin; and it looks to Christ, and his blood, as the remedy of both, taking guilt from sin, and wrath from God; as making reconciliation thro' the blood of his cross: and, in this respect, this “peace is a sweet composure and tranquility of mind, arising from a sense of pardon and reconciliation, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God.”—As it hath relation to *affliction*, it imports the same thing, namely, “a sweet composure of Spirit and tranquility of mind, flowing from a sense of divine favour through Christ;” and further, it contains these three things.

(1.) An *acquiescing* in and *submission* to the *divine will*, whatever befalls the man; resolutely to take up the cross, with an absolute resignation to the divine pleasure, 1 Sam. xxv. 25, 26.

(2.) An *heroic courage* to encounter with *difficulties*, the soul saying, *Through God we shall do valiantly; for it is he that shall tread down our enemies*, Psalm lx. 12. *By thee will I run through a troop; by my God will I leap over a wall*, Psalm xviii. 29.

(3.) *Holy security*, and a sweet inward relish of *ease*, in the midst of trouble and difficulties. When the storm is whirling about their ears, *in patience they possess their souls*.

This peace as it relates to *sin*, is opposite to enmity; the enmity hath got a deadly stroke in regeneration and justification: God is at peace with the soul, and the soul is at peace with God. And as it relates to *affliction*, it is opposite to disquieting thoughts, impatiencè under trouble, and a fretful disposition.

2. It is a *divine* peace, and has a divine original. All the three persons of the glorious Trinity are co-workers herein, as the author of this peace. God the FATHER, he is called *the God of peace that bruises Satan under our feet*. He gives peace, creates, maintains,

preserves, and perfects it. The SON is called *the Prince of peace*. He, as a Prophet, preaches peace; as a Priest, purchases it; and, as a King, proclaims and commands it: yea, in the abstract, he is *our peace, and joy in believing*, by his powerful, physical, irresistible efficiency, mastering all the storms of the soul. *Peace* is a fruit of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22.

3. It is a *holy* peace: *Great peace have they that love thy law, nothing shall offend them. As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and on the Israel of God. The fruit of righteousness is peace.* As it is said, *he that hath this hope purifieth himself*; so, he that hath peace, it embitters sin; and peace with God cannot be without war with sin; hence, when sin prevails, believers cannot find rest, till they get a new sprinkling of the blood of the Peace-maker.

4. It is a *miraculous* peace: it is a miracle; for it is peace in the midst of fire and water. The three children walk in the midst of fire, and have peace: the Israelites walk through the Red-Sea, and have peace. And all this according to his promise; *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*, Isa. xliii. 2.

5. It is a *noble* and *nobilitating* peace: it sublimates the soul above all inferior things, so as with a generous disdain, it looks down upon the trifling vanities which bewitch the affections of the world. A man who hath this peace can trample upon crowns and diadems, as upon dung; and is not afraid of, nor over awed with the terrors that damp the spirits and defeat pusillanimous persons in the world; but he hath a *victory over the world*, 1 John v. 4, 5. Psalm xlii. 1,—5.

6. It is a *secure* and *well-secured* peace; firmer than the mountains and hills: *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. It is everlasting peace and consolation, built upon everlasting foundations; such as, the

everlasting love of God, and the everlasting righteousness of Christ.

7. It is a *sweet* and *sweetening* peace : it sweetens every *lot*, and makes him say, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* It sweetens the *cross*, and makes him glory in it, saying, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It can turn a prison to a palace, and a rack to a bed of roses. It makes the soul acquainted with that paradox ; *Poor, yet possessing all things ; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,* 2 Cor. vi. 20. It sweetens the aspect and prospect of death : O how will this peace mollify the thoughts of the king of terrors ! and make the soul to say, *O death, where is thy sting ?* It sweetens the views and apprehensions of the *day of judgment*, while the man apprehends the Judge to be his friend, his righteousness ; and that he is at peace with the divine tribunal, through the blood of Jesus. It is a miserable peace that cannot consist with, but is dashed and confounded at the thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity : and hence the wicked man, amidst his carnal peace, banishes the thoughts of these awful things, otherwise they would destroy his peace. But here is a peace which makes the soul at peace with death, judgment, and eternity : yea, and to rejoice in the view of these awful and unavoidable things.

8. It is a *perfect* peace ; *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,* Isaiah xxiv. 4. It is perfect, in that it is not a faint *impression*, but such a peace as shall accomplish the end for which it was given, and not be altogether useless : yea, it is perfect, in that it not only grows to perfection *after* time, but it hath a kind of perfection even *in* time, being a *peace that passeth all understanding*, unspeakable and inconceivable : and there is no end of its growth ; *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,* Isa. ix. 7. And it is perfect in respect of the *grounds* of it : such as, *God*, and his attributes ; *Christ*, and his righteousness ; the *Spirit*, and his operations ; the *Covenant*, and its promises ; as may be seen on the first general head of the method.

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When faith views the *freedom* of the covenant, then peace comes in like a river, however unworthy the soul be in itself: when faith views the *fulness* of the covenant, then peace comes in, however empty the soul be in itself: when faith views the *stability* of the covenant, then peace comes in to the soul, however mutable it be in itself: when faith views the *Mediator* of the covenant, it brings in peace; under a sense of *ignorance*, peace comes in from his being a Prophet to teach; under a sense of *guilt*, peace comes in from his being a Priest; under a sense of *bondage*, peace comes in from his being a King: when faith views these things peace runs in. The *promise* of the covenant, viewed by faith, brings in peace. Can I have peace that have such a false heart? Yes; when I view the promise, made by the true God. Can I have peace that have such a backsliding heart, that never retains a word? Yes; because though I break my word, yet God cannot break his word: *He hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins*; and *the covenant stands fast with him*. When faith views the *condition* of the covenant, *viz.* the *righteousness of Christ*, peace flows in like a flood: for the promises are ratified thereby. Faith improves Christ's righteousness, as a justice-satisfying righteousness, as a debt-paying and a bliss-purchasing righteousness, a covenant-sealing and strength-furnishing righteousness; faith improves it as a ransom, a laver, and a ladder.

## S E R M O N CXLIX.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths  
are peace.*

[ The third Sermon on this Text. ]

**T**HE pleasures of the ungodly cannot be valued by any who truly see their end. Who would envy him that wears a crown but for a day, and would be the scorn of the wicked to-morrow? Or him who would choote one day of mirth and pleasure, though he knew that it would fill the rest of his life with pain and misery? Who would envy the state of the wicked and ungodly, whose life-time is but, at best, a day of sinful pleasure, and issues in an everlasting state of wo and torment? How grieving may it be to any considering believer, to look upon a worldly sensual gallant, in the midst of his vain-glory and mirth, and to think where that man will shortly be, and how the case will be shortly altered with him? It would sadden our hearts to see such a one struck dead in the place; and, alas! should it not grieve us, to foresee the stroke of death and wrath under which they will perish for ever? When this is the case, who would not chuse more solid and durable pleasures, such as are here set before us: *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness.*

Having finished what we intended on the doctrinal part of the subject, by demonstrating the *truth* of the proposition, *viz. That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness*; considered the *qualities* of that pleasure that is to be found



found in Wisdom's ways; spoken of some of the particular *paths* of Wisdom, which are all peace; opened up the *nature* and *qualities* of that peace; we shall now proceed to the sequel of the subject.

V. The fifth thing proposed was the *application* of the point. Is it so, *That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness*? Then the inference I would deduce from it, at present, is to rectify the *mistake* and *error* of the world, and of all carnal men, who, if one begins to leave off wickedness, and to seek after Christ, then they reckon his pleasant days are at an end, and that he is turning mad, morose, and melancholy; because they have no taste of spiritual comforts themselves, no relish of divine pleasures, no favour of any delight, but what is carnal and worldly; therefore they imagine the way of religion a most unpleasant way.

For pursuing this use, I shall essay the three following things. 1. Argue a little against this opinion, for demonstrating the *absurdity* of it. 2. Answer some *carnal objections* against the pleasures of religion. 3. Shew what these *things* are, wherein believers have pleasure, such as the world knoweth not of.

1<sup>st</sup>, I would argue a little *against* this mistake and error of the world, as if the way of Wisdom and true religion were not a pleasant way.

1. Must not that way be pleasant, which is pleasing to *God* himself? But such is the way of wisdom and religion, as may be seen, 1 Pet. ii. 5.; where believers are called a *holy priesthood*, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to *God*. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy*, Psal. cxlviii. 11. And must it not be the chief pleasure of the saints to please *God*?

2. Must not that be very pleasant to the soul, that is the very *life* und *health* of it? Why, Wisdom's way, or the way of faith, love, and holiness, is the very *health* of the believing soul; whereas the way of unbelief, enmity, and sin, is the very *disease* of the soul. Life and health is a constant sensible delight. It is only sin that is opposite to soul health: *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee*, Psal. xli. 4.

3. Must

3. Must not that way be pleasant, which *removes* all fears and troubles? But such is the way of Wisdom; the way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John xiv. 1. It removes the fear of death and damnation; and therefore must afford a greater pleasure than this world can afford. One serious thought of everlasting salvation, which Wisdom's way is the earnest of, can give that true contentment to the soul, that all worldly wealth and glory can never give.

4. Must not that way be pleasant, that removes the *cause* of all sorrow, *viz.* SIN? But such is Wisdom's way; it removes sin, which is the cause of calamity. In this way, the *guilt* of sin is removed, by justification; and the *rule* of sin, by sanctification; till the *being* of it be removed in glorification. Wisdom's way is the way of holiness, which is the very destruction of sin.

Must not that way be pleasant, which consists in *rejoicing*, and *graces* which cannot be exercised without pleasure; such as, knowledge, faith, love, hope, and joy itself? *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. The way of Wisdom consists in these joyful exercises, when considered as the way wherein Wisdom directs us to walk, as well as the way wherein Wisdom walks towards us.

6. Must not that way be pleasant which consists in *communion* with God, who is the fountain of pleasure and delight; and brings us near to him, as a God of love? Such is the way of Wisdom: *We have known and believed the love that God hath to us: God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*, 1 John vi. 16.

7. Must not that way be a pleasant one, which whosoever chooses it, do voluntarily forsake *all other pleasures* in the world, and renounce them for the sake of the pleasure of this way. They, with Moses, chuse the worst of Christ, rather than the best of the world, Heb. xi. 25, 26. *Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all*  
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*the treasures of Egypt.* Would they make such an exchange. if they had not found it a more pleasant way, and that which tends to everlasting pleasure? All who ever tried Wisdom's way, they think they never can have enough of it. The more holy they are, the more holy they would be: he that hath most, would gladly have more, Phil. iii. 12, 14. Pſal. xxvii. 4.

8. Must not that be a pleasant way, which, whosoever hath once chosen and tried, will never choose to go back again to their former pleasures? Such is Wisdom's way; every taste of the pleasure thereof makes the believer say, with Ephraim, Hof. xiv. 8. *What have I any more to do with idols? Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, the son of man, whom thou hast made strong for thyself; so will we not go back from thee,* Pſal. lxxx. 17. It makes the man say, *I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast quickned me.* If they found God's way did not answer their expectations, they have abundance of leisure, and temptations too many, to turn back to the state from whence they came, and to a loose wicked life; yea, but that is the life they would not chuse for all the world: surely therefore, they find it the most pleasant way; if not in sensible delight, yet at least in easing their consciences, and securing their minds from the terrors that sinful pleasures would produce; nay, when they are themselves, they loath the very remembrance of their sinful pleasures.

9. Must not that way be pleasant, that can turn the most painful things into pleasant things? That which can sweeten gall and wormwood must needs be very sweet itself: such is Wisdom's way, that can bear up the soul under all afflictions, and make it rejoice; yea, and glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 3. Read to this purpose, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness: most gladly, therefore, will I rather rejoice in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

10 Must not that way be a pleasant way, that can make the views of *death* and *judgment* as amiable to the enlightned soul, as ever it was formidable to the awakened conscience? Surely that way, and that pleasure is little to be accounted of that cannot endure a serious thought of death and judgment. How poor is that pleasure that is damped at the views of death, and frightened and chased away at the prospect of judgment! But, in Wisdom's way, a man may look death in the face, and say, "Come, O friend! why tarry the wheels of thy chariot?" For death, as an *enemy*, is one of the trophies of the victory of faith; *Death is swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54.: and as a *friend*, it is the chariot to carry the soul to heaven. And, in this way, a man may look to judgment, and say to the Judge, *Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. *Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bethel*, Song viii. 14.

In a word, It must be a pleasant way, that leads to *everlasting* pleasure.

2dly, We propos'd to answer some *objections* that *car-nal minds* make against the pleasantness of Wisdom's ways; or the pleasures of religion. And,

OBJECT. 1. "How can that way be pleasantness that *forbids* all our pleasure? that requires us to *mortify the flesh*, to *renounce the world*, to *deny ourselves*, and so *to abandon* all our pleasures?"

ANSW. The strength of this objection lies in this, that Wisdom's ways are *ungrateful* to the flesh, and *oblige* us to part with our sins: and, indeed, as *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*; so they cannot take *pleasure in God*, or in *his way*. A new and spiritual nature is necessary in order to our having these new and spiritual pleasures; for, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. But, mean time, O sinner, do you think that sin is so lovely a thing, that a man cannot live pleasantly, or merrily, without it? Whereas, indeed, they that are the most free of sin have the most pleasant life. Sin is a breach of God's law, and an abuse

abuse of his authority : and is there no mirth, but in abusing God ! no pleasure, but in injuring our Creator and Redeemer ! What sinful natures have we that must have such pleasures ! Cannot a man live merrily unless he provoke the God of heaven, and trample on his mercy ? Cannot a man live in pleasure, unless he tumble in the mire, or drink poison ? Alas ! what pleasure is it to dishonour God and destroy ourselves ! Let it be considered, that it is for our everlasting pleasure, and to prevent everlasting pain, that the pleasures of sin are forbidden ; for they exclude all spiritual and eternal pleasure ; and do you accuse the word of God, and Wisdom's way, because it would keep you from such costly comfort, and dangerous delights ? You will forbear the most delightful fruits and drinks, if your physician tell you they will hazard your life, or torment you afterwards ; and will you be offended with the Physician of souls, when he warns you to beware of that pleasant poison that destroys the soul ? Yea, even at present, is not virtue more pleasant than vice ? sobriety more pleasant than drunkenness ? chastity more pleasant than uncleanness ? and temperance more pleasant than gluttony and intemperance ? Do not these bring in such troubles of conscience, such sickness, shame, and remorse, as that they have a punishment in their bosoms, if not a consumption of mens wealth and outward estate, besides the consuming of their precious souls ? But again,

OBJECT. 2. " How can Wisdom's way be pleasantness, when it is a part of Wisdom's way to *take up our cross*, and lay our account with *tribulation* ; for, *through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven* ; and, *if any man lives godly, he must suffer persecution* ? "

ANSW. 1. As for *sufferings* and *chastisements*, the cause of them is sin. God doth not punish men for walking *in* Wisdom's way ; but for going *out* of it. It is no small part of the pleasure of Wisdom's way, that it keeps men out of the way of punishment. Is it not then unreasonable, when we trouble ourselves, to blame our Physician for troubling us, in order to a cure ?

When we have made ourselves sick with too much of the creature, and sensual delight, no wonder then we need painful and unpleasant physic.

2. As for sufferings in the *cause of Christ*, they are usually requited with pleasure, both here and hereafter. If we knew the joys of martyrs, we would never shrink at the sufferings of martyrs. What hath made many of the sufferers for Christ face the severest tortures, with undaunted courage and fortitude, but the internal pleasure they found in God, and the ways of religion?

3. In a word, the sufferings and trials of the children of God are only *castigatory* for their chastisements; or *probatory*, for their trial; or *medicinal* for their health. A little of the vinegar of affliction will make them relish their pleasure and prosperity the better. O what lamentable work hath prosperity, honour, and wealth made in the world! Do we not see those who are most prosperous in the world, to be ordinarily the most proud and perverse? and shall we grudge that necessary moderate affliction that tends to save us from the like overthrow? The people of God, through their frailty, would be apt to surfeit on their pleasures, if infinite Wisdom did not order some sour sauce to help their digestion. And yet it is a known experience among them, that their times of greatest affliction are ordinarily their times of greatest consolation: when he brings them to the wilderness, then he *speaks comfortably* to them, and gives them, in the *valley of Achor*, a door of hope; so that their tribulations do not hinder their consolation, but further it, Hof. ii. 14, 15. And as their *afflictions abound*, so do their *consolations abound*, 2 Cor. i. 5. And, *in the multitude of their thoughts within them, his comforts delight their souls*, Psalm xciv. 19. And so their sufferings work for their joy, and their trials for their triumph.

OBJECT. 3. "How can *Wisdom's way be pleasantness*,  
 "or how can we suppose that they who *fear God* have  
 "the greatest pleasure, when we see the contrary in  
 "the *sadness of their faces*? in their heavy doubts, and  
 "fears, and complaints; inasmuch, that while many

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“ of the ungodly have a life of mirth, they, on the contrary, have a life of mourning ? ”

ANSW. This objection, respecting what seems to be the common case, requires to be particularly considered.

1. We are to distinguish between *new entrants* into religion, and *established saints*. No wonder that a new intrant have pangs and sorrows for his having lived so long in sin and misery : but who will hence infer, that the way of godliness is unpleasant, because a man, that is entering into it, is lamenting that he hath lived so long in the way of wickedness ? The complaint of penitent souls is not their present piety, but their former impiety.

2. We are to distinguish between *weak* and *strong Christians* : and the more grace and piety that any hath, the more peace and pleasure usually attend it. Hearken what the godly complain of ; are they grieved because they are *godly* ? Or rather, is it because they are not *more* godly ? Do they complain of their *faith*, or of their *unbelief* ? of their *spirituality*, or of their *carnality* ? Who then will say that holiness is unpleasant, because men who have it, would gladly have more of it ?

3. We are to distinguish between believers who have *fallen*, since their conversion, into any *great* and *wounding sin*, and believers that *walk more uprightly with God*, and maintain their integrity and peace. No wonder if David, after his sin, complain of the *breaking of his bones* ; and Peter go out and *weep bitterly*. Believers know so much of the evil of sin, that they cannot walk so lightly under it, as the blind obdurate world, that are past feeling.

4. We must distinguish between the *assured* believer, and the *doubting* one, that is afraid lest he be not in a state of grace, and union with Christ ; that man's grief is not because he is *sanctified*, but because he is afraid lest he be *unsanctified*. This doth not say that religion is unpleasant : nay, it shews that Wisdom's way is most lovely and pleasant in his eyes ; otherwise, why is he so much troubled, when he doth but doubt whether he be in it or not ?

5. We must distinguish between believers who *duly understand the extent of the covenant of grace*, and others that are not *so much enlightened*. If a believer, through mistake, think that the grace of the gospel extends not to such an unworthy creature, or to such a great sinner as he, no wonder that he is troubled; but this infers no conviction the man hath of the unpleasantness of Wisdom's way; nay, but rather proclaims the estimate he hath of the excellency of the gospel, and the happiness of the heirs of promise, though under a mistake he be excluding himself, and so is under fears.

6. Consider, that the *sorrow* of believers may consist with *joy*. Try the most dejected mournful Christians, if they would change states, and change pleasures, with the best and greatest of the wicked and ungodly, you will find they would not do it for all the world; nor turn back to the state they were in. Yea, the godly sorrow of a believer is attended with *solid joy*; in comparison whereof carnal mirth and laughter is but *madness* and *folly*. It is little, trifling, ridiculous accidents and toys that provoke to loud laughter; but great things give us inward sweet content and joy, which scorns to shew itself by laughter: and hence the believer's pleasure is not ordinarily so discernable to others, as carnal mirth is.

7. Consider the *root* of the believer's pleasure is indiscernable: the world cannot understand their peace and pleasure: it is a *peace that passeth all understanding*; and *strangers intermeddle not with their joy*. They have *hidden manna*, the *white stone*, and the *new name*, that *no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it*, Rev. ii. 17. The world cannot see the grace of Christ, nor the comforts of his Spirit within them. You see their crosses, but cannot perceive their unction by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

8. Consider, that however saints may be in *heaviness*, through manifold temptations, they are not *always* so; take them in their own element, and then you will find them *rejoicing*. When they are brought into *God's holy mountain*, then are they *joyful in his house of prayer*, Isa. lvi. 7. You may, perhaps, find them in a valley:  
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a fish is a most lively creature, but it must be in the water, not in the land; so is it with the believer: see Psal. cxxii. 1. *I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord*; compared with Psal. cxx. 5, 6. *Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.* Take a believer when he is himself, when the *candle of the Lord is shining*, when there is no quarrel between him and his God, when his conscience is sprinkled, and his heart purified, and the Lord is lifting up the light of his countenance upon him, and see if he be not a glad man then, Psal. iv. 6, 7.

9. If you will judge whether Wisdom's way be pleasant, you must look to these who *live by faith* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the mercy of the gospel; and not look at the dejections and sorrows of these who grieve themselves by swerving from the way of holiness and Wisdom. And yet even weak and mournful believers have more joy than the wicked world; even these who many times fall through weakness. Why, the very preservation of one soul from that despair which these would cast them into, if they had not Christ to fly to, and the little tastes of mercy that they have felt, and the reviving that they find between their sorrows, and the hopes they have of better days, are enough to weigh down all their own sorrows, and much more to weigh down all the trifling, light, vanishing pleasures of the world.

10. Consider, that this is not the life of *perfect joy*; and therefore some sorrow will be intermixed. Comfort will not be perfect till holiness be perfect: what is wanting now, will be made up in the new Jerusalem, when believers will *enter into the joy of their Lord*.

OBJECT. 4. "How can Wisdom's way be pleasantness, when it *commands* the contrary, namely, to *fast, and weep, and mourn*? So that it is not only the *weakness* of professors, but the *way* prescribed to them, that must bear the blame."

ANSW. If God's children will *fall, and break their bones*, they must endure the pain of *setting* them again. Some of their sorrows are medicinal: but while he com-

mands them to *mourn*, he commands them also to *rejoice*; and he calls them to no mourning that is inconsistent with their joy, and to *rejoice evermore*: and if believers did but live as God requires them, they would be the wonder of the world for their exceeding joy. They would make the world admire the joy, and hope, and comfort that transports them. They would be so taken up in the love and praise of the glorious Redeemer, that they would scarce have leisure to observe whether they were rich or poor; or to regard the honour or dishonour of the world. These little trifling things would scarce have any room in their thoughts. O the joy they would have in their secret prayer! in their heavenly meditation! in their holy conference! in their reading and hearing the promises! and in their public worship and praise, if they did but follow more fully the conduct of the Spirit, their comforter! What makes believers slight this world, and to take all your pleasures to be unworthy of their entertainment and regard, but that they have had a taste of sweeter things, and by faith have got the better of their childish vanities? If God and his favour be better than such worms as we, and the heavenly glory better than these transitory toys, you may well conceive, that the believer's joys, that are thereby fed, must be better than all the pleasures of this sublunary world. If then you love a life of pleasure, come over to Christ, and believe him, that *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths peace*. We come now,

3dly, To consider what these *things* are, wherein believers have pleasure, such as the world know not of: no man can trade in such a way of comfort as this is; it is *the rejoicing of his heart*, Psa. cxix. 111. Why,

1. He hath comfort in his God, who is the *God of all consolation*, whose love is to the believing soul what the sun is to the body, *viz.* to enlighten, warm, revive, and comfort it: if it were not that sin causes some eclipses, or raises some clouds, or shuts the window, he would rejoice continually; and, with David, *encourage himself in the Lord his God*; and find how sweet a thing it is, *being justified by faith, to have peace with God*, Rom.

Rom. v. 1. What comfort like this, to have God for our consolation !

2. He hath comfort in his *Head*, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the *consolation of Israel*. The believer brings comfort, by faith, from the death of Christ, from the life of Christ, from the resurrection of Christ ; from his intercession, from his office, from his blood and righteousness ; from his word, his covenant, his promise, his mediation ; and hence may triumph, with the apostle, Rom. viii. 34. *Who shall condemn us, when it is Christ that died ; yea, rather that is at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us ?*

3. He hath comfort in his *guide*, the Spirit of God, who is given to be *the Comforter*, John xiv. 16, 17. xv. 26. He may bring comfort from the Spirit's motions, influences, and operations ; from his enlightening, quickening, strengthening, teaching, and directing operations ; and from his continual inhabitation, as being in him a *well of water springing up to everlasting life*.

4. He hath comfort in his *conscience*, while he hath the *testimony* thereof ; *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world*, 2 Cor. i. 12. When all the world is in a flood, a good conscience is an ark. A wicked man's conscience is his hell ; but a believer's conscience is his heaven upon earth : when it is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, it gives a man peace within his own breast, whatever trouble be without doors.

5. He hath comfort in his *grace* : though Christ the fountain of grace be his main consolation ; yet even the streams are pleasant, as they are so many tokens of eternal love, and so many pledges of eternal life, yea, the first fruits of it.

6. He hath comfort in his *duties* and *services*, while he puts them in their own place and room. It is pleasant to him to serve and glorify his God. There is a sweetness in his exactest services : the more fully he is brought up to the will of God, in self-denial, in forgiving enemies, or in whatsoever part of his preceptive or providential

dential will, the more sweetness and comfort doth he find. Yea, there is a sweetness in the bitterest of his services, even in his tears; for, *his water is turned into wine, and his fasting into feasting*. This is proposed as an argument to choose Wisdom's way, and to love the truth and peace: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace, Zech. viii. 19.*

5. He hath comfort in his *experiences*, while he is enabled to reflect on the Bethel-visits that God made to him, Hof. xii. 4.; and while he remembers that God is the God of Bethel; the same God in his worst times, that ever he found him to be in his best time. How comfortable are experiences of the kindness of their Father, in hearing their prayers, helping them in straits, delivering them in distresses! experiences of his returning after distance, and reviving them after decays! experiences of sudden turns in their condition, from bondage to liberty, from fears to joy! of sudden glances and displays of his glory after desertion, and preventing their expectations, when they thought of nothing but being swallowed up! how he surprised them with his mercy, in bringing them out of the horrible pit, pardoning their iniquity, healed their backslidings, and allowed them access to his throne with boldness and holy courage and confidence?

8. He hath comfort in his *helpers*; I mean, the dispensers of the gospel, that are called *the helpers of our joy*, 2 Cor. i. 24. It is their office, in the Lord's name, to preach *deliverance to the captives, and to comfort those that mourn*. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Rom. x. 15. How amiable are the ordinances of God to believers! How do they *draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation!*

9. He hath comfort in his *mercies*; in his *temporal mercies*, which he hath with God's blessing, being *blessed in his basket and in his store*; and so he rejoices in the use of the creature, being sanctified to him by  
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the word of God : in his *spiritual* mercies ; in his garment wherewith he is clothed, Christ's everlasting righteousness ; in his charter, wherewith he is secured, the everlasting covenant. O what ground of consolation is here ! They have multitudes of the mercies about them, and every day renewed upon them to feed their comfort : *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ*, Eph. i. 3.

10. He hath comfort in his *crosses* : this we see clear from 2 Cor. i. 4. *Who comforteth us in all tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* It is comfort to know that his crosses are physic to heal him ; *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin ; and that all things shall work together for good ; and so even afflictions shall be his commodities.*

11. He hath comfort in his *life* ; why, *goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life*, Psal. xxiii. 6. O what a comfortable life hath he, when he lives like himself ! When his life is a life of faith, a life of love, a life of communion with God, a life of reconciliation and peace with God, a life of sanctification and holiness, it is a life of comfort.

12. He hath pleasure in his *death*, while it is a *dying in the faith*, Heb. xii. 13 ; a *dying in the Lord*, Rev. xii. 13. Not only is death their *gain*, Phil. i. 21. but death is their *delight*, while they are *strong in the faith*, and viewing death as the porch to everlasting pleasure and joy at God's right-hand.

Thus we have endeavoured to rectify some mistaken notions that the world and carnal men have of those, who relinquish a course of wickedness, and embrace Wisdom's ways ; obviated some carnal objections against the pleasures that are to be found in a religious course ; and condescended on a variety of those things, in which true believers find solid pleasure.

## S E R M O N CL.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

[ The fourth Sermon on this Text. ]

**I**T is possible that many are convinced of the truth of what is here asserted of Wisdom's ways; and therefore they may think it needless to multiply words on this subject: for, who is there, that is so senseless, as not to own, that the way of true religion is the best and sweetest way? But alas! Sirs, this is a gross mistake. It is true, many are superficially convinced, that are not converted: many have a slight opinion, that Christ, and heaven, and holiness is best; while yet their practical judgment does not go along with their opinion; and hence they relish the world, and their lusts, as sweetest unto them, and have no delight in God and his way: their heart goes after their covetousness, the world, and the lusts thereof; sinful pleasures being their choice. We may easily guess what their true judgment is, from what they choose, and what they refuse; their refusing their spiritual pleasures discover they have no solid conviction of this, that *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

The doctrinal part of the subject being discussed, and an informatory use of the doctrine essayed, rectifying some mistakes which the wicked world are apt to entertain concerning the pleasures that are to be found in Wisdom's ways, we now proceed to another use.

The

The *second use* that we make of the doctrine, is of *examination and trial*, whether or not you be acquainted with the peace and pleasure of Wisdom's ways. Surely, if you be walking in Wisdom's way, you will know something of the pleasure of it.

We shall observe four things that take place in Wisdom's way, that yield pleasure to the gracious soul.

1. Pleasant views.
2. Pleasant experiences.
3. Pleasant impressions.
4. A pleasant bent and propensity of soul towards spiritual pleasures.

1<sup>st</sup>, Enquire what you know of the pleasant *views* that are to be found in Wisdom's way. There are some views that are *preparatory* thereto and have *pain* in them; yet they tend to usher in the pleasure. Those that are *prefatory*, are a view of your *lost estate*, your want of all the *good* that innocent Adam had, and a view of your having all the *evil* that guilty Adam had. Your want of all the grace the second Adam hath to communicate, your inability to save yourself, and utter incapacity to help yourself. Have you got a particular afflictive view hereof, leading you to a concern about salvation?—The way being thus paved, what do you know of the pleasant view of *Christ* the Saviour, and of *God* in Christ, mentioned, 2 Cor. iv. 6. John i. 14. *God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?* These views of Christ, the sun of righteousness, are so pleasant, that they contribute to make the most terrible things comfortable and pleasant when viewed in Christ. A view of *God* is terrible to a sinner; but, when he is seen in *Christ*, he is a reconciled God. A view of *justice* is terrible; but when in Christ, it is satisfied justice. A view of *wrath* is terrible; but, when seen in Christ, it is appeased wrath; it is hell quenched with his blood. A view of the *law*, and its *curse*, is terrible; but, when seen in Christ, it is a fulfilled law; for, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness: He hath magnified the law and made it*

*honourable*. A view of *death* is terrible ; but, when viewed in Christ, it is unstinged ; and the believer may triumph over it, and say, *O death ! where is thy sting ?* Every thing out of Christ hath a dreadful aspect ; but in Christ it hath a pleasant view.

QUEST. *But may they not have PLEASANT views of God in Christ, who yet have not SAVING views ?*

ANSW. For preventing mistakes, here I will give you a fourfold account of these pleasant believing views that are *saving*, which believers have either in their first believing, or in their further progressive actings of faith. Saving views of Christ are. 1. Clear and distinct. 2. Particular. 3. Powerful. 4. Determining, under the influence of that powerful distinguishing grace. This is what imports the assurance and persuasion of faith. Indeed, a sinner, convinced of sin and wrath, and condemned by the law of God, could get no relief but by believing in Christ, if he had not, in believing, so much assurance of the *mercy* of God in Christ, revealed to him in the gospel, as he had assurance of the *wrath* of God, revealed to him in the law. As much particular persuasion, as he formerly had of law-wrath, leading him to despair ; so much particular persuasion doth he now get of gospel-grace, leading him to hope. Why, the particular assurance he hath, when under conviction, the particular assurance he hath of the law-threatening condemning him, can no other way be remedied, but by as particular an assurance of the gospel-promise absolving him.

Whether the generation can hear or bear this doctrine or not, it will be found to be true : and wo to us if we know nothing of it, that there is, in saving faith, as much assurance and persuasion of the promise of the gospel, as there is, in conviction, a particular assurance and persuasion of the threatening of the law, and as you are strangers to true conviction of sin and misery. If the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, hath never given you a particular assurance of the law's threatening, with application to yourselves, so as to see wrath denounced against you in particular ; so you are strangers to true and saving faith, if the Spirit of God,



as a Spirit of faith, hath never given you a particular assurance of some gospel-promise, with application to yourself, so as to see mercy there for you in particular. If it were not thus, the remedy would not be suited to the malady; and the plaister would not be so broad as the sore: the balm given by the gospel would not correspond with the wound given by the law. But so it is, that, as in conviction, there is such a faith of the law, as gives a man a particular persuasion of the malady he is under; so, in conversion, there is such a faith of the gospel, as gives a man a particular persuasion of the remedy provided for him: otherwise there would be no relief.

It is true, remaining unbelief may keep a person much in bondage: but as we speak of what is in the *nature* of faith; so we speak of what takes place when faith is in *act* and *exercise*. Why, faith sees the gospel making as much way for the hope of salvation, as the law made within him to the fear of damnation.—Here is a part of the pleasant views that are to be had in Wisdom's ways.

*2dly*, There are pleasant *experiences* that Wisdom's children have in her way, whereby you may try yourselves, what knowledge you have of the pleasure thereof. And these are not only experiences of things *pleasant* in themselves; but also of *unpleasant* things working to some pleasant and desirable issue. I speak not here of *extraordinary* experiences, but even of such as are more *common*: such as, experiences of the *evil of sin*; which they got, partly by the word, and partly by the rod, making them know what an evil and bitter thing it is, and what a fountain of wickedness is in their heart.—Experiences of the *deceitfulness of the heart*, which is like a deceitful bow, soon turning aside from the sweetest frame; insomuch that the plagues of the heart are like to overcome the man wholly.—Experiences of the *vanity of the world*; vanity in the abstract: this they are taught from experience, as Solomon was, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*: and, *who may come after him?* for, he had more of the pleasure, riches, and honours of the world than any before him, or since; and

and yet, *all is vanity saith the Preacher*.—Experiences of the *policy of Satan*, who is a cunning enemy: they *are not ignorant of his devices*. He adapts his temptations to our trade and temper.—Experiences of the *truth of the threatening*; such as that merciful one, *If his children break my laws, I will visit their iniquity with the rod, and their transgressions with stripes*. They feel this verified in their *broken bones*, as David did.—Experience of the *truth of the promise*; as Israel did, *Josh. xxiii. 14. And, behold, this day I go the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof*.—Experiences of the *goodness of the promise*, and of the  *blessings*  that are treasured up therein. This they feel sometimes in providence, and sometimes in ordinances, when they are made to say, *It is good for me to draw near to God*.—Experiences of the *tokens of divine favour*, as when he hears their prayers, gives them grace to pray and wrestle; when he intimates pardon, and communicates sweet influences of his grace, recovers them from backsliding, returns after desertion, relieves in extremity, supports under affliction.

But that people may not deceive themselves with experiences, that they may know whether they be solid, I will give you a character of true experiences, namely, that they are *working experiences*, as it is said, *Rom. v. 4. Experience worketh hope*. This is true of all solid experiences, when compared with one another, and linked together; though yet different experiences have different effects, yet all work to some advantage and benefit thus—The experience of the *evil of sin* works towards the making the man *bate sin*, and to *loath himself* for it; and *shun all appearances of evil*.—Experience of the *deceitfulness of the heart* works towards a man's *watching* over his heart, and *jealousing* and *distrusting* his heart; and *desiring* to have it *searched and tried*.—Experience of the *vanity of the world*, works a *weanedness* of heart from the world, and from the comforts of time; and tends to a *gaining* of the heart, and *engaging*

ing it to the Lord.—Experience of the *policy of Satan* works in the soul a desire to *put on the whole armour of God*, and to fly to God in Christ by prayer; *for this I besought the Lord thrice*: and the man is thereby humbled; *a thorn in the flesh is given, lest he be exalted above measure*.—Experience of the *truth of the threatening* works a *holy filial fear*, like that of David; *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*: And thus he is guarded against presumptions.—Experiences of the *truth of the promise* works more and more *dependence* upon a promising God, as he is truth and faithfulness itself: and thus he is guarded against despair. Hath he accomplished his promise in this or that particular? and will he fail in what further he hath said?—Experience of the *goodness of the promise*, and the sweetness that the soul finds in the Lord's way, in a suitability to the promise, this works out farther *strength* to the man's faith; as Israel, when they saw the great work of God at the Red-sea, then they *sang his praise*, Exod. xiv. xv. When they experienced the out-making of any promise, this inflamed their love; *I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication*, Psal. cxvi. 1 —Experiences of the *tokens of God's love*, this also *works love*, and *constrains them to love*; and also excites *joy*, and makes them rejoice in the shadow of his wings, and *glory in the Lord*—In a word, by *all experiences* they come to be more and more *rooted in the faith*, and by degrees to more and more of a *sensible assurance* of the love of God.—Try what you know of these things.

3dly, There are pleasant *impressions*, by which you may try also if you are acquainted with the pleasures of Wisdom's ways. What are these? In a word, it is *God's seal and impression on the heart*, which discovers it to be a new heart, when it is impressed with a suitable frame. The leading impression is that spoken of, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*. It is a stamp and impress of the Spirit of God upon the heart, making it, of a worldly, a heavenly heart; instead of a proud, a humble heart; instead

of

of a carnal, a holy heart : making the soul all glorious within, according to the measure of the manifestation of his glory. Something of God's image remains engraven ; but because this is very little discerned, there is a twofold more abiding frame and impression that still remains upon the spirit of believers, almost at the lowest.

1. The first is a *poor* and *needy* frame, mentioned, Mat. v. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of God.* They are poor with respect to themselves, empty of themselves ; poor with respect to their own righteousness ; poor with respect to their own strength ; and therefore are ready to say, *In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength ; for I have none of myself ; no grace, no good in myself.* They have still impressions of their own poverty and want ; far from thinking *they are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing.* This impression and frame is so pleasing to God, that he says of such, *To this man will I look ; even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,* Isa. lxvi. 2.

2. The next is a *hungry* and *thirsty* frame, spoken of, Mat. v. 6. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.* This also, for ordinary, remains with the believer at the lowest, and at the worst ; and it follows upon the former : because he is poor and destitute of all things in himself, therefore he desires to have supply out of Christ's fulness. And there is still some longing in his soul, " O to be brought near to God ! O for another visit ! O to see his power and glory in the sanctuary ! How long ! long ! " This also is such a pleasing frame in God's sight, that he hath promised satisfaction to such ; that *he will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things,* Psal. cvii. 9. *The needy shall not always be forgotten ; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever,* Psal. ix. 18.

These two particulars suppose and import an impression they have of their own want and weakness ; and an impression of the fulness and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. But because these that are hypocrites and unregenerate, may have many good impressions, at certain

certain times, and very *strange* impressions, yea, even *joyful* impressions, like the *stony-ground bearers*, who *received the word with joy*. I will lay before you the difference between the pleasant *spiritual* impressions that take place in Wisdom's way, and the impressions that *hypocrites* and *reprobates* may have.

(1.) True and saving impressions are *sociable*; they accompany one another, and go hand in hand together: For example, holy fear doth not cast out love, nor love cast out fear: holy triumph in the Lord does not take away trembling at his presence; nor holy trembling take away triumph: joy does not destroy godly sorrow for sin; nor godly sorrow remove spiritual joy: faith doth not destroy repentance; nor repentance destroy faith: the man's humility does not destroy his boldness before God; nor his boldness of access destroy humility: his low thoughts of himself doth not destroy his high thoughts of Christ; nor his high thoughts of Christ destroy his low thoughts of himself: his self-diffidence does not destroy his holy confidence; nor his holy confidence destroy self-diffidence. Nay, instead of destroying one another, they advance and harmoniously help and forward one another.—Whereas the hypocrite's joy destroys his sorrow; his faith and false confidence destroys and excludes his repentance; his fear destroys his love; and his pretended love to God destroys his fear of him: one good impression he hath destroys another; they cannot keep company together. Whereas spiritual impressions in believers excite and quicken one another.

(2) True and saving impressions are *unlimited* and *unstinted*; and the good frames of hypocrites stinted and limited; insomuch that they rest satisfied without their attainments: so far they go, and reckon they need go no farther, if they think they have so much as will keep them out of hell, or bring them to heaven. But true believers have no stinted measures of grace: whatever holy impressions are made upon them, they still desire more, and more, and more; pressing after consummate perfection: *I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting these things that are*

*behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 13.*

(3.) The true and saving impressions are *habitual* impressions; they are like the believer's daily bread: tho' a man be not always eating or drinking, yet the taking of food for the nourishment of the body, is a man's daily habitual work: so, though the believer be not always under a divine impression, or in a spiritual frame, but hath his changes, yet he is habitually thus exercised; and if any days pass wherein he is destitute of these meals, they are to him as days of famine, and spiritual scarcity; his soul pines and languishes, and is uneasy for want of what it would be at in duty. Whereas hypocrites can be quite easy in the want of these things, without ever giving a longing look towards the Lord for his returning to them. But the believer dies of penury and want: these are his melancholy days, his fighting days, till he recover all again, by the Spirit of the Lord returning, and reviving his heart, and restoring his soul. It is true, the established believer learns, in the want of sensible enjoyments, to live by faith on the Son of God: yea, but still that faith gives many a long look for the Lord's returning to its sweet and sensible embraces.

4. These impressions, in believers, are not only habitual, but *natural*. If the hypocrite can have any such impressions, they are not natural to him, they are not his element; he hath no new nature corresponding thereto: and therefore he cannot endure to be long under any good and spiritual impressions; his carnal unrenewed nature sets it off; and his *carnal mind*, being *enmity against God*, he is content that the impressions be gone. But, to a child of God, these impressions are natural; they are his new nature, his element; they are like the very breath of his new nature; natural to his sanctified part, as breath is to his body: yea, so natural to him, that they are like a part of his life, and the removal of them is like death to him: and hence, when under these sweet and heavenly impressions, he is disposed to give as it were, a charge to all the

the world, to beware of disturbing and bereaving him of his joy: *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my Love till he please,* Song ii. 7.

In a word, the hypocrite and the godly differ as much in their motions and affections, as the motion of a clock differs from the sun; the one moves by art, the other by nature: the hypocrites motions and impressions are like artificial clock work, under the influence of the common operations of the Spirit, working upon him by some outward means and providences; but the impressions of believers are natural, under the influence of the Spirit dwelling in him: and whatever subserviency outward providences and ordinances may have for advancing them, yet they are the fruits of the special operation of the Spirit that is in him, *as a well of water springing up to eternal life.* So that their impressions differ as much as a land flood, that quickly dries up, being only maintained with rain from the clouds, differs from a living spring, which is never altogether dried, even when the flood is abated.

*ably,* There is a pleasant *bent* and *propensity* of soul towards spiritual things, and spiritual pleasures. If a man know what it is that pleases and delights him most, he may know whether he be acquainted with Wisdom's pleasant way, or not; and whether he hath the Spirit of Christ, or not: for such as have the Spirit of Christ, do favour *the things of the Spirit.* This is a durable and infallible evidence, which the weakest Christians can scarce well tell how to deny in themselves, namely, what they would be at, and what they are most pleased and displeas'd with. Could they be more holy, it would please them better than to be more rich. Could they have more of God, it would please them better than to have more of the world; yea, than ye give them all the pleasures and honours of the world. They are never so well pleas'd with themselves, and their own heart, as when they find them nearest heaven, and have most of the knowledge of God, and an impress of his attributes, and sense of his presence. They are never more pleas'd with their own life than when it is most holy,

and fruitful, and most like a *walking with God*. They are never so much displeas'd with their hearts as when they find least of God upon them, and when they are most dead, and dark, and dull, and indispos'd for communion with him. They are never so much displeas'd with their life, and weary of it, as when it is most carnal, and fruitless, and unholy, and uncircumspect. This is a certain evidence of their sincerity and uprightnes; it shews what they love, and what it is that hath their hearts and wills; and looks upon a man to be what he sincerely would be. His complacency and displeasance are the immediate sure discoveries of his bent and inclination: and poor doubting souls should often have recourse to this evidence.—It is quite otherwise with the wicked: and it is a sure evidence of their misery, that they would be better pleas'd to be great, than to be good; better pleas'd to be rich, than to be righteous and religious; better pleas'd to serve their lusts, than to serve the Lord: they are more taken up with the applause of men, than with the approbation of God; and would rather be far from God, than near him. They take the world and sin for their recreation and delight, and account Wisdom's way but a melancholy way, wearisome, and unpleasant course. This shews they have yet the old corrupted nature and serpentine enmity against the Spirit and life of Christ; and therefore can no more please God, than his holy ways are pleasing to them: *For, to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God, Rom. viii 6, 7.*

In a word, it is the pleasant exercise of believers to *delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man; to rejoice in his word.*

OBJECT. “ May not *hypocrites* and *unbelievers* have “ joy and *delight* in the word, like these *Isaiah* *lviii. 2.*; “ and like *Herod*, that *heard the word gladly*; and the “ *stony-ground hearers*, that *received the word with* “ *joy?* ”

ANSW.



ANSW. Such is the difference between *spiritual* and *carnal* joy, that whereas the *godly sorrow* of the believer is the matter of his *joy*; infomuch, that he is more glad when his heart will melt for sin, than he would be, though he had all the carnal pleasures in the world. On the other hand, the *carnal joy* of the wicked is matter of *sorrow*; yea, in the *midst of his laughter his heart is in heaviness*.—Again, even the greatest sorrows of the godly are medicinal, fanative, and preparative to after joy; whereas the greatest joys of the wicked are hurtful, pernicious, and preparative to after sorrow: but godly sorrow worketh out the poison of sin that would mar their joy.

But more particularly, the difference between the *godly* and the *wicked* in their *delight*, may be viewed in four things, *viz.* the matter, the manner, the measure, and the end of their joy and delight.

1. As for the *matter* and *ground* of the godly man's delight, it is God himself, Christ himself, the gospel itself: whereas the matter of the hypocrite's delight is rather his *own knowledge* of these things; and so his *knowledge puffeth up*.

2. They differ as to the *manner* of their delight: that of the godly is solid and constant, and proceeding from the special grace of the Spirit; but the delight of the wicked man and hypocrite is unsound, unsolid, and unconstant; proceeding from the common grace of the Spirit, and not from the new nature, but some impression on the old nature; and so his delight is not natural; neither is it the man's element, as we have illustrated above.

3. They differ in the *measure* of their joy. The delight the believer hath in the Lord, and in the word and law of the Lord, is his chief delight; it is his *exceeding joy*, Psal. xliii. 4.: but the natural man hath something that he delights more in; he takes more pleasure in worldly riches and honours: but the godly hath more delight in the word than in all manner of worldly enjoyments; *O how love I thy law! it is sweeter to me than honey: therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold*, Psal. cxix. 97. xix. 10.

cxix. 27. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Then hast thou put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased,* Psal. iv. 6, 7.

4. They differ in their *end* and *effect*. The delight of the godly leads them to desire conformity to the law, inward and outward, while the wicked content themselves, at most, with an outward reformation. The difference between them is like that of the two painters, or skilful limners, who, both together, beholding one and the same picture, very artfully drawn: the one beheld it with admiration; and contented himself with seeing it, and commending it; but endeavoured not himself to make the like: the other beheld it with a desire of imitation; and so praised it, as to set his skill a-work to make the like. So it is with the regenerate and the unregenerate man; the regenerate man liketh and delighteth in the word of God, so as he desires and endeavours a conformity thereunto: but the unregenerate man rests in the contemplation of the word; and remains easy, though he attain no conformity to it.

Thus we have laid before you some of the pleasant views that are to be found in Wisdom's way; presented you with some of the pleasant experiences that Wisdom's children have in her way; condescended on some of the pleasant impressions made upon those acquainted with Wisdom's way; and considered the pleasant bent and propensity of soul towards spiritual things, and spiritual pleasures.

This use of trial, to know if we be walking in Wisdom's way, and are acquainted with the pleasures thereof, might have been farther enlarged on, and examined by the *ground* and *cause* of it, namely, the efficient and instrumental, the Spirit and word of God; by the *object* thereof, *viz.* Christ, in his person, purchase, covenant, and ordinances; by the *properties* of it, *viz.* joy and pleasure that is unspeakable and full of glory: and by the *effects* thereof, such as the rejoicing, elevating, strengthening, sanctifying, and supporting pleasures

pleasures found therein: but the consideration of these would lead us into a large field of matter; and, as we intend brevity, the prosecution of them shall be superseded, at the time; and let what has already been offered suffice.



## S E R M O N   C L I .

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

[ The fifth Sermon on this Text. ]

**I**T is not at all surprizing, that the way of religion and holiness should be *pleasantness* and *peace*, seeing CHRIST himself is *the way*; and every thing in and about him yieldeth inconceivable pleasure to the true believer. And what satisfaction the gracious soul finds in communion with a reconciled God in Christ, is only known to those who have their fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit. Though there be nothing more certain than that Wisdom's ways are not only *pleasant*, but *pleasantness*, and every individual path of that way *peace*; yet there is scarce any thing more like a paradox to the carnal mind: but this is not to be wondered at, since he is a stranger to the life and power of religion upon his soul, and to the solid pleasure and satisfaction arising from the contemplation of God and his excellencies, and in the lifting up the light of his countenance upon the soul. However, the testimony of the Spirit of God in the scripture, as well as the attested experience of the saints, puts it beyond all doubt; for, *Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths peace.*

The

The doctrine being formerly improv'd in an use of information and examination ; we shall now proceed to another use of the point.

The *third use* shall be for *exhortation* ; which shall be tendered to two sorts of persons. 1. To the *wicked*, who can find no pleasure in Wisdom's way. 2. To the *godly*, especially such as are under heaviness and sorrow, that they would study more to manifest that the way they are in is pleasant.

1<sup>st</sup>, We are to direct our exhortation to the *wicked*, that never found any pleasure in Wisdom's way, nor ever could relish any other pleasures, but these that are sensual and brutish. O Sir, be exhorted to *come and try Wisdom's way*, and to *taste the pleasure* thereof. And, in order to excite you hereto, we would first offer some *motives*, and then give some *directions*.

[1.] For *motives*, we shall lay before you the four following considerations, which we would have you seriously to ponder.

1. Consider how *wicked the heart* is, that can find more pleasure in sin, than in God and holiness ; that can find the creature pleasant and God unpleasant ! What a shame is this to your understanding and will ! What a shame to the understanding is it, to value darkness rather than light ? And what a shame to the will, to choose death rather than life ? What a shame to both, that the worst things are more pleasant than the best ? If you had no more wit than to be pleas'd more with dung than with meat, and more with nakedness than with cloathing, you would not be reckon'd wise enough to be left to your own disposal and government ; and yet here, the folly that you manifest is unspeakably greater, when you are more pleas'd with feeding upon swines husks, than upon heavenly manna ; and have more pleasure in exposing your shameful nakedness to the world, than in being cloath'd with a heavenly robe ; a robe of perfect righteousness for your justification, and a robe of grace and holiness for your sanctification. O sinner ! you have a God of infinite goodness to delight in, and you have liberty to come to him ; you have

have liberty, as well as others, to love, admire, adore, and trust in him; to open your hearts to him in secret, yet you have no delight in him; no desire to think or speak of him. You come to public ordinances, but you find no pleasure therein, because you are strangers to the inward and spiritual part thereof; you look at the ministers gifts and parts, and the manner of his doctrine and delivery, but are never taken up with the spiritual matter that is delivered. And yet, perhaps, you have pleasure enough in drinking, feasting, and idle talking; you seldom weary of them. But every spiritual exercise is a weariness to you; and it is one of the hindrances of your conversion, lest religion should deprive you of your mirth, and cause you spend the rest of your days in heaviness. Alas! what blindness and wickedness is here!

2. Consider how *ungrateful* your heart is, when God hath provided, and Christ hath purchased such privileges and delights, that sinners may be charmed with them, and yet you say, you take them for no delights at all. If your child, or a beggar, should refuse the best things you can give them, and throw them away, saying, there is no sweetness in it; would you not reckon it monstrous ingratitude? Why do you so then with Christ, and his blessings and pleasures, saying, *What a weariness is it?* Mal. i. 13. But if you still are weary of reading, praying, hearing, and other religious exercises, take heed lest you provoke God to cast you into a place where you will have more cause to be weary. Will you not weary of hell-fire, and the dolorous reviews of your own folly, and of the awful sense of the never-ending wrath of God, and that for wearying of the sweetest services, and rejecting the greatest mercies he can offer, as if they were burdensome, worthless things? If God be not worthy to be loved and delighted in, more than all things else, surely he is not God. If heaven and holiness be not sweeter than all the pleasures of earth and sin, then they ought not to have such honourable names. Sin and earth may be called heaven; but, wo to them that have no better!

3. Consider, if you find no pleasure in God and holiness, and in his way, you may be sure he hath *no pleasure* in you, while you take more pleasure in fordid, fading trifles, than in God and Christ. He can take no pleasure in your person nor in your prayers: *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord*, Prov. xv. 8. *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee: the foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity*, Psal. v. 4, 5. See also Isa. i. 13, 14, 15. Eccl. v. 4. Mal. i. 8, 9, 10. chap. ii. 3. Zech. xi. 18. Heb. x. 38. How justly will they be all damned that *obey not the truth*, but had *pleasure in unrighteousness*? If you continue to say practically, you have no pleasure in him; how fearful will it be, when you shall hear him saying, he hath no pleasure in you! Hath Christ bought holiness and everlasting pleasures at the price of his blood; and do you think carnal, sensual pleasures better than they? O Sirs, is it Christ or you, think you, that is mistaken in the value of them?

4. Consider, if God, and his ways of wisdom seem not pleasant to you, then *heaven* itself cannot seem pleasant to you, if you consider truly what heaven is; for, the heavenly blessedness and felicity consists in the perfection of that holiness, vision, love, joy, and enjoyment of God, which you so much hate, and can take no pleasure in. If the little holiness on earth be so unpleasant to you, that appears in the imperfect saints here, what pleasure could you take in that perfect holiness that takes place above? If the thoughts and mention of God, and the singing of his praises, be unpleasant, or matters of no delight to you, what would you do in heaven, where this, in perfection, must be your everlasting work? Surely you have no right notion of heaven, if you hope to be there, and yet have no pleasure in heavenly things here? What sort of a heaven do you expect? Can you beg of God to bring you to glory, when you take glory to be a misery, grace a burden, and religion a weariness? If you think there is a heaven of such sensual pleasures as you desire; or if you choose heaven only as a place of more tolerable misery than

than hell, you will shortly find your expectations to be deceived, and your hope miserably frustrated.

[2.] That you may not only come and *try*, and also *taste* the pleasure that is to be found in Wisdom's way, we shall lay before you the following *directions*.

1. Would you taste the pleasures of Wisdom's way, and the peace thereof, then *come and see*; come and search into the pleasure of Wisdom's way. Do not stand looking at a distance, where you see nothing but the out-side: do not judge by hear-say, which gives no taste or relish; *O taste and see that the Lord is good*, Psal. xxxiv. 8. The sweetness of honey or meat is not properly known by looking at it, but by tasting it. Come near and try what it is to live in the faith and hope of eternal life, and to live in the love and favour of God through Jesus Christ. The shell is not sweet, but serves only to hide the kernel, which is the sweetest part: and indeed, the kernel of religion is covered with a shell so hard, that flesh and blood cannot break it. Hard sayings, and hard providences to the church, and to particular believers, are such hard shells, as many can never break through, and therefore never taste the sweetness.

2. Cast away your *prejudices* and *false conceits* which have deceived you, and turned your mind against the ways of Wisdom. This would natively follow upon the former; for people will never be rid of their prejudices against Christ, till they *come and see*. Nathaniel saith, John i. 46. *Can any good come out of Nazareth?* Philip answered to him, *Come and see*: intimating, that a sight of Christ would effectually remove prejudices. Can there be any pleasure in Wisdom's ways? in a religious life? Yea, if you will come and see, you will soon throw away your prejudices. These two things are closely connected together, and reciprocally influence each other. Why, they that will not come and see, will not relinquish their prejudice; and they who will not cast away their prejudice, will not come and see. A man may be persuaded to hate his meat, if you can but make him believe it is poison; or to hate his cloaths, if you can but persuade him that they are infected with the

plague : so, if you suffer your understanding to be deluded so far as to overlook the amiable nature of holiness, and of Wisdom's way, and to think the image of God is but a fancy, that a heavenly life is but hypocrisy, and that it is but pride for men to be holier than others. If you believe what the devil and his instruments say, no wonder than you hate the very name of holiness ; nay, you shall never love God, nor see any loveliness in his service. How can you find pleasure in the greatest good, while you take it for an evil ?

3. Apply yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the use of his appointed means, for the *renewing of your nature*, and that his spirit may give you a new understanding to discern, and a new heart to relish spiritual things ; for your old corrupt minds and hearts will never do it, they are unsuitable to the things of God ; and therefore cannot receive them, nor favour them, 1 Cor. ii. 14 15. Rom. viii. 5,—8. The appetite and relish of every living creature is suitable to its nature : a fish hath no pleasure in dry land, nor a flying bird in the bottom of the deep ; so, *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, and therefore takes no pleasure but in fleshly things ; and *and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, and therefore will relish spiritual things. Seek therefore the new nature.

4. If you would taste the pleasure of Wisdom's ways, then forbear the pleasures of the ways of *folly*, even these sinful fleshly pleasures that you are so much taken up with ; for they insatiate your understanding, corrupt your appetite, and make the sweetest things seem loathsome to you. When the heart is glutted with sensual pleasures, it makes the word and ways of God unfavoury. The Prodigal that we read of, Luke xv. never thought of the sweet and full provision of his Father's house, till he was brought to a famine of his former pleasure, and denied the very husks. Hence it is, that God so frequently promotes the work of conversion by affliction. Perhaps you cannot tell how to leave your sensual pleasures, you who never found any nobler pleasure than that which lies in eating, drinking, sporting, and the like ; what will you do when pain and sickness



sickness make you weary of your meat, drink, and sport, and to say, *I have no pleasure in them?* These things which you are now so loth to leave, may shortly become such a load to your soul, as undigested meat is to a disordered stomach; that you shall have no ease, till you have vomit them up. Alas! you will never know your friends, unless you forsake these deceivers; nor know the pleasures of a holy life, unless you let go the poisonous pleasures of sin: then you will find that Wisdom's ways will not destroy your pleasures, but change and recover your pleasure and delight, and make it noble, heavenly, spiritual, solid, and durable; and give you life for death, light for darkness, and gold for dross; and the greatest peace and safety, instead of the greatest peril.

2dly, We would next offer a word of exhortation to the *godly*; such as are under *heaviness* and *sorrow*, and who live as sadly, as if they found more grief than pleasure in Wisdom's ways: and our exhortation to them is, that they would study to manifest that the way wherein they walk is a *pleasant way*, and that its *paths are peace*, by their *cheerful walk*, by their *rejoicing and working righteousness*. In order to enforce the exhortation, we shall adduce some *motives*, offer some *directions*, and obviate some *objections*, that may be proposed, as we go along.

[1.] For *motive*, then, you may consider the six following particulars.

1. Let the dejected believer consider, that, by his heaviness and dejection, he seems to the world to accuse God and his service, as if he was a *hard Master*, and his service *unpleasant service*. I know this is not your thought, who are believers; I know it is not God and his service that you complain of, and that you walk heavily, not because you are *holy*, but because you fear you are *not holy*; yea, but you may thus give great occasion to ignorant persons to judge otherwise. If you saw a servant always dull and melancholy, that was wont to be merry and cheerful, when he was in another service, would you not think that he had a master that displeas'd him? If you saw a woman in continual heaviness

viness, ever since she was married, that lived more heartily and cheerfully before, will you not conclude that she has met with an unagreeable match? Why, then, your heaviness may tend to the reproach of your heavenly Master whom you serve; and are you not married to the Lord Jesus Christ? And will you give occasion to the ignorant world to reproach your heavenly husband? And can you find in your heart to dishonour and wrong the God whom you so much esteem.

2. Consider what a *lamentable hindrance* you may hereby be to the conversion and salvation of souls; your dejected countenance and complaints may affright men from Wisdom's ways, as if they were not pleasant ways, but rather grievous: you gratify Satan and his instruments, who would keep men from Christ and his way, by making them believe that the servants of Christ are a company of distempered, depressed, melancholy souls; and that godliness is the way to make men mad: and, indeed, this is one of the days wherein, as the prophet Isaiah hath it, chap. lix. 15. *Truth faileth, and he that departed from evil maketh himself a prey; or, is accounted mad*, as it is in the margin. Satan and the wicked persuade men, that if they will set their heart on heaven, they must never any more look for a pleasant life on earth; and will you contribute to confirm this slander of the devil and his instruments? Can you have peace in your own mind to lay such a stumbling-block as this in the way of your miserable acquaintances as to hinder their salvation? Perhaps you have hindred it formerly by your sinful merriment; and will you now do it by your sinful heaviness? If you could live a heavenly joyful life, that the glory of your hopes might appear in your countenance, deportment, and conversation, what an attractive would it be to the ignorant, who, having a natural enmity against it, cannot see the excellency of it immediately in itself, but only judge of religion by the carriage of the persons who profess it? And surely these will appear to be the best and happiest persons who have the greatest comforts, and conquer the greatest trouble of mind. O! were the pleasure and excellency of religion exemplified in the lives of  
Christians,

Christians, the world would be forced to admire the very thing they hate ; and some would wish to see and know what it is that so much delights us, and desire to be made partakers of our joys. O sirs ! shall they glory who have nothing but a vain transitory world to comfort them ? and will not you *glory in the Lord* ? Shall they boast of their fading riches ? and will not you boast of the *unsearchable riches of Christ* ? Psal. xxxiv. 1, 2, 3. *I will bless the Lord at all times ; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord ; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.* Psal. xliv. 8. *In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever.* Why, in this case, poor fading sinners would begin to pity themselves, and to think with themselves, “ Surely it is not for nought that these men rejoice, and have such pleasant, comfortable lives, and joyful countenances, even in the loss of all these things that we take all our comfort in.” Therefore, O believer ! as you would not dishonour our Lord, and discourage your neighbour from his way, endeavour, through grace, to reach his joyful life, and and glory in the Lord.

OBJECT. “ If I would endeavour to live thus, for the encouragement of others, I fear this would draw me into a *hypocritical affectation* of joy and courage, as long as I am unable inwardly to rejoice, and can see no sufficient cause of rejoicing within myself.”

ANSW. Every believer in Christ hath sufficient cause of unspeakable joy, without himself, in the perfections of God, the fulness and righteousness of Christ, the promises of the covenant, which stand as unshaken foundations of his fiducial assurance, even when he cannot find, within himself, these good marks and characters which are sometimes the foundation of his evidential assurance : and I would have you to know, that you ought not to suspend your comfort, and forbear your joy and delight, till you would have that full evidential assurance you would be at. Yea, I will assure you, that the weakest faith and hope will warrant a more comfortable life than you can live. And it is not *hypocri-*

*hypocryfy*, but *duty*, to do the outward actions that are commanded you, with reference to holy courage and confidence before the world; even though you cannot reach to that degree of inward comfort you desire.

I remember once to have heard a dying faint speak to this purpose to some that were in the company; “ I had an inclination, said the person, many times to speak more of Christ and religion, and to commend it to you more than I did; but that which marred my courage and confidence, was the fears lest afterwards I myself should prove a hypocrite: this was a temptation to me.” It is possible some of the Lord’s people may be under temptations of this sort. Far be it from us, Sirs, to persuade any man to lye and hypocryze; as some perhaps do, who can talk boldly of religion, just to recommend themselves to the opinion of others, as if they were more acquainted with religion than indeed they are: but I speak to sober, serious, and exercised souls. You do not lye, nor affirm yourselves to have the joy which you have not, when you only endeavour to express, as fully as you are able, that little which you have; and, indeed, a little peace and pleasure, a very little of this joy and pleasure is of such a high and heavenly nature, grounded on the smallest hopes of everlasting life in Christ, as will allow you, in the expression of it, to transcend the greatest delights of the ungodly; yea, to endeavour conscientiously to perform the external part, is both a commanded duty, and a means to further the inward rejoicing of the soul; as outward diseases of the body may contribute to the inward recreation of the mind, and the performance of outward duty may be the *means* of inward frame: and it is no hypocryfy to essay the outward means, even when you find a want of the inward frame and encouragements. If you cannot restrain your anger, as you desire, it is no hypocryfy, but your duty, to hide it, and to refrain from the sinful effects of it; yea, in doing so, your anger itself may be the more quickly subdued. Thus, if you cannot restrain your inordinate appetite to meat and drink; yet it is no hypocryfy, but duty, to hold your hands, and shut your mouth, and refrain from

from the things to which you have an appetite : the doing so, may subdue the appetite itself. If the drunkard would forbear the drink, and the glutton the dish, and the sportful his sinful games, then the fire of sensuality might go out for want of fuel, as it is with other lusts of the flesh, could men make no provision for it, to fulfil the same, Rom. xiii. 14. Even so, if you cannot overcome your inward doubts, fears, and sorrows, as you desire; yet let them not be frightful, nor cause you walk so dejectedly before the world as to dishonour God, and disparage your holy profession : and you will find, that your essaying a holy cheerfulness of countenance, expression, and deportment, even when you want the inward comfort you desire, may contribute to your overcoming your inordinate disquietment, and much promote the joys that you desire.

But yet further, that you may see cause for the cheerful walk we have been speaking of, I exhort you, by way of motive,

3. To consider, that if you have but one spark of *saving grace*, it is not possible to conceive or express the happiness of your state, and the cause you have to live a joyful life. If you have no grace at all, you are not the person I am speaking to; but, if you have it, and yet suspect the want of it, as it is hardly possible to want it, and yet to be heavily lamenting the want of it; so, if you have it in the least degree, you have in it an unspeakable treasure of delight. I formerly offered marks; and, if you are indeed in Wisdom's way, God is yours, Christ is yours, the Spirit is yours, the promise is yours, heaven is yours in title, and shall be yours in possession. Shall they dwell in grief, and refuse consolation, who, in a few days, shall be swallowed up with joy? If you were sure of this, and of being for ever with the Lord, after you have lived but a few days more, would not your conscience check you for your discouragement, and say, that your want of joy doth express your too much want of thankfulness for such mercy?

OBJECT. "Yea, I could rejoice, If I were sure  
"of all this; but, when I rather think I shall have no  
"part of it, it can be but small comfort."

ANSW. (1.) Whence is it that you have such *fears*? Have you not in your soul that love to God and Christ, that hatred and weariness of sin, that desire after communion with God in Christ, that esteem of the gospel, and of the searching word of God, that love to the saints and children of God, that are evidences of grace, and things that accompany salvation? And notwithstanding of this, you will be still questioning whether you have them or not, and whether the kingdom shall be yours; it is your own weakness and inconsiderateness that causes your sorrow.

(2.) Are you not sure that *Christ* and his *benefits* are yours? Why, man, woman, I am sure they are yours in the offer and general promise; and, if they be not yours in a special, saving way, nothing but your continued refusal deprives you of them. If you will not have Christ, and his offered benefits, why do you so dissemble as to complain that you have them not? For, if you are willing, they are yours.

OBJECT. "How can we live comfortably under  
"so much *sin*, and so much *suffering* both? For, per-  
"haps you know not our circumstances, otherwise you  
"would not call us to joy and pleasure."

ANSW. According to this method of doing, you will never rejoice till you come to *heaven*? for you will never be free of sin and suffering till then: nay it would seem, you would have no man else to rejoice, and so would banish all comfort from the world; for there is no man without sin and suffering. Are your sins great, believer? Why, then, be sorrowful for them after a godly sort; but let not that hinder your thankfulness and joy: for the pardon of sin, and the promise of begun deliverance here, and of full deliverance hereafter, are yours. Are your afflictions great? Why then, be humble under them; but rejoice that they are fatherly chastisements, proceeding from love, and tending to your greater good; and that you are *chastened of the Lord*, that you may not be *condemned with the world*.

Will you tell me, is there more evil in your infirmities and sufferings, than there is goodness in God, sweetness in Christ, happiness in heaven, and fulness in the covenant? If you dare not say that, then surely you have greater ground of joy than you have ground of sorrow. Yea, there is no mourning that God allows his children, but what is either mixed with, or makes way for joy: *Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted*, Mat. v. 4. Gospel-humiliation is both attended and followed with kindly heart-melting consolation.

4. Consider, that the *advancing* of peace and pleasure is the great end and design of the everlasting gospel. As God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they repent and live; so surely he takes no pleasure in the dejectedness of his children, but rather that they would walk in love and cheerful obedience before him. It is the office of Christ to *give rest* to these *that labour and are heavy laden* with burdens of their own, Mat. ix. 28. he was *anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor*, Luke iv. 18. When he was to leave the world, his legacy that he left to his disciples was peace and comfort: *Let not your heart be troubled. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world giveth give I unto you*, John xiv. 1. xvi. 18, 26, 27, 28. Nay, he commanded them, as they love him, to rejoice because he left them and went to the Father. He foretels them of sufferings; but he promises that their *sorrow should be turned into joy*; and that *in him they should have peace, when in the world they should have tribulation*, John xvi. 20, 33. When he appeared after his resurrection, his salutation unto his friends is, *Peace be unto you*, John xx. 19, 21, 26. And the *abounding and multiplying* of this holy peace is the desire and salutation of Paul, to the church, in all his epistles. The gospel itself is the *message of peace*: the work of the ministry is the *preaching of peace and reconciliation with God*. The proclamation of angels was *peace on earth and good-will towards men*, when they were discovering the birth and incarnation of the *Prince of peace*. It is God's call to his people to *rejoice evermore*: and it is

the character and description of believers, *being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and to glory in tribulation*, Rom. v. 1, 2. See also 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 14. Luke vi. 22, 23. Mat. v. 11, 12. 2 Cor. vi. 10. Col. i. 24. Acts v. 41, 42. chap. viii. 8, 39. Psal. v. 11. xxxiii. 21: lxviii. 3. cvi. 5. cv. 1, 2, 3. cxxxii. 9, 16. Isa. lxxv. 13, 14. Multitudes of scripture passages to the same effect, may shame the godly out of their indecent trouble and heaviness; as you would shew a child his face in a glass, when he cries, that you may see how he deforms it. If, by these, you wound your own soul, and bring grief upon yourself, dwell not in that wounded state, but run to your Physician, and beg of him to *restore to you the joys of his salvation*, and make you to *bear the voice of joy and gladness*, that your *broken heart and bones may rejoice*, as David, Psal. li. 8, 12. Why will you sit complaining of your wants, when the fountain of all store is at hand for you to go to? or complaining of your wounds without going to the Physician, who freely offers you his help? And what though they be not suddenly cured? Wounds may be caused in an hour, but they used not to be cured in an hour. Wait his time, and use remedies, and cheerfully trust him, and you shall find the healing go on with success, though it will not be finished till death.

5. Consider, that as peace and pleasure are the life of heaven; so it must be the most *holy and happy* life, that comes nearest the life of heaven. To go to heaven, is to *enter into the joy of our Lord*: and as they are the most happy; so they are the most holy Christians that are the most joyful; and joy is a part of our holiness, and of our religion; *The kingdom of heaven consisteth in righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. And therefore, without this holy delight, we deny God a principal part of his service, which is the *sacrifice of thanksgiving*. How unfit is a doubting, drooping, distressed soul, for the great and excellent work of praise, which should be our daily sacrifice? We thus muzzle our mouths, when we should be speaking and singing forth the praises of the Lord. What a shame is



it that the servants of the devil are so jocund, and the servants of God so dejected? Will you go drooping to heaven, while they go dancing to hell? O believer, you could live merrily before your conversion, when you served sin; and will you walk dejectedly when you serve Christ, as if you had changed for the worse, or would make men think so? I know you would not, for all the world, be in the state you was in before conversion, and faith in Christ Jesus; why then do you live as if you were more miserable than you was before?

6. Consider, that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost, the third person of the glorious Trinity, to *comfort* as well as *sanctify*; and if you would be loth to resist the sanctifying work of the Spirit, why should you not be loth to resist his comforting work, since it is the same Spirit you resist in both; and since, while you resist his comforting work, you resist his sanctifying work also, and his strengthening work, whereby you would be fit and strong for service and suffering both? *For the joy of the Lord would be your strength.*—So much for motives.

[2.] For *direction* to attain this pleasure and joy, we tender the following advices.

1. Study a more full and fixed *knowledge of God*, and his *attributes*, and *covenant-relation* to you in Christ Jesus. If infinite perfections be not matter of *pleasure* to you, it is because they are not known: If the sun seems not light to you, it is because you want sight, or look not to the light: If the most pleasant meat, or food, be what you can find no relish in, it is because your appetite is diseased, or you do not taste it: If your most suitable and affectionate friend be not amiable to you, it is because you know not his suitability and love: So, if the infinite and eternal God, possessed of all infinite and glorious perfections, can afford no pleasure to you, it is because you have no acquaintance with him. Study then his infinite *perfections*; and be much in secret prayer and meditation, knowing it is love itself you have to do with; for, *God is love*: and so it is the fountain of all pleasure you draw nigh unto. It is a cold heart that fire itself cannot warm; a dead heart indeed

indeed that life cannot quicken.—Study also a full and fixed knowledge of his *covenant-relation* to you, as thy God, thy Father, thy friend in Christ. Think not of him as cruel, or an enemy, if you would love him, or delight in him. Love and delight are never forced by bare commands and threatenings, but drawn forth magnetically, as with a load-stone, by attractive goodness. If God were not most amiable, lovely, and loving, it is not saying, *Love me, or I will damn you*, that would ever cause any man to love him; but rather to fear, and hate, and fly from him. Now, his love is manifested in his covenant of promise which thou hast laid hold upon, in the day of believing; and wherein he hath engaged to be thy Father, thy Saviour, and thy Sanctifier: and this covenant cannot be violated, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21. Isa. liv. 6, 7, 8. *The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.* God's providence does not give you such security that the sun shall shine, and that the streams shall run, and that the earth shall be fruitful, as God's covenant gives you of all that is necessary to your happiness.

QUEST. *But how shall I be sure that I am in covenant with God?*

ANSW. By your *consent*. God offers himself to be your Father, his Christ to be your Saviour, his Spirit to be your Sanctifier; do you consent to this, or not? If sin be so sweet and pleasant to you, that you are unwilling to have God to be your portion; if you would not have him to be your reconciled Father, your Saviour, your Sanctifier; then, why do you so dissemble, as to lament your misery, while you refuse your happiness? But if you are brought to a cordial consent, then you are truly and spiritually in covenant, and the benefits are yours; and therefore the joy, and pleasure, and comfort thereof should be yours.

2. If you would find the pleasure of Wisdom's ways, then *abandon worldly pleasure*; and let not your heart be overwhelmed with worldly cares, or griefs, or troubles; you cannot find your delight in God, when you turn

turn from him to seek it in the creature. If you sought less for pleasure in friends, and health, and wealth, and prosperity in the world, you might have more in God. The flesh is ready to befool men into brutish conceits of the nature of happiness. You first fancy that it is an excellent thing to be rich, and renowned, and to rule others, and to have plenty of all accommodations for the flesh; and then, because God satisfies not these carnal fancies, you think he neglects you, or deals hardly with you: as if every person in a town should murmur because they are not provost, or bailies, or justices; whereas yet, if they had sense to know it, they are but kept from a double incumbrance, and from a burden that, perhaps, would break their backs. But when the flesh befools people into an over-valuing of these worldly things, they are then always tickled by deluding pleasures, or troubled for the crossing of their carnal wills; so that they grow out of conceit with, and have no suitable relish for the true and durable delights.

3. Take heed of *indulging yourself in any sin*; and keep still your watch against *temptation*; for sin will breed trouble and sorrow, instead of joy and pleasure. Sin is the cause of suffering: when it promises you delight, it but prepares you for sorrow; when it is flattering you into presumption, it is preparing you for despair; when it is promising you security, it is preparing you for trouble; and when it is promising you secrecy, it is preparing you for shame: and, *be sure sin will find you out*, some way or other, Numb. xxxii. 23. Therefore, when you have sinned, delay not to fly to Christ by faith and repentance. If you would thus get out the thorn that vexes you, Wisdom's way would be more pleasant to you. As you would not forfeit the pleasure of religion, leave the house, leave the company, the occasions that insnare you to sin; for, if you do not, your best resolutions and precautions will prove so weak, that the flesh will beguile you, and so rob you of your happiness and pleasure.

4. Use *cheerful company*; not *carnal*, but *holy*; not such as waste their time in unprofitable, vain, frothy speech,

speech, who are more employed in speaking ill of their neighbour, than in speaking good of Christ; and who seldom speak good of any but themselves; or, if they speak good of some, it is with a view to disparage others. Beware of the company of such as have only a carnal, idle, worldly conversation; but seek after the company of these that are most acquaint with the pleasures of religion, and whose chearful conversation does manifest their sense of the love of God, and the grace of Christ. Their is a delightful virtue in the converse of joyful Christians, and thankful heavenly believers; *As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend*, Prov. xxvii. 17.

5. Let your *prayers* be still attended with *praise*. When you address yourself to God, pore not only upon your wants, in order to prayer; but also upon your mercies, in order to praise; and let not thankful acknowledgments be forgotten. I would advise troubled and fearful souls to spend as much of their time and words in confessing their mercies, as in confessing their sins; and in praising God for what they have, as in praying to him for what they want: and you may find chearfulness of heart promoted by thankful expressions.—And I would advise you to the same thing with respect to your *thoughts*, namely, that you endeavour to spend as many thoughts upon grace and mercy, as upon sin and misery; as many thoughts upon the goodness and love of God in Christ, as upon his terrors and threatenings. Why will you study only your afflictions and your wants, while you live in a land that flows with milk and honey? Why will you still keep the gall and wormwood in your mouth? This is the way to lose both the benefit of affliction, and the pleasure of religion. Beware of cherishing any fears or sorrows, but such as are subservient to faith, hope, and love; and preparatory to thankfulness and joy: for religion consists not of any other kind of sorrow. Study above all things, the love of God revealed in Christ, which is the best attractive of your love to him: and hate all suggestions that would represent God as unlovely or undesirable to you.

6. If you would know the rest and pleasure of believers, seek to rest in the *will of God*, in all conditions. You cannot expect rest and pleasure while you seek only the fulfilling of your own will, and murmur at the disposal of the will of God. If you rest in your own wills, your rest will be disturbed and imperfect; but if you rest in God's will, then you will rest in constant peace and quietness. You pray that *his will may be done*; and if you acquiesce in the doing of his will, you shall find repose and heart-satisfaction, whatever befall you.—Subject yourselves to his *commanding* will in every duty; for the comforts of religion attend the exercises thereof, and are not to be expected in a way of sloth.—And submit to his *disposing* will; for, in this way, you will find your crosses turned to comforts, and your afflictions mixed with consolation; such as that, *fear not little flock*; for, as it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the cross, so *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*, and the crown; and, indeed, the fore-apprehension of this is matter of unspeakable joy: *We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*, Rom. v. 5. As the pleasure of the carnal consists in the sense of what they have in hand; so the pleasure of believers consists mostly in a sense or view of what they have in hope, or of what they shall enjoy with God for ever, and of their being *for ever with the Lord*.

7. Meditate much upon the *disadvantages* of not delighting and taking pleasure in the Lord. Why, little pleasure in the Lord argues little light and much darkness; and hence misapprehensions of God and his providences. Little pleasure in the Lord argues little life and strength, little faith and love, and little humility.

8. Meditate upon the *great advantages* of delight and pleasure in the Lord. Why, this pleasure is your holiness, your happiness, your heaven: it is the heaven of the church militant, the heaven of the church triumphant; the heaven and happiness of God to delight in himself. And the more pleasure you take in God, the more he takes in you, John xiv. 21.

9. Know and consider; that there is no such weight in your *objections* against this delight, as any whit can weaken your obligation thereunto. What are objections drawn from guilt, when you view Christ as your righteousness? What are objections drawn from your pollution, your darkness, your deadness, when you view Christ as your sanctification, your light, and your life.—And remember in what *cases* you are called to take pleasure in the Lord, even in these cases and seasons wherein you are ready to think your duty is to be discouraged.—When God is writing *bitterness* upon all other things; why does he imbitter the creature, but that you may delight in Christ? for then he is saying, *Come with me from Lebanon?* Song iv. 8.—When you are *disappointed* of your expectations from other things, from dear relations and enjoyments; perhaps from such a minister, such an ordinance; why, then you are to go a *little further*.—When under *despondency* and *discouragement*, fears and faintings of spirit; then you are to take pleasure in the Lord, and *hope in him*, Psal. xlii. 11. xliii. 5.—When you walk in *darkness*, and have no light; when you find a *restlessness* of spirit, and know not what to do; then he says, *Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*—When you come to a place where *two ways* meet, and know not *which hand* to turn to; then you are to take pleasure in him, saying, *I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*, Isa. xlii. 16.—When *troubles* and *afflictions* are swelling on every hand: even then you are called to delight in the Lord: when *deep calleth unto deep*, and *his waves and billows going over us*; yet then *the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his songs shall be with us*, Psal. xlii. 7, 8.—When the *world* is so *bad* that you know not whom to trust, or converse with; even in this case you are to delight in Christ, who is a trusty friend to whom you may tell all your mind; *He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.*—

*brother.*—When the world is turning *up side down*, and all things are turning out of course, nothing but a babel of confusion to be seen in the face of affairs in church or state; then is a time of delighting in the Lord, Psal. xlv. 1, 2, 3, 4—In all these, and a thousand such cases, you may find pleasure in Christ.

Take pleasure in this, that Christ is still the same, when other things bid an adieu. Take pleasure in this, that he is full: when emptiness is written upon all things else, there is an immense fulness in him. Take pleasure in this, that he is so free; so free-hearted to dispense of his fulness. Take pleasure in this, that he is unchangeable; though you change, and the world change, yet he is unchangeable in his love, unchangeable in his word, unchangeable in his covenant: *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.* Delight in this, that he is sympathizing; that *in all your afflictions, he is afflicted*; that he who *toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* Take pleasure in this, that he is so sweet as to sweeten all the waters of Marah to you: that he is so sib to you, so nearly related to you; your head, your husband, your elder brother, your shepherd, your friend, your physician, your *all in all*; and *bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh*, by virtue of the natural sibness between him and you; your Surety, by virtue of the legal sibness and oneness between him and you; and your life, by virtue of the mystical and spiritual union and relation to you: *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.*—These considerations may afford comfort in every case.

## S E R M O N C L I I .

Some SIGNS of a sad EVENING TIME  
with the CHURCH of GOD.

ZECH. xiv. 7.

*But it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.*

**A**S the whole scriptures testify of Christ, so this text testifies concerning the tenor of his dispensations towards his church and people, both in his providence and grace—There are two *but*s in the verse where our text lies; the one points at the *wise disposure*, the other at the *joyful issue* of God's procedure towards his church and people.

In the words themselves we observed, 1. The *saddest crosses* and *calamities* that befall the church and people of God in this world, represented under the metaphor of an *evening time*. 2. The *sweetest comforts* and *encouragements* that take place in their lot, represented under the metaphor of *light*. 3. The *season*, or *remarkable time* wherein this light breaks forth; it is at the *evening time*, when their hope is giving up the ghost. 4. You have the *infallible certainty* of this happy issue, *It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.*

These things we have formerly opened up †; our present

† These and other topics of discourse, were handled by our Author, in several excellent Sermons, at sacramental occasions, in the year 1723. The Publishers of the present edition would have been very happy to have been able to have favoured the public with the whole of these Sermons on this text; and used every means, in their power, with the relations of the Author to effect their design; but they are very sorry their endeavours were unsuccessful.—This one, being formerly published in the folio edition, as opposite to the then present times, it was judged proper still to continue it, as now still suitable.



present purpose is to evince, that the *present time* we live in is an *evening time*. We would have you attentively consider the *signs of the time*; and surely, if you do so, it will appear too evident, that it is an *evening time*, a *dark time*, an *evil time* with the church of God. And, to assist you herein, we would represent some of the SIGNS of an *evening time in the church*. And seeing the Spirit of God expresses the *sad case* of a people by an *evening time*, he hereby allows us to allude to the phrase in representing the same. The signs that we mention then shall be gathered from that allusion, so as they may be the better fixed upon your memories, when they are expressed by such things as are obvious to every body, who can distinguish between evening and morning.

Now, of these SIGNS there are two sorts. 1. Some that may be called *prognosticating* signs, shewing that a dark evening is approaching. 2. Some that may be called *promulgating* signs, shewing that the present time is an evening time.

1st, There are *prognosticating signs*, that not only shew forth much darkness present, but that a darker evening time is *hastening* on; such as these following.

1. It is a sign that bodes an evening time when the *shadows are waxing long*. While the sun is high, the shadows are short; but the lower the sun is, the longer the shadows are.—So here, my friends, it is a sign of an evening time coming upon the church, when *empty shadows* are growing long, and of more account than *substantial religion*. When a man's shadow is two or three times longer than himself, it says the sun is low, and the night is nigh. Is it not so in a spiritual sense, when professors have much more of the *form of godliness* than of the *power thereof*; more of the *shadow* of religion than the *substance* of it? Some, indeed, have not so much as the form or shadow of religion either in their families or closets; which saith that it is quite dark with them, and that they are destitute of the light of the knowledge of Christ: for, where there is no light, there is no shadow at all; all is black darkness there; or, they have a shadow of devotion, and no  
more,

more, or little more; which saith that the light they have is a declining light, and that a dark evening is coming on. When the church is in a thriving case, and the sun high in her firmament, the shadows of empty forms, superstitious ceremonies, and human inventions are cut short; yea, and cut off, as you know they were solemnly renounced and abjured among us, in our covenanting days: but when the shadows are turning long again, many standing up for them, and few appearing against them, but rather standing for nothing but mere shadows in the church of God, themselves have a name to live, but are dead; when this, I say, doth universally obtain, it bespeaks an evening time.

2. It is a sign that bodes an evening time, when *labourers are fast returning from their labour*. If you see those who labour in the field returning home from their work, you conclude that the evening time is at hand. So, when, in the church of God, many faithful labourers, in God's vineyard, are fast taken home to heaven, from their labour on earth, it is a sign that an evening time is approaching. As the removal of the *godly* in general is a prognosticating sign of an evening of judgment coming, they *being taken away from the evil to come*; so the removal of *eminent labourers* in God's vineyard in particular, bodes an evening time. When Lots are taken out of Sodom, it presages a shower of wrath. Methuselah was taken away the year before the flood; Ambrose was removed before the ruin of Italy; Luther before the wars of Germany; and many eminent labourers hath the Lord, of late, removed in this land, and from this country-side: we may only thence conclude, that when Noahs are taken into their arks, it betokens a deluge, and that God gathers his harvest before the winter storm, and calls home labourers before the dark night come on.

3. It is a sign that bodes an evening time, when *men begin generally to be heavy and sleepy headed*: for, as *they that sleep, sleep in the night*, saith the apostle; so, when men begin to fall a napping, it shews that the night is coming on.—Thus when *universal security*, and

*spiritual*

*spiritual sleep and slothfulness* begin to seize a church, it betokens a night of judgment approaching. We find all the virgins, both wise and foolish, to *slumber and sleep* before the *mid-night cry* was made. When people are saying, *Peace, peace; then sudden destruction cometh*. There are many symptoms of sleep and security about us; and we are not like to be awakened till the mid-night cry of the Lord's coming, in a way of judgment: neither will that cry awaken a secure generation, unless the Lord come powerfully with it. But,

4. It is a sign of an evening time a-coming, when *the dew begins to fall*. We find the Lord speaking to his sleeping church in these terms, Song v. 2. *Open to me, for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night*: intimating, what he suffered for her, even the dew and drops of the night of divine wrath and vengeance. Which, by the bye, is one of the grand motives why we ought to open our hearts to him, who exposed himself to the wrath of God for us. But now, I say, when the dew begins to fall, it betokens an evening time.—So, when the dew and drops of *God's judgments* begin to fall upon a church, it bodes a darker evening time approaching; especially if these lesser drops of judgment have not the proper effect upon them, to awaken and quicken, but they rather remain incorrigible: for, as a physician, when lesser potions will not work, prescribes a stronger; so, small judgments contemned, are harbengers to usher in greater: *If by these ye will not be reformed, saith the Lord; then will I punish you seven times more for your iniquities*. How many drops of the night have been falling, for sometime bygone, upon us, is evident to all that have their eyes open; yea, to common observers: not only the death of many gracious men, but also the great departure of the divine glory; the wide rent and division of the church; besides many temporal judgments, intestine flames, insurrections, sword, poverty, slavery: and more especially spiritual judgments; blindness of mind, hardness of heart, barrenness under the gospel, and innumerable drops of dew that have fallen; do not these prognosticate an evening time?

5. It is a sign of an evening time approaching, when the *air* (that was warm with the sun-beams through the day) *becomes exceeding cold*: when the sun being away, the air grows cold, it says the dark night is coming on.—Even so, when *iniquity abounds, the love of many waxeth cold*, Matth xxiv. 12. This coldness of Christian love to God and men, is a certain fore-runner of a darker evening time of calamity. Ephesus *fell from her first love, and the candlestick was taken out of its place*, Rev. ii. 4, 5. When Laodicea became *lukewarm, neither cold nor hot*, then God *spued her out of his mouth*; that is, rejected her with abhorrence. Perhaps there was never a colder air than that which the present generation breathes in: love to God and his people, zeal for God and his glory, that sometime ago warmed the breasts of Christians, is turned to such a cool of the evening, that the coldness of the air prognosticates a storm.

6. It is a sign of an evening time approaching when the *clouds and sky begin to grow ruddy and bloody*, as it were *tinctured with scarlet*: whatever fair days it may signify afterward, yet it is a sign of an evening, in the first place, to be at hand.—So, when *dry clouds*, by reflection of the sun-beams, cast a dash and make a fair appearance, and no more: I mean, when *hypocrisy* is universal, and professors are nothing but *clouds without water*, Jude ver. 12. having a glittering splendid outside, but empty and destitute of the Spirit; and when, at the same time, the great ones of the land, whether in church or state, that fly above others, like the clouds instead of being useful for watering those that are below them, are turned to nothing but red sky, bright empty nothings, having no moisture in them, no grace: and, indeed when the great ones of a land are given up of God, and become generally graceless, and destitute of religion, it is a symptom of an evening time of wrath. When king Saul is rejected of God, and runs to the devil, consulting with the witch of Endor; then he and Israel falls upon the mountain of Gilboa. When Zedekiah is given up, with his nobles, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and break covenant; then he  
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and his people are carried away captive to Babylon. When David was so far left destitute of the Spirit of God, that his heart was lifted up in pride to number the people; then a severe stroke from God lights upon Israel. Alas! when great men, nobility and gentry, are left of God, and turned sensual, not having the Spirit, what are they but so many ruddy glaring clouds, from whom God is withdrawing wholly; and so many bloody signs of a dark night coming on?

7. Another sign of an evening time is, when *hills and mountains begin to interpose between the sun and us*; when they begin to hide the body of the sun from us, then night comes on.—Even so, it is a symptom of an evening time hastening on a church, when mountains of *sin and guilt*, great mountains separate between God and us, between Christ, the Sun of righteousness, and his church. Who can study the circumstances of our day, and the abounding iniquities and profanities of all sorts, and among all ranks, without seeing good cause to justify the Lord's withdrawing his presence, and taking with the charge, Isa. lix. 20. *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you?* The hills are come between the sun and us, and night is approaching.

8. Another sign of an evening time is, when *the light is gradually declining and departing*.—So is it a symptom of an evening time coming on a church, when there is a *gradual departure of God's glory*. We read of the gradual removes of the glory of the Lord from the *cherub* to the *threshold of the house*, and there it stood, from thence to the *midst of the city*; and from thence to the *mountain*, Ezek. x. 4, 18. xi. 23. Shewing us, by how many steps and paces the Lord departs from a sinful people, as loth to go away; and waiting to see if any will interceed with him to return. The gradual departure of God's glory is a sign of a gradual approach of a sad evening time.

9. Another sign of an evening time approaching is, when *singing birds are silent, and give over their melodious notes*.—Now, you know, a lightsome time of the church is represented by a *time of singing of birds*, Song

ii, 12. So we say, it is a sign of a dark evening time at hand, when the singing birds begin to cease: I mean, when the sweet singers of Israel have lost their melody, and are out of court; being so far discouraged, that they are no more useful in the courts of Zion. When God discouraged old Eli, and would not speak to him but to young Samuel; then a night of wrath was near to Eli's family, to Hophni and Phinehas; yea, to the church of God: for presently the ark of God was taken, and left in the hands of the Philistines. When Solomon was discouraged; then a multitude of enemies brake in upon him and his people. When old professors are discouraged, singing birds silenced, and eminent servants, who have been useful through the day, are dismissed, as if there were no more use for them, it says that evening time is coming on. When God is saying, in his providence, to his old friends and favourites, that he hath no more to do with them in this world, their singing time on earth being over: when useful instruments are become unfavoury salt, having lost their usefulness, their favour, and their melody, it is a symptom that night is coming on, that the day-birds are drooping.

10. It is a sign that the evening time is coming, when, as the day-birds are either flying to their nests, or drooping and putting their bills under their wings, so *the night-birds are appearing and flying abroad*; when the morning birds are disappearing, and the evening birds, such as the bat and the owl, that cannot endure the light of the day, are discovering themselves, it is a sign that night is approaching.—So, Sirs, it is a sad symptom of a very dark night coming on a church, when not only, on the one hand, the *day-birds*, that sing sweetly in publishing the joyful sound, are either flying away to their heavenly nest; or, if any of them are left, as I hope many are, yet they are generally under some silencing kind of dark cloud or vail, that mars their melody and usefulness: but also, on the other hand, when the *night birds*, such as *hereticks* and *erroneous teachers*, are flying about, and discovering themselves. If it were a clear day in the church, such evening birds, that delight in the darkness of error, would not peep out of  
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their holes : but their appearing prognosticates a dark evening time ; for a deluge of errors brings on a deluge of wrath, 2 Theff. ii. 10, 11, 12. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Surely no error is more damnable and pernicious, than that of *denying the Lord that bought them* ; and casting a cloud upon the supreme Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ : this black cloud of Arianism, is one of the blackest that ever covered the gospel church ; and yet, besides this, many other clouds of error have darkened our sky. However, *errors and heresies must needs be*, saith the Spirit of God, *that those that are approved may be made manifest* : and they must be also, that approved truth may shine forth the more brightly, when it breaks out from beneath the dark cloud of error.

11. It is a sign of an evening time at hand, when *men are generally tired with the toil, and wearied with the work of the day*.—So, it is a sign of an evening on a church, when the generality therein are saying of the service of God, and work of the day, *What a weariness is it ?* When people are weary of *Christ and his yoke*, weary of the *true religion*, &c. it shews that God is weary of them ; that God and they are not to keep company long together ; or that some heavier yoke is to be laid upon their neck, to make them long for, and take the better with his light and easy yoke.—This weariness of God's service is evident from the general *atheism and infidelity* of the day ; men saying to the Almighty, *Depart from us ; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways : what is the Almighty that we should serve him ?* Job. xxi. 14, 15.—It is evident from the *stop that is put to reformation*, which proves but an abortive child, it flicks in the birth, or rather goes backward, and draws in its hand ; which says that the child of wrath is to be brought forth before the child of mercy ; I allude to that history, Gen. xxxviii. 27.—It is evident from this, that there is *none to stand in the gap*, at which wrath enters in, Ezek. xxii. 30, 31. When men are generally weary of prayer, the gap is open, and judgments ready to come in. And sometimes people are so weary of God, and so ripe for a stroke, that though there were a praying and wrestling remnant busy in their behalf, it would

not avail. Sin may be come to such a height, and the rectitude of God's equity and justice may be so much concerned to punish it, in a church or nation, that the most powerful intercession of men cannot prevail, Jer. xiv. 1. There is a time when prayers and pleadings will not profit a people; yea, when there is no physic operative, Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

12. It is a sign of an evening time approaching, when *the light becomes uneasy*, and *windows become useless* for letting in the light; and when men close the window-shutters to exclude any light that is shining: this you know is ordinary when the night is coming on.—Even so, Sirs, it is a sad sign of an approaching dark night in the church of God, when the *light of the gospel* becomes uneasy to men, when they prefer the darkness of ignorance, to the light of knowledge; and the darkness of error, to the light of truth; the darkness of legal notions, to the light of gospel mysteries, John iii. 19. Gospel ordinances are compared to *windows* for letting in the light, Song ii. 9. Now when these become useless for this end, and the gospel becomes under a general contempt, it is a sad symptom of night coming on, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16. Jerusalem had a signal day of the gospel; but she fell a *stoning the prophets*, and did not know the time of her merciful visitation; therefore *wrath came upon them to the uttermost*; and, *behold her house is left unto her desolate*. We have our gospel-day; and the time has been when the gospel was highly prized and valued: but possibly thirty or forty years possession of the gospel has given many people a fill of it, so as they lothe the heavenly manna: it is become light food and unfavoury to the most part: any thing in the world tastes better, in their mouth, than the waters of sanctuary. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not*; yea, the darkness shuts out the light, or at the same time *holds the truth in unrighteousness*, Rom, i. 18.

2dly, There are *promulgating signs*, shewing that the present time is an evening time. Many of these things that I have mentioned, not only declare, that it is an evening time, but they are also prognostications of a darker



darker evening approaching. And as I have not gone out of my Bible to prophesy of what is to come; so neither need I go far off to find signs and evidences that the time we live in is, indeed, an evening time, in many respects: and while I offer these marks of an evening time, you may, and ought to try yourselves whether it be a dark night with you, as well as with the church of God in general, that so you may the more deeply regret the darkness of your condition, and more vigorously apply to Christ the fountain of light, that at evening time he would make light to shine.—The signs of an evening time at present are many: we shall mention these following, still alluding to the metaphor that the Spirit of God makes use of.

1. It is a sad sign of a present evening time, when *the stars only appear and the sun disappears*; when nothing but stars appear in the firmament. Now, ministers of the gospel are compared to *stars* that borrow their light from the sun; they are called *stars in his right-hand*: but Christ himself is the *Sun of righteousness*.—Now, is it not an evidence that it is evening time, when the light of the sun, the glory of Christ, cannot be seen, and only the star light appears? And when there is no more but an outward objective light of a gospel-ministry, without an internal subjective light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ? And when people are gazing only upon the stars; looking meerly to instruments, and taken up with them, without looking to Christ himself?

2. It is a sad sign of an evening time, when that which is called the *falling of stars* is discernable.—And is it not an evening time with the church, when the stars are seen to fall, as it were, *from heaven to earth*; when those who were eminent ministers and professors are making apostasy from the faith; and when they are observed to make *shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience*; when the *dragon is pulling down the stars with his tail*, and *sons of the morning falling to the ground*? Surely a time of apostasy and defection is so.

3. It is a sign of an evening time, when *wild fire casts a dash*, and *false lights* are followed, fancied, and confided in.—And is it not a dark evening time, in a spiritual sense, when the light of *wild nature*, the light of human wisdom and carnal reason are taking the place of spiritual, scriptural, and gospel light; and when men are following blind guides, false lights, that are ready to lead them into the ditch; and especially when men are confiding in their own light? There is not a greater sign of mens being in the dark night of a natural state, without saving light, than when they are confident of their own knowledge, and see not their own blindness and darkness, John iii. 39, 40, 41. To this purpose see 1 Cor. iii. 18. viii. 2.

4. It is a sign that it is an evening time, when *artificial light* comes to be in most request; such as that of candles, torches, and lamps, instead of day-light and sun light.—Even so, it is an evening time in the church, when, instead of the *simplicity of the gospel*, and the plain preaching of the word of God, preference is given to the *wisdom of words* and of *human literature*. When, on the one hand, candidates for the ministry, and many who are actually invested with the ministerial function, though tinged with loose and legal principles, set up for a new modish way of preaching, with flourishing harangues, without studying to preach Christ, and the great substantial truths of the gospel; but rather empty speculation, and lifeless morality: and, on the other hand, when a world of people, that come under the name of wits, and people of a fine taste, are pleased with no sermons, but such as are artificially decked with the flowers of gaudy rhetoric and tickling oratory; and when this comes to be universally preferred to plain, powerful, and spiritual preaching, quite cross to the apostle Paul's way, notwithstanding of his great attainments in human literature and acquired abilities, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 4. Now, when these artificial lights are set up and esteemed, as the only light in request, it speaks a dark state of the church; and especially the gross darkness they are in that please themselves with candles of that sort, instead of the *true light*, John i. 9.

5. It is a sign of an evening time, when *darkness obstructs the light, hinders discerning, and occasions many mistakes*, Isa. v. 20.—Thus it shews an evening time in the church in general, when gross darkness of *ignorance* covers them, and when the face of the covering remains, infomuch that there is no discerning between good and evil, truth and error; and when the generality are running into mistakes. How easily are men cheated in the dark, having bad wares put into their hands? They vent falsities, instead of truths; formalities, instead of holiness; and put off any thing to men in the dark: and the deceitfulness of sin rules over men, because they are in a state of darkness, and destitute of spiritual discerning, infomuch that they cannot *receive the things of the Spirit of God*, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

6. It is a sign of an evening time, when *day-work is laid aside, and night-work is at hand*.—Even so, is it not an evening time with people when the *works of darkness* are generally practised? What these works of darkness are, you may gather from Rom. xiii. 12, 13. See Job xxiv. 17. Surely when professors turn profane, and works of darkness generally practised, then it is an evening time. A sinning time is always a dark time: profanity is the daughter of obscurity. Darkness and ignorance of God in Christ, is the root of all wickedness and ungodliness.

7. It is a sign of an evening time, when *men are generally wandering out of the way*; for people wander in the dark.—Even so, is it not an evening time in the church, and with the generality, when not only *works of darkness* are practised, by men's doing what is evil; but also *duties of piety* are neglected and omitted, by mens wandering out of the good way; and no wonder that men break God's commands by commission, when they wander from him by omission. But what makes wandering, but darkness and want of understanding, which is a deadly sin? Prov. xxi. 16.

8. It is a sign of an evening time, when *stumbling becomes universal*; for, as people wander in the dark, so they stumble in the dark.—Alas! what a sad evidence of an evening time, in a spiritual sense, when  
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men are stumbling on *every stone* in their way, and running over dangerous precipices unawares; and especially when Christ himself is become a *stumbling stone*, Rom. ix. 32, 33. O! they are in dreadful darkness that are stumbling on the rock of ages, on which they should be building! Why, say you, *who are they that stumble upon Christ, instead of building on him?* Why, even they that, like the Jews, have a *zeal of God, but not according to the knowledge, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 2, 3. Where you see the darkness of ignorance they were compassed with, was the cause of their stumbling. They were not ignorant of *God's law*; nay, they were *zealous* for that: but they were ignorant of *God's righteousness*, revealed in the gospel, that is, of Christ as *the end of the law for righteousness*: and hence they stumbled in the dark. Many are much enlightened in the knowledge of the law, and heated also with a zeal for the law of God; and yet are in the dark night of gross ignorance of Christ and God's righteousness: and so they stumble in the dark and fall into perdition.

9. It is a sad sign of an evening time, when *all is hushed in silence, and the house kept in profound peace*: for, in the day time there is still some noise about the house; but in the night time there is nothing, for ordinary, but undisturbed peace and tranquility.—Even so, it is a sign that it is the dark and dead hour of the night with people, when their *hearts are resting in the beds of carnal ease and peace*: it says that the devil is lulling them asleep in the bed of security; *When the strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace*, Luke xi. 21. Some are ready to think, God be thanked I was never disturbed by the devil: Yea, but man, why doth he not disturb you? The reason is, because he is sure enough of you: but if you were *resisting him*, he would give you little peace; he would set all the powers of hell on your top. But when all is hushed into a hellish peace, it is a black evening time: thus many say, *We shall have peace though we add drunkenness to thirst*.

10. It is a plain sign of an evening time; yea, that it is mid-night with them, when *all their doors are barred and bolted*, and when *no knocks are heard or answered*, so as to procure an opening of the door: this is the case that frequently occurs in the night time.—And now, is it not a sad evidence, that it is an evening time; yea, a midnight time with a multitude in the visible church, when the *doors of their hearts are fast shut against Christ*; and though he *stand at the door and knock*, Rev. iii. 20. yet they do not hear, answer, and open to him? When sinners knock at his door, he is still ready to open, according to his word, *To him that knocketh, it shall be opened*: but when he knocks at the sinner's door, he may knock a thousand times, and never be heard and answered. Many a knock hath he given, and still is giving, at the door of this generation.—He knocks by his word of *command*, Heb. iii. 7, 8. Eph. v. 14. 1 John iii. 23.; by his word of *threatening*, John viii. 24. Luke xiii. 3. Mark xvi. 16.; by his word of *promise* and kindly *invitation*, Mat. xi. 28. John vi. 35. viii. 38; by his word of *expostulation*, reasoning the matter, Ezek. xxx. 11.; by his word of *complaint*, John v. 4.; and by his word of *counsel*, Rev. iii. 18.—Again, he knocks by his Spirit, by conscience, by afflictions, by common mercies, by judgments, by the good examples and counsels of others, and foretastes of love.

11. It is a sign that it is an evening time, when *the moon is risen*, and *risen high*: for, you know, as it is a sign the sun is setting, when the moon is risen; so, for ordinary, the higher the moon is risen, the farther on is the night, and the farther off is the sun. When the moon is up, the sun is down.—Now, as CHRIST is compared to the *sun*, and this WORLD to the *moon*, so, when it is day light with the church of God, their splendor is described by their being *clothed with the sun, and having the moon under their feet*, Rev. xii. 1. And as it is a day time of spiritual light with a person or people, when they have the sun above their head, and the moon under their feet: so it is a night-time of *spiritual*

*darkness* with a person or people, when they have the moon above their head, and the sun under their feet; when mens affections are set wholly upon this changeable world, this mutable moon: when the world is uppermost in their heart, Christ is downmost. Are not then the worldly hearts, worldly affections, worldly mindedness of people, *who only mind earthly things*, an evidence that they are darkness? Some by the *moon* in Rev. xii. 1. understand the moon of *self-righteousness*: and it holds thus also, that when men, instead of being clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and having the moon of self-righteousness under their feet, are clothed with the moon, the spotted moon of their own righteousness; then they have the Sun of righteousness under their feet. They are trampling on Christ and his righteousness, while they are exalting themselves and their own righteousness, extolling the law of works, and not knowing that they are thus crying down Christ, *the end of the law for righteousness*, in whom only we have *righteousness and strength*.

12. It is a sign that it is an evening time, when *looking-glasses* are of no use; and when, by reason of darkness, men can make no use or improvement either of a *mirror*, for seeing themselves; or of a *prospect*, for seeing other things.—So, it is a sign of a very dark night, an evening time of gross darkness, when *God's two glasses* are of no use; I mean, neither *law* nor *gospel*: when people can neither see themselves in the glass of the law, as Paul did, Rom. vii. 9.; and also when they cannot see Christ, and the glory of God in him, in the glass of the gospel, as Paul and others did, 2 Cor. iii. 18. But it is a time of darkness with the church, and with particular souls, and a sad evidence, a certain sign of their total want of saving light, when the law is unserviceable for discovering their sinful nature, hearts, and lives; and the gospel unserviceable for discovering the glory of God, in the method of salvation through Christ: when they are neither convinced of sin and misery, by the Spirit opening the command, and applying the threatening of the law; nor convinced of righteousness and

and judgment, by the Spirit coming as a *Spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness.*

Now, tell me, after you have heard these *signs of an evening time*, if there be not much matter and ground of deep regret and lamentation over the present time? Are not the generality in the visible church; yea, the most part here, under gross darkness? Is it not a black evening with you, man; with you, woman? If God would convince you by these signs of it, you would see that you are enveloped and surrounded with the clouds and thick darkness of hell; and see your need to cry, *Lord, enlighten; Lord, send forth thy light and truth.*

## S E R M O N    C L I I I .

GOSPEL-HEARERS have a firm Ground for  
FAITH and HOPE in the Worst of Times.\*

ROM. iv. 18.

*Who against hope, believed in hope.*

**T**H E R E is always need of *faith*, and of a *strong* faith, and especially in days of trials and troubles. Such was the faith of the Patriarch Abraham, as you see in this chapter, particularly in the context. Here his faith is commended. We are told particularly in *whom* he believed, and *how* he believed.

1. In *whom* he believed, you see, in the preceding verse, that it was GOD, even the GOD that *quickneth the dead*, and that *calleth the things that be not as though they were*, ver. 17.

There was difficulty in Abraham's way with reference to believing what God had promised him, namely, in giving an Isaac, a son to him; and to Sarah in her old decayed years. Now, his faith looks to a God that promised, as a God that *quickens the dead*, and *calls the things that be not as though they were*; and really his faith needed such an object and foundation as this. And, indeed, such is the art and policy of faith, that it gripes to that in God which suits the particular difficulties of the soul. But as we are told in *whom* he believed; so, we are told *how* he believed, particularly in the text, and the following verses also. O! how did he believe? why, *against hope, he believed in hope*;  
as

\* This Subject was opened up in two Discourses at a sacramental Occasion at Orwel, on the Saturday and Sabbath, the 5th and 6th of August, 1738. They were never before printed.



as it follows, ver. 20. *He staggered not at the promise of God, but was strong in the faith, as being fully persuaded, that God was able to raise him from the dead.*

Here, in the words that I have read, we have a sum of the ways how he believed: *he against hope, believed in hope; and so became the father of many nations; the father of the faithful, as he is called, even as some think Eve is called the mother of all the faithful, the mother of all living; being the mother of all that believe on Jesus Christ.*

But, I go on to consider the text. I need not divide it; it is divided to my hand: I may say it is divided against itself. Here is *hope AGAINST hope*; here is natural hope against spiritual hope: *who against hope, believed in hope.* Abraham, in his present case, had nothing from sense, or carnal reason, to support his hope of having a son, or that the promise should be accomplished; all things from sense and reason seemed to speak against it. Well, but *against hope, he believed in hope.* There is a nick in religion, Sirs, that we need to know and understand; here is hope, and it seems to be, as it were, upon the gulph of despair, when there is nothing without, but ground of despair against hope believing in hope.

For understanding of the words further, we may remark these two or three things concerning the patriarch Abraham.

1. I remark, that Abraham had heard the gospel; the gospel was preached to him: Gal. iii. 8. *The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying. In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed. Of thee shall come an Isaac, and of him shall come the Messiah; so in thee shall all nations be blessed.*

2. I remark, that as Abraham heard the gospel, so he believed the gospel: Rom. iv. 4. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.* He was a believer, and a strong believer.

3. I remark, that between the time of the promise made to Abraham. and the accomplishment of it, there was a considerable time, and many difficulties interveened.

Hence

Hence we read in the following verses here, of the *deadness* of Abraham's body, and *bareness* of Sarah's womb.

4. I remark, that those great difficulties, lying in the way, gave occasion to discover the *strength* of Abraham's faith: So we are told here, that *he staggered not at the promise; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God.* And we will find, after the having of the promise of an Isaac accomplished to him, in that instance repeated to us, Heb. ii. 17, 18, 19. where we, have a short account of Abraham's offering up of Isaac by faith: *Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises, offered up his only begotten Son; of whom it is said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.* How did Abraham receive him from the dead in a figure? He did it, in regard he received him as the promise of God: he received him from the dead, in as much as he received him by means of Abraham's dead body, and Sarah's dead womb, out of the hands of that God that *quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were:* and so *against hope he believed in hope.*

The Doctrine natively arising from the words is the following,

*That unto those that hear the gospel of a promising God in Christ, there is a firm ground for faith and hope, in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases.*

In speaking to this proposition, I would, through divine aid, essay the four following things.

- I. I would illustrate the doctrine in a few remarks.
- II. I would enquire into the *nature* of this faith and hope, that is here spoken of.
- III. I would notice some of the *hopeless* and *desperate-like cases* that may take place, and yet a firm ground for faith and hope remain.

IV. I

IV. I would enquire what *ground* there is for faith and hope in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. And then,

V. Deduce some *inferences* for application.

I. I would *clear* and *illustrate* the doctrine in a few remarks. And,

1. I remark, that although all these are true believers, who against hope believe in hope; yet there is a *foundation* for faith and hope to all the Lord's people; yea, there is a foundation for faith and hope in the everlasting gospel: the gospel opens a door of hope; it publishes and presents Christ to us, who is the sum of all the promises of the covenant, and of the blessings thereof; and sinners are called to come to this Jesus, and believe in him: it is the command of God that we do so. But, again,

2. I remark, that although the dispensation of the gospel contains many calls, invitations, and promises; yet I look upon the promises to be the *ornament* of that dispensation. Hence we have the gospel called a *promise*, in the text formerly read, Gal. iii. 8. *He preached the gospel to Abraham; what is the gospel? In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.* The promises, and the revelation of grace, are the proper object of faith: and as faith believes the promise, so hope expects the first fruits thereof.

3. I remark, that the promises of the covenant are calculated for the various *cases* and *conditions* of sinners that hear the gospel. Hence we have promises of conversion, promises of the new heart and spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 23. yea, there are promises of salvation, and of the means as well as the end: *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and will not turn away from doing of them good. I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.* The promises are absolutely and indefinitely dispensed, in the everlasting gospel, to poor sinners. Some of them indeed run in a conditional form, as if persons were to expect such and such blessings, upon such and such conditions. But, as many divines express it, all conditional promises are radically absolute.

absolute. Because what is exprest, in one part of the gospel, as conditional, is absolutely promised in another part thereof.

Now, these absolute promises answer the pinches of the awakened sinner, when he finds all he needs is promised, and is in the hands of the promiser, even God. And these promises are absolutely dispensed in the gospel, that sinners may see their salvation is of grace; and that they may see the promise is of grace; and that it is of grace to take the promise, and to see that all things relating to the great salvation are of grace. But,

4. I remark, that it is not the *providence* of God, but the *promise* of God that is the rule of faith. Many stagger at the promise, through unbelief, because they mistake in this matter, and regulate their faith and unbelief, by the providence of God, and the aspect thereof. If providence be favourable, they think they may believe; but under frowning providences, when providence seems to contradict the promise, then they cry out, O! who can believe them? But, Sirs, we are to look on the providences of God as in the *hand* of Christ, and we are to look on the promises of God as in the *heart* of Christ: I say, the reins of providence are in his hand, and he draws these reins up and down, as in infinite wisdom he pleases. O! but the promises are in his heart; they are the expressions of his heart-love, and good-will to poor sinners: and therefore we ought to believe, that he will never suffer his providences to give the lie to his promises, whatever way we may reckon through our unbelieving hearts. O! Sirs, we cannot read the providences of God, or see the mysterious steps thereof: but, if we would conceive aright of God, we are to look into his heart. Where will we see his heart? Why, whatever way he turn his hand, his promise is in his heart, and his heart is in the promise; and he will never let his hand rule against his heart; no: he will bring all providences to work together in the promise in the issue: *all things shall work together for good to them that love God.* We are to trust in the promise of God, whatever be the aspect of providence; and so believe in a promising God, and rest

rest in his word : and this is the way to find all his providences answering our purpose in the issue. For the Lord often sees fit, Sirs, by cross-like providences, to bring about his counsels : he takes these sovereing steps, and shews the majesty of his grace, in steping over mountains of difficulty and mountains of impossibilities, to shew that it is like himself that he works. But we are to leave the bringing about of his promise to himself, and rest in his word ; and *against hope, to believe in hope.* Again,

5. I remark, that this way of believing *against hope*, believing *in hope* is exemplified by many others in scripture, besides the example of Abraham. We have the example of Job, saying, *Though he be actually slaying me by his providences, yet will I trust in him,* Job xiii. 8. We have also the example of David, saying, *At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee :* and the parallel case you have of David, 2 Sam. ii. 5. *Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure.* Thus we find it exemplified in Habakkuk, chap iii. 17. *Altho' the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit grow on the vines ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* And also this may be seen in the notable woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 22,—28. who, over the belly of all discouragements laid in her way, yet, *against hope she believed in hope.* But I proceed to the

II. Thing proposed, namely to speak of this *faith* and *hope.* And here I shall, 1. Enquire what faith is ; 2. What hope is ; 3. How these two graces agree ; and 4. How they differ. A short word to each of these.

1. To the first, what *faith is.* I shall speak a short word of it, as it relates to the promises, the subject. It is a cordial assent to the divine promises ; it is a divine cordial assent to the divine testimony of God, saying in effect as the apostle did, 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.* This cordial assent includes in it, an approbation of the way

and method of salvation, through Jesus Christ, as a way that redounds to the honour and glory of all the divine attributes, as well as a way to secure our eternal life and happiness. And not only does it include in it an approbation of it; but a particular appropriation of the promise to ourselves. Faith, Sirs, as it is described in our Shorter Catechism, is just the soul saying, I receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation to me: he is offered to me in the gospel, and I receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to me, and promised to me. Whence, Sirs, I would have you to remark, though the last clause is the last mentioned, yet it takes first place; the assent of the soul in a day of power: that Christ in the gospel is offered to many in the promise, here is a promise to me, says the poor soul; here is a Saviour for me; here is wisdom for foolish me; here is a righteousness for me; here is sanctification for polluted me; here is redemption for miserable me: O! here is an help meet for me; here is a promise for me, in it I see Christ offered to me, and here upon I take him. It is just like a marriage bond: before the bride take the man's hand, she is persuaded he has made love over to her, and is joining himself to her; and thereupon she takes him: So it is here; call it as you will, assurance or persuasion; the soul says, here is a Christ offering himself to me; to be a head to me; to be a husband to me; to be all for me; to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption to me. I see him offering himself to me; so I take him, and rest upon him alone as he is offered to me, and for me. There is a cordial *assent* that goes before the *consent*, or receiving of Christ.

2. I come to enquire what *hope* is. Hope, Sirs, another grace of the Spirit of God, whereby the soul has a believing expectation of the good things contained in the promise. I call it a *believing expectation*, because there is no hope without faith. Many say they hope in God; but it is false, if they never believed in God, they that never had true faith, never had true hope. Hope is a believing expectation; the believer is an expectant of some good thing, as no evil thing can be the object

object of hope. So it is the good things contained in the covenant of promise, which is the object of hope. Sirs, there was a promise of life made to Adam; and, upon his performing perfect obedience, he might have obtained that life promised. Well, but he failed in the condition, and so there was no life nor hope by that covenant. But there is another covenant of promise in Christ Jesus; and we may hope for all things thereby, because the condition is performed, by the obedience and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, he having payed the debt we owed; not only so, but the penalty that we incurred being satisfied, so we have a new hope coming, running in this channel to us; and we cannot have the hope of eternal life, upon any other ground. This is the hope here spoken of: It is not an old, but a new covenant hope. Many have nothing but an old covenant hope, hoping if we do the best we can, God will do his best to us. O man! what for a hope is this? it is just an old-covenant hope. But this hope, Sirs, that is the hope of the gospel, it is a new-covenant hope. The hope that we speak of is a hope grounded upon the obedience and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and upon the promise of Jesus Christ. It is a new hope, and a holy hope. The old-covenant hope, Sirs, persons may have it, and yet remain dead in their sins. The old hope never quickens them. Well, but this new and lively hope, quickens the soul to run in the way of God's commandments, in hope of that rest that remains for the people of God. O Sirs, this hope quickens him of being ever with the Lord, and being like him, and seeing him as he is. It quickens their desire to be purified: *He that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* O, it quickens his desire of being more and more like unto the Lord. This hope is a firm, fixing hope: it is the anchor of the soul. The man that has the old hope, is never fixed at all; he wavers like a wave of the sea, that hath no foundation at all. The true child of God may be said to waver, but not like a wave of the sea, but like a ship at anchor: the wind may toss him hither and thither; yea, but his anchor is fixed within the veil.

3. The third thing proposed, was to point out, how faith and hope agree. (1.) Faith and hope agree as *sister graces*; they are twins; they are twins born together, and bred together, and nourished together. (2.) They agree in their *instrumental* cause; the word is the cause of both: as *faith comes by hearing*; so *hope comes by hearing*; by hearing of the resurrection of Christ, we are begotten into a *new and lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. (3.) As they agree in their *instrumental*, so they agree in their *efficient* cause: as God is the *anchor of faith*, Heb. xii. 2.; so he is the author of hope: and therefore he is called *the God of hope*, Rom. xv. 13. (4.) Faith and hope agree in their *usefulness*: as the believer *lives by faith*; so he *lives by hope*: as there is a confidence of faith; so there is a confidence of hope. But,

4. The main question is, how faith and hope differ: (1.) Faith and hope differ in their *order*: faith is first in order before hope; we first believe the promise, before hope; we first believe the promise, before we can hope for the accomplishment of the promise to us. (2.) They differ in their *office*: the office of faith is to *believe*; but the office of hope is to *expect* what we believe. The office of faith is to *direct*; by making known the way; but the office of hope is to *excite* and *encourage* the person in the way. (3.) They differ in their *subject*: the subject where faith dwells is the *understanding* properly; but the subject of hope is the *will*: though the will goes along in believing, yet the proper subject of faith is in the understanding. If this were considered, we would see more how faith differs from works; how it is opposite to works; and that we are not justified by works, but by what God has done, and what God will do through Jesus Christ. (4.) Faith and hope differ in their *object*: the object of faith is properly the *promise*; but the object of hope is the *good thing* promised; the object of faith is the *truth* of the promise; but the object of hope is the *good* of the promise; it is that which faith expects the truth of: or, the promise is like a messenger from a king, to a favoured person, telling him he is a coming. The man receives the messenger; and then he goes out to meet the prince:

So,



So, the promise is the messenger, telling the King of glory is coming; and faith is receiving the messenger; and hope goes out to meet the prince, waiting patiently for the accomplishment of the promise. What the man believes, he is said patiently to wait for.—In a word, as to the difference in their object: The object of faith is not only things that are future, but the things that are past, present, and to come: But the object of hope is only things that are future. In a word, faith looks to the promise as the egg; but hope looks for virtue to be hatched out of that egg.—Here we may see some differences between faith and hope. But I go on,

III. To the third general head, Which was to enquire a little into some of the *hopeless* and *desperate-like cases* that may take place; and yet a firm ground remain for faith and hope. It is not possible to mention them all: I shall only name a few,

1. One thing that unbelief makes a handle of, and makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is, that as the *object* of faith cannot be seen; so we are called to *believe* what we cannot see. It is very true, when outward providences favour not the man's faith, then he thinks he should not hope: but, Sirs, if ye make sight or sense the ground of your faith, you will never believe nor hope either. The foundation of faith and hope are things that are invisible: we can only endure as seeing him that is invisible, 1 Cor. iv. 18. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*

2. Another hopeless and desperate case is, with reference unto the *contrariety* that lies in the way of believing the promise: not only are there no outward providences to favour the man's belief; but there are many things contrary to the promise. So it was in Abraham's case here. As there was no appearance of Abraham and Sarah to have a son; so there was appearance to the contrary: there was nothing to be viewed, by sense and reason, but the deadness of their bodies: his faith had that to look through. Well, but he looked to God, as a God that *quickeneth the dead*, and cal-

leth the things that are not as though they were. Many a time this is the case with the poor soul, in believing the promises. O! how hard is it to believe the promises? I think, says the poor soul, they are against me, I have essayed to believe the promises; but I find the quite contrary of what I believed. I believed there was a promise of purity; and instead of that, I find impurity taking place in my heart, and nothing but impurity. There was a promise of liberty that I believed; and I find bondage instead of liberty. There was a promise of beauty; but I find blackness instead of beauty. There was a promise of life made to me; but I find deadness instead of life. Why then, what must you do? Indeed there is no way of doing, but against hope: believing in hope against things that contradict the promise, and seem quite contrary to it.

3. Another thing that is an handle to unbelief, and makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is, the *time* that *intervens* between the promise and the accomplishment of the promise. May be some soul has laid hold on the promise; but the promise is not like to be accomplished: and may be there are many here, that have gotten a promise, long since, and have been caused to hope upon it, for twenty or thirty years; yes, but the accomplishment is delayed; and some may reckon they are never accomplished to this day; O, says the poor soul, I do not find the thing accomplished that I expected: I do not find that communion with God, or conformity to Christ, I expected; and that it is a handle that unbelief makes use of. O the time is long! O when will he come! But, O Sirs, beware of limiting the holy One of Israel. At last the reason will speak; therefore against all these believe; against hope believing in hope. But again,

4. Another thing that makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is with reference to the *way* and *manner* of the accomplishment of the promises. O says unbelief, I do not see how it can be accomplished; how such a thing can take place. O Sirs, that is another way of limiting the holy One of Israel; as to the time, so as to the manner; you say on the matter,

*Can*

*Can the Lord give us flesh in the wilderness? We find the Lord's people challenged for this. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding, Isa. xl. 27, 28.*

5. Another thing, that makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is, the present *aspect* of providence; and particularly providences crossing the promises. As in the case of David, he got a promise of being brought to the kingdom; but instead of it being accomplished, we find nothing but a track of cross providences in the way. He is hunted like a partridge in the wilderness; and says, that one day or other I shall fall by the hand of Saul. So it may be with his spiritual case, Psal. lxxviii. 8, 9. *Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? will his promise fail for evermore?*

6. Another case, that seems to be hopeless and desperate-like, is, when not only the promise and the providence of God seem to clash together; but when the *promise* and the *precept*, seem to clash together; when we are called to perform a duty that seems cross to the promise of God.—We have an instance of this in Abraham; he is called to sacrifice Isaac; there is a command, that is cross to a command; not only cross to that command, *Thou shalt not kill*, but cross to the promise, *In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*. The church's Saviour was to come of Isaac; so to cut the throat of Isaac, was like a cutting the throat of the whole church of God at once. Here is a difficulty indeed, that nothing could do but this, *faith against hope, believed in hope*.—Another instance is of Gideon, Judg. viii. when he is ordered to fight against the Midianites, which were like grasshoppers upon the face of the earth, innumerable. Gideon has an army of thirty-two thousand men; well, Gideon is commanded to reduce this army to a far lesser number to thirty, and then he is ordered to fight the battle with these Midianites: might not Gideon say, O! how shall I justify this conduct before

fore the world ? it seems quite contrary to the rules of reason and prudence, as well as religion ? has not the Lord ordered his battles to be fought by usual means ? Faith has sometimes the like of these things to grapple with, that cannot be answered but by believing the word of God, and *against hope, believing in hope*. What ! shall David, a stripling, go out against Goliath ? or, shall the walls of Jericho be thrown down with the sound of rams horns ? or shall a small handful of men stand up against a whole nation, in a way of national reformation ? Indeed, there is no way of believing this, but *against hope, believing in hope*.

7. Another hopeless-like case, is, when any *fair beginning* meets with a *sudden stop* ; fair beginnings, whether of the conviction of the heart, or the reformation of the kirk, when they meet with a sudden stop, O ! how trying is this to faith ? We find the building of the house of God begun, and then a stop put to it, as you read in the books of Esther and Nehemiah. Many a time the Lord has begun a good work in a person's heart, and considerable opposition casten up. Is that to hinder faith ? no : but to make us learn, *against hope, to believe in hope*. And to believe that God, when he comes to build up Zion, he will appear in his glory. Why does he not appear in his glory, when there is so much rubbish to be taken out of the way ; so many mountains to be taken out of the way, that must be removed by the hand of our Zerobabel ? his hand laid the foundation of the house, and his hand must also carry it on, and finish it. But again,

8. Another hopeless-like case that seems to say, O where can faith or hope have a footing, when the person's case hath nothing but the *image of death* upon it ? Why, Sirs, this is the case of the most of all them that hear the gospel ; as all are dead in trespasses and sins, therefore they ought to believe that he is a God that *quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were*. And those that are quickened by grace, they are persons for the most part that find their deadness most, and find more and more need of quickening

ening grace ; this is the case of the most part of the Lord's people, that there is nothing but the image of death on their case ; and how then can there be hope ? Why, *against hope, we are to believe in hope* : to look to that God, who says in the xxxviii<sup>th</sup> of Ezek. ver 3,—12. *Can these dry bones live ? Can the house of Israel live, who are saying, We are cut off for our part ?* Therefore the promise is to them ; *Thus saith the Lord, O my people, I will cause you come up out of your graves.* Sometimes the case of the church, and her relief, is represented by a resurrection ; thereby faith and hope, Sirs. We may expect strange things, Sirs, of this world at the last day. The raising of the soul from spiritual death, is remarkable ; but the raising of the dead will be more remarkable. An instance of this you have Mark v. 35. there comes a man to Jesus, to come and lay his hand on his daughter ; in the mean time the maid dies, and his servant cries, *Trouble not the Master, the child is dead.* It is as if it should be said, the case is now hopeless. Here was, Sirs, a rushing flood of temptations on the man. But the Lord Jesus lifts up the standard against the enemy ; he says to the man, *be not afraid, only believe.* What though thy child be dead ; yet the case is not hopeless ; the case is not past his cure, who is a God that *quickeneth the dead.* And tho' this be the case of multitudes here, though they are dead, quite dead ; yet, O the case is not past his cure who is *the resurrection and the life.*

I should now come to the fourth thing proposed, which was to speak of the *grounds* of faith, namely, what ground there is for faith and hope, in the most hopeless and desperate cases. But I cannot insist, I shall come to the application.

This doctrine would admit of a large application ; but I must pass it all at present with a word of *trial.*

O Sirs, will you try if you have that faith, that can *against hope, believe in hope.* Sirs, these that can believe this way, have indeed strong faith. Every believer has not strong faith ; but we should all seek after a strong faith. Who are these that *against hope, believe in hope ?*

1. They who can trust in the *dark*; or who can trust to the *promises*, when they want inward comforts. These are among the persons who against hope, believe in hope. This is what we are called to in the dark. *Let them who have no light trust in the Lord, and stay themselves on their God, Isa. l. 10.*

2. Those who against hope, believe in hope, they not only trust in a promising God, without comforts, but *against* comfort: instead of comforts they have nothing but crosses at the hand of God. *Though he should slay me, yet I will trust in him.* Sirs, this faith, that against hope, believes in hope, is a faith that takes hold of God; it will not let him alone till he bless him. It is a strange word, my friends, that you have in Isa. lxii. 6. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence.* Sirs, true faith, as it were, will give God no rest, till it get the blessing; no rest, till he return to his soul; and till he come back to his house, and revive his work.

In a word, true faith, that *against hope, believeth in hope*, can stand its ground, when *sense and reason* seem to be against believing. It answers them with the truth of God, and the faith of the promises of God. O try your faith, if it be a faith that believeth in a promising God, and that gives him the credit and glory of his truth, by depending on his word against all outward appearances.

Sirs, let us be persuaded to look to a God in Christ; and by faith to believe against unbelief, and by hope to believe against hope. Time will not allow to pursue an use of *exhortation*. I shall only say, O Sirs, endeavour to drop the anchor of faith, in this day of darkness, upon the word of a promising God. Upon his word you will need to have the anchor fixed.—Sirs, these are sinning days wherein we live, erring days, days of dreadful defection from God, and his truths: and what do we know but there may be dreadful days, days of terrible calamities. Sirs, who knows but this may be the last peaceable communion that we may have? and, O if God were not threatning to send a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant: but, O be established, and to have our faith fixed within the vail.—I'll tell you a  
promise

promise to drop your faith and hope upon, Psal xcix. 3. *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.* O Sirs, there are some strange providences taking place. Many threaten the people of God; states-men may threaten; the church-men may threaten, and judicatories may threaten. Why, these are sometimes like the waves of the sea: the waves may lift up their voice; but this is ground of hope, that the Lord not only *sits on the floods*, but *he reigns in Jacob*, and *to the ends of the earth*.—Another word that you may drop your anchor of faith and hope on, be the trouble what it will, is in Psal. xci. 8. *He shall call upon me, I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.* O seek to have the Lord to be with you in trouble.—Sirs, whatever should fall out in providence, the presence of God will make a prison to be a palace. O! it can make a fiery furnace a place of safety. O! it makes a den of lions, a place of miracles and wonders. O! seek his gracious presence: He has promised, that where his people are met together, to bless them, saying, *Lo, I am with you to the end of the world.* O! drop the anchor of faith on him, that he may be with us on this occasion.—But I pass all other uses that I designed. May the Lord bless what hath been said, *Amen.*

## S E R M O N CLIV.

GOSPEL-HEARERS have a firm Ground for  
FAITH and HOPE in the Worst of Times.\*

ROM. iv. 18.

*Who against hope, believed in hope.*

[ The second Sermon on this text. ]

**M**Y Friends, faith and hope are precious and excellent graces : but many only make a boast of them. They that can speak lightly of faith, and swear by their faith ; sure they declare they are strangers unto faith : and they that can speak lightly of hope ; saying, (as the common bye-word is,) I hope in his mercy ; they surely seem to be very great strangers to this faith and hope of Abraham's. There is a mystery of faith, and a mystery in hope : and, indeed, Sirs, we never begin to hope till we be hopeless. We never begin to hope till we begin to despair ; to despair of help from ourselves, and from all creatures, and all things in the world. Here is a strange battle between hope and hope : Here is hope against hope : here is, as it were, the fixing of the anchor of faith and hope upon the very gulph of despair. He against hope believed in hope.

The doctrine I noticed yesterday was, *That unto sinners who have the gospel, of a promising God in Christ, sounding in their ears, there is ground of faith and hope in the most desperate and hopeless-like cases.*

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\* This Sermon was preached on the Sabbath at the tent.



The method laid down was, 1. To prove and confirm the doctrine, in a few remarks. 2. To enquire into the nature of faith and hope. 3. To mention some of these hopeless and desperate-like cases, and yet a firm ground for faith and hope remain. 4. To enquire what ground of hope there is in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. 5. Apply the subject.

What remains to be spoken to is the fourth head, namely, enquire what *ground* there is for faith and hope, in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases.

Sirs, it is the great business of the preachers of the gospel, to open a door of hope, and to call persons to believe and hope in the Son of God; and to hope in the mercy of God through him. I would touch at some of these grounds, 1. More generally; 2. More particularly. And,

*1st*, More *generally* there is ground for faith and hope to all sinners, if you consider these six things.

1. Is it not ground of hope, in the first place, that an *all-sufficient Saviour* is offered to you? that his blood is able to cleanse from all sin? O Sirs, is not this a door opened for you sinners?

2. It is ground of hope, not only that this Saviour is all-sufficient, and his blood able to wash away all your sin and guilt; but you have a *right* to plead upon this blood. It is true, indeed, the former ground of hope, *viz.* the all-sufficiency of the blood and righteousness of Jesus, we can say his blood is able to cleanse a thousand worlds; yea, it has intrinsic excellency to save all the devils in hell, were it not hedged in by the decree of election: they have no right to it; no, by no means; it is to you, O man, woman, that *the word of salvation is sent. To you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* You have ground to plead on this blood. *Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham:* therefore you may plead for pardon and salvation upon this blood of Jesus.

3. It is ground of hope to all sinners, who hear the gospel, that the *mercy* of God vents through this blood of Jesus; and that the *grace* of God reigns through this righteousness unto eternal life, O Sirs, is there no  
ground

ground of faith and hope here, that the mercy of God, vents through this blood, and vents to the honour of justice? Justice is satisfied by the blood of Jesus: his wrath is appeased, so that God can be merciful to you, and yet be just; *He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Why, he hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.

4. There is another door of hope opened to you, sinners, in this gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ is both *able* and *willing* to save sinners. He is not only able, being *the mighty God*: but he is willing, being *the Prince of peace*. And he is declaring his willingness by his calls; by his invitations; and by his commands to you that believe: *This is his command that you believe.* O then, Sirs, why do you doubt of the love and good pleasure of God? Here is the command of God that you believe; that you believe on him, and come to him for life and salvation. O! do not declare your enmity against him who is, in the gospel, declaring his good will to you. But again,

5. There is ground of hope to all sinners who hear this gospel, that God hath *sealed* Christ to be a Saviour for sinners; *Him hath God the Father sealed.* Christ has not only ability to save; but he has authority to save: he has his Father's authority to save. It is in the name and authority of his Father that he is coming and courting you to him: *Him hath God the Father sealed.* He hath sealed him to be a Prophet, to teach ignorant souls; he hath sealed him to be a Priest, to deliver enslaved souls; he hath sealed him to be a King, to deliver souls from sin and Satan. God hath sealed him to be a Saviour: why then, it cannot be against God, that you come to him for salvation; No, you cannot do God so much honour as to come to a Saviour. He hath sealed him with a super-eminent unction of the Holy Ghost, and anointed him to those offices of saving sinners. Is there no ground of hope here?

6. Here is ground of hope, that the Lord Jesus, who sealed the covenant with his blood, hath made an *affignation* of all the benefits of the new covenant unto sinners in the visible church: *To them belongs the covenant:*  
and

*and the promises.* They have a sealed right thereunto ; a right that God hath given to sinners in the visible church, as such : therefore he has allowed all the members of the visible church to be baptized. They could not have a right to any of the seals of the covenant of promise, if they had not some right to the covenant itself. I say, God has made an assignation to the visible church, of all the benefits of the new covenant : they are among your hands ; O sirs, take what belongs to you. My friends, has not salvation come near you, when it is in your hands ? Is there no ground of hope here ? You may take hold of any promise in all the Bible, because it is sealed by the blood of Christ ; it comes freely to you, because it was dearly bought by the blood of him who is God. Therefore all the promises come freely to you. Here then is ground of hope to all sinners, who hear this gospel. in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. But I come,

2dly, To lay before you some more *particular* grounds and reasons, why all persons ought against hope to believe in hope.

1. Every thing *in* God, as he manifests himself in Jesus Christ, is ground of hope. The *Christ* of God is ground of hope : *He is the hope of Israel.* He is the hope of the church of God : he is the hope of all his people, and poor sinners may build upon him ; for every thing in him is ground of hope. His incarnation is ground of hope ; *to you is born, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* O his doing and dying is ground of hope : he died to bring us to God. His resurrection is ground of hope ; for, *he rose again for our justification* : and by his resurrection *he declared himself to be the Son of God with power* ; by which he declared his righteousness to be a sufficient righteousness. Again, Christ's ascending is a glorious ground of hope : *By him, says Peter, we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God.* The very reason why God raised him from the dead, and ascended gloriously, was that our faith and hope might be in him. Here is a Saviour that was *dead, but is now alive, and liveth for evermore ; and*

*has the keys of hell and death.* O sirs, the Christ of God is ground of hope; a door of hope is opened, if you look to the offices of Christ. O! his prophetic office says there is ground of hope for poor ignorant sinners. O! his priestly office says there is ground of hope for poor guilty sinners. O! his kingly office is ground of hope, for slaves to sin and Satan, because he is a king that bruises the head of the serpent. Again,

2. In the second place, as in the Christ of God, so all the *promises* are ground of hope: they are calculate for the cases and necessities of poor sinners. They are a ground of faith and hope, they being all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. O sirs, observe as I said before, the covenant consists of promises: what does God, think you, by these promises? He puts himself, and all the blessings of the covenant, in these promises, that we may lay hold upon him. There the infinite invisible God comes as near as it is possible for him to come. Since we cannot see an invisible God, he comes, as it were, to our hand in the promises, that we may take him up there. He puts himself in a promise, saying, *I'll be thy God.* He puts his Spirit in a promise: *I'll put my Spirit in you.* He puts his justifying grace in a promise: *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own names sake.* He puts sanctification in the promises: *I'll put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* He puts all the blessings in the promises, that we may believe and hope in him, as a promising God. What want you that is not in the promises? *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men after me.* There is power to believe the promise promised. Faith is not of yourselves, but the gift of God promised: If you want repentance he puts it in the promise: *They shall look unto me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn.* He is exalted as a prince, to give repentance, and the remission of sins. He puts all the graces in the promise: *I'll circumcise their hearts to love me.* He puts grace and glory in the promise. But, again,

3. Another ground of hope is the *presence* of God, his promised presence. He is not far off, or at a distance; he is near in the word of grace and promise. We need not say, *Who will go up to heaven to bring him down?*—*he is near in the word that we preach.* His name is the great Immanuel, God with us. O Sirs, say not he is far off. There are many promises of his presence, that faith and hope has to rely on. *There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God.* He hath said, *I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

4. The *providence* of God is another ground of hope: therefore we ought to cast our care upon him, who careth for us. We ought to consider his special providences towards his church and people, in all ages, that so they may be a prope and pillar to faith and hope. When Adam fell from a state of innocency, into a horrible pit, and brought himself and all his posterity to misery; O then, how did the promise come? *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.* And, when Israel was in the greatest thralldom, how did providence appear in their delivery? and when the Jews were like to be destroyed by Haman, how did providence appear for them? and when Christ, the glorious head of the church, was laid in the grave, then the church's hope seemed to be gone: Yes, but in this case was the greatest appearance of providence. As it was with the head, so shall it be with the members.

5. The *blood and righteousness* of Jesus is another ground of hope. The blood of Jesus is the blood of God; and the righteousness of Jesus is the righteousness of God. O here is a foundation for faith and hope. It is an everlasting righteousness, and a law-magnifying righteousness; it is a justice-satisfying righteousness; it is strength-furnishing righteousness; it is like the money that answers all things? because it is the righteousness of God. O Sirs, here is a strong foundation for faith and hope; so strong a foundation, that we may not only build on it, but were there ten thousand worlds, here they might build upon this foundation. Here is a door of hope.

6. The *oath* of God is another ground of hope ; the oath, by which his word of promise is confirmed : So that all that venture to it, may have sufficient ground of hope. *He hath sworn by two immutable things, whereby it is impossible for God to lie.* O ! is not this security to the faith of the church of God ? When God says the word, and gives his promise, that is good enough ; but, O Sirs, is it not still more, when he confirms his word by his oath ; when he has sworn by his holiness ? *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.* It is the oath of God, not only to us, but to a better hand ; it is the oath of God to Christ : *I have sworn by myself.* When God swears by himself, he can swear by no greater : for then he swears by all his glorious attributes and perfections, that the covenant shall stand fast, to all that flee by faith to him. O Sirs, this is sure ground of hope.

7. The *name* of God is ground of hope. Why, Sirs, he is pleased in his word to make his name the greatest argument for which sinners may plead with him : accordingly we find many saints saying, *O pardon us for thy name's sake : for thy name's sake blot out iniquity.* O Sirs, if we build our faith and hope upon the honour of his name, he will surely do for his name's sake.

8. The *glory* of God is ground of faith ; not only his name, but the glory of his name : *For thy name's glory help us.* You may build your faith and hope upon the glory of his name, because his name cannot be glorified greater than in the way of saving sinners through Jesus Christ : therefore we are to build our faith and hope upon the glory of his name ; if we build our faith and hope here, sirs, to be sure he will not let his glory fall. O ! he will glorify himself. O happy they who get their salvation thus secured, by building on the glory of his name.

9. The *mercy* of God is ground of hope, as it vents itself through Christ Jesus. *Mercy shall be built up for ever.*

10. The *truth* and *faithfulness* of God is ground of hope. This truth and faithfulness is called a *shield* and *buckler* to us.

11. Not only are the attributes ground of hope, but the *spirituality* of God is ground of hope; for his words are spirit and life. And, indeed, the more spiritually we view any promise, the more sweetly do we view it.

12. The *infinity* of God is ground of hope; being infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. We may soon be non-plussed, but nothing can non-plus infinite Wisdom: therefore we may, *against hope, believe in hope.*

13. I may add, the *eternity* of God is ground of hope, that he is the eternal God, he puts that in the promise: *The eternal God is thy refuge, God endures for ever.* All the world is waxing old as a garment, as it were out of fashion; but his children and servants shall continue for ever. The eternity of God is ground of hope, for there is eternal happiness in him.

Again, the *unchangeableness* of ground of hope; because *he is God, and changes not, the sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

I may add, the *personality* of God is ground of hope, whether we consider him jointly or separately. If we consider the personality of God *jointly*, as three persons speaking in the plural number, there we find them speaking so in the work of creation: come, *let us make man after our own image.* I'll tell you a text wherein they speak so in the work of redemption, in carrying on the work of salvation, Song i. 11. *We will make the borders of gold with studs of silver.* We Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; we will begin the work, and we will carry it on; we will do so and so: or if we consider them *separately*, it is ground of hope for communion with God. We have the Father's love discovered in coming; and we have the love of the Holy Ghost set before us as the great applier of redemption-work. In this light we have the order of communion set before us, as you see it expressed, Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.* Here is the order of communion with God: we have communion *with* the Father, *in* the Son, and *by* the Holy Ghost. So communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is a door of hope opened to all of us.

Again, The *matchlessness* of God is ground of hope : his being a non-such God in Christ. O Sirs, are you saying, there is no sinner like me, my case is a matchless case ? but, O ! is there any God like him ? he is a matchless God. O Sirs, here is ground of hope : the very being of a God, as a God that quickeneth the dead, is ground of hope : yea, faith and hope can center no where but in a living God, and in the life of God.

These are some of the grounds of faith and hope : and I shall reckon it a sore matter, if none in this great assembly can see a door of faith and hope opened to them. Since there is a door of faith and hope opened, O then go in by this door.

V. I go on to the application. O that the Lord would make application of it. Is it so, Sirs, that in this gospel there is a firm ground of hope, even in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases ? Then for information,

1. Hence we may see, Sirs, what is the reason that God does, in his holy provience, bring his church and people many times into hopeless and desperate-like cases. O Sirs the reason is, that we may *despair* of help and hope any where else, that they may hope only in God ; therefore he orders matters so, in his providence, or in some circumstances about his people, that you may place your hope only in him that can help in desperate-like cases. 1 Cor. i. 8. *For we have the sentence of death, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in him who raised Christ from the dead.* O Sirs, some are brought to very dismal straits, very great difficulties ; they are ready to say, O ! what is it that God designs to do with me ? They think God is about to slay them, or destroy them ; or that the Lord has some ill design against them. No, man ; but his design is, that when you see your case hopeless and desperate, you go to God and trust in him. *We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust to ourselves, but to God.*

2. Hence we may see, that the people of God ought not to *murmur* against God, when he brings them to straits and difficulties ; to such cases as seem hopeless and

and



and desperate. O, do not murmur against God. O Sirs, do not object he hath an ill design against you; his design is to drive you to himself; to make you cast the anchor of faith upon a sure foundation, even God himself. In the 20th chapter of Judges, the children of Israel are allowed to go out against the tribe of Benjamin to battle, and God is consulted in the matter; and God bides them go, and yet they are smitten before the Benjaminites. O! then they go to God weeping, and cry, *shall we go and fight against our brethren?* Yes, says God; well, they go a second time, and they are worsted by them, and the battle goes against them. What was the design of this providence? One would think the design was to destroy them. O no; no; it was that he might avenge himself more remarkably in the third battle: They go forth the third time and they are destroyed before them.

A second use may be by way of *trial and examination*. And seeing, Sirs, it is so, as I have been saying, that even in the most hopeless and desperate like cases, we have a sure ground for faith and hope, in a God in Christ, as it was with Abraham, *who against hope, believed in hope*, let us try whether we have any faith like Abraham's. Every believer has not the same trials and difficulties, and so does not need the same strong faith; yet true faith is still acted in the same way, in the same parallel cases, that may have some reference to Abraham's faith; try it therefore by these few things.

1. Then, if we have any faith like Abraham's faith, then, Sirs, you will only be *satisfied* with Christ. Will you tell me, are you satisfied with Christ only? do all things else fail you? do you think Christ a heaven upon earth? Can you think Christ righteousness and strength to you? O Sirs, can you think yourselves right enough with Christ, though you should want all things in the world, like Habakkuk? *Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine, &c. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.* Enquire then, if you can be satisfied with Christ alone. There are few, Sirs, can be so: there is something in the world gives them satisfaction; take away that, and Christ cannot satisfy them. O try

it if you be satisfied with Christ alone. Can you say, *O whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon thee earth, that I desire besides thee.*

2. If your faith have any thing like Abraham's in the nature of it, try it by this, can you *live* upon an absent God? can you live upon a God in Christ, even in desertion? can you believe in an angry God, a God whom you have sinned against, whom you have offended and provoked? can you believe in an angry God, even when he may be expressing his displeasure in his providences against you? can you go to this God, and put your confidence in him? can you believe in him, when you are not able to claim your relation to him? are you then claiming your relation to the Son of God, though he may be hiding himself? Why, Sirs, this is something like the faith Christ expressed on the cross; *My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me?* FORSAKEN ME! and yet *my God.* Sirs, the relation to God may be maintained by the soul, even when it finds he is away. O can you claim a relation to a forsaking God? that is something like the faith of Abraham, *who against hope believed in hope.*

3. Enquire if you can stop your ears to the voice of *sense* and *reason.* This Abraham did, when he was called to consider the ground and object of his faith, *viz.* the *power of God.* We are told he considered not the *deadness of his own body,* nor the *deadness of Sarah's womb:* he stopt his ears at carnal sense and reason. Are you then able to stop your ears at carnal sense and reason, and open your ears to what God says, as a promising God? His faith is some way like the faith of Abraham.

4. Can you set the *arguments of faith* against all the arguments of sense and reason, to wit, the *power of God?* Once, yea, twice have I heard that *power belongs to the Lord.* Set the argument of faith against all the tossings of unbelief.

I come now to close with a word of exhortation; and it shall be but a short word.

Is it so Sirs, that sinners that hear the gospel, have a sure foundation for faith and hope, even in the most hope-

hopeless and desperate-like cases, then they call to all sinners who hear this gospel, is, *imitate Abraham*, who *against hope believed in hope*. Let sinners do it; and let believers do it more and more, by following the footsteps of the father of the faithful more and more, *who against hope, believed in hope*. Sirs, this is the call of God, that we ought to glorify, by a strong faith. Employ the omnipotence of God against unbelief; for indeed, Sirs, true faith has no power at all, but the power of God: it has nothing to live upon, but the fulness and righteousness of Christ, and God in a promise, a God in covenant.

*Object 1.* O, but why do you essay to persuade me to believe, and hope in Jesus; for my case is not only *hopeless* and a desperate-like case, but I seem to be *given up* to the power of sin. I think God has given me up to the power of my lusts; iniquity prevails against me: Sin not only *dwells* in me, but I think it *reigns* in me.

*Ans.* O man, thinkst thou this is a hopeless case? well, but is there not hope in Israel, as long as God calls you? your very complaint is ground of hope: *Iniquity prevail against me*, says David; *but as for our transgressions thou wilt purge them away*. Why, there is ground against hope to believe in hope; for, though iniquity prevails against you, yet God has promised to purge away iniquity. There we are called to believe in this promising God.

*Object 2.* But, O my case is hopeless, in respect I think God does not *hear* my prayers.

*Ans.* You may find your case paralleled. Lam. iii. 8. the church crys there, *When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer*. But yet you will find her saying, *It is good for me to hope, and wait for the salvation of God*, ver. 26.

*Object 3.* But, O is not my case a desperate-like case, for God is *against* me in his providences, and my corruption is irritated by the cross? and is there any hope in this case?

*Ans.*

*Anfw.* Even in this case, you are called against hope, to believe in hope. There is a parallel case in the lviith of *Isaiah* and 17. ver. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; yet he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.* There is corruption irritated by the cross; God smote him in his providences; and yet he *went on frowardly.* Well, was the case hopeless? No: See what follows, *I have seen his ways, and will heal him.* O! See what wonderful condescension! *I have seen his ways, and will heal him.* O! let *Israel* hope in the Lord; for *with the Lord there is mercy.*

*Object.* 4. But, O is not my case hopeless, when I find no manner of probability of my being saved and pardoned?

*Anfw.* This is a limiting of the holy One of *Israel.* *Isa. xl. 27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob; and speakest, O Israel? My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?*

*Object.* 5. But, O say you, my case is yet more hopeless; why, I essay to use means, and yet all means prove *unsuccessful*; and I am worse: and is not that a hopeless case? These means that are useful to others; these means, instead of being helpful to me, are hurtful to me. The ordinances that are full to others, are dry breasts to me?

*Anfw.* O, Sirs, this would indeed be a hopeless and desperate case, were it no: for the grounds of hope we have been speaking of. But you have a parallel case in *Exod. ii.* God calls *Moses* to deliver *Israel*; but instead of their being delivered, their bondage is increased, things made against them. Do you find nothing by the means of grace? Wait on God, who is the *hope of Israel,* when you are going to a communion table.

*Object.* 6. But, O is not my case a hopeless-like case? I have gone to a communion table sometimes; I have found myself worse when I have been there. O then, would you encourage such an one to believe and hope? I have sinned against him; and sinned fearfully against him.

him. I have been worsted by the enemy ; I am just a trophy of the victory of the devil : and do you call me to believe and hope ?

*Answ.* Yes ; though thou art a backslider, the call of God is to you to return ; *Return, O backsliding children ; for I am married to you.* O poor soul ! return to him. Will you tell me, will you be the better of standing away at a distance from Christ ? is it not better to perish in Christ's hand, than in the hands of the devil ?

*Object.* O, says one, is not my case a hopeless case ? I am now in the very *belly of hell*, as it were ; and is there any hope in this case ?

*Answ.* Yes : Jonah says, chap. ii. 2. *Out of the belly of hell I cried to the Lord ; and he heard me out of his holy temple*, ver. 4. O then, look again to God's holy temple.

*Object.* 3. O ! is not this a hopeless case ? I see there is no *favour* from sense and reason to me ; all arguments from the common sense of the world contradicts my hope.

*Answ.* Why, man ; is that your case ? then it is just equal to Abraham's in the text, *who against hope, believed in hope.* O Sirs, look to God to answer all objections raised by unbelief, that you may glorify God by them all ; and so *against hope, believe in hope.*

## S E R M O N CLV.

FAITH in CHRIST the Surest Way of RELIEF  
in the SADDEST CASE. †

JONAH ii. 4.

*Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight ; yet I will look a-  
gain toward thy holy temple.*

**T**HE Spirit of God, in the words of inspiration, acquaints us, that *many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.* Many are their troubles, though believers : and hence the exercises of the children of God, in this world, are sometimes very sad, and at othertimes very sweet. It is a very sad exercise that the prophet is employed in, in the first clause of this verse, *I said, I am cast out of thy sight :* and it is a very sweet exercise, and exceeding reviving, that he is employed in the next clause of the verse ; *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

There is shortly in these words. 1. The *sad case* that Jonah was in ; *I said, I am cast out of thy sight.* 2. The *cure* of that case ; *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

1. There is the *sad case* he was in ; *I said, I am cast out of thy sight.* No wonder he feared he was cast quite away, when he was now cast into the belly of the whale, and ready to be quite devoured. Jonah had proved disobedient to his God ; he refused the message that God had given him to go unto Nineveh, and proclaim, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed.* Jo-

† This Subject was handled in two discourses, on a Sacramental occasion at Dalkeith, in the year 1751.—Never before printed.

nah possibly thought this very unpleasant work; and perhaps he thought that the people of God, Israel themselves, will not be reclaimed by my preaching: why should I go to these that are strangers unto God? According to some, he might have thought this; a proud thought, that he would be disappointed in his design: Nineveh would destroy him for coming with such a disagreeable message; or, if it was successful, God would repent, and not execute judgement; and then he would be reckoned a false prophet: Where upon he wilfully disobeyed the heavenly message. But God pursued him in the way of fatherly wrath and indignation, until he is brought into these sad circumstances here; and he was never awakened until he is thrown into the sea, and brought into the belly of the whale, which he calls *the belly of hell*. Jonah was fast asleep in the midst of the sea, while he lay by the side of the ship: and he was not awakened with the storm. Sirs, when people are asleep in the time of a storm, or wrathful times, it is a sad sign that the storm comes for their sake, and that they are the Jonahs that brought on the storm. However, God had a mind, that Jonah should be awakened; and therefore they never fell a crying unto God, until he was in the belly of the whale, and there he had his fears: *I said, I am cast out of thy sight, &c.* Jonah knew he was in the presence of God, as God is essentially every where; for now God was pursuing him. Here notice, that Jonah was in very sad case and condition; for, he apprehended God had quite cast him away; *I said, I am cast out of thy sight.* As if he had said, I have now no ground to expect God's gracious presence: there seems to be now no mercy for me. Thus it continued with him until faith gets in its word, and so here is relief: *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* Here is,

2. The *cure* of this sad and pitiful case; faith's beholding God's holy temple. Jonah knew what it was to look to a God in Christ; God's holy temple.—The temple typified Christ, wherein was the ark of the covenant: there was the propitiatory sacrifices, that were typical of the only propitiatory sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jonah looked to God in his adversity, and his relief came in by this act of faith.

In these two cases there are these two things observable.

1. "That the true children of God may be brought under great fears and apprehensions that they are cast out of God's sight: Or, that gracious souls may sometimes be brought under prevailing fears that they are quite cast off, and that there is no mercy for them;" *I said, I am cast out of thy sight.*

2. "That the surest way of relief, from the saddest case the people of God can be in, is faith in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ: or, faith's looking anew unto God's holy temple;"—*Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

It is the first of these observations we propose to open up at the time; viz.

*That a truly gracious soul may sometimes be brought under disponding fears, lest they be cast out of God's sight.*

And the method we would lay down for handling it, through divine aid, shall be the following.

- I. Explain a little the term, *I am cast out of thy sight.*
- II. Offer a few remarks concerning the *fears* that the Lord's people may have, lest they be cast away.
- III. Lay down some of the *grounds* of these fears.
- IV. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. We propose to explain a little the TERM, *I am cast out of thy sight.* This we shall essay in the three following particulars.

1. *I said, I am cast out of thy sight*; it is, as if Jonah had said, Now I am cast off from being a prophet unto God any more:—the Lord will not employ me henceforth. I am cast off from this office; and there is no more use for mein God's vineyard.

2. *I said, I am cast out of thy sight*: that is, I have no more hope that I shall see the glory of God in the sanctuary: I have seen it formerly, but I shall see it no more.

I do



I do not expect that God will ever give me a blink of his countenance again.

3. I said, through unbelief, when I am brought under sad circumstances, that now there is no ground for hope: I see nothing but ground for despair. I apprehend there is no mercy for me with God. O Sirs, it is a melancholy case with the soul, when the hope of God's pity is gone, and when it says, I am cast away; God will never give me a look of his gracious face again.

II. We are to offer these three or four *remarks* concerning the fears the Lord's children may have.

1. Remark, That it is certain, that these that are in a state of *union* to Christ, they shall never be totally or finally lost. There is something that secures them: Christ will not cast them quite away.—The unchangeableness of the love of Christ secures them; *Whom he loves, he loves unto the end.*—The immutability of his grace and covenant says they shall never be quite cast away.—The promise of God says, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. iii. 5. *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord*, Isa. liv. 10.

2. Another remark is this, That though the Lord will never altogether cast off his people; yet they may really be *deserted* for a time; and they may be so far cast out of his sight, as that they may really apprehend that they are quite cast away, when they are in a mistake. Psa. xxxi. 22. *I said in my haste, I am cast off.* He said it, but it was through unbelief, and in his haste: and hence he immediately corrects himself, *nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.*—But although a child of grace may be in a mistake, and think they are cast off, when they are only deserted for a season; yet they are in a mistake, in saying they are cast off altogether, Isa. liv. 17. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee.* I say, this shews there may be real desertion; and we find this was the case with the glorious head of the body: he cries, *My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken*

*saken me?* And so his people may be really deserted, and cast, as it were, out of his sight.

3. I remark, That there are *degrees* of God's deserting his people: he may be at a distance, and sometimes standing, as it were, behind our wall, not far off; and sometimes his comfortable presence may be farther away. And, indeed, when they depart far from God, it is a sad evidence that the Lord is far away from them.— There are many degrees of desertion: and it is a hard to tell how far God may desert a child. This desertion is sometimes called his *hiding his face*. Sometimes his *shutting them out of his presence*; and *shutting out their prayers*, as in Lam. iii. 44.

4. I remark, concerning the Lord's children, that there is nothing more *afflicting* to them than the Lord's deserting them: That is a most heavy and afflicting unto them, that are the true children of God. And hence their cry is, *How long, O Lord, wilt thou hide thyself?* and, *will the Lord cast off for ever?* And this leads me to the next head of method,

III. The third thing we proposed, which was to notice some of the *grounds* whence these fears proceed, that God's children may have. And they may arise from such things as took place in Jonah's case.

1. Jonah was troubled with *heavy dispensations of providence*: So, when the Lord's people find that they are surrounded with awful providences, this augments their fears, and they cry out, *I am cast out of thy sight*.

2. Jonah was brought into the *greatest danger of death* that a man could be brought into. Jonah could not now expect to be saved, but by a miracle; and he could not expect that God was to work a miracle for him, that had rebelled against his command. The same is often the case of the people of God.

3. Jonah could see no way how he could be *delivered from destruction*: So the fears of the Lord's people, they many times flow from this, that they are under heavy circumstances, and they see no ways of escape: They see no way how the promise of God can be accomplished.

4. Jonah's case was this, the *Comforter* was gone. The comfortable hopes of heaven was withdrawn from him. So, this often fills the Lord's people with fears, lest they be cast away. *The comforter that should relieve their souls is far removed from them.*

5. The case with Jonah was this, the wrath of God was pursuing him: and this is another reason why a child of God may fear, lest he be cast away. He sees one wave upon the back of another.

6. Another thing that was the cause of Jonah's fears was this, his *conscience* is now *awakened*, and his *sin* is staring him in the face. I am, might he say, in the greatest danger; but it is my sin that has brought me into this case.—My sin hath brought me to the gates of death. So it is this that makes the children of God apprehend that they are cast away. A consciousness of guilt flies in their face; and therefore that God is pursuing, them, and they have raised the storm.—These are some of the grounds why the Lord's people do fear they are cast away.

IV. The fourth general head, was the *application*; from what I have said, we may infer,

1. How thankful any of the Lord's people ought to be, if they are delivered from such desperate thoughts, as to conclude they are cast away. It is a melancholy case, when a child of God fears he shall be cast away. *God gathers the outcasts of Israel*; but unbelief may make them say with Jonah, *I am cast out of thy sight*. Yet there is still ground of hope, when they go to God himself.

2. Hence we may infer, what the Lord's people ought to be, lest they provoke God to cast them out of his sight for a time; lest they provoke him to give them up to themselves.

3. We may see, that though doubts and fears be inconsistent with faith; yet they may be where true faith is. Hence Jonah, who was a prophet and a believer, he is brought to these doubts, *I said, I am cast out of thy sight*.

4. Hence we may see, that these doubts and fears will prevail with God's children, until faith get in its word.

word. Jonah thought he was cast out, until he got a view of God in Christ.

. *Secondly*, This doctrine may be improv'd in a way of *trial*, for all these that belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, and apprehend themselves to be under desertion. Let them examine themselves whether or not they be under real desertion. How shall I know that the desertion I am under is real desertion? I shall acquaint you with two things that were in Jonah's case.

1. It was his continued *rebellion*, and giving way to *sin* and *corruption*, that proved that he was under real desertion: So, when the children of God are giving way to sin, way to rebellion, and yet going on forwardly in the way of their own heart; to be sure it is a sign of real desertion.

2. It is a sign of real desertion, when people can *sleep easily* under a *guilty conscience*, as Jonah did. The storm awakened the heathen mariners; but it could not awaken Jonah. When persons are sleeping under guilt, it is a sad sign they are under real desertion. When the Lord's people have his presence with them, they are awake, and are ready to say with the church, *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please*. But at other times we find the church so fast asleep, that there was no rousing of her. When her Lord knocks at her door, she was unwilling to be awakened, and unwilling to be raised: *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* When a child of God enjoys the presence of God, the least guilt upon the conscience makes him have an errand to the throne: but when he can sleep easily, with contracted guilt upon the conscience, that is a sign of real desertion,

On the other hand, I would have you to notice, if there be any thing *hopeful* in your case. I will tell you of two things that were hopeful in Jonah's case.

1. One thing was hopeful about him, he had *honourable thoughts* of God in the midst of his desertion: he spake like the Psalmist, *Thou art righteous in casting me into this hell of misery: Righteous art thou, O Lord.*

*My*

*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? But thou art holy.* Thou hast forsaken me, yet thou art holy. So Jonah here justifies God in casting him into this tribulation. It is therefore some hopeful thing, when persons entertain honourable thoughts of God, and justify God in their trouble.

2. It is a hopeful thing in Jonah's case, that he had some *desires* after a departed God, as appears in the clause following, *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* That soul is not really deserted of God, that has longings desires after a deserting God.

*Thirdly*, I come now to an use of *exhortation*. I might offer a word of exhortation to these that are in a deserted case, the case of these that are crying, *I am cast out of thy sight.* I would exhort such to beware of concluding, that they are quite cast out; there is hope in Israel concerning thy case; although thou art in the belly of the whale, yet the door of hope is opened, while Christ Jesus is exhibited as the gift of God unto you, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and so to be an antidote against all misery. And it would be an evidence of your sharing of these blessings; if ye were brought off your self-wisdom to Christ, being made wisdom to you; brought off your self-righteousness for Christ, being made of God unto you righteousness; brought off your self-holiness, self-goodness, and all conceit of your self-qualifications, unto a view of the absolute need of Christ for sanctification; and if ye were brought from a sense of your misery to Christ for complete redemption. O then, beware of saying that the door of hope is shut against you, such conclusions Satan fosters them, that he may lead you away from Christ. O, say you, I find dreadful wrath and anger in God's dispensations. It may be so; but did not Jonah find the same? and yet says he, *I will look again towards thy holy temple.* But, say you, I am plunged in the deeps of misery; and it is my sin that hath brought me into these deeps. Well, be it so; but was not this the case with Jonah? his rebellion against God brought them into these terrible deeps: and yet says he, *I will look again towards thy holy temple.*

What I have been saying concerning *believers*, that have been brought into such great deeps, is not for you that are *strangers* to such exercises, or know not how to exercise faith. You see, faith expressed by looking in this and many other places of scripture; *Look unto me and be saved.* This is the call of God unto believers, to look again and again towards God's holy temple. Ye that never yet looked to Christ, his call is, *look to me and be saved.* He says, I am the great God, cast yourself out of the old ships, in which ye hope to be saved, and come to the rock of ages, and, in order to your coming to him I would have you believe the law. I do not expect that you will believe the gospel until ye believe the law: that is, believe your undone case without him; believe the absolute need of coming out from under the old covenant, and of casting yourselves out of the old ships.—People that are ready to be ship-wrecked, they will be very loth to cast themselves upon the waters, unless the mariner be skilful, and tell them, there is no hope, if they do not cast themselves upon the waters and sweep to shore.

Well, this is the case with lost sinners, they are very loth to cast themselves out of the old ships; they trust to their own doings, they think, if they do so and so, God will be favourable unto them: and they will not cast themselves out of the old ship, unless they be informed, by that faithful mariner, the Spirit of God, that they will perish in the deeps of divine wrath, unless they sweep to the rock. O, but say you, I cannot sweep to the rock. But, O Sirs, cast yourselves out of the old ships, and essay looking to him: *Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.* This was Jonah's case here; *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

## S E R M O N CLVI.

JONAH ii. 4.

*Yet I will look again towards thy holy temple.*

[ The second Sermon on this Text. ]

**T**HAT salvation is of grace is a notable argument and vast encouragement unto the faith which is in this text, namely, *to look again and again towards God's holy temple*: This is the exercise of faith that Jonah was now brought unto. Jonah had been sleeping when he was in the ship; but we have him now awakened, praying and calling upon God, when he is in the belly of the whale. In the greatest danger, the Lord does good unto his own by afflictions, and often brings on storms to awaken them. Convictions arise in the conscience, and prayer is poured out, as in Isa. xxvi. 16. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer, when thy chastening hand was upon them.* Thus we find Jonah here exercised.

I entered upon these words yesterday: and, after some introduction, found in this text, 1. *The case that Jonah was in; I said, I am cast out of thy sight.* 2. *The cure, and that is faith; yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* From the first clause of the verse I observed, "The gracious souls may be sometimes under desponding fears lest they be cast off." *I said, I am cast out of thy sight.* This proposition I first explained; and then offered some remarks anent the fears they may

have ; I next give some *grounds* of these fears ; and lastly deduced some *inferences* for the application of what was offered on the subject.

I now go on to the second doctrine laid down from the second clause of the verse ; *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* Why it is thus expressed, and in what respect it is called a *looking unto God*, I have already explained.

DOCT. *That the surest way of relief, from the saddest case, the people of God can be in, is faith in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ ; or, faith's looking anew unto God's holy temple.*

The method proposed, through divine assistance, for handling the subject, is the following,

- I. To offer a few *remarks* for clearing of the doctrine,
- II. I propose to inquire into the *import* of that *resolution* of Jonah's in the text.
- III. I would take notice of some of the special *discouragements* that faith has to surmount, and grapple with when it looks towards God's holy temple.
- IV. I would next offer some *reasons* why this is the best way of relief, from the greatest difficulties, the children of God can be in.
- V. I would lastly make *application* of the whole.

I. We return to the first thing proposed in the general method, which was to offer a few *remarks* for clearing the doctrine.

1. I remark, That there is a mighty *struggle* in the best of God's children between their faith and unbelief. Here we see a struggle in the text. There are two sentences in one verse : there is the power of unbelief ; *I said I am cast out of thy sight*, the other is the sentence wherein the victory of faith is expressed ; *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* So that the believer in Christ is a mysterious kind of creature : he has, as it were, two nations struggling within him.



2. I remark, that *corruption* and *unbelief* frequently have the ascendent before faith and before grace. Here we see it in the text; unbelief saying, *I am cast out of thy fight*. The power of unbelief may be so great, that faith may be quite out of fight, as it certainly is, when the soul is saying, *I am cast out of God's fight*

3. Remark, however low the actings of faith may be for a time, yet faith will get up its head in triumph; for, the author of faith is the finisher of it; and he is the supporter of it. Our blessed Lord has prayed for his people that their faith fail not. He has engaged to keep them by his mighty power.

4. I remark, that the first thing that revives the soul, and the first grace that is revived in the soul, is that of *faith*; when once faith acts in a way of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, then all the other graces come to be revived also: for faith influences love, and works by love; and excites repentance: *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn*. Faith influences all the other graces: and it is the first thing that is revived in the soul, after it has been fore kept under by the powers of hell.

5. I remark, when faith comes to be revived, after a great decay, then the spirit of *prayer* comes along with faith. This is evident, if ye consider how the words are spoken unto God, in a way of prayer: *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple*.

II. The second thing proposed, was to inquire into the import of the *resolution*; *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple*. We find faith comes under various names in scripture, according to the many names that its object is represented by. If Christ is held out as *matchless*; then faith is called a *beholding*. *Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon*. If he is exhibited as a gift; then faith is called a *receiving* this gift; *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*. If Christ is represented as *meat* and *drink*; then faith comes under the name of *eating* and *drinking*: *Eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of God*. If Christ is represented as a *rock*, or *foundation*; then faith

faith is called a *resting* on this foundation. If Christ be represented by a city of refuge; then faith is a *flying* unto him as a refuge. If he is represented as a *glorious object*; then faith is called a *looking* to him: *Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.*

In the *import* of this resolution there are these four things we shall take notice of, 1. The *act* of faith, and what may be imported in this *looking*. 2. There is the *resolution* of this act; *I will look*. 3. There is the *object* of this act; *Thy holy temple*. 4. There is the *circumstances* of this resolution. It imports a looking to him with a *yet*: *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

1<sup>st</sup>, There is the *act* of faith. Faith is called a *looking*: and faith, being thus expressed, may import these following things.

1. This act of faith imports the *knowledge* of Christ, or a sight of him: it is a *seeing of the Son*; it is a knowledge of him as an immutable ground of confidence unto his people. Jonah had the knowledge of God; and knew a God in Christ, when he viewed him as the *temple of God*.

2. It imports the soul's *despairing* of help from any other airt: *In vain is salvation expected from the hills, or the multitude of mountains*. The soul, in believing, sees all other refuges fail him; and so his eyes come only to be set on Christ.

3. This act of faith, here called a looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ, it has in it a view of his *sufficiency*. There is in faith, an apprehending of the ability of the Lord Jesus to save, as well as his authority, that he cometh in his Father's name, importing his authority to save: and faith looks upon him as well qualified to save to the uttermost.

4. In this act of faith, this looking unto Jesus, there is not only a view of his sufficiency, but there is a *hope* of being helped by him. Where there is no hope, there is no looking to the Lord Jesus Christ: but this look of faith, saith that the door is cast open; and by this looking we are to understand the soul's rolling itself upon

pon the Lord Jesus Christ, and taking rest in him: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* It is the soul's flight unto Christ, as a city of refuge. And,

5. This looking to Christ, imports, the soul's *waiting* upon him, in the midst of all difficulties: *I will wait upon the Lord who hideth his face from the house of Jacob.*

2dly, There is the *resolution* of this act; *I will look AGAIN towards thy holy temple.* This resolution imports the four following things.

1. It imports, that Jonah had looked *formerly* to God's holy temple. He had looked before to Jesus Christ, when a distressed situation, and had found benefit and advantage in doing so; and therefore resolves to look *again* to him. *They looked unto him and were lightened,* Psal. xxxiv. 5.

2. It imports, that this is the *best* way, the *only* way: *I will look again towards God's holy temple.* The child of God, when in perplexity, can find relief and comfort from no other quarter, but by a looking to a God in Christ. This is the course the Spirit of God directs to; *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,* Isa. xlv. 22.

3. It imports, that this way is as *safe* a way as ever it was: *I will look again.* As if Jonah had said, though I have offended God, by disobeying the heavenly message; yet I know that he is pacified and reconciled in Christ: and therefore, *I will look again towards his holy temple,* as the only safe way for me to get his anger turned away.

4. It imports, that he is persuaded that he was *never right* since he looked any other airt; and since he ran away from God by disobedience to his call: *I will look again.* Yea, *I will go, and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now.*

3dly, The third thing was the *object* of the act: *I will look towards thy HOLY TEMPLE.* The temple was a type of Christ. There was the sanctuary; there was the altar; there was the sacrifices offered: these were so many symbols of the presence of God, all typical of our Lord  
Jesus

Jesus Christ. So that *I will look again* imports these six things.

1. That where ever God goes, there *faith* goes: where the fulness of God goes, there faith will go. God had gone out of the first Adam, and all his natural seed: God is in the second Adam, and faith must follow God. Faith pursues after the fulness of God, where ever that dwells; and it is in Christ that all the fulness of the God-head dwells.

2. It imports, that faith's acting upon God is not upon God *immediately*, but in and by the intervention of means; and particularly by the great mean, Jesus Christ. It is God in Christ that faith looks unto. It cannot have access to an absolute God; it dare not face an absolute God; but we may come to God by Jesus Christ, and look to God in his holy temple.

3. Faith, considered as looking towards God's holy temple, imports, that faith has its eye upon the *holiness* and *purity* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and upon this ground, expects admittance into the presence of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ was *holy, harmless, and undefiled*. He was *heard in that he feared*: He was heard for his *purity*, as it may be read. The holiness of God is in him: and faith looks to the holiness of Christ, and expects to be heard through his purity and holiness. *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

4. Faith, as exercised in looking to God's holy temple, it imports, that in the act of believing it consults the *honour* of God's holiness: *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple; there does beauty shine*: there does the holiness of God shine; there does all the attributes of God shine: and faith expects salvation from God, through Jesus Christ; *I will look again to God's holy temple.*

5. Faith, in looking to God's holy temple, it views Christ as the consecrated way to God: *I will look again towards thy holy temple*. It is God's way; God's consecrated way. I hope to win near to God through this way: it is the way consecrated through the vail of the Redeemer's flesh. *I will look again towards thy holy temple.*

6. This

6. This act of faith, as it is a looking to God's holy temple, imports, *The bold approach of faith unto God, through Jesus Christ. We have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus.* However guilty and filthy of ourselves, here is a foundation of boldness. This boldness of faith is expressed in God's face, in the words of the text: *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*—Thus I have given you some view of the import of faith as it is a *looking*; a *looking again*; and a *looking unto God's holy temple*.

*4thly*, The fourth thing is the *circumstances* how faith looks towards God's holy temple; and that is with a *notwithstanding*, or a *yet*. Notwithstanding all that is come and gone; notwithstanding all difficulties I have undergone; notwithstanding I concluded I was a cast-away; yet faith surmounts all difficulties. *Yet will I look towards God's holy temple.*

III. The third thing in the general method was, to notice what are the *discouragements* that faith has to grapple with, as imported in the *yet* of the text. Faith is a grace that has to surmount many difficulties; yea, all difficulties. Now, if it be enquired, what are these difficulties? I confine myself to the context. And here I shall observe three grand difficulties that were in Jonah's way of believing, and giving this look to God's holy temple. And many difficulties there are in the way of many of the Lord's people, if not in them all. They are these: 1. Egregious and great guilt may be in the way; 2. Strong and powerful corruptions; 3. Angry providences, and dreadful dispensations may be in the way.

*1st*, There may be great *guilt* in the way of believing; that yet faith must surmount in looking towards God's holy temple. This is exemplified in Jonah's case here. Was there not great guilt lying upon his conscience?

1. There was the plain *command* of God to go and preach unto Nineveh, and tell them, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.* But he obstinately rebelled against the command of God.

2. His guilt behoved to be great, in regard God hereby was to prevent the *ruin* of Nineveh; yet he would not go to deliver God's message to them.

3. The excuses that Jonah made, or the inducements that hindered him from executing this commission, were most *unworthy* of a prophet of God. He was displeased that God should shew mercy unto the Ninevites.

4. His sin and guilt was greatly aggravated, from what *mercy* God had shewn unto him. He had given him grace; he had dignified him to be a prophet; he had given many things that aggravated his guilt exceedingly. And now, what shall become of the man? Why, faith surmounts these; *yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* How does faith get this great guilt surmounted? Why, it looks to the *mercy* of God; it sees God to be the Lord God, pardoning iniquity, merciful and gracious, in the temple? It sees pardon and remission of sins in this temple; it sees all the promises, yea, and amen in Christ Jesus: it takes up the promise, *I, even I am he that blotteth out thine iniquities, and I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness.* Faith getting a view of God's temple, or of the Christ of God, sees the bowels of mercy that are with God; and sees God a promising God, and so wins off this difficulty of grievous guilt, that lies upon the conscience.

2dly, Another difficulty, is *strong corruption.* This was the case with Jonah: he not only lay under great guilt; but his corruption was strong; his enmity against the will of God was strong. 1. Observe, Jonah sinned against a great deal of *light*: his corruption overcame his conversion. 2. Jonah *covered* the light from them in this case. 3. Jonah by reason of the power of corruption was *hardened.* He could not pray, and call upon his God, no; his heart was alienated from the duty of prayer, until he was thrown into the belly of the whale. 4. By reason of these things, he was brought to the brink of ruin.

Well, when there is such powerful corruption, what can the soul do? Can Jonah expect that God will work a miracle for him that was rebelling against God? With what face can he look towards God, when God was pur-

pursuing him with wrath and indignation? But faith gets up its head, and surmounts these difficulties. How? by looking to God's holy temple: *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* Why, what is to be seen there, suitable to the power of corruption? Why, faith sees in Christ, the power of God, is not only able to take away the *guilt* of sin; but also able to take away the *power* of sin. It sees Christ to be the power of God: *I will look to thy holy temple.* In this temple faith sees the promise of God, not only with reference to the pardon of sin, but with reference also to the taking away of the power of sin. *Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

3dly, There is another great difficulty in the way of believing, which needs a looking with a *notwithstanding*, or a *yet will I look again*; and that is, *angry providences, dreadful dispensations.* Oh! was not this the case with Jonah? Yes truly. He was under terrible dispensations of providences: for, he was now quite deprived of the *comfortable* presence of God: *The comforter, that should relieve his soul, was far from him*: and, at the same time, God was pursuing him for his disobedience. Every one that reads the history here, may see what terrible dispensations he was brought under. God, for his disobedience, pursues him, and all that were about him. I remember, that the mariners that were with Jonah, they are said to belong to Nineveh; and after they went home remembered what had befallen them; how God had cast Jonah into the sea; and how he was swallowed up of the whale; and how God had wrought a miracle for him: and this made his preaching take the more effect upon them. However, Jonah was under very strange and fearful-like providences: and, among other things, Jonah might reckon that his looking to God's holy temple was not ingenious work: it was out of necessity and fear, and not out of choice, when he was brought to this sad pass. But we have his faith conquering all these difficulties; *I said, yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* And, in this providence, we may notice how faith gets the victory by these, and the like means.

1. Though the soul, in straits, be driven unto Christ, under its difficulties; yet the soul that makes Christ its *last shift*, will be welcome to our Lord Jesus Christ: and faith comes to act more kindly afterwards.

2. Faith is a grace that can look to the *mercy* of God amidst all the angry dispensations of God; it can see mercy in the midst of wrath. Again,

3. Faith looks to the angry providences of God, and his dreadful dispensations that the soul is trysted with; yea, it looks to them in the glass of the *promise*; and particularly that promise that was cited in the former sermon, Isa. lvii. 17. *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.* Here was a very trying providence: here was wrath kindled; and here was wrath pursuing the soul: and here were heavy providences, as it were, rousing corruption, and making the person fight more against God; *He went on frowardly*; and yet, in this very case, faith looks to sovereign mercy: *I have seen his ways, and will heal him.* Again,

4. Faith, in the midst of terrible times, wherein God is shewing himself angry; faith, I say *overcomes* in looking to God's holy temple; and looking over all angry dispensations in the way. The woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. she cometh to Christ, saying, *O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.* Well, she got one repulse on the back of another. The first was, *he answered her not a word*: he, as it were, disdained to regard her. And when his disciples came to interceed for her, a second discouragement is cast quite in her way; *I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Well, the woman comes again the third time, and worshipped him, saying, *Lord help me.* But here is another repulse; *It is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it to dogs.* Well, this was enough to fill her with despair: but faith was at hand, and draws arguments from that which might have been matter of discouragement; *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* On this our blessed Lord says, *O woman, great is thy faith.*—So it is with  
faith



faith looking to Christ, notwithstanding all the difficulties that are in the way, and amidst angry dispensations of divine providence.

IV. The fourth general head in the method, was to give some *reasons*, why faith is the surest way of relief, from the saddest cases that the children of God can be in. I shall briefly assign these four reasons following.

1. Because it is the way that God has commanded. God hath ordered us, in the greatest trouble, to trust in him: *Trust in the Lord for ever; for, in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.* God hath commanded us to take the way of looking to his holy temple.

2. Another reason is, because the promise is *annexed* to this way: *He that believeth shall be saved.*

3. This is the way that all the *saints* God's in all their difficulties, have taken: *By this way the elder obtained a good report.* And ye see how they wrought miracles by faith, Heb. xi.

4. This is the way wherein his people have win *nigh* unto him; and they found this to be the safe way. It is said, *They looked to him, and were lightened: this poor man cried, and the Lord helped him.* And I trusted in him, and I am helped. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.*

V. We now proceed to the *application* of the subject. And we may apply it in an use of information, trial, and exhortation.

1<sup>st</sup>, We may try it in an use of *information*. And,

1. Hence we may see, why faith is the *eye sore of hell*. Why, Satan fights against neither small nor great, but against this grace of faith. Why, it is by faith that we bruise Satan's head: it is by faith that we have power with God, and prevail.

2. Hence see what is the *ground* of all the discouragements which the people of God meet with. Why, it is their unbelief: they are not employed in looking unto God's holy temple.

3. Hence see what is the *duty* of backsliding believers, and backsliding churches and professors, that have turned

turned away their eyes from looking to God's holy temple: why, their duty is to *return to the Lord, from whom they have fallen by their iniquities*. This is the duty of the generation; and of backsliding Scotland, to *return to the Lord*.—It is the duty of those that have turned aside unto crooked ways, to return to the Lord. It is the duty of those that have gone aside out of God's way, and deserted their holy profession, to return to the Lord. In so far as any desert their holy profession, wherein they were baptized, in so far have they turned away their eyes from God's holy temple.—It is the duty of the backsliding generation to return: and, indeed, those who have been professed witnesses for God, and his cause, they have more work upon their hand than they had. They have not only the corruptions of the *Judicatories* to witness against, which witnessing was the original design of the *Associate Court*, while we maintain the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of the church of Scotland: but we have more *ad-do*; that is, to witness against the extravagancies of new Separatists. We need not speak, as if we were designed to expose them: No; by their violent and furious methods, they have exposed themselves to the rational world; like these, in 2 Tim. iii. 3. of whom he says, *They shall proceed no farther, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men*. However, we may apprehend dreadful judgments coming on the generation, especially because of growing defection. O Sirs, cry that the Lord may recover such as have been ensnared by the temptations of the times, that they may return unto the good old way, and look again towards God's holy temple.

4. Hence see what a blessed thing it is to have *one look* of Christ. O what a good thing is that, when such a person is brought into straits! his relief is at hand, just to look again, and there find relief. O Sirs, they have great advantage who have got a sight of God in his temple, and have seen his glory in his sanctuary: whatever changes may befall them in the world, yet, O what advantage has the believer to think upon this God of Bethel, that he is what he was? *I am the God of Bethel*.

So the believer in Christ, let him be brought to never such a strait, if once he has looked to Christ, he hath but just again to look to Christ. But,

*Use 2. For trial.* Try, O Sirs, if ever you have looked to Christ, who is the holy temple. Got you never a sight of God's holy temple? that is, a sight of God in Christ. How shall I know this? Why, try it by these following things.

1. If you have been made to look to God's holy temple, than some time or other you have been cast into the sea of *trouble*. Sirs, people never get the pledge that God vouchsafes kindness unto them, until they be ready to sink in the ocean of divine wrath.

2. Try if your eyes have been opened to see the *holiness* of God in his temple, in Christ Jesus; and to see the way of salvation through Christ, to be such as brings honour to God's holiness, and glory unto all the attributes and perfections of God. This is a sight that faith gets, when it looks to God's holy temple.

3. Try what *effect* this has had upon you. If ever you look'd to God's holy temple, did ye not find it a heart-melting look? and did ye not find it a heart-conforming look: *By beholding his glory, ye have been changed into his image.* Did ye not find it a heart-humbling look? And did ye not find it a heart-weaning look; weaning you from the world, and making you count all things but loss and dung for Christ? And did you not find it a sin-killing look, making you to say, *What have I to do any more with idols?* Did it make Christ precious unto you? *To them that believe he is precious.*—Enquire what virtue is in the look ye got of Christ; it will make you look with disdain upon all other things.

4. Try if ye have look'd to God's holy temple: then certainly you will follow your look, and follow on to know the Lord. Sirs, they that have once looked to Christ, they will follow their look: it will not be one look that will satisfy them; they will look again and again. They will look to him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. So, I say, if you have look'd to Christ, ye will follow your look: your life will

will be a believing life; *The life they live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God.* It is true, unbelief many times gets the ascendent over them; but when unbelief prevails, that is not the believer's life, it is rather his death and disease: *His life is a life of faith on the Son of God.*

5. Try by this, if you have look'd to him, it will be, and has been, with a *notwithstanding*, or a *yet*, as in the text: *I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* And though ye have had difficulties in your way, and yet you have got them mastred; ye have had mountains in the way, and yet ye have win over them: ye have been brought to believe on the Son of God, notwithstanding of the great guilt you have been lying under, and notwithstanding strong corruption. *Yet will I look;* and notwithstanding angry providences, and heavy trials, yet ye have been made to *look again towards God's holy temple.* And though you are brought to think that your case is the most dreadful case, the most desperate case, the most terrible case that ever a soul was brought into, yet thou hast said, *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

*Use 3.* For *exhortation.* This doctrine may be improv'd in an use of exhortation. 1. To these that *never* look'd to Christ, God's holy temple. 2. To these that have *once* look'd, but are under such exercises that they dare not look again. 3. To such as are come to this resolution in the text, and are saying, notwithstanding of all difficulties, *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.*

1. To you that *never* look'd to Christ to this day; ye that never got faith.

(1.) I would have you to consider, that you have been viewing not God's *glory*, but *vanity* all your days. What are you looking to? to passing shadows, the vain profits and pleasures of time. Ye have been beholding nothing but *vanity* all your days

(2.) What will ye do in the day of *visitation*? what will you look to when death looks you in the face; and when ye must look upon death, judgment, and eternity? Where will you look for help?

(3.) Con-

(3.) Consider, ye that never look'd to Christ, what a *miserable* case you will be in, when all things else will leave you?

(4.) O bethink yourselves, what you are now called unto. Surely you are eternally undone, unless you give a look unto God's holy temple. Therefore, O sinner, I advise you to take the holy Spirit of God to anoint your eyes, with eye-salve, that you may see the Christ of God, and look to him: for there is no salvation in any other name, by which you can be saved, but by the name of Jesus. O come to him, who is the rock of ages; rest not in the old ship, in a secure state, or in your own legal righteousness, under the covenant of works; there is no safety there. You must throw yourself out of that old ship, and swim unto the rock of ages. When people are in great danger of sinking, or splitting upon a rock, they will be loth to come out of the ship, until their skillful mariner tell them, that they will sink and perish, unless they throw themselves out, and swim unto the rock: even so, Sirs, ye that are sailing in the old ship, under the covenant of works, thinking yourselves good enough, and imagining that ye can believe well enough; and thinking you have a good heart to God; and that God will be pleased with you, when you do as well as you can. O come out of that old ship, and swim to the rock of ages.—O say you, I cannot swim. O Sirs, your misery will not ly in this, that you are unable to come to Christ, but in that, that you are unwilling. If you cannot *swim* to Christ, *look* to him; *Look to me and be saved.* O Sirs, he wants but a look: the rock is a living rock, and can come to you. Look to the rock, and the rock will draw you to him. I remember it was said by a little maid, who was servant to Naaman's wife, *Would to God that my master would go to the prophet of Samaria; he would heal him of his leprosy:* So say I, would to God ye would look to Christ, he would heal you; his name is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, *I am the Lord that healeth you.*

2. A word to you that have *look'd* to Christ, but dare not look again. Is unbelief saying, *I am cast out of thy sight?* So it was with Jonah; and yet he looked. Are ye under grievous guilt lying upon your conscience? So it was with Jonah; and yet he looked towards God's

holy temple. O my dear friends, let nothing hinder you from looking to Christ. It is a very grievous trouble that exerciseth you, *viz.* an angry God: So it was with Jonah; and yet he looked. Is your sins the cause of the storm of wrath blowing at this day? So it was with Jonah; Jonah was the cause of the dreadful storm that blew upon the waters, and yet he *looked again towards God's holy temple.* Say not that ye dare not look again: I looked once, but now my case is such, I fear I will be welcome no more: why, what ails you poor soul, that you dare not look again? Is not Christ as good as ever he was? Whatever changes befalls you, he is God and changes not. Therefore let nothing hinder you from coming to him.

3. A word unto these that are brought unto this resolution in the text, that though they have apprehended themselves to be cast out of God's sight, yet are resolved to look, and to look *again towards God's holy temple.* Is this your work? Is this your resolution? O then, the blessing of God will attend this work. O look not to man, nor angels, nor creatures; look not to ministers; look not to your duties, nor your frames; look to *God's holy temple.* Look to it notwithstanding all the difficulties that may be in your way; pursue your resolutions: a firm resolution may do much. The mariner sets out at such a port; his resolution is to go to such another port: his resolution carries him to the haven, although he meet with storms in the way; many storms that might have set him quite back: yet the man pursues his resolution; and at last comes to the desired haven. Has God wrought such a resolution in you, as to look to his temple? O pursue the resolution, and that will bring you to the desired haven at last. Looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, living on him, resting upon him. O look to the temple where God dwells: there is enough for you in God's holy temple. Although unbelief may have a great ascendant over you, and make you say, *I am cast out of thy sight;* yet, notwithstanding of this, faith acted upon the Lord Jesus Christ will be relief unto you, when your way is like that of Jonah's here. *Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.* Amen.




# MINISTERIAL WARNINGS

By the REVEREND  
MR. R A L P H E R S K I N E,  
Late Minister of the Gospel at DUNFERMLINE.

Read publickly to that CONGREGATION.

Relative to some late OCCURRENCES there, concern-  
ing his Ministry, its being interrupted by the Ju-  
dicatories of the Church.



*A Ministerial Testimony, Warning, and Declaration.*

With relation to the *Invasion* attempted on MR. ERSKINE'S *Pulpit* and *Ministry*, by MR. HENRY HARDIE Minister in *Culross*, and by appointment of the *Presbytery* of *Dunfermline*, *Sabbath, June 6th, 1742.*

WHEREAS I understand, that the pretended Presbytery of Dunfermline did, on Wednesday last, appoint, that my pulpit should be henceforth occupied by other ministers and preachers than myself; and that, in prosecution of that appointment, Mr. Henry Hardie, minister in Culross, has adventured to take possession thereof, in order to the excluding of me from the exercise of my ministry therein; and in regard that I judge there are many who are not aware of the iniquity that is involved in this invasion made upon my pulpit, and intrusion made upon this congregation: Therefore I reckon myself obliged, by virtue of my ministerial office, as a watchman set upon the walls of the city of God here, to give warning to the people of this congregation of the sin and danger that attends this incroachment upon my ministerial labours; that they may not involve themselves in the guilt of supporting, owning, or countenancing the said intrusion and invasion; and, in order to this, I shall briefly notice the rise and spring of this violent obtrusion.

The pretended General Assembly, that met in the year 1740, having passed a sentence against eight ministers, whereby they pretended to depose them, in the manner expressed in their act; and this not for any error



ror in their doctrine, nor immorality in their practice, nor negligence in their ministry, the said Assembly themselves being judges; but merely because they were endeavouring to fulfil that ministry which they had received of the Lord, by bearing a judicial testimony to Scotland's covenanted reformation, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and presbyterial church-government, against that stream of defection and backsliding that was running through the land, and particularly among the ministers and judicatories of the present establishment; the said Presbytery of Dunfermline have now thought fit to sustain themselves executioners of this *unjust sentence*, by appointing my charge to be supplied, and my pulpit to be invaded: I do therefore give my testimony, in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, against this deed of the Presbytery of Dunfermline. And this I do for the following grounds and reasons.

I. Because this deed of the said Presbytery of Dunfermline carries in it an *approbation* of the unjust and sinful sentence of the foresaid Assembly against these eight ministers, and me among the rest: It is their setting their seal to that sentence that God never set his seal to by his approbation. That this procedure of the pretended Presbytery doth involve them in this guilt, is evident to all that have any understanding; because it proceeds upon a supposition, that this congregation is totally vacant, which it can be no other way, while I am yet living and officiating in my ministry here, than by the said sinful sentence of assembly, of which they are now the sinful executioners.

II. Because this deed is an evident *robbing* of this congregation of their present *lawful pastor*, and an intruding of ministers upon them without their consent, and without their being lawfully called or conveyed to enquire if they wanted two ministers in the place. Inasmuch that this deed is a manifest robbing the people of this congregation of their Christian liberty, and falls in among the common intrusions made in the land; in regard I know not of seven or eight persons, among all the seven or eight thousand examinable persons of this congregation, but seem to be still satisfied to subject them-

themselves to my ministry in the place. This procedure, therefore, infers also an approbation, or a practical homologating of all the violence done to God's heritage by the judicatories for many years bygone.

III. Because this deed carries in it a *strong attempt* to involve this congregation in the *sinful breach* of a *solemn engagement*, between them and me, before the great God. For here I must observe, that, in every orderly settlement of a minister among a people, there is a mutual covenant between the minister and the people, which is binding before God, the principal party in all covenants between man and man. By which covenant, I become bound and obliged to the duties of my pastoral office and calling amongst the people of this congregation; and, in like manner, they did bind and oblige themselves to give due respect to me, as one of Christ's ministers to them, and obedience and submission to my ministry in the Lord; and to do what in them lay to strengthen my hands, and encourage me in the great work of the ministry, as becomes a dutiful people to their lawful pastor. Heritors, Elders, Magistrates, Town-Counsellors, and Heads of Families, did all concur in the above solemn engagement, in their call given to me about one and thirty years ago. And though I am very conscious to myself of much sinful weakness, and many failures in the discharge of my pastoral duties; yet I can appeal to the consciences of the people of this congregation, if I have not, according to the measure of ability and grace given me, endeavoured to discharge the duties of my office amongst them, particularly by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ unto them; and I have some satisfying hope and persuasion, that I want not some seals of my ministerial work, and of my call to the same, among the people of this congregation. Therefore, as this deed is an attempt to separate what God has been joining these thirty years, and a rending of my people and me asunder, in the midst of my ministerial work amongst them; so it is a giving way to their incurring the guilt of a notorious breach, on their part, of that mutual covenant between them and their lawful pastor, to whose

ministry

ministry they had professed submission for thirty years space. And, if ever there was a call scriptural, harmonious and unanimous, fixing the pastoral relation to a people; if ever there was a call that had all the evidences of its being the call of God, it is that which now the said Presbytery of Dunfermline attempt to annul.

IV. This present deed involves in it the *guilt* of all the *corruptions* and *defections* of the time; in so far as it is a putting to their hand to slay the witnesses for a covenanted reformation in Scotland, relating to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house therein; for which I know not now of any judicial testimony, save what is in the hands of those that are associate for the defence of it, on which account some ignorantly reproach us as Schismatics. The authors of this present deed have shewn themselves enemies to the work of God, and the testimony of the day, by casting out one of those that are lifting it up.

Therefore, and for all these and the like grounds and reasons, I do, in the great name of our Lord God, whose I am, and whom I desire to serve in the gospel of his Son, *admonish* and *warn* the people of this congregation, that they give no manner of countenance to the ministry of such as are thus sinfully obtruding themselves upon my charge, robbing you and me of our rights, lest you thereby involve yourselves in the guilt of homologating and approving of that sinful sentence of Assembly 1740. in killing the witnesses for Scotland's covenanted reformation; and lest you involve yourselves in the sin and guilt of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, in abusing their authority, for supporting of that unjust and unlawful sentence, and in doing thus what in them lies, to cast a testimony for Christ, and for Scotland's covenanted reformation, out of the church of Dunfermline: Again, lest you involve yourselves in the guilt of justifying an intrusion upon my ministerial labours, and so of trampling upon my commission and ministry that God hath given me amongst you; and of bearing down a testimony, which I hold, in conjunction with others, for the honour of Christ, and the rights  
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of his injured crown and kingdom. And finally, lest you be found guilty of joining with those that are evidently crucifying Christ, in his cause and truth, at this day, wherein the anger of the Lord is great, and his awful judgments are going round. For all these reasons, I warn and admonish all the people of this congregation, to beware of countenancing those that do, or shall continue afterwards to occupy the charge that belongs to me, invading my pulpit, excluding me from my ministry therein, and obtruding a ministry upon you without your call and consent; lest, by countenancing them, and partaking with others in their sin, you come also to share with them in their judgments.

I refer the conduct of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and of such as, by their orders, do now, or shall hereafter, obtrude themselves upon my pulpit and ministry here, to be judged and cognosed by the chief Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, at the day of our compearance before his glorious tribunal.

In this testimony and warning, however it may be mocked at and ridiculed by some, galling and vexing to others, and tormenting to them that dwell upon the earth; yet therein I have endeavoured to exoner myself, to discharge my duty, and deliver my soul, and the souls of others that hear me. And though this warning should, through ignorance, be disregarded by some; or, through wickedness, be despised by others; yet I incline to follow the example of our glorious masters, who said, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Even so I desire to pray, Lord, forgive them, and lay not their iniquity to their charge of this congregation.

WARNING

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A WARNING offered by MR. RALPH ERSKINE to  
the Congregation of DUNFERMLINE, Sabbath,  
August 22d, 1742.

UNDERSTANDING that the pretended Presbytery of Dunfermline have, on Wednesday last, taken some steps, in concurrence with some in the Parish applying to them, toward the calling of a minister, in my room and place, to this congregation, as if that place were lawfully voided; or, by divine allowance, vacant, and could be lawfully, and by divine allowance, supplied with another minister, as long as I live, and continue in the exercise of the ministry, to which I was regularly and unanimously called by this congregation; and fearing lest many in this place, either through ignorance or inadvertency, be not aware of the danger they are in, if they shall give their assent or consent, by their subscription for, or submission to, another minister in my room, I thought it my duty at present to represent the danger thereof, and to give them fair warning. Let it therefore be considered,

I. That none can have a hand in calling another minister in my room, as matters at present stand, without *involving* themselves in the *sin* and *guilt* of those pretended judicatories, that have first passed, and then executed a wicked sentence against the associate ministers for maintaining reformation-principles against a course of defection therefrom; pretending to depose them from their ministry, in the several charges to which God had called them, and me among the rest. And since the calling of another minister in my room, must be upon the ground of a supposed vacancy, occasioned by the said sinful sentence, and sinful execution thereof, none of this Parish can give consent to such a call, without

being involved in that sin and guilt, and, upon the matter, consenting to my being *deposed*, and *excluded* from my ministerial charge and work in this congregation.

II. Those that shall have a hand in calling another minister, in my room in this congregation, become guilty of a very great *inconsistency* with themselves, if they consider the ground upon which I am persecuted, and excluded from my charge by the said judicatories, *namely*, the ground upon which I engaged to stand when I was licensed and ordained minister here, *viz.* the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland, grounded upon the word of God, and sworn to by our covenants, national and solemn league. Before the Presbytery then in being, (which looked indeed like a reforming Presbytery; and, were they not all now in the dust, they could witness that before them) I owned the binding obligation of these covenants; and declared my resolution, through grace, to stand to these covenanted and reformation-principles. And my continuing to stand upon that ground, from which the present judicatories have gone off, is the present persecuting violence against me. And if any in this congregation, by calling another minister, consent to the deed of the present judicatories, they act so inconsistently with themselves, as to reject me for the reason and ground upon which they received me, and upon which they have been remaining under my ministry these thirty years and more; for I stand upon no other ground than I did at first, and have done all along. I have no new Bible, no new Confession, no new principles, no new terms of people's communion with me; but the very same covenanted principles as before: and why I should be rejected now, more than before, let those that are disposed to do so consider, and see how they shall answer to God for such inconsistency with themselves.

This, by the by, answers the ignorant objection of some, "Why, you have left the kirk, and her judicatories; you have left the presbytery, that is now carrying

“rying on the call for another.” It is easy to answer, from what I have said, That by no means did I leave them, till they left me standing upon the very ground upon which their predecessors set me: But they have left both their predecessors and me, by rejecting a testimony, given in to them judicially, against the present defections from these reformation-principles. If a great overflowing stream should carry down a vast company of people, and leave but a few of them standing where they were, How ridiculous would it be to say, that these that are standing have made a schism, by leaving or separating from their brethren that are carried down the stream? Even so absurd is it to say, that those are guilty of schismatical separation from, or leaving their brethren, who are standing where they were, to their old presbyterian principles, and the rest carried down the stream of defection from them: And if I be standing where I was, only with a new testimony in my hand, for my former old principles, those that now shall discard me as their minister, by calling in another in my room, can never reconcile themselves now, with themselves formerly, but by owning practically that they are content to be carried down the stream of defection with the rest of the present backsliding generation.

III. Those that consent to the calling of another minister to this place, in my room, will involve themselves in the guilt of *perjury* and *covenant-breaking*: for minister and people, once married together by a regular gospel-call, such as mine was, are bound by covenant, before the great God, to mutual fidelity one toward another; he to a faithful discharge of his ministerial work amongst them, and they to a continued submission to him in the Lord: And whom God hath thus joined, it is not lawful for men to put asunder, unless there were lawful and scriptural grounds for a divorce.

Now, perjury and covenant-breaking, in such a case as this, where the relation is sacred and spiritual, must run very deep: And the longer the relation has subsisted, the more aggravated will their sin be that endeavour the dissolving of it; since the longer it has stood, the more firm and numerous are the bonds by which it has

been established. If my ministry has been blessed, to the conversion of some, and, from time to time, to the edification of converts; or even to the awakning and alarming of others in this congregation, so as that they are conscious to themselves of its having been useful, at sundry times, for touching and reaching their hearts and consciences, as well as enlightning their minds and understandings; then their giving consent to the extruding of me, and the intruding of any other in my room, while this relation is not lawfully dissolved, must be a sin against all such light as they have seen, and all such experience as they have felt under my ministry; and a sin of this sort must run deeper than they are aware of; and must be of that nature, as cannot but stare them in the face, when God arises and makes his deputy, conscience, to awaken upon them.

Some may here object, "What shall become of the rest of the Parish, that now desert your ministry? Should they remain destitute, and the other place of worship, where you do not now preach, remain desolate? Is it their sin to seek after another?" I answer, If they should be destitute, they have made themselves so, by casting off my ministry; and they have now indeed involved themselves in such circumstances, that it is both their sin that they *want* a minister, and their sin that they *seek* another in my room. For, while things stand as they are, they cannot chuse or submit to another, without being guilty of a continued act of covenant-breaking, and trampling upon the ministry of one whom they called, and God sent to them to be their minister. And as to put my not preaching now in the other ordinary place, you all know it is merely owing to my being excluded by violence, such as I could not resist, unless I had designed, by carnal weapons, to fight my way to it; which, you will own, was neither suitable to my character and profession, nor any way adapted to your edification. But,

IV. Those that have a hand in calling another to this congregation in my room, they are exposing themselves to that *wrath of God*, that is threatned in his word against



gainst such as are guilty of misusing the messengers of God, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. where it is said of that people, *The Lord God of their Fathers sent to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on them: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.* The poor people of this place do not know, but in rejecting me, they are rejecting him that sent me: And though they could get one that shall preach to them as an angel of light, this iniquity is and will be marked before the Lord. They cannot get one as sent of God, and commisionate of him to them, as long as my commission to be their minister remains valid before God. They cannot seek another in my room with a good conscience; nor can another come with a good conscience into my room, because it cannot be done without an obtrusion upon my lawful ministry here; and therefore they cannot, in this way, expect to have one in mercy, and with a blessing, but rather in wrath, and with a curse.

Although I am persecuted, because I do not side with the present times, and my persecutors may think they do God service, and that there is no persecution in the case; yet I reckon my being persecuted in my office and ministerial work, more gross and heinous than any outward corporal persecution, and what tends to bring on the greatest wrath. The people of this place, that are guilty, know not that they are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath; greater wrath than that which will fall upon heathens, that never enjoyed the gospel. Precious Christ, and his everlasting gospel, is become a stumbling-block to them; and they, to support their present practice, are a prey to every bitter lying spirit, that tends to disparage the ministry which they abandon. As, of old, the Pharisees received every false and reproachful account of Christ they could pick up, to justify their opposition to him; so, when once people begin to desert, disown, and disregard a gospel-ministry they have been long under, they will be glad to entertain every lying story, every false and calumniating

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ing report they can get, to justify their practice in deserting it: And God, in his righteous judgment, will let those stumbling-blocks be put in their way, and let them fall and stumble upon them to their ruin, 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Isa. viii. 14, 15. Christ himself could not be so openly rejected, with any grace, by the Jews, Pharisees, and people of old, if their woful contempt of him had not been rendered, as it were, justifiable, by its being gilded over with the notion of Christ's being a blasphemer of God, and thereupon their opposition to him looked on as a duty and service to God. But the slighting of Christ and his message will be pursued with heavy judgments, though this sin should be covered over with a mask of duty to God, and though it should be fortified with Sanhedrims and Judicatories in its favours. *I would have gathered you, but ye would not, says Christ; therefore behold your house is left desolate, Matth. xxiii. 37, 38.*

V. Those that have any hand in this sin of calling another minister to this congregation in my room, do by this deed, give *scandal* to this congregation that adhere to my ministry, and do thereby exclude themselves from the benefit of any sealing ordinance to be dispensed by me, until they shall confess their sin, and be purged from the scandal and offence they give thereby. And the scandal may appear plain and evident, not only from what is said, but if it be considered,

VI. That those who shall call, and submit to any other in my room, they not only reject their own lawful pastor, without any ground, but reject him at the last and most noted period of his life, when, in holy providence, he is become *more than a minister* to them as formerly, a *public witness* for the persecuted truth and cause of Christ: And, to reject my ministry, in such circumstances, is not only a pouring contempt on the whole of my thirty years ministerial work in this place, and a declaring that the gospel has never been a favour of life, but of death to them; but also a despising of the whole witnessing-work of the day, and the public testimony of the time, wherein God hath honoured me to

to be concerned. And, indeed, if the people of this place had contrived a way to get rid of my ministry, twenty years ago, their guilt had not been so aggravated, as now, when a testimony is put in my hand, wherein the glory of God, and the credit of his name and truth is so much concerned: For now they cannot cast off my ministry for another in my room, nor countenance those that are carrying on such an obtrusion, without involving themselves in the guilt of all these public defections that I and others are witnessing against; and trampling upon these truths of God that we are witnessing for; and casting behind their back all these reformation-principles, whereof I have been called, all along, to be a professor and a preacher, but now to be a confessor and a witness.

Upon all these accounts, I see it my present duty to warn the people of this place, to consider what they are doing in this matter, as they have any regard to the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, the salvation of their own souls, their peace in a dying hour, and the great account they are to make before God's tribunal, of what improvement they make of the gospel-ministry he hath sent to them.

**A** Third Ministerial **WARNING** read publickly to the Congregation of **DUNFERMLINE**, on Sabbath, May 1st, 1743.

**W**HEREAS I understand, that last Sabbath-day there was, by appointment of the pretended Presbytery of Dunfermline, an intimation made; of the admission of one to be minister in this Congregation, in my room and place, upon Thursday next; and notwithstanding I have formerly given, and publickly read solemn warnings to this congregation on this head, both when the said Presbytery appointed my room to be supplied with other ministers, and afterward, when they appointed the moderation of a call for another minister in this place; and though these warnings have been printed and published, so as every one has access to see and read them, and none that I know has ever yet offered to answer them, and consequently I may be judged to have exonerated myself sufficiently on this head: Yet, lest any should misinterpret my silence on this occasion, as if I, or any of this congregation, might now be easy or indifferent in this matter, or were any way conniving at this sinful and remarkable obstruction; and lest any should afterwards alledge, that this designed settlement was carried on without any dissenting or reclaiming voice in this congregation, and that such an open and wicked encroachment was made without any kind of opposition; though I neither design nor desire, that any outward opposition be made, nor that any external disturbance in the least be given, by word or deed, to any that are, or may be concerned in this affair: Nay, so far on the contrary am I from the use of any such carnal weapons, to oppose the public corruptions of the time, or this noted obstruction among the  
rest,

rest, that I desire and expect, none that have a regard for my ministry, and for the cause of Christ so much run down at this day, will in the least offer to countenance that obtruding work; they that give their presence seem to give their consent, and to involve themselves in the whole guilt thereof.

All the opposition I propose that you or I should make against this designed admission, is only by a sober, meek, serious, and practical witness-bearing against it. Therefore I do, in my own name, as lawfully called of God, and of this congregation, to the work of the gospel ministry therein, and in the name of all that shall adhere to me, and my ministry, and in the fear of that God, to whom I must be accountable for all that I do, before him and this congregation, give my testimony against that intended admission, in so far as it is a palpable intrusion designed to be made upon my charge, and against the voice and consent of all in this congregation that are still cleaving to my ministry, and professing to witness for the reformation cause.

Again, In so far as it is contrary to the rule of God's word, and the gospel order of discipline and government in the house of God, a violence done to God's heritage, a sinful robbing this congregation of their right to, and interest in their only lawful minister; an open violation of the sacred bonds and obligations this Parish is under to encourage me in, and cleave to my ministry: so long as it is not so much as pretended, that I am either convicted of error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, but merely persecute for non-compliance with the defections of the judicatories, and judicial witnessing with others against the public defections and deviations from our reformation purity, and covenanted doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.

Again, I give testimony against this obtrusion, in so far as it includes an approbation of, and siding with the judicatories, in their unlawful and unwarrantable acts and sentences, past against a number of ministers witnessing for the reformation work; and as it includes a contempt poured upon the dispensation of the gospel

here, accompanied with a testimony for the whole covenanted reformation principles.

In so far likewise, as it includes evident perjury and treachery, not only in violating the particular oath of God towards me, as minister in this place, when I was unanimously called thereto, by all sorts of people therein; but also a breaking of the national vows for reformation, which both the ministers of this Presbytery, and the people of this place have formerly professed to be binding upon them: And consequently, as it includes the sin of apostacy after the knowledge of the truth, and a turning their backs upon the good ways of the Lord.

Likewise, I testify against it, as it is an open laying of a foundation for a perpetual schism and separation here, from the true Presbyterian Reformation Cause, which this congregation has been professing with me these thirty-two years. As it is for adhering to that cause, I am excluded from the former legal advantages I enjoyed; so the judicatories, for deserting that cause, are chargeable with the schism and separation that is now like to be perpetuate here, and for which reason all that join with and cleave to the said established judicatories, in their present corrupt way, are guilty of concurring with, and involved in that schism.

Again, in so far as this obtruding work in view, is an opening of a way for other sinful settlements in this congregation, wherein no other vacancy can be filled up, but such as will be collegiate partakers with the intruded, and intruding fraternity; and consequently such as either will have no conscience of the corruptions of the times, and the danger of running without being called and sent, or else must be reckoned to be brought in over the belly of all the light and conscience that God has given them; which is a very heaven-daring provocation, and may justly bring wrath to the uttermost upon this place, and make God pursue a heavy quarrel with the inhabitants thereof, and with their posterity after them, who shall be involved in, and accessory to the wickedness and guilt of these settlements,

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so opposite to the order and appointment of the God of heaven.

In so far also, as it is an opening of a wide door in this place, for planting and perpetuating a lax and erroneous ministry, a carnal, loose and latitudinarian ministry, to the perverting of the gospel of Christ, and the ruining of immortal souls, that cannot well distinguish between sound or unsound, legal or gospel doctrine; while the most part of people are subject to be easily seduced by corrupt teachers, and are matter fit for them to be cast into any form; if they satisfy them with a few plausible sermons, they are malleable and fit to be hammered into any shape, Jer. v. 31. *The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so,* Amos iv. 5. *This liketh you, O house of Israel, (or as it is in the margin, so you love.)* It will be no wonder, if dismal effects of this sort take place, before half the years pass over, that have elapsed, since I was called to be minister here.

On all these accounts, and for all the reasons contained in the two warnings I read before you not long ago, and that are published, which I hereby advise you to look over again and consider, and likewise for all the reasons contained in the Act and Testimony and Declination emitted by the Associate Presbytery, against former and present defections of the establish church, in so far as this intended obtrusion contradicts that Testimony, and homologates these defections, I give this open testimony against it, and however it may be despised by some, and derided by others, yet for my own exoneration, and for your warning, and especially that God may be glorified, whatever be the effect, I leave this testimony, to be marked down by all that hear me in the register of your consciences, as one of the books to be opened in the great day of accounts, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel,

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