

RICHARD SIBBES

THE LIFE OF FAITH

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LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME."

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by Richard Sibbes

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THE LIFE OF FAITH

SERMON I

And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.—GAL. 2:20.

THEY are the words of a man pursued by the law unto Christ, proceeding from the Spirit of Christ; the nature whereof is, to apply generals to particulars. So St Paul here, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' He sees he is dead by the law; therefore he

seeks for a better husband. The law finds him dead, and leaves him dead. Thus pursued by the tenor of the law, he flies to Christ, and says, 'I am crucified with Christ,' nevertheless I live. How? 'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

There be three ranks of men in the world, under which all men may be comprehended.

1. The estate of nature.
2. The estate of men under the spirit of bondage.
3. The estate of grace under the gospel.

This is the speech of one of the third rank, of a man awaked by the spirit of bondage, who hath attained to a clear and evident sight of his misery, and of the excellent remedies, of a man who hath attained to a new frame and temper of soul. It is the speech of a person in the state of grace, who now aspires to a more noble and excellent life. In the words we may consider divers things.

1. That there is another manner of life than the ordinary life of nature.
2. That it is a better and more excellent life than that he formerly lived; as if he had said, Now, since I have seen the misery of my former natural estate, and the excellency of a spiritual life by faith in the Son of God, I esteem my former life to have been wretched, not worthy of the name of life, compared with that which I live now, as being founded in a better root than the 'first Adam.'
3. The spring of this life is the Son of God. God is life naturally, and we have life no otherwise than from him who quickeneth all things.
4. The conveyance of this spiritual life is by faith. Water springs not without a conduit to carry and spread it. The sun warms not without beams, and the liver conveys not blood without veins. So faith is that vessel which conveys this spiritual life, that conduit wherein all spiritual graces run, for the framing and working of spiritual life, conveying all, to pitch upon those excellencies of the Son of God.

5. The object and root of this spiritual life is, faith in the Son of God, loving him, and giving himself for him.

So there is a life besides the natural life, and the root of it is Christ, who is our life. Life is the best thing in the world, most esteemed of us; as the devil said concerning Job, 'Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life,' Job 2:4. Life is the foundation of all comforts; life is the vigour proceeding from soul and body, So the spiritual life is nothing else but that excellent vigour, and strong connected strength of the soul and body renewed, grounded on supernatural reasons, which makes it follow the directions of the word, over-master the flesh, and so by degrees be transformed into the image of Christ, consisting in holiness and righteousness.

Doct. The first point then is, that there is a better life than a natural life, because there is somewhat in a man which aspires and looks to a better estate. A child in the mother's womb hath life and senses in that dark place, but it is not contented therewith, but is restless as in a prison, tumbles and turns up and down; for this life that it hath is not to dwell there, but a beginning-life to fit it to live in the more open and spacious world, whither it must shortly be sent forth. So in this dark life of ours there is a divine instinct, power, and faculty in men, that nothing here can suffice; which shews, that there is a place to satiate the will and the understanding, and fill the affections; that there is a condition which shall make a man fully happy. That there must be a better life, which is this spiritual life; for this life which we live in the flesh is a thing of nothing. Our little life we live here, wherefore is it? To live a while, to eat and drink and enjoy our pleasures, and then fall down and die like a beast? Oh no, but to make a beginning for a better life. If this life be such a blessing, what is then that most excellent spiritual life we speak of? It holds out beyond all. By this spiritual life, when one is most sick, you shall see him most lively and spiritual. When sense, and spirit, and sight, and all fail, yet by reasons drawn from spiritual life he comforts himself in Christ, the glory to come, and what he hath done for him. So the apostle shews the aim of a Christian is to be in sufferings of this life for the increase of a better, 2 Cor. 4:10, saith he, 'Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made

manifest in our body.' When the body is weakest, the spirit is strongest. Take a man who hath not this spirit and hope, he is à la mort* at the apprehension of death, because he hath no faith, no knowledge, no quickening life, no sense or taste of more excellent things; he knows not whether there be a Holy Ghost or not: or if he be convinced in conscience, yet he is taken up with horrors, and fears condemnation at hand for evermore. Oh what are we without this life? Otherwise an heathen or an infidel were as happy as we.

A Christian furnished with this spiritual life can see Christ and glory, beyond all the things of this life; he can look backwards, make use of all things past, see the vanity of things so admired of others; he can taste things nature doth not relish; he hath strength of reasons beyond all the apprehensions of reason; he is a man of a strong working. This should stir us up above all things to get this spiritual life in us, lest, like St Paul's living dead widow, we be dead whilst we be alive, 1 Tim. 5:6. Therefore, unless we will be dead creatures, labour we must for a spiritual life, for there is another death which follows the first death. We not only lose God and Christ, life and glory, eternal life, communion with saints and angels, but also we come to eternal torments with the devil and his angels. Therefore above all things go we to Christ, that we may live in his sight.

What is the reason we seek not more for this spiritual life? Because, when the conscience is not awakened, we think there is no such thing: like Judas, walking on in the state of nature, in drunkenness, voluptuousness, covetousness, and the like, until we perish suddenly. If the conscience be awakened, oh then it is easy to work upon such a one who sees his misery and desires the remedy. It was easy to persuade Jacob to send for corn into Egypt, when a famine was in the land of Canaan. It is easy to persuade men hungry and thirsty to eat and drink; easy to persuade a laden, weary man to lay down his burden and rest. So it is with us. If the conscience be awakened to have a sense of sin, and that intolerable wrath and eternal punishment due thereunto, we should and would long for this spiritual life.

I beseech you, let us believe there is such a life. Look 1 Pet. 1:3. There he blesses God, 'who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' None can go to heaven but

they who are begotten again here. The main help is the use of the means. This is that pool of Bethesda, at which if we lie the angel of the covenant will put us in to be healed. Never rest then till this life be gotten in us. When we find such an antipathy betwixt our spirits and sin as is between poison and them, then there is a beginning of the work. So we should hate sinful persons, whose conversations hinder the progress and increase of our spiritual life. Those who venture on all occasions, no wonder they do fall in sinful courses. What is all their care and endeavour but to draw one into sin? They care for their lusts, and never think of any more. A Christian will care most for the nourishing of his best life, knowing that good and bad company do, the one quicken, the other dead him.

Christ is called life, the bread of life, tree of life, and he gives us living water to refresh our souls, not that he is so essentially bread, or a tree, but by the efficacy of his working in us. For God is life in himself. Therefore he swears by it: 'As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner,' Ezek. 33:11. We consider not here of life so high, though this life must be derived from him principally. It is so naturally. The Son is the fountain of life, because he is God, who is radically, fundamentally, and essentially life.

But before Christ be fitted to be life for us, he must be man first, as John 6:55, 'For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' And the reason why he so quickens is, because he is also God, being that bread which came down from heaven, of which 'whose eateth shall live for ever.' Now this great work of our salvation being of necessity to be performed by an infinite person as God, who could not die, he therefore took upon him a mortal nature, to open a current to mercy and justice. Therefore his flesh is meat indeed; but the flesh profiteth nothing without the Spirit which quickens; for there must be a Spirit to seal up all this unto us. As without shedding of blood no forgiveness of sins, so without the Spirit sealing these things unto our souls, we can have no comfort of them. When we speak of spiritual life, he it is that we live for; by him, and in him, and through him we live. Therefore, 1 Cor. 15:45, 'the last Adam is called a quickening Spirit,' because by that Spirit he quickened himself, and quickens us now to live the life of grace, and shall hereafter quicken our dead bodies at the resurrection. So he is called 'the Sun of

righteousness,' for light and heat, because, as the sun lightens and warms, so he is the light of the world, as John speaks, 'lighting everything which cometh into the world,' John 1:9, warming also and cherishing the mass of things, and therefore is called light and life.

Thus have we seen briefly there is another life than the life of nature; that this is a most excellent life; and that the root and spring of it is the Son of God. Now the way of conveyance of this life is 'by faith.' A fountain is not sufficient to send forth water abroad; there must be pipes to convey it for use. So from the heart and liver there must be arteries and veins for the maintenance of life and conveyance of blood through all the body. Christ is the heart and liver of all spiritual life; but there must be a conveyance to bring it to us, and this is faith. But why is faith the grace to convey life to us?

(1.) Because we are saved now out of ourselves by another. Therefore that grace which brings us to this great good must lead us out of ourselves. This faith doth, which is the hand of the soul, to lay hold of all the graces, excellencies, and high perfections of Christ.

(2.) Because faith gives all the glory to the party* on whom it relies on and trusts, as Rom. 3:26. Paul shews why works were excluded; and such a righteousness was brought in, saith he, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth; and then he adds, 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.' If by love it had come, or humility, patience, or anything in us, some boasting might have been; but this looks another way, lays hold upon another's riches. Faith acknowledgeth nothing to be at home; therefore it goes to another to fetch it, which else it would not do.

(3.) Because we must be brought back again to God by a contrary way than that we were lost by; for the same way we could never have recovered. The serpent, we know, shaked Eve's faith in believing the threatening. Whilst they kept the word and feared the commandment, they kept their life; but, losing this awful respect, they lost communion with the fountain of love. So we fell by infidelity, and must return again by faith in the righteousness of another.

By this time we are come to the main thing intended, how we live by the faith of the Son of God. We shall not haply reach the depth of so profound a mystery; only I will endeavour to give you some few heads, wherein faith principally exerciseth her powers and functions.

1. The life of faith is exercised in our effectual calling.
2. In the state of justification, whence comes reconciliation.
3. In a vigorous life, arising on the comfort of our justification.
4. In our sanctification; in those supplies faith finds out to make up the imperfection thereof.
5. The life of faith in glorification.
6. We live by faith in all the several passages of this life, as we shall see when we come to them.

Thus we live continually by the faith of the Son of God, and so we must live till we come to heaven.

1. We live the life of faith in our effectual calling. The Spirit works it, the Spirit is God's hand. This makes, that our eyes are bent upwards to see a better life, to see a calling, to live holily and righteously in all things, to see what a rich means is provided to reconcile God and man, to satisfy justice, and so to draw us in a new way and course of life, to rely on God, and look unto him in all our actions. Then the grace of union is given. God's Spirit works our hearts by this faith, to have first union, and then communion with God. Thus the soul being seasoned, and seeing the excellency and necessity of another new life, touches Christ, and begins to live the life of faith in effectual calling; for at first we are dead and unlovely creatures, estranged from grace and gracious actions, until, in this estate, Christ is discovered by the Spirit, and faith to unite us to him.
2. Secondly, We live the life of faith in justification. This is a life of sentence that the soul lives by, peace being spoken unto it by the pardon of sin; for God by his Spirit doth report so much to the soul, giving us assurance that Christ our surety and peace-maker is raised up again. So

Eph. 2:5, it is said, 'Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us together, and made us sit in heavenly places with him.' And why? Because our Surety hath paid our debt. We say of a man condemned, he is a dead man till he have a pardon, which when he hath obtained, we turn our speech, and say, he lives. So in justification: being united unto Christ, and believing our pardon, we are said to live. Our sins lie on him as our surety; for then, as our husband in charge, he doth pay all our debts. Thus by virtue of our marriage to Christ, he discharges all our debts, and goeth away with them; even as the scapegoat in the wilderness went quite away with all the sins and iniquities of the people, never to return again. Look we therefore to our sins, the curse and wrath due unto them, and all as laid on him. Look at whatsoever is good in him, that is for us; whatsoever is evil in us, look in him for it, to have it taken away, pardoned, and not imputed.

As we sin daily, so Zech. 13:1, 'There is a fountain daily running, to wash away sin and uncleanness.' Therefore for our daily sinning, we must continually run and bathe our souls in this blood, apply the comforts of his sufferings, intercession, and obedience unto us. St John teaches us thus much; saith he, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,' 1 John 2:1. If we sin daily, he justifies the sinner daily: he came to save sinners: therefore, when sin stirs us up to run from God, we should run to him. Faith says, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. 8:1. Why? My sin was condemned in Christ, and a condemned person hath no voice. Christ came to destroy sin, and condemned sin in the flesh. Our sins were crucified with him, and are now all condemned sins, if we will go unto Christ, who hath borne all our iniquities, as the prophet Isaiah excellently shews.* Therefore St Paul triumphantly demands the question, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' Why? 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall then separate us from the love of Christ?' Rom. 8:33, 34. So in our daily sins you see we have use of these things, to have, upon our confession, a daily pardon of course taken out every day. Thus God would not have us sink.

So long as there is matter of guilt in us, God will have a way to cleanse our souls, and renew our comforts. Every day we run into new debts, and every day in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to ask pardon, and to run unto God, to have the book crossed out with his blood. Every day a Christian must eye the brazen serpent, I mean the Lord Jesus, signified thereby; he must sprinkle his heart with the blood of Christ, that the destroying angel may pass by him in the day of wrath, as the Israelites then did. This is it to live by faith; every day to sue out our pardon; to look unto our advocate and surety, who hath paid our debts, and cancelled that obligation against us, contrary to us, as the apostle speaks, daily to wash in that ever-running fountain. 'Christ is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec,' Ps. 110:4. Though the act be past, he remains the same still. What puts down our courage, strikes us with terror and fear, but our sins? Oh, but why is this brazen serpent lifted, but thus to wash away our daily frailties and failings, so as whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life? John 3:14, 15.

So justification is not only a sentence of pardon, but it is also, as Rom. 5:15, a title to life everlasting: 'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by Jesus Christ.' Where God pardons, he advances. So if Satan shall come to shake my title, to shake this faith, assure him that Christ came to save sinners. If he object, thy title is naught and stained, being thou hast so many sins and corruptions about thy mortal body, answer him, What serves my faith for but for my comfort, to shew me that my title is in Christ? my strength and ground of comfort is in him, not in myself. See one parallel example, how David lived this life of faith in justification: 'If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand?' Ps. 130:3. There he pronounces death on himself ere he be acquitted, and so must we in the like case. But then comes the appeal: 'But mercy is with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Enlarge it yourself. If a man be not sound in this point, all he does is nothing. This is all in all. Our sanctification without this is nothing. This is the ground of all. Be careful of this, to look to Christ's obedience, life, death, and sufferings, and those comforts flowing from our interest therein.

But to direct you a little further ere we leave this sweet point.

First, Look back every day unto the passages thereof. See how we have passed along, see what sins have escaped thee; then come at night to God, confess and be sorry for all, resolve against all, crave strength against all. Oh it is a fearful state to sleep in sin; better sleep in a house full of adders and venomous beasts. See also and watch every morning; corruption doth cleave to all our best actions; we pass no day so, but we have cause to say, Lord forgive us our sins. By this course we shall keep our souls free, being ready for death. We shall by our particular reckoning, every day clearing the score, be ready for our great general pardon, and when trouble comes, have only that to encounter with. I beseech you, therefore, put this in practice. Be sure with the day to clear the sins of that day; so shall ye live a comfortable life, and be fit for all estates, for life, for death, for sickness, trouble, or whatsoever, all our business lying in heaven then.

Obj. If it be thus, we need not care how we sin: it is but every day to sue out a new pardon.

Ans. Oh beware; ere our pardon be sealed, there must be confession, sorrow for sin, resolution with full purpose to do so no more; there must be arraignment, condemning, and judging of ourselves for it, because whatsoever we would not have God to do, we must do it ourselves. Our time in getting this quietus est sealed, is for the most part according to our sin. He that hath such a resolution to sin every day, because sin is every day pardoned, he may go long enough without pardon, at least comfort of his pardon. For though pardon of sins be pronounced, yet God hath the keeping of joy in his own hand. As David had his sin pardoned,—by the judgment of faith he knew thus much—yet Ps. 51:8, how doth he pray for joy, and that God would heal the bones which he had broken! He roared all the day, and still felt a pain like the breaking of bones. The joy of the Spirit had left him. This he cries to have restored. Thus though sin may be pardoned, yet the more we sin, the more hardly we shall repent, the longer we shall want joy; or, it may be, go all our lifetime mourning without comfort in such a case. Now let us see how it may be known that we live the life of faith in justification.

Trial 1. First, By trying how it comes in the soul; as Rom. 7:4, saith the

apostle, 'Wherefore, my brethren, we also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' After a man is dead by the law, and apprehends himself slain, then he comes to live this life of faith. Christ quickens none but the dead. Why do not the papists attain to this grace of justification? They never see themselves wholly dead, but join some life to the natural estate of man. Therefore Christ quickens them not. Such only are quickened by him who find themselves dead in the law. Then they come to have a holy despair, and to see that life and comfort is out of themselves in another. Justification springs from a holy despair, and receiving life, after we have seen ourselves dead.

Trial 2. Secondly, Where this life of faith is, there is a wonderful high valuing and prizing of Christ, his righteousness, merits, obedience, and wisdom of God in that way of forgiveness of our sins by this God-man, the wonderful mediator; as Philip. 3:8. Paul accounts all things 'but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord,' being contented to suffer the loss of all things to win Christ. It is the precious pearl to sell all for. Paul accounts all our own righteousness as nothing in regard of this. There must be a high estimation of the riches of Christ's obedience and sufferings: for where there is not this high estimation of it, they are rotten in the point of justification. But you see how Paul sets at nought and vilifies all things in regard thereof; so Rom. 4:16. Abraham is brought in to be justified by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. And Ps. 32:2, he is pronounced to be the blessed man, 'unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and whose sin is covered.'

Trial 3. Thirdly, When we have a zeal against all contrary doctrine, as St Paul shews to the Galatians, who would have joined works to faith: 'Christ is become of none effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace,' Gal. 5:4. And in the third chapter he says, 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?' 'This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' Gal. 3:1, 2. A man sound in the point of justification hath a hatred to popery, and all

such doctrine which impairs the riches of the grace of Christ. Death is in the Romish religion. Why are some of them then saved? Not because they die in that religion, but because they reverse their judgment in this point of justification.* So you see there is a hatred, a zeal in such, as St Paul had against contrary doctrines.

Trial 4. Fourthly, There is peace and joy settled in the heart: as Rom. 5:1, 2, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.'

Quest. To add one thing more ere I leave this point, In the case of relapse, what shall we do then? Are we not cut off? Must we not have a new incision?

Ans. I answer, Every man who falls does not fall on all-four, fall away quite. There be degrees of falling; as in a sick man, though ill, he is not by and by dead. Some life and strength remains, which works out towards health again. There is so much grace and life in justification left, as to recover him again. But as in other cases, so in relapses also, a man must live by faith. We see, 2 Cor. 5:20, even such as were in the state of grace, are entreated to be reconciled. Though we fall, we must not therefore fall off, but stir up grace, and recover ourselves again. So Isa. 55:7, there it is said, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' And then he adds the reason, 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' So Jer. 3:1, 'They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not the land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.' Thus we must live by faith, for all our slips and falls, yet not to let go our hold, but still run to the horns of this altar, still fly to this city of refuge, and so we shall be safe.

Quest. But what is the reason that many who are justified yet find not daily comfort?

Ans. Perhaps they daub up[†] themselves, and do not search the bottom of their corruption: as Ps. 32:3, David, when he kept close his sin, his bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long, and God's hand was heavy upon him day and night. Then he shews how he found comfort: 'I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto thee; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' So it may be in this case. We come not off with God freely, we do not ransack our sins, we search not all the corners. Sin is a marvellous subtle thing. Again, thereby many times God will humble us for a former sin, and keep off comfort, until we be more humbled, and stand in awe of sin.

3. Thirdly, Hence springs a vigorous life. A life of cheerfulness, when a man hath his pardon sued out, then comes life and joy, strength of holy actions well rooted and grounded. Who should joy, if a triumphant righteous person should not? Who have cause to rejoice more than kings? By justification we are made kings and priests, are lifted above all sins and lusts, world and devil; have a right and title to heaven. Shall a carnal man joy in his titles and privileges, and shall not we much more, being sons of God by adoption, and heirs of all things? So Rom. 5:1: 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and joy in tribulation.' Being once justified, the sting of all troubles is taken away. God is ours. We joy in God. This is all in all. The blood of Abel, that cries for vengeance; but the Spirit of God in this estate tells me, that the blood of Christ speaks better things, mercy, mercy; in his blood is always comfort, though we be weak and unskilful to apply it. The washing in this blood should make a Christian walk on cheerfully in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But I hasten to the next, which is,

4. Fourthly, The life of faith in sanctification. This springs from these grounds:

(1.) First, Faith lays hold on Christ, as God offers him. How is this? See 1 Cor. 1:30: 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' God gives Christ, not for justification only, but sanctification also: and thus faith must apprehend him.

(2.) Faith receives him as whole Christ in all his offices; not as a priest to save only, but as a king to rule; as a wife receives her husband, to be governed and ruled by him.

(3.) Again, Christ came not only to take away the guilt of sin, but the dominion of sin. He came, as John speaks, to destroy the whole work of the devil; as it is said, Eph. 5:25, 26, 'He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' Christ doth purge his church, not only from the guilt of sin, but also from the meddling and polluting of itself in the world with filthy things. So Rom. 8:3, the apostle shews, that 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' He came as well by water as by blood. Therefore faith puts him on, not only by justification, but also in sanctification. To clear this.

[1.] Upon justification of necessity comes sanctification. For what is the stop of God's mercy? His anger for sin committed; in which case he denies his Spirit. But with reconciliation there comes also the Spirit: as Ephes. 1:13, saith the apostle, 'In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.' Now the Spirit once given, is the seed of all graces. Whosoever is justified, hath the Spirit of Christ: Rom. 8:9, 'And if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

[2.] Again, having the Spirit of Christ, faith fetches all strength from Christ. Samson's strength was in his locks; a Christian's strength is in Christ. This the devil knows well, and therefore labours especially to weaken faith, and draw us from our strength. Christ says, 'Without me ye can do nothing,' John 15:5; and St Paul affirms, that he 'can do all things through Christ who strengthened him,' Philip. 4:13. The Spirit gives strength.

[3.] Again, as by Christ and his Spirit we have strength, so by his Spirit we have strong convincing reasons to work with strength from reason. Why doth a Christian carry himself in a holy just carriage answering his

profession? Oh, saith he, I have great reason; Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; and should not I give myself to him, deny my lusts, and live to him? For, indeed, the foundation of all Christian obedience is laid by faith in Christ. So when a man looks to heaven, he hath a reason to abstain from all lets and hindrances of his safe and comfortable passage; to magnify the riches of Christ's love, which hath provided for him such an inheritance, and to live accordingly. So when he looks to the pardon of sins past, he sees reason to hate them more and more, to strive against them in time to come, and to love Christ the more, who hath pardoned them. And when he looks to God's free love in Christ, he sees reason to be inflamed with divine love, to admire the riches of that grace, and to be thankful.

[4.] Again, Christian affections are as the wind, to carry us on in a holy life. Thus strength, and reason, and affections, these make a man work. First, love sets us a-work: 'we love him,' saith the apostle, 'because he loved us first,' 1 John 4:19. We have his love first shed abroad in our hearts, inflaming the affections, and kindling the heat of divine love; and then we send back a reflex of love unto him. God cares for nothing but faith which works by love. This love is a most operative affection stirred up by faith. Indeed, all our Christian graces are set a-work by faith in Christ.

Thus you see faith apprehending Christ, as God offers him; and these things which I have mentioned following, we come to live the life of faith in sanctification: an example whereof see in that woman, who because many sins were forgiven her, loved much. Love is bountiful. All obedience comes from love. Love is the keeping of the law. This affection is stirred up by faith, yea, by Christ, for by him we have the promise of the Spirit, whence all graces come, and promises of the new covenant, to have fleshly hearts given, and his Spirit put in us. All promises of justification and sanctification are derived from Christ. They are in him, made for him, and effected for his sake; for he is 'yea and amen,' the centre and ground of all the promises. Now being brought by faith to live in justification, we must of necessity also live by faith in sanctification. There be two parts of a holy life: 1. In mortification, dying to sin; 2. In vivification, living to righteousness.

For the first, What does it do to a man in this case? Why, he looks what brought Christ to suffer so much; my sin. So this affection stirs up the same passion in him, in a sort, which was in Christ, and makes him hate sin with a perfect hatred, as in Zechariah it is said, 'They should look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born,' Zech. 12:10. Secondly, It looks on the love of Christ, that made him give himself for us. This makes us to hate sin, and provokes us to live unto him who hath done so much for us. These two things in the death of Christ stir up hatred to sin.

Then again, in vivification, the same Spirit which quickened him doth also quicken us: as Col. 3:1, 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.' So that the same Spirit which is in Christ, being sent into us, quickens us also to have mounting and heavenly thoughts. As the foot and little finger, though distant, live and stir by the same life and spirits diffused through the whole body, so the same Spirit quickens every Christian this way. As also by imparting strength, he imparts reasons from the resurrection of Christ to make us heavenly-minded, so when the soul dies one way, it lives another way. For Christ having by the Spirit discovered a better state, and life to come, of eternity, immortality, tranquillity, and glory; then a Christian dies to all worldly things, and hath the affections taken up that way.

Thus we see every day so to lead our lives, as we not only live the life of faith in justification, but also of sanctification; how out of Christ's fulness to fetch grace for grace. Therefore in all our wants go to him still. He is not only a sacrifice satisfactory for our sins, but he is a storehouse also and treasure of all good things. He is made unto us sanctification, therefore beg we favour from him, and endowments of grace conformable to his grace. And again, when we lack fulness, let us not despair, but fetch the large vessel of faith, and we shall have a share of the large graces which are in Christ, according to the largeness of our faith.

Quest. What is the reason that so few find strength and comfort in Christianity?

Ans. They set upon getting of grace, and killing corruptions by their own strength, and so are ever wanting; but if a man depend upon God, he shall have fulness out of Christ. God hath sanctified his nature for this purpose, that out of his fulness we might have grace for grace. And so again, every day go to God, and plead for strength against sin, power to lead a holy life, and imputation of Christ's righteousness, to supply the defects of our sanctification. St Paul says, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me,' Philip. 4:13. It is a magnificent speech, and a great matter to have a man ready to suffer all things, and overcome all things. This will make us work wonderfully, if we have this strength supplied. See an instance, Luke 17:3, 4. Our Saviour tells his disciples, that they must forgive their brother seven times, and seven times, as often as he confesses his fault. They thought this a wonderful hard duty, for nothing is so sweet to a man as revenge, for he would willingly be his own carver in all things, and do things in his own strength. The disciples upon this fall a-praying, 'Lord, increase our faith;' as though they had said, We had need of faith to believe the pardon of so many sins, and to enable us to forgive so often. And so I say of the subduing of sin, we had need of faith to have so many sins subdued; yet faith will do it.

Now in this great work, 1. Go to God, and beg his Spirit, and repent of all manner of sin; 2. Then beg faith. This will set all other graces a-work. It is like the blood and spirits which run all the body over. So in our spiritual life, this faith must run along in all graces, and set them a-working, yea, it sets God and all his attributes a-work. It runs to Christ, and prays, Lord, increase my faith, that can bear nothing as I should, resist nothing, believe nothing, and trust nothing. This indeed must be all our strength, to see nothing in ourselves, but all in Christ.

Since Adam's fall, it was appointed that Christ must keep all our joy, our strength, and ability, yea, to be our life. God will not since that time trust us with it, for we would quickly lose all again. It is Christ's office. He hath these endowments, as man, given him, to furnish us with all things fitting to a spiritual life. Faith will fetch all from God in Christ, who is made the mediator of the New Testament, to convey all these things unto us. Yet further, let us see some trials to discern whether we live this life of faith in sanctification.

Trial 1. If it be thus with us, There will be a putting of ourselves upon Christ's government in all duties. Faith will do all that Christ commands, depending upon him for strength; and who so depends upon Christ for strength in one duty, will depend upon him for strength in another. There is a harmony betwixt the soul of a Christian and the command of obedience. He hearkens to the precepts of duty, as well as to the promises of forgiveness of sins. Where this universal obedience is not, here is not the life of faith in sanctification; for faith here takes not exception at one duty more than another, but looks for all the strength of performance from Christ, who for this cause is stored with all fulness, that it may drop down upon all his members.

Trial 2. Again, There will be a wonderful care not to grieve the Spirit, in such a one. As if he should say, I must depend upon the Spirit for help and assistance to do all, to guide me in my whole course, and shall I grieve and leave off the Spirit? Shall I carry myself so as to make him leave me? He must lead, instruct, comfort me, and assure me of my happiness; shall I then quench the Spirit? Therefore, I say, there will be a giving way to it, and a resolution settled, that this guiding in sanctification is the best guidance of all. A believing heart does tremble at any thing which hinders the Spirit's working. It sets not a step forward in anything without direction of the word and Spirit.

Trial 3. There will be courage to set upon any duty, to encounter and resist any sin; upon this ground, as he should say, have not I a storehouse of strength to go to? Is not he full of grace and goodness? Are not all his works wrought for us? Have not I exceeding many, great, rich and precious promises of help? Is not he the truth itself? Is there not then supply enough in Christ to help me out in all things? It were Pharaohlike to set us to work without strength and ability to go through with our work. There is light and heat in the sun to direct and cherish, much more in Christ their Maker. It is grace that leads us through all. We are justified freely through his grace, and by his grace we have continual strength supplied to enable us in all things. It is grace, grace! A sanctified liver by faith will therefore cheerfully set upon every duty.

Trial 4. Again, in this case, all is lively in a man. As we see a lively

fountain, the water whereof will sparkle and leap, so there will be living joys, speeches, delights, exhortations, sensible of good and evil. He will trust God, rely on his word and promise, because Christ cannot touch the soul, but we must be lively. As the man who no sooner touched Elisha's bones, but he stood up and revived, 2 Kings 13:21, so a touch of Christ quickens and makes vigorous. As Christ's promise is, John 4:14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.'

Let the use of all be this, Upon this discovery remember to go to Christ for succour, and labour to live plentifully and abundantly in him this life of faith.

Obj. But, may some say, how should I go on to finish this great work of grace? It is a mighty thing to attain to, so many sins to overcome, so many temptations to buckle with, so many right hands and eyes to cut off and pull out.

Ans. I answer, Faith teaches us to fetch all from Christ, to beg his Spirit to help us in the course of sanctification, that by his might we may prevail; and so in all mastering sins beg strength of Christ, and then set upon the walls of Jericho, and they shall fall before you.

How shall this be done?

As they did; they believed the promise, that compassing it seven times it should fall to the ground. So we, having so much and so many promises for the subduing of sin in us, let us set upon them, look up unto Christ, believe the promise; and our walls of sin shall fall so far before us, as they shall neither hinder our comfort nor our salvation. Eclipse it they may for a little while, but the sun will shine again, break through and dispel all those clouds and mists.

Let us set upon all Goliahs, therefore, by the word and Spirit, and withal set our will against them, that we heartily desire and endeavour to be rid of such lets and incumbrances, and we shall in the end find a notable victory over them; and so in all troubles and vexations, as Luke 17:3, 4,

seq., with the disciples beg of God the increase of faith. This will help us out in all storms and tempests; help faith and help all. This will set heaven and earth a-working for our good. We see, Heb. 11, that all is attributed to faith. Why? Many other things concurred in those excellent actions for doing of them; but all is attributed to faith, because faith is that great wheel which set all the rest a-working, and stirs up all, as, 1 Cor. 13:4, seq., it is said of love, that it does all: for the same reason, because in those things there mentioned it stirs up all the rest. So in any grace which is wanting in us, go to Christ and say, Lord, I lack wisdom, counsel, strength, understanding, prudence in thy holy fear. The fulness of these are in thee; Lord, it is for thy glory to help thy poor servant, and bestow some measure of these upon me to do thy own work with. Lo! Lord, I lay myself down to thee to work by me. I have an angry spirit, full of tossings and turmoilings, but thou art the Prince of peace, abounding in meekness. Oh bestow on me such a meek and peaceable spirit, as, learning of thee, I may be meek and lowly in heart. I instance but in a few things; enlarge them yourselves. In all things let us, with confession of our wants, have an eye unto his fulness, and then we shall find the more of his abundance, when we set not upon these duties in our own strength only.

Two things are opposite to this life of faith.

(1.) Despair. This cuts the pillars of hope. Against this divers, as Luther for one, have been tempted to despair, but yet setting on the work, have overcome.* So the Israelites were afraid, upon the evil report of the spies of Canaan; but when they went on, they overcame and beat down all their enemies. So we say, Oh, I shall never overcome such a sin, or such a corruption, or do such a duty. This is not true, go on, look to Christ, join his strength with thy endeavour, be out of love with it, resolve thoroughly, set upon it strongly, and down it shall before thee.

(2.) The second is presumption; for this know, that in his own strength shall no man be strong. In St Paul's speech, 'By grace I am that I am,' 1 Cor. 15:10. So again, saith he, 'In him'—to wit, in Christ—'we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts 17:28. If we do presume, it is just with Christ to forsake us, as he did Peter. Take heed also of spiritual self-sufficiency, lest we rest on ourselves, and go not to Christ. Our moving to

all good duty is by him. It is but a word for him to help us, either in things tending to a spiritual or a natural life. Therefore, for conclusion of all, leave him not. In thy emptiness go to his fulness. If thy cistern be dry, turn the cock of thy faith, and his fountain will fill it again. Take him still along with thee, and thou canst not choose but live this life of faith in sanctification.

THE LIFE OF FAITH

SERMON II

And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.—GAL. 2:20.

WE see here our blessed apostle doth exemplify himself a man living another life than the life of nature, from higher reasons, grounds, and principles: 'I live,' saith he, 'by the faith of the Son of God.' First, he considers of another life than that which is rational, correcting the error of the same; for as reason corrects sense, so faith doth reason. This makes a man a new creature. The spring of this life is Christ. The means of conveyance is faith. It is meet now we should fetch all out of* ourselves; for since Adam lost what he had, it is dangerous to trust ourselves with it any more. Therefore Christ keeps it for us, and makes it ours by conveyance of his Spirit, making us all children of grace. Faith is wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and then it works, as Augustine says, *acti agimus*. Thus by effectual calling being once knit unto Christ, it is consecrated, as that by which we live. Christ is conceived in our souls by faith. As he was conceived in the Virgin's womb by her yielding to the promise, so we, closing with the promise, faith is wrought, and then Christ comes to live in the heart, as, believing the promise, he came thereafter to live in her womb. In the last sermon we propounded many

things touching the life of faith, how it lives in effectual calling, in justification and sanctification, in glorification, and in the several grand passages of this life, one of which remains yet to be unfolded, as, the life of faith in glorification.

Quest. 1. But how? Vision is for glory; what hath faith to do with this, which is of things unseen?

Ans. 1. I answer, we live by faith in glorification thus, because faith lays hold on the promise, and we have the promises of glory set down in the word, and with the promise we have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and having the earnest and first-fruits, God will surely give the harvest. We have the Spirit, and thence faith reasons, God will make good his promise, he will not take back his earnest. Thus faith gathers great matters, believes all, and so lives comfortably in expectation of fruition.

Ans. 2. Again, faith lives by the life of glorification in Christ the head. There is but one life of Christ and his members, and one Spirit, one with him in union in the first degree of life. His glory is our glory. As in justification our debts are made his, so his glory is made ours, as it is John 17:1, seq., and he is gone to prepare a place for us, to bring us where he is. 'The glory which thou gavest me,' saith Christ, 'I have given unto them;' yea, 'and in him also we sit in heavenly places,' Eph. 1:3. So in regard of Christ to whom we are knit, we live the life of glory.

Ans. 3. Thirdly, by reason of the nature of faith, as Heb. 11:1, which is to make things absent have a certain being. Now faith being wrought by an almighty power, raising us above ourselves to fasten and lay hold on so many mysteries, so it makes an almighty working in the soul, makes things afar off to come evident. Thus it presents glory to us, as though it were present, and we in some sort live by it.

How to know whether or not we live the life of faith in glorification.

1. This, where it is in faith, makes a Christian glorious, puts him in a spirit that is glorious in all estates. There is no grace in him, but it is set a-fire by this faith of glory to come. When faith looks back on things, it hath strength, but when it looks on glory, all graces and virtues are set a-work.

1. Hope is set on work by faith, and keeps the soul, as an anchor, steadfast against all assaults.

2. Hope doth stir up patience; for, saith the apostle, 'what we hope for, we wait patiently for it.' Thus patience is exercised in two ways. (1.) In suffering of grievances. (2.) In the expectation of time.* So faith doth thus put life in patience, reasoning;—Why? What! it will not be long; these afflictions will not endure ever; I myself shall away ere long; glory will come at last for ever and ever; therefore I will bear all patiently.

3. Again, it sets courage and magnanimity a-work, as Heb. 11. What made all the patriarchs so stout to hold out and endure so many miseries, but that they had an eye to the glory to come? What made Abraham forget his father's house, going he knew not whither, but that he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and therefore he was a stranger at home? The like we have of Moses, who forsook Pharaoh's court, because he saw him who is invisible. Yea, and of Christ himself it is said, that for the glory which was set before him, he despised the shame, endured the cross, being now set at the right hand of the Father in glory and majesty, Heb. 12:2. So 2 Cor. 4:16, saith Paul, 'For this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day;' and the reason is, 'For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,' &c. He who thus hopes, does not want a comfortable life. And therefore upon this ground it is the apostle's concluding exhortation, 1 Cor. 15:58, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' This makes a man zealous and fruitful, so it makes a man sincere, as 2 Cor. 5:9, 'Wherefore we labour (saith he), that whether absent or present we may be accepted of him.' The ground whereof is, 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things done in his body.' In this case our comfort is in all things to be sincere in working.

Now there is an order of things. Whosoever lives the life of faith in these grand passages, that soul lives the life of faith also in all other passages of

our life; and these grand passages will run in the lesser courses of our life. To touch one: when a man is in extremity of both outward and inward affliction, then faith lays hold on this general, that God is wonderful in working, and that his ways and thoughts are not like our thoughts and ways. In all several cases faith makes use of all things God hath done or promised; as,

1. Of a man in the state of grace, God in desertion appearing his enemy.

(1.) In this case faith at first conquered God, and obtained a blessing by wrestling, as Jacob did. Faith therefore knows the same way again, to go to those precious promises God hath made, of returning again, not to forsake and be angry for ever, not to plough all the day to sow, as Isa. 28:24, speaks. Faith knows that God works by contraries. It knows God takes away the sense of his love, not in anger, but to stir up the conscience and sense of sin, that we may lament and mourn for it the more, and so receive a surer report of the forgiveness of it. Faith does know that his name is wonderful. He raises things past hope. When a man is in despair touching himself, and all things in himself, and of all comforts, then he is nearest home, as Paul said excellently: 'But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead,' 2 Cor. 1:9. So faith looks at God working with Christ the Son of his love, how roughly he dealt, yet lovingly, with him; for Christ is a pattern as well as a cause of good unto us. Christ in the case of his forsaking went unto God, saying, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mark 15:34. Faith sets God's promise against his present working; as though it should say, 'Though thou killest me, yet will I trust in thee,' Job 13:15; for all this thy love is the same; thou art merciful and gracious, and wilt not be angry for ever. Faith, as I may say, pulls off God's mask, sees through the dark cloud, that God appears an enemy for a time, that he may return again with the more abundance of comfort afterwards. Faith knows, as Paul speaks, that it is God that comforts the abject, raises the dead, will be seen in the mount, making our extremity his opportunity.

So faith reasons, Is it so, indeed? and is he wonderful in working? Doth he thus and thus work by contraries? Then I will answer his working the same way; I will believe one contrary in another, I will expect the sun will

shine again, though now it be under a cloud. The like I may say of any other extremity, as in the raising of our dead bodies. Faith, as it is in Ezekiel, sees a spirit quickening and putting life in dry bones, assuring us thereby that he can as easily raise up the dead as deliver us out of any extremity. Saint Paul's argument is to trust in God, who raiseth the dead, [that he] can do all things, work wonderful changes in our greatest miseries. As for the church now in misery, there is a promise that Babylon shall be cast into the sea as a millstone, Rev. 18:21. Now faith believes the promises of glory, how that God will outwork all human policy, and catch the crafty in their own nets; that as certainly as day comes after night, so assuredly all God's promises shall be made good, as David resolves, Ps. 130:6, 'My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.'

So in any cloud get faith, and it will break through all impediments. Believe the former grand passages of calling, justification, and sanctification, and then we will trust God for the rest. Then is faith most glorious. When it works alone, then it works most strongly. Then also God delights to shew himself most effectually; for when all other means fail, and faith works it out alone in wrestling, then he hath all the glory, and then all is well; and therefore we must do in this case as the prophet advises, 'Let him who sits in darkness and hath no light, trust in his name,' Isa. 50:10.

Faith does raise men up, and set them upon a rock, so sure as nothing can take away their comfort and joy in God; because Christ's name is wonderful, who then works in desperate cases when it is seasonable. A mighty God delights to work mightily, in mighty plunges. Then faith plies the suit hard: Help, Lord, or none can. Our Saviour, you see, slept in the ship until a mighty tempest rose, and then he rebuked the winds and the seas; so he seems to sleep now in the church. Why? That we may wake and stir him up by our prayers. When the Israelites' tale of brick was doubled, and the people greatly perplexed, then Moses came fitly to promise deliverance. So when the afflictions of Christians are doubled, then they are commonly most humbled. They pray hard, search, believe,

and apply the promises, and then deliverance comes. Therefore in all exigents set we faith a-work, for this stirs up prayer, and prayer stirs up God, and God stirs up all the creatures. Blame we not, therefore, any trouble so much as to cry out, Oh I am undone! what shall become of me now! No, find fault with an unbelieving heart. It is not the trouble, but our weak faith which makes us to sink in these waves. Beg then of God, in great trouble, great faith to go through. Cry, Lord, increase my faith, for then the trouble is small when the faith is great.

(2.) Secondly, In daily afflictions. Whatsoever we suffer by them, labour to take away the sting of sin by living the life of faith in justification, as David did, Ps. 32:5; confess we our sins to God, beg to have the sting of them taken away, and hereupon we shall find him to forgive our iniquity, as in David. So in all our weaknesses and imperfections of sanctification, go to Christ for more grace, and say, Lord, though I be poor and empty of goodness, and of that which thy exact holiness requires, yet Christ hath abundance of fulness to supply my wants. Oh let me receive some grace for grace out of his fulness, and accept what he hath done for me in his pure and perfect obedience; good Lord, impute it to me, for thou hast made him to be for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And so for glorification; in all afflictions set we glory before our eyes, as Paul did, remembering that 'our light and short afflictions, which are but for a moment, cause unto us a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory, not being worthy of that glory which shall be revealed,' 2 Cor. 4:17. So in any affliction, we have still use of the life of faith in glorification. All these must be used in our afflictions, living the life of faith in all.

(3.) Thirdly, In sickness of body. Trust to Jesus, he is as powerful and as willing to help us now as he was to help others in the days of his flesh. All things are possible to us if we believe. It is but a word for him to rebuke all storms and tempests whatsoever. Let us not do like Asa, trust only in the physician or in subordinate means, but know that all physic is but dead means without him, 2 Chron. 16:12. Therefore with the means run to Christ, that he may work with them, and know that virtue and strength comes from him to bless or curse all sort of means.

(4.) Fourthly, So for disgraces. Commit we our credits to him as our lives

—he cares for both—remembering what Peter speaks, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified,' 1 Peter 4:14. He means such a Spirit shall rest on us, which shall make us glorious. So Heb. 12:2, 'We are therefore in sufferings pointed unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the glory which was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' This suffering hinders our happiness; look to him, he is now set in glory, so shall we be. It is not in man's power to alter men's conceits. God hath this in his power, when he will heap honour, or pour disgrace upon any man. Therefore let us look up and desire no more good name than God will afford us. If dogs bark, no matter; at length God will clear our name, and our righteousness shall break forth as the noonday. Thus much the church assures herself of, Micah 7:8, 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I fall, I shall rise again.' As though she should say, God's servants are never finally forsaken. A time will come when God will do me good for all this, when I am humbled and have made a right use of it. That we may do this, think God in Christ hath given me the pardon of sin; what matter then of all other things which cannot hurt me, and shall all work together for my good? David, we know, Ps. 6:8, began to complain grievously in this kind; but afterwards, ver. 8, when the Lord had spoken peace to his soul in the life of faith in justification and sanctification, then he says, 'Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.' Then he despises the shame.

(5.) Fifthly, In our particular places and graces. Thus must we here live by faith also; for a Christian knows that he stands as in a circle set there by Christ to work. Therefore faith concludes, Here look I for understanding, wisdom, success, blessing, and ability to go through-stitch (a) with the business I am set about. He that set me here will enable me, and if I have ill success, then I will go to Christ, and I shall speed well with his assistance, as Peter did, who, though he had toiled all night and caught nothing, yet at length, at Christ's command, casting forth his net, caught abundantly, Luke 5:5. So there may be many who take much care and toil for heaven, to subdue and overcome corruptions, and yet catch nothing; find no answerable success. Oh let them go to Christ, and trust him as

Peter did, and they shall overcome so at length, as all shall be well. So if magistrates, ministers, and people would trust God for strength more than they do, things would be better than they are with them, as we see the instance in Moses, who being commanded to go to Pharaoh, complained for want of utterance. But what saith God to him? 'Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?' Exod. 4:11. Therefore in all such wants, faith goes unto him for it. The like, we read, was Christ's encouragement to his disciples, Luke 21:15, 'Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what you shall answer, for I will give thee a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.' This was made good also in the bypast troubles of the church, when poor silly women put to silence with their answers great learned men.

Now faith sees what Moses did, Heb. 11:24. It looks up to Christ, to him who is invisible. It is with faith in this case, as it was with Micaiah, 1 Kings 22:19, when he had seen the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand. Then Ahab, a king on earth, was nothing unto him when he had seen the King of heaven in his glory. So we by faith seeing Christ, heaven and glory over our head, caring for his church, standing at the right hand of God, by assistance of his Spirit, this will put invincible courage in us.

(6.) Sixthly, For provision and protection. Faith goes to Christ, hangs and depends upon him for all these things. Faith knows that it hath encouragements, promises, and examples enough to strengthen our dependence on him, as to name one: Luke 12:32, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's will to give you a kingdom.' Hence the believing soul argues from the lesser to the greater. What! will God deny me daily bread, that will give me heaven, and raise me up to life everlasting? and so it cites and revolves the promises often, that a little which the righteous hath is better than the abundance of the wicked; for he adds no sorrow with it; that a little with love is better than a stalled ox with contention, Prov. 15:17. Yea, and in this case by faith we know that the saints, in extremity, shall be extraordinarily provided for. Sometimes he will bless a little, as the seven loaves and five fishes multiplied suddenly to feed five thousand people. They were in great want before, and were suddenly

supplied. So it shall be with us. Sometimes we know the woman's oil increased; the ravens also in distress shall feed Elias; Lazarus shall have the dogs to lick his sores. In the use of the means we need not fear, and wanting means God will create means when all doth fail; for then faith lives best, knowing that God commands all means, and can suddenly do what he will.

And so for protection and preservation, faith knows that Christ will be our shield and protector, therefore it relies upon him. 'Fear not,' saith God to Abraham, 'for I am God, all-sufficient, thy buckler and thy exceeding rich reward,' Gen. 15:1. Hence the saints have so esteemed him in all ages their rock, fortress, strong tower, salvation, helper, deliverer, refuge, and the like; and Christ tells his disciples, that he is with them even unto the end of the world, Mat. 28:20. He rules his by his kingly office for the good of his church. Thus much we know he made good, both in Egypt and in the wilderness, bringing his people safely into Canaan, through all those dangers they were in; providing also for the women, persecuted by the dragon, a place of refuge in the wilderness, where she was safely kept, Rev. 12:6.

(7.) Seventhly, And for our children.

Obj. Oh, say some, I could be content with a little, but I have many children.

Sol. Here faith sets in, and answers, But are they not also Christ's children, and must not he provide for his own? Do therefore what thou canst, and for the rest despair not, but cast this burden upon him, who hath commanded thee in nothing to be careful, but in all things to make thy suits and supplications known with prayer and thanksgiving. In this case faith in a dying parent follows Christ's example, John 17:6, 11; 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me: that they may be one, as we are.' So a dying father may say, Lord, thine they were, thou gavest them me; I have done what I can for them. Thou, Lord, art the first, best, and last Father, the world* and the fulness thereof. Now, therefore, holy Father, keep them in thy name, for thou art the refuge of the poor and needy, and thy time is to help when all other

help is at a stand. Why, consider, is not he the Father of the fatherless? Then let us leave them to him with that resolution and confidence of the prophet David, 'When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up,' Ps. 27:10. Not that he means fathers and mothers use to do so, but though they should, or even when they forsake us by death, yet God doth wonderfully save and protect their posterity. Then learn to exercise thy faith. Though thou leave them little, yet trust in God, and know that he who rests under the shadow of the Almighty, as the psalmist speaks, shall be safe, Ps. 91:1. He who provided for them in the womb, and prepared breasts for them ere they came into the world; he who put so tender affection in women: know that he will also have care, and be more compassionate over thy children after thee. Let faith then settle thy heart on these grounds. In the womb they were nourished and bred thou knowest not how. Oh, saith David, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made,' Ps. 139:14. And after thy death they shall be nourished, thou knowest not how. For this cause many are punished in their generations, because they would not trust to God, but did use ill means to perpetuate their houses, as covetousness, worldly policy, and the like.

(8.) Eighthly, In prosperity.

What use is there in this, of the life of faith? Oh yes, very much; for,

[1.] First, What makes prosperity sweet, but because by faith one knows that his sins are pardoned? What comfort, I pray you, hath a prisoner in the Tower of his life, though he abound in all outward plenty of gold and silver, so long as his pardon is not sealed? This sweetens prosperity, the life of faith in justification, that all my sins are nailed with Christ upon the cross, that the handwriting against me is cancelled and done away. Thus one comes to be of the first-born, 'whose names are written in heaven,' Heb. 12:23, and to joy that he hath a double portion, being exempt from many fears, crosses, and miseries others are vexed with. Who are better Christians than they that know they enjoy all good things with God's favour and blessing? Here faith hath a continual work, to see God's love in all, and so to be abundantly thankful, according unto that we have received.

[2.] Secondly, The life of faith orders our prosperity. How? Not to abuse

those good blessings bestowed on us, not to be puffed up by them, not to disdain, but to relieve others by them. Faith causes us to think of them as they are set forth in the word. It causes that we delight not too much in them, shews us better and more lasting riches, friends, and the like. It makes us take Saint Paul's counsel, 1 Cor. 7:29, to rejoice and do all things as though we did them not, and to use the world as though we used it not, because the fashion of this world passeth away; and therefore it makes men, as Paul speaks in another place, not trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who can do all things. In sum, it causeth us manage all the things of this world, so as thereby not to have our hearts drawn away from the chief good.

So again, in all the comforts of this life, it makes a man eat and drink and sleep, and do all in Christ, looking up into him in all his actions, living by faith, and joying that now he hath a title, and a right to all the creatures. He being clean, now to him all things are clean, because he is now in Christ, who is pure, without spot, and Lord of all; for to the unclean all things are unclean. It cost Christ dear to purchase our liberty to the creatures. Therefore finding and joining in this freedom, we live the life of faith in prosperity; whilst it eyes God in all the passages of this estate, sets him in the first place, receives all, and joys in all as coming from the love and graciousness of so good a God; returning in humility the strength and glory of all unto him; supplying also the necessities of his members.

(9.) Ninthly, In God's ordinances. In the preaching of the word and in the sacraments, faith makes us live this life of faith, not to be captious how this comes that God hath appointed this means, especially, unto the end of the world to teach men by. It makes us lay aside by-conceits to think, why it is enough for me, his will shall be the rule and square of all my thoughts and actions. He hath sanctified and made effectual this ordinance to this purpose; therefore I believe he will bless his own means, which though to the world it seems to be the foolishness of preaching, yet it shall be effectual to my salvation and the rest of his church. He made the world by his mighty word, he repaired the decayed world thereby, and by it he will also call for and raise up all the dead at the last day. Therefore I will rest upon his ordinance without further dispute.

And so for the sacraments. What is a little water to the washing away of

sin? Oh, but the blood of Christ, this is the cleanser, this washes away our sins. His ordinances make it powerful and effectual to that end he hath appointed it, for the believing soul. So the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper seem weak and feeble things; ay, but they are ordained to strengthen and increase faith. Here the Christian soul believes God can so strengthen faith by his Spirit, working in us a nearer communion with Christ and hatred of sin thereby, blessing his own ordinances, so that, as meat and drink refreshes, sustains and feeds this mortal body, so shall his ordinances by his blessing be effectual for the refreshing, fortifying, and nourishing of our souls to life and endless immortality. Again,

(10.) Tenthly, So in our combats. Of necessity we must fight the good fight of faith many ways. First, if any trouble assault a believer, he hath recourse to the life of faith in justification and sanctification. As he conquered God at first, in repenting, praying, and wrestling for forgiveness of sins, and applying the promises, so now he knows how to conquer any evil that befalls him. As it was said to Jacob, 'Thou hast, as prince, had power with God and with men, and hast prevailed;' so a Christian, having in his first new-birth-pangs conquered God, and prevailed, now by the same assistance and skill he can conquer all things also. Secondly, A Christian fights this good fight by living the life of faith in glorification. Saint Paul says, 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life,' 1 Tim. 6:12; insinuating that the way to live this life of faith is to lay hold of eternal life, having serious and constant meditations of the glory to come. Canaan, we know, was given to the Israelites, divided and given by Jacob, ere his death, long before they came there. Who would not fight then for such an inheritance? Now there were serpents, giants, strong and many enemies by the way; so they fought against all, and overcame all. Even so betwixt us and heaven there be many enemies to overcome: the flesh, the world, the devil, and all those numberless number of events which by their malice and our frailty we are tempted unto. But here faith must lay hold of eternal life, answer all objections with this, All these shall not make me lose eternity, there is no comparison betwixt heaven and earth; false pleasures here, and true substantial joys to come. This, saith the Scripture, is our victory which overcometh the world, even our faith, 1 John 5:4. Why? Because faith makes Christ's victory ours. Christ overcame sin, hell, death, the world,

and all; and Christ himself being ours, we have all made effectual for us, which we have done and suffered. So Christ overcomes in us by his Spirit, as the apostle hath it, 1 John 4:4, 'Stronger is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' So that a weak Christian hath a strong Spirit in him, which no power can prevail against, though he hath some foils.

Quest. But how doth faith fight against the world by the life of glory?

Sol. The world offers and presents petty base things before us. Faith keeps off, and opposes the glory to come, preferring that before all; as Moses did, who because he saw him who is invisible, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming the rebukes of Christ before all the treasures of Egypt; because this glory presented better things unto him than this world hath, Heb. 11:24, seq. And if, on the left hand, the world threaten troubles, afflictions, persecutions and the like, for well doing, and not running into sinful courses with others, then faith remembers, as it is Rom. 8:18, that 'all the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' We see then that the life of faith of that glory to come, helps us in all temptations to fight the good fight against all enemies whatsoever. He who hath a crown before him, it will make him run through the pikes or anything to attain it; so faith, having glory, immortality, and the joys of heaven before it, overlooks and despises all oppositions, and sees all things subdued to Christ, as though all were past; whereupon it gathers assurance that it shall triumph over all in him.

(11.) Eleventhly, So we persevere unto the end,

Fighting and living this life of faith; that is, a Christian makes it his daily and continual life. This is a ground of perseverance. A Christian then lives in a sort the life of Christ, as it is said, Rom. 6:9, 'Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him.' So such a one once living by faith, dies no more. There is a perpetual supply of spiritual strength imparted unto him from Christ the head, whereby he lives by faith in all the passages of this life. Rom. 8:35, 'What shall separate us from the love of God in Christ?' Nothing can. It is a never-failing river, entertained unto death, that whosoever drinks thereof shall never thirst again; for Christ's promise is, 'Whosoever liveth and

believeth in me shall never die,' for after faith ends, then comes the life of vision, so that all our life the life is the same, we continue so living even until death, and then faith leaves us to the fruition of the thing believed. But doth faith leave us when we come to die? Oh no!

(12.) Twelfthly, We die by faith also.

For a Christian knows that he is in heaven already. As he lives by faith, so he dies in faith also. Faith makes him, like Stephen, resign his soul to God with comfort. He knows that Christ will receive that soul, which he hath purchased by his blood. He dies by faith, because he sees death conquered in Christ before him, and because he looks beyond death, and over-eyes all things that are betwixt him and glory, having the Spirit of Christ in him, which makes him bold and fearless, as David says, 'I will not fear though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, because thou art with me,' Ps. 23:4. This blessed faith in the Son of God makes us do all things, suffer all things cheerfully and comfortably. Faith makes absent comforts present to us. It eyes such sweet contentment in God's presence, that all difficulties below seem as nothing. It knows whom it hath trusted, and what is laid up for it. A believer sees invisible things. Oh the glorious things that the faithful soul beholds! He sees the angels ready to carry him from a house of clay to a heavenly paradise; from the company of sinful men here in misery, to the sweet society of saints in perfect bliss, which he himself now enjoys the first-fruits and earnest of, and longs to be fully possessed with.

Obj. But how can this be, when neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard what God hath prepared for his?

Ans. Indeed, to carnal sense these things are undiscernible; but to a renewed soul, the Spirit that God hath given them discovers the eminency thereof above all earthly contentments whatsoever. We see they are compared to a kingdom, to a feast, to a crown, familiar resemblances, that so the meanest capacity might conceive and be taken with them. What more desirous* than a kingdom for honour! what glory is there in a rich diadem! and what sweet refreshings are there in a feast! Yet, alas! these are all but shadows; the reality is heaven itself. Talk not then of riches, but of thriving in grace, which will make you rich indeed. What

good will the riches of the world do us at the last day? They take them wings and fly away. If we have not the true riches, we may die in want for all these, as Dives did. Know this, that if there be anything good in earthly kingdoms, there is much more in this spiritual kingdom.

Again, the children of God know these heavenly things by their taste. They have the first-fruits of them even in this life; and if the communion of saints here be so delectable, how much more will it be in heaven! God's children have a taste of that eternal Sabbath in heaven, by keeping a holy Sabbath to God here on earth; they have a taste of that eternal rest and peace which they shall enjoy hereafter, by the peace of conscience which they have here; and that heavenly joy which doth flow into the soul now, is but a taste of that eternal joy which we shall have our fill of one day.

God is so far in love with his children that he keeps not all their comforts for another world, but gives them a taste of the sweetness here. But what are all refreshments below to that which we shall have above in God's presence? As John saith, 'We are the sons of God, but we know not what we shall be,' 1 John 3:2. Only this we know, that when Christ our head appears, all his members shall be like to him. Our life may well be said to be hid with Christ in God, because flesh and blood discerns not the things prepared for those that love him. We lead a hidden life. We cannot see God face to face, or know him so perfectly here as one day we shall do. All that we have now is a taste of the good things to come, and but a taste.

The life which we now live is a life of faith, and we are to walk by faith, not by sight. Therefore, if God did give us all here, what need have we of faith? It were no commendation for a Christian to abstain from the sinful courses of the world, if he did see the glory that he shall have present before him. But God will manifest to the world that he hath a people whose comforts are higher and greater than the world affords, who live by faith and not by sight.

God doth not reveal to us now all that we shall have hereafter, because we are not capable of such delicacies, we cannot digest them; as Peter and John, they could not see Christ's glory in his transfiguration, but they must be spiritually drunk with it: 'Master, it is good being here: let us build tabernacles.' Oh but saith the Holy Ghost, 'They knew not what they

said,' Mark 9:5. So likewise St Paul, when he was caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, he could not digest them, they did so ravish him; therefore God gave him 'a prick in the flesh,' that he might not be exalted above measure, 2 Cor. 12:7. Are we stronger than Peter and Paul, to bear these revelations from above? Is it not goodness in God to reserve them till such time as we are able better to relish them? Moses, desiring to see the face of God, had this answer, 'No man can see my face and live,' Exodus 23:20. So he that would conceive aright of the joys of heaven must die first.

Though we cannot see or understand these spiritual excellencies, yet let us often think of them. The life of a true Christian is taken up with the consideration of those things which he shall hereafter have in heaven. There is no grace in a Christian, but it is set a-work this way. What is faith without this? The chief work of faith is about things not seen. It makes absent comforts to be in a manner present; and so overcomes the world by seeing these things above the world. How is patience strengthened, but by the consideration of future relief? If there were not better times hereafter for the godly, they were of all creatures most miserable; but the thought of that makes them wait with patience. What makes men so tender in conscience, and so fearful to sin, but the eyeing of him who is invisible?

And have we such glorious comforts in another world? Let this cheer up our hearts with joy against all contempts and slighting here below. The world knows not God, nor us, neither doth it not know what things are prepared for us; and shall we care for their abuse and scorn? What though we walk up and down here unknown, our condition shall one day be manifested with glory in the sight of all, and then we shall esteem of things below as they are. The consideration of this should raise up the spirit of every Christian. What makes us do things that are excellent, but our believing an excellency in such ways and courses? He that sees an excellency in God, you may turn that man loose to any temptation; for if Satan tempts him to any sin, he thus considers with himself, Shall I lose the sweet contentments of heaven for a base lust? Shall I lose my peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, for the satisfying of my unruly corruptions? Consider what we lose in the committing of any sin. The

profit and pleasure that a man gets in following the world, alas! what is it to the precious comforts which we lose? Who would be beholden to Satan for anything? Is it not a disparagement to go from God, as if there were not sufficient in him to quiet the soul? Hath not God enough, but we must be beholden to the devil our enemy?

Oh, then, let us admire the love of God to his poor creature, in preparing such great things for him. Let us say with David, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art so mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou so regardest him?' Ps. 8:4. How wonderful is thy mercy in having such high thoughts towards lost sinners? 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that hath thought us meet to be partakers of an inheritance, immortal and invisible, reserved in the heavens for us,' 1 Pet. 1:4. A sound Christian begins his life in heaven here upon earth: he praises and glorifies God by a holy and fruitful conversation. This is our best way of blessing God. Praise in the heart will soon break forth in the tongue.

The apostle, when he speaks of the state of God's children, calls it a 'heavenly kingdom,' a 'glorious inheritance,' a 'wonderful light,' a never-fading condition. He is not able to express their happiness, it is every way so full. 'So God loved the world.' So, as I cannot utter it. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath shewed, that we should be called the sons of God,' 1 John 3:1. It is so free and so rich love, that I am not able to declare it. Envy not, then, the wicked in their pleasure and bravery. Alas! they are but for a term of life; pity thou rather to see them delight in such sinful vanities. Shall a Christian envy any in their pleasures here, when he himself is in such a state of admiration? He should be so far from grudging and repining at the prosperity of others, that he should solace himself cheerfully with his future hopes. The thoughts of his good to come should revive him more than any want or discouragement should deject him. What though we have not our comforts in possession? We are sure of them; God reserves us for them, and them for us. We are like little children, that think not of the portions that their parents have left them till they come to age. Many weak Christians think not of their Father's portion, they mind not those unspeakable joys laid up for them in their minority; but as they grow in grace, so they will have more knowledge of it, and longings after it.

If it be a great matter to come out of a dark prison, to see the light of the sun, what will it be to come out of this dark world, into the glorious light of heaven? A natural man knows not this, but when once we come to see that light that we shall have in glory, then we will admire it, and cry out with the apostle, 'Oh the exceeding love of God in Jesus Christ!' Indeed, those things that came by the gospel cause wonderment, that God should love flesh and blood so as to prepare such excellent things for them.

But we must know, God doth qualify all those here that he prepares happiness for hereafter. The reason is, because no unclean thing shall enter into heaven. We must not think to come out of the mire and dirt, and enter into heaven presently. No. There must be a suitableness wrought in us for such a condition. Those that will not live holily here, have no dwelling in that holy place. If thy heart can tell thee that thou hadst rather have this honour, and that pleasure, than grace in thy soul, the word of God doth as plainly tell thee, that the excellencies of heaven are none of thy portion. A swine loves the puddles rather than the sweet fountain; so wicked men delight in the world more than in heaven, which plainly shews they shall never come thither. Nothing will comfort us at last but a true change of heart. If thou beest not a new creature, thou shalt have no part in the New Jerusalem: therefore let us not feed ourselves with vain hopes. There is none of us but desires heaven; but why dost thou desire it? Is it because it is set forth to be a kingdom, an excellent place of joy and rest? Is it for this only? Assure thyself, then, thou wilt never come there. Thou must desire to have heaven, because of the divine nature, because it is a holy place, and near to God, if thou wouldst possess it indeed; and 'if thou hast this hope in thee, thou wilt purge thyself, as he is pure,' 1 John 3:3.

If we would have faith ready to die by, we must exercise it well in living by it, and then it will no more fail us than the good things we lay hold on by it, until it hath brought us into heaven, where that office of it is laid aside. Here is the prerogative of a true Christian above an hypocrite, and a worldling; whenas they trust, and things they trust in fails them, then a true believer's trust stands him in greatest stead.

For use of all. See then how faith is the life of our life, and the soul of our lives, because by this we are knit to Christ Jesus, the life and food of our

souls. Let us then make use of it; house and entrench ourselves in him, as it is Ps. 90:1, 'Make him our dwelling-place in all generations.' He is our buckler; our enemies must break through Christ ere they come at us; all is ours in him, and in his strength and might we shall overcome all adverse powers whatsoever. You see then that this is no idle, but a mighty working grace. It works in heaven, and earth, and hell. It works against Satan, it works by love to God, makes us love him and work to him, and makes us industrious to work for others. Faith is the root of the tree, love the branches. Thus faith works mightily and strongly; it is a quickening and an active grace. Those therefore who find it not active, no marvel they want the comfort of it; they must strive to stir it up, and set it a-work to live by it. Those who find they have it, let them improve it to a better use than many do, to swear by it. This shames us in troubles to be unarmed. Where is our shield of faith, when every little poor dart strikes our armour through? This shews we have but a paper shield. We ought therefore to bewail our unbelief, and labour for this grace, which is so active and useful, so much the rather, because it is most miserable to be in a storm without a shelter. This will help us in all miseries whatsoever, and make us conquerors over all in him who hath loved us. Oh the excellent use of the life of faith! It looks back, and makes use of all God's works, promises, wonders, threatenings, and judgments; and gathers strength, wisdom, courage, instruction from all. It looks and sees all things past, as it were a-working, doing, promising, threatening in present, and is answerably affected; when by strength of fancy it presents the ideas of things past, to work upon us the more, as present, and so is overawed from sinning against God. Sometimes it sees all this world a-fire, and therefore for worldly things and enticements it puts them over so much the more lightly, as perishing things condemned to be burnt. So it is the best prospective in the world; it presents to itself things afar off, as present and at hand, and makes them excellent, great and glorious to the sight afar off. Therefore above all things study we to live this life of faith—Oh it is worth all our pains—and shun infidelity as that which only makes us miserable, causing the guilt of sin to lie on us, and shutting us up under the wrath of God; yea, it seals us up to the day of wrath, turns all our actions to be sinful in God's sight, and is cause of that great condemnation John speaks of; whereas by the contrary, the believing soul lives a comfortable life, is admitted into the glorious liberty of the sons of

God, hath a shelter to keep off all storms and tempests whatsoever, and comes by this life of faith to be assured of his part and portion in the love, merits, obedience, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of the Son of God; in sum, to be assured of its salvation in particular, as Saint Paul was, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.' But thus much shall suffice for this time. I shall prosecute things more fully in the next.

SALVATION APPLIED

And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and gave himself for me.—GAL. 2:20.

WE have already, out of the words immediately going before, spoken of spiritual life, and of the excellency of it; and, in the third place, of the manner of conveyance, which is by faith; and, fourthly, the spring and fountain of this spiritual life, which is the Son of God, described here by his love and the fruit of it: 'He loved me;' and, as a fruit of that love, 'he gave himself for me.' Now, to come in the last place to the apostle's particular application, which he expresseth in this word 'me:' 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' wherein these points offer themselves to our consideration:

First, That God loves some with a peculiar and with a special love: 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Secondly, That faith answers God and Christ's particular love by a particular application: 'Who loved me.'

Thirdly, That this particular faith in God's particular love is the ground of assurance, which springs from this particular faith.

Fourthly, That this assurance which proceeds from our particular faith in God's particular love, is the spring of all spiritual life, which sets the whole soul a-working. For what is the ground of my living by faith in all the passages of my life, but the apprehension of his love, who loved me, and gave himself for me; and can I then do less than give myself to him?

Now to unfold these in order.

1. That Christ loves some with a special, superabundant, and peculiar love; for Christ, when he suffered upon the cross, looked with a particular eye of his love upon all that should believe in him; as now in heaven he hath carried our names upon his breast. As the high priest had on his breastplate written the names of the twelve tribes in precious stones, Exodus 28:21, 30; so Christ, our high priest, hath the names of all his children in his heart, to present them always to God by his intercession, so as when he now appears before God, the church with him appears before God in his heart. The Father sees the church in the heart and breast of Christ. Now as this, I say, is true in heaven, so upon the cross the church was in the breast of Christ. There was but a certain number for whom Christ savingly laid down his life, John 17:9. Paul was in the breast of Christ when he shed his blood: 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' So that then Christ loves some with a peculiar, special, and superabundant love. Here then the question is concerning,

1. General love. 2. General gift.

Quest. Whether Christ loved all, and gave himself for all, because here the apostle saith, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me'?

Ans. 1. I answer briefly, first, that Christ's loving and giving himself was parallel in even lines with God's love and gift, John 6:37, 39; for Christ gives himself for none but those which God hath first given him. Christ had his commission, and he came to do his Father's will, not his own, John 6:38, and will save all whom his Father hath given unto him; as it is John 17:6, 'Thine they were, thou gavest them me.' Those that the Father gives in election, Christ redeems, and by redemption saves; for redemption, in regard of efficacy, is no larger than God's election. Therefore he joins, 'Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' His love is only to those whom God gave him, for he looks upon all he died for as they were in his Father's love. There are a company in the world whom God hates: 'Esau have I hated,' Rom. 9:13. Here love and gift go both together. He gives himself for no more than he loves, and he loves no more than God loves.

Ans. 2. Again, whomsoever Christ did love and give himself for to death, there be other fruits which accompany this. They who have interest in Christ's redemption, they have the spirit of application. Where there is obtaining by Christ anything of God, there, I say, is grace to apply it by his Spirit; and many things go with it. For them that he died for, as the apostle shews, Rom. 8:11, 'for them he rose again, and for them he sits at the right hand of God.' These go together: 'For if he spared not his own Son, but gave him to death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Rom. 8:32. Where God gives Christ, he gives the spirit of application with him, Mat. 17:13, 2 Thess. 3:2. But we see that the greatest part of the world have not faith; for it is the faith of the elect, which worldlings not having, nor the grace of application, therefore they have not the favour of God obtained by Christ. So it is written, Rom. 5:10, 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' These go together. Now the greatest part are not saved by his life, therefore they are not reconciled by his death.

Other places do clear this truth, as Heb. 9:14, where is shewed, that where Christ hath offered up himself for any, there is also a purging of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. But the most are not purged, therefore they have no interest in Christ's death.

A strong reason is further shewed hereof by Christ, John 17:9, where he avouches plainly, and makes a main difference between two sorts of people, saying, 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.'

Obj. But here some may object, Christ's death is of larger extent than his intercession.

Ans. To cut off this objection, Christ says after in the same chapter, ver. 17, 'And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.' That is, I prepare and sanctify myself to be a sacrifice as a priest; I prepare myself to be a holy sacrifice for such; therefore Christ sanctified himself for them, not for the world. Under the law there was a brasen altar for sacrifice, and the golden altar for incense, which golden altar for incense was effectual for no more than the brasen altar

was for sacrifice. And Christ offered himself a sacrifice for all those that he makes intercession for. The point is clear. I will not answer all the objections might be brought, only encounter with some of the main ones, which are brought by the papists against this truth. Saint Paul's meaning, therefore, is not that he loved me with that love wherewith he loved all mankind. The apostle means a more special love, 'He loved me so as he gave himself for me;' that is, with a more special love than he bears to all mankind. This is a point that tends to God's honour and man's comfort; for God hath the more praise and thanks from his elect, and those that are redeemed by the peculiarness of it, which the more it is, the more they acknowledge themselves bound unto God and Christ. These are they that are elected, these are they for whom the Scriptures are, for whom the world stands and Christ came, Ps. 116:1. They love God and single him out, and the more they do so, God doth single them out to delight in. Peculiarity enhanceth and raiseth favours to higher degrees than otherwise. The fewer that are taken out of the world from the refuse of mankind, the more their hearts are inflamed to love God again. God, as the psalmist says, hath not dealt so with every nation, Ps. 147:20. When will a man be most thankful to God and give him glory, but when he can say, Thou hast not dealt so with the rest of the world; what is in me more than in the rest of mankind? I differ nothing from them but in thy peculiar love. Hereupon comes the heart to be knit in love unto Christ again. But against this it will be objected,

Obj. Why doth Christ by the ministry persuade all in the church for to believe in Christ, and for to believe forgiveness of sins, if Christ did not die for them all?

Ans. I answer, that in the church he calls all, that he may cull out his own. The minister speaks promiscuously both to the elect and those that are not, because God will not rob his own children of the benefit, though they are mingled with others to whom the blessed things do not belong; as it is with the rain, it rains as well upon the rocks of the sea, and upon the barren heath as upon the good ground. Why, for any good to the rocks? No, but because, together with it, it rains upon the fruitful ground, which hath the benefit of the rain. So God rains the showers of his ordinances upon all, but the benefit thereof is only to his ground, not to the

reprobates. The sun shines upon all, but who hath the comfort of that shining? Those who have eyes to see it only and use it, not the blind. But to them that believe not, they have another use. They have this benefit by Christ's death, that there is mercy offered them, and some gifts of the Spirit. God offers and stirs up good motions in them, but they rebel against them. There be many degrees and means of faith. They use not all the means they ought, neither take all the degrees, therefore they are without all excuse, because he gives more grace, not only the means, but he is ready to give more grace than they are willing to entertain. So it is their rebellion, which is the cause of their damnation. They are said to resist the Holy Ghost, such reprobates in the church, to quench the Spirit, Acts 7:51, which implies the Holy Ghost is ready to work more in them than they are willing to entertain. Is it not so by experience? There is a company of profane persons, that, out of the abundance of their wicked hearts, and the poison of their breeding, will not vouchsafe to hear at all; others that do come, though for some bye and carnal ends. Happily the Holy Ghost, in hearing, beats upon their consciences and awakes them. But what say their rebellious hearts? Shall I stoop to leave such and such courses that are pleasurable and gainful? Hereupon they resist the work of the Holy Ghost in the ministry, when their hearts tell them there is a readiness in the Holy Ghost, and that he is sent from Christ and the Father to work more effectually in them than they are willing to be wrought upon, and therefore it is they are damned. 'Thy perdition,' saith the prophet, 'is of thyself, O Israel!' Hosea 13:9. Their own consciences will tell them thus much. So it is no matter what cavils they raise of Christ's intention and God's election. Look thou, man, to thine own heart. Doth not thy own heart tell thee thou art a rebel, and livest in profane wicked courses, in neglect of holy duties? Thou carriest thine own sentence and cause of damnation in thy breast. I appeal to the worst, who live in sins against conscience. Here is the ground of thy damnation. There be many ascents and degrees to saving faith. Thou withstandest the beginnings and the motions of the Spirit. If they come in and work upon thy heart any estrangement from sin, thy proud heart begins to rebel, and will not yield. It is the only true obedience which lays itself at the foot of Christ, and is willing to be led and persuaded in anything so far as frailty will permit, and allows itself in no evil course. This is that which brings sound comfort, which they not doing, therefore are without all excuse.

Obj. If this were not so, they might object another day, Christ did not die for me, therefore why should I be damned for not believing?

Ans. Their consciences therefore will tell them, that they used not all means to believe, neither took the degrees of faith; for God's Spirit doth work after a kind in wicked men, as in the three bad grounds, the word was effectual in divers degrees; but when it comes to the upshot, they hated not their sins, were worldly minded; or, the plough had not made furrows deep enough to humble them, to value mercy and Christ above all things, and to hate sin above all. This is enough to justify their condemnation. Howsoever Christ is offered, and there is a command to believe, yet their hearts tell them they do not all they might. They must know that God's secret purpose in electing some, and redeeming some, and leaving others, it is hid from the world, as his secret will, that is not the rule of our obedience, but God's revealed will and commandment. Therefore men must look unto what God commands. If their conscience tell them that they yield not that obedience which they ought and might, but rather resist the motions of God's Spirit, hereupon comes their damnation to be just. They are commanded to believe. What! Not to believe remission of their sins; for know,

1. There is the act of faith; and 2. The fruit of faith.

Now a wicked man is not first commanded to believe the forgiveness of his sin, but in this order, in obedience to subordinate duty before. He is commanded to believe that he shall have benefit by Christ, by yielding obedience of faith to Christ. The act is one thing, and the fruit is another. Every one is bound to believe and cast himself upon Christ for salvation, but not bound to believe the fruit, unless they have the act.

Obj. But it will be objected, we are not bound to have the first act of faith to believe; if we should, it were in vain, we should believe a lie.

Ans. I say no. The gospel runs, whosoever believes in Christ shall have the fruits of the death of Christ, shall have everlasting life. Thus whosoever believes and casts himself upon Christ, doth the act, shall have the fruit. Away with idle questions; What? Doth the fruit of Christ's death belong to me? Did he die for me? Go thou to the act; if thou hast grace to cast

thyslf upon Christ, and to assent when he offers and invites thee, it is well. Yield the act of faith, and leave questioning of that, which is then put out of question. Reason not this, whether God hath elected, or Christ hath died for thee. This is the secret will of God. But the commandment is, to believe in Christ. This binds. Therefore, yield to Christ when thou art called and bidden to cast thyslf upon him; then thou shalt find, to thy soul's comfort, the fruit of his death.

Caution. Let no man excuse himself by quarrelling against Christ, for not giving himself for all. There is no man condemned, but for not yielding obedience in the act of faith, and doing all that his heart tells him he might, but is unwilling to do. It is for rebellion he perishes: as when a malefactor is condemned, who hath a book given him to read, which he refuses to do. His not reading is the cause of his execution and death, as well as his ill deeds which he hath done: his refusing pardon, that he will not read, with the other. Both are causes of his death, because he doth not read, and because he is a malefactor (a). So in this case, when a man will not yield the act of faith, though his other sins will damn him, yet, if he would believe and take the mercy offered, his other sins would not damn him. If men would or could believe, no other sins would hurt them; but because they do not, their other sins shall be laid to their charge, and their rebellion, that they will not believe, and take the benefit of God's offer. They refuse mercy, because mercy cannot be had without conditions of obedience; as Christ reproves the Jews, John 3:19, 'And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' This is the condemnation, with a witness, the great and main cause of condemnation: they would have heaven, if they might have it with their lusts; but they will not yield to the act of faith, to take Christ as he is offered unto them, upon his own terms, to be ruled by him, for better and for worse. This they will none of, which is that which damns them. They would single out of Christ what they list.

When Christ sent the seventy disciples forth to preach and heal the sick, notwithstanding they were to be refused of many, as it is Luke 10:11, yet they were taught by our Saviour, as to wipe off the dust of their feet against them, so also to convince them in this, that the kingdom of

heaven was come near unto them. In vain, therefore, do wicked men and our adversaries cavil against God's justice in this, which every man's conscience shall accuse himself at last to be guilty of, and clear God of; in that they would none of wisdom's counsel, shutting their eyes against all instructions, refusing to be reformed. This I thought good to add, to avoid the snarling of wicked, carnal, profane persons.

2. The second point is, that true faith doth answer this particular love and gift of Christ, by applying it to itself. True faith is an applying faith. There is a spirit of application in true faith; for God in the Scriptures offers Christ, and Christ offers himself in the ministry to all that believe. Hereupon comes faith to make Christ our own. It doth appropriate Christ to itself in particular. Christ is a garment, faith puts him on; Christ is a foundation, faith builds upon him; Christ is a root, faith plants us in him; Christ is our husband, faith yields consent, and consent makes the match. So then there is a particular truth that strikes the stroke betwixt Christ and us: 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' The nature of faith is to make generals become particulars, to restrain generals into particulars; for there is a particular cause, which must have a particular restraint. Christ's love is propounded to all in general. Before it do me good I must have a particular restraining faith for to make it my own. Now the papists are enemies to this particular faith, it being opposite to their opinions and authors, save some of the honester that incline to us. They say, that we ought to believe with a catholic general faith, that there is remission of sins for the church, but not 'for me;' for where, say they, is your name set down in Scripture? They are against this special faith, because they know it is the ground of assurance, unto which they are enemies; this assurance also being an enemy to all their fooleries, forgeries, and courses they take to have assurance.

We must know more clearly, that there is a particular faith required of us. A Christian ought to say, 'Christ loved me.' Neither is this by any special revelation; for God's Spirit doth witness ordinarily, first or last, so much to all that are his, except in some cases. Now that you may know this particular faith is aimed at by God in the Scripture, look what is the end of the ministry and of the sacraments. Are not we ambassadors from God to men, to unfold Christ's love in particular unto them: if they believe,

then to tell them, that they may be assured of salvation? Doth not the apostle, Rom. 10:9, speak in particular, that, 'if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' This is spoken to every man in particular.

And for the sacraments, what kind of faith doth baptism seal, when water is sprinkled upon the child? Doth it seal a general washing away of guilt? No; but a particular washing away of the guilt and filth of the sins of the party* baptized. Wherefore are the sacraments added to the word, but to strengthen faith in particular? Therefore every one in particular is sprinkled, to shew the particular washing of our souls by the blood of Christ. What is the reason that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is added to the word, but that every one may be persuaded that it is his duty to cast himself upon Christ, and to eat Christ, and to believe his own particular salvation? It overthroweth the main end of the sacraments, to hold a confused faith in general. Therefore seeing it is the main end of the word and ministry, let us labour for this particular faith, that we may say in special, 'Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' Nay, 'for me,' if there had been no other men in the world but I. And the rather labour for this, because it is that which distinguisheth us from counterfeit Christians and believers. For wherein is the main difference? It is in appropriation. True faith doth appropriate Christ unto itself, makes Christ a man's own, it being the nature of saving faith to draw the general into particulars, which is meant by eating Christ, drinking his blood, and putting on Christ; all which enforce particular acts of faith. But against this it will be said,

Obj. St Paul had a special revelation, without which no man ought to believe thus much.

Ans. I answer, he had no special revelation, for, Rom. 8:38, he enlargeth the comfort unto all: 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' It is idle to speak of a special revelation, unless we call it so, as it is hid from the world; so every Christian hath a special revelation from the Spirit. For the Spirit, which knows the 'secret things' of God, and which

knows his heart, testifies to him that he is a child of God, and so he hath a special revelation; but not if we distinguish one Christian from another. Every true Christian hath this revelation, because they have the spirit of revelation, for which the apostle prays, Eph. 1:17. 'For if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his,' Rom. 8:9. Thus we have seen that God loves some with a peculiar and a special love; and secondly, that they have a special faith to make this love their own.

3. The third point is, that assurance doth spring from this particular faith; so that a Christian man may be assured of the love of Christ. But here divers questions and cases must be answered and explained to clear the point, else our speech shall not be answerable to the experience of God's people, or the truth itself. First, we must know that there is a double act of faith in the believing soul,

1. An act of faith, trusting and relying; and 2. An act of assurance upon that act of relying.

For it is one thing to believe and cast myself upon Christ for pardon of sins, and another thing upon that act to feel assurance and pardon. The one looks to the word more principally; the other is founded upon experience, together with the word. We ought to labour for both, for affiance and consent in the will, to cast ourselves upon Christ for salvation; and then upon believing we ought to find and feel this assurance. But these many times are severed, and sometimes the first is without the second. The first brings us into the state of grace. A man may be in the state of grace, by giving consent to Christ and relying on him for mercy, and yet want assurance of pardon and reconciliation in the second place.

This falls out oftentimes, especially in the new birth, that in those strugglings when little grace strives with corruption, there the Spirit of God is exercised in the act, in yielding the obedience of faith, to cast itself upon the arm of Christ, into the bosom of Christ, and upon God's mercy. As for any feeling, it doth not so much stand upon it at first, as it doth regard the act; after which assurance it comes for a reward, as God sees it good.

Then again, it often falls out in the time of temptation, that the first act of affiance, it is without the act of persuasion or feeling, which requires more experience, when a Christian, in the time of temptation, hath rather experience of corruption and the wrath of God, having no experience of the contrary; yet he yields the first act of affiance with a particular faith, casting himself upon the mercy of Christ and upon his death, for the comfort of redemption.

Quest. But here a question must be asked, What is the reason that, where the first act of faith is, to cast itself upon the mercy of Christ in the promises, that yet there is not the sense of pardon and reconciliation, nor that full persuasion: why is this many times suspended?

Ans. 1. I answer, many causes there be of it. To name some:

(1.) First, In some the distemper of the body helps the distemper of the soul; I mean a melancholy temper, which is a constitution subject to distrust, fears, and temptations. As some tempers, that are of a bold spirit, are subject to presumption, the devil suiting himself to their temper; so where there is this melancholy abounding, which is prone to fear and distrust, the devil mingling his suggestions with their constitution, causes that those tempers are inclined to fear, where there is no cause of fear. They are careful enough to do their duties abundantly, as God doth discover his will unto them; they cast themselves upon God's mercy, and renounce themselves; humble souls, only, out of distrust, helped by Satan applying himself to their distemper, they are kept in darkness.

(2.) And also it is, many times, from a judgment not rightly persuaded: as when they think they have no faith, because they have it not in so great a measure. And when they are not rightly conceited of the covenant of grace, which requires truth for perfection, and not measure. For Christ will not quench the smoking flax. He despiseth not the day of small things, but cherisheth it. 'Thou hast a little strength,' saith he to the church of Philadelphia, 'and hast kept my word,' Rev. 3:8; yet they think, out of a spiritual covetousness, that they have none, because they have not so much as they would, and as stronger Christians have. They misconceit the covenant of grace, where truth goes for perfection.

Sincerity is our perfection, which is known by a strife against the contrary, and by a desire of growth in the use of all means. There is not so much as truth where there is not this; where the least is, there is this strife against the contrary, and a desire of growth in a further measure by the use of means.

(3.) Also, they are held perhaps without this persuasion and assurance of the pardon of their sin, because perhaps they are taken up with other cares. They do not value this so much as they should do; whereas this is another manner of gift than the most take it for. God vouchsafes not this sweet heaven upon earth, the sense of his love in Christ to any, but it is sought for long, and valued highly, that afterwards we may be thankful for it.

(4.) Again, Perhaps they are negligent in holy communion with those that are better than themselves; casting themselves into dead and dark company that want life, who bring them into the same temper with themselves. Many other causes may be reckoned why these acts are severed, that men, casting themselves in the spirit of obedience upon Christ, have not that assurance of the pardon and forgiveness of their sins. Hence we may give an answer to another question.

Quest. Why do some Christians feel more comfort than others do, who have the same means of grace?

Ans. 1. I answer, Because God stirs up in some an higher esteem of it than others; they have more spiritual poverty.

2. Again, There is difference in the ages of Christians; some have had longer experience in the ways of God than others.

3. Again, Men differ in their temper. Some are of a more cheerful temper. Therefore there is a clearer manifestation which helps the work a little, the disposition of the outward man.

4. Again, Men differ in their worldly temper. Men, for want of Christian prudence, cast themselves too much upon the employments of the world, that they suffer the strength of their soul to be carried so one way, that

they have no time to gather assurance of salvation. Howsoever, for the main they are conscionable,* yet many such are so worn out with the world, as they differ in heavenly-mindedness and want of care of this, so they differ in assurance and want of God's love.

5. Again, As God hath a purpose to employ men, as he hath great and many things for some men to do, so he suffers them to have a greater measure of assurance and pardon of sin, because he intends they shall go through a great deal of business. Those who he intends shall not go through such employments, he vouchsafes not unto them that portion of assurance; for these are distinct gifts of the Spirit, to give the spirit of faith, to cast ourselves upon Christ, and to give the spirit of assurance. Howsoever the Spirit doth both, as 2 Cor. 2:14, seq., it teacheth us those good things that we have of God; yet sometimes the Spirit doth not so teach us the good things of God, as it enables to do the works of the Spirit, because God hath divers employments for Christians.

Quest. Another question which some may move is, Why oftentimes it comes to pass that Christians of greater parts want assurance, and sometimes die without it, when many times a weaker Christian of meaner parts has it? Men of ordinary rank do many times die with more assurance than their great teachers. What is the reason it falls out that poor Christians of mean knowledge and gifts have a heaven upon earth, and enjoy a great deal of comfort when they end their days, men of greater parts dying more concealed?

Ans. I answer, Many reasons may be given. Christians are prone too much to value gifts; and those that have are much prone to be proud of them, and to think that grace and gifts go together, when these are often severed. Men of excellent gifts have many times no grace at all; and are given them for the good of others, not for themselves, being proud and barren all their days, not having any feeling of that they can largely talk of with glory to others; because they value these things, and neglect grace, humility, faith, and broken spirits, which things God values more than all gifts. Therefore you have men far above other[s] in gifts and glory of the world, which want this assurance.

Quest. But put the case they be good Christians, yet often they grow

proud, and puffed up with great gifts, for the apostle says, 'Knowledge puffs up,' 1 Cor. 8:1.

Ans. Again, When there is a great deal of good parts in knowledge, there is oftentimes great inquisition made after things which should not be looked after, and many impertinences, wanting knowledge and experience in that which they should more look after.

Then again, men of greater gifts may out of some error look for comfort too much in sanctification, and in the covenant of works, more than in faith. A poor Christian, perhaps out of right judgment, when he stands in need of comfort, may seek it in faith, in justification, casting himself upon Christ, when another man, thinking to find his comfort more in graces and gifts than in casting himself upon Christ in justification, he may justly be deprived of that comfort; whereas we honour God most, whatsoever our graces are, in casting ourselves upon Christ, and ending our days in mercy, making our appeal to mercy; whereas the graces of sanctification and excellent parts are excellent for the good of others, but if we place too much affiance in them, it is just with God we should oftentimes go mourning to our graves. Therefore we must set them in a right place, take them as signs and evidences of our comfort, but not forget to rely rightly on our free justification, and the fruits thereof, as the foundation of comfort, which made Saint Paul, Phil. 3:8, count all things 'but dung and dross in comparison of the righteousness of Christ.'

Then again, God doth it to shew his freedom, that to whom he pleaseth he will give more assurance, to shew that he is a free giver. Our salvation is according to his good pleasure, so is the feeling of it; some shall have more, some less. God will sometimes manifest his comforts and feeling more to weak Christians than others, as a father or mother shews the greatest love to the weakest child. God knows that strong Christians have other things to support them with than feelings; they can go back, as holy David doth, to former experiences, and rely upon the word and promise strongly; so he suffers them to support themselves with stronger things than present feelings. Those who are weakest, he vouchsafeth unto them the sweet feeling of his love, as parents dandle and study most to please the sickest and weak children. But we should leave this to God, who gives us what measure he will, and at what time he will. Some he thinks good to

keep a long time from feeling this assurance, to humble them for being too bold with sin; and some, likewise, he will keep longer from this assurance, perhaps all the days of their life, because they have been too confident heretofore in touching and meddling with petty sins, which, as pitch and fire, hath burned and defiled them too much; in the mean time supporting them with sufficient grounds of a happy estate, notwithstanding their infirmities; they may be as good Christians after a fall as ever, though perhaps never attain unto that feeling and sense which formerly they enjoyed; for though they have not feeling, yet they may have strong faith, as Christ upon the cross had strong assurance without feeling, when he said, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Thus we see that assurance may be obtained.

Quest. Now we come to a more principal question, How we may know whether we have the act or no, the first act to yield the obedience of faith, for that is the main. Perhaps a Christian may die in the rage of a fever, or in child-birth, and never have strong assurance. Many go to heaven that never have it.

Ans. 1. But for the first, a man may know in his right temper that he performs the act of faith in affiance, by the reflect act of his soul, if it be not hindered, let him return upon himself; as, how do I know I understand a thing when I do conceive it? Why, by a faculty the soul hath to know it understands. So, how doth a soul know that it believes, but by a reflect act of the soul, whereby it knows it believes when it doth believe, especially when the soul is in a right temper? If a natural soul knows it understands when it understands, and loves when it loves, so doth the soul by the Spirit know that it believes when it doth believe. If, as I said, the soul be not distempered, it is the nature of the conscience to bear witness of the act of itself; and usually God's Spirit, together with the conscience, doth discover it, Rom. 8:16.

2. But the safest course is to go to the fruit. Know thou hast the act of faith by the fruit. To name one now, because in the next point I shall have occasion to speak more of it. The fruit of this act is seen especially in the greatest temptation; for if a man have a spirit of prayer, then to go to God, and have boldness in extremity, certainly he believes; for faith is the cause of prayer, prayer is the breath and flame of faith. Where there is the

spirit of prayer, there is always the spirit of faith; where there is boldness to go to God, there certainly is the Spirit, whereby we may be assured that we have the spirit of adoption, howsoever we find not so evident witness that we are the sons of God. Yet if we have liberty and boldness to go to God in extremity, it is a sign there is the spirit of faith; as we may see in David, Ps. 31:22, 'For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee.' He said he was cut off, yet he cried unto God when he was in temptation. Though his flesh yielded, and said he was cut off from God, and that he was not the child of God, yet there was a better principle within him to pray, 'nevertheless I cried unto thee.' So saith Job, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job 13:15. Job wanted this assurance and feeling, yet notwithstanding, see the act of his faith, 'Though he kill me, I will trust in him.' When in extremity we can trust God, and go boldly to the throne of grace, and not sink in despair, it is a sign that we are in the state of grace, and yield the act of faith. Though we find not that sweet feeling, at length God will be merciful to us; so that after we have yielded the obedience of faith, we shall find the assurance.

Quest. But at what time specially?

Ans. 1. First, Especially when a man hath yielded the act of faith, and cast himself upon God, and a long time lived by faith, then God will seal this believing with the spirit of adoption. When we believe specially against a temptation of distrust, then we usually have the sealing of the Spirit.

Then again, when we have striven with any corruption a long time, God, as a reward of our holding out, will crown our faith and our obedience with a sweet sense of his love. After that Job had strove a long time, at length concluding, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' God manifested himself in mercy unto him. The woman of Canaan, after she had striven and wrestled with Christ, at last gets a gracious answer; so when we can subdue our corruptions, and perform holy duties in some strength of grace, in reward of our diligence and care, we have some comfortable revelation of the Spirit, and taste of the life to come more than ordinary, God crowning our diligence with the sweet sense of his love.

And also, when he hath some great employment for us, to encourage us the more, he will give us the more evidence and manifestation of his love, more ravishment; as the disciples which were with Christ in the mount, they did see his glory there, because they were to see him abased afterwards. Those that God means to honour and use in any great employment, oftentimes before he gives them the full assurance of his love.

Again, sometimes in the midst of sufferings, to reward our faithfulness, as Paul in the dungeon was so filled with joy as to sing at midnight; to encourage us, that whatsoever our threatenings and torments shall be in our sufferings for the name of Christ, yet if we yield obedience to God, our comfort shall be more than our discomfort, as St Paul had the spirit of glory, which raised him above his abasement. Thus we see when they are severed, and when God pleases for to vouchsafe the manifestation together with the act.

Now I come to the fourth and last point, indeed the chief of all, that this particular faith in obedience to Christ, with assurance of his particular love, is that which carries us along all our life of faith unto the day of death. 'I live,' saith he, 'this life of faith in the Son of God.' Why, what makes him to do so? Oh I have good cause to love Christ and to depend upon him. Why? 'He hath loved me, and given himself for me;' and I feel so much to my soul's comfort, therefore I will wholly depend upon him, in life, in death, and for ever. And indeed particular special faith, if it be joined with some assurance, it is the ground of living by faith. No man can live a holy life by faith, but first he must know that God loves him and Christ loves him. Holy actions spring from love, and are directed by love to the right end, which only love moveth us to intend. How can any spirit aim at his glory whom he loves not first? Can any soul, not knowing whether Christ loves it or not, intend Christ's glory as it should do?

Quest. I beseech you, if we speak of doing or suffering, thankfulness or cheerfulness, especially at the hour of death, whence come all these?

Ans. Come they not from some taste of God's love? When do we love, but when many sins are forgiven? And when are we willing to suffer anything for Christ's sake, but when we know that he hath suffered so great things

for us? We count it a glory to suffer anything for Christ, when we know he hath loved us and given himself for us.

Quest. Again, for thankfulness, how can a man be thankful for that he hath no knowledge of? What makes a man thankful for the great work of redemption in Christ, but a particular faith?

Ans. This made St Paul and the rest of the apostles so often to break out, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' He breaks out into thanksgiving that he, together with other Christians, had the Spirit, which doth persuade them of God and Christ's particular love. Then again, for thankfulness for ordinary blessings, how can a man thank God for any ordinary blessing, if he be not assured that it comes from the love of God in Christ? When he is persuaded of this, then he can give thanks, both for the principal and other lesser favours,

Obj. He may think else, What is all this to me? I am but fatted against the day of slaughter. It is good for me to take my pleasure whilst I may enjoy these things, to think I am but as a traitor, who hath the liberty of the prison. This smothers our thankfulness.

Ans. It is the believing soul that is thankful for mercies, and also cheerful in duties. Whence come Christians to be a voluntary people, zealous of good works? as Tit. 2:11, the apostle sets zeal betwixt faith and works, looking both ways, saying, 'The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared,' by the first coming of Christ, and giving him to death, 'teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.' Here faith looks backwards. Then, looking forward, says he, 'Looking for, and waiting for the appearance of the blessed God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed us, that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

Quest. Whence comes a zeal to good works, but when we look to the grace that hath brought salvation and redemption from our sins, and to the glorious coming of Christ?

Ans. When faith looks both these ways, it is set a-fire, it makes us zealous, as Heb. 9:14. When the heart is sprinkled with the blood of Christ in the

forgiveness of sins, then we serve the living God, and are a voluntary and a cheerful people when our hearts are enlarged with assurance.

Quest. Further, what makes a man ashamed of his evil life? What breeds those affections of repentance, grief, and shame mentioned Ezek. 36:31, 32, 'Then shall ye be ashamed,' &c.?

Ans. When God had once pardoned their sins, and given them many favours, then shall ye be ashamed that ye have served me thus and thus, and grieve that ye have departed from me. So that then do Christians come to have those two penal affections of shame and grief, the two ingredients to true repentance. Why? 'Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me.' As if one should say, Hath he done so? Was my sins the cause of his death, and did his love move him? I am ashamed that I have offended so gracious and so sweet a Saviour. It makes a man weep over Christ. It was my sins which caused his death and torments. This particular faith fills the soul with all divine graces, and it follows Christ, and sees that he did all for us. Then a man sees that Christ was born for him: 'To us a child is born, and to us a son is given,' Isa. 9:6. It follows Christ in his whole life, and so all that he did was for me. His death, 'He died for me;' his sweating in the garden was for me, my sins caused it. So I see his love, and the foulness of my sins. He was thrust through the side for me, and cried upon the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' My sins had an active power there. He rose again for me, he is now in heaven for me, as carrying me in his breast. The sight and consideration of this draws the soul again unto Christ in repentance for sins, and in all holy duties whatsoever. This is the reason why those Christians that have been pulled out of the fire, and converted oftentimes by a violent conversion, are the most fruitful and loving Christians, as St Paul and others; because they know Christ hath forgiven them a mighty debt, a thousand talents; the more which debt appears to be, the more they know they are bound to God, and to sacrifice and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, that hath discharged so great a debt for them.

When they consider his wonderful love to such as they are, they are inflamed with love again; as in the gospel, the woman who had many sins forgiven her, therefore she loved much. The prodigal young unthrift in the gospel, for whom the fat calf was provided, no question he could not

satisfy himself in expressions. God sometimes provides fat calves, great measures of comfort, even for prodigals, and they of all shew most love, they cannot tell how to satisfy him by any painstaking. 'The love of Christ,' saith Paul, 'constrains me, a holy violence moves me, who was a persecutor and a blasphemer,' 2 Cor. 5:14. So the sense of the love of Christ in pardoning of sins will constrain one to a holy violence in the performing of all duties. Why, if any base ends come into a man's mind, in that, is a Christian to regard himself, to seek his own ease, honour, pleasure? No; this consideration, if he have any assurance of the pardon of his sins, will move him to the contrary. Christ died for me; shall I not live to Christ, live to him that gave himself for me? Seek his honour that abased himself for me? So that it quells all base ends, the consideration of Christ's particular love.

So it stirs us up to be at cost for Christ and for his church, at any cost, to sacrifice our Isaacs. He loved me, and gave himself for me; is anything then I can give satisfactory? He gave himself for me, therefore I will give myself for him. This will make a man prodigal, even of his blood, for Christ's sake. When a man is moved to be discontented with his estate, and to doubt of God's providence in particular things, this will help, Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me. Will he not give me all necessaries who hath given himself? So that this stirs up to all duties, cuts the sinews of all spiritual sins, of distrust in God's providence, and all base ends. It stirs me up in particular practice of holy life to go to him for all graces. I have himself, therefore he will give me his Spirit and grace. I have the field, therefore I shall have the pearl.* He hath given me himself, he will give me therefore all that he hath; his Spirit, graces, and privileges, all shall be mine.

Thereupon it is used in all Paul's epistles as a compelling argument, as elect, and by the mercies of God do this; moving them to all spiritual duties from the love of God in Christ. And, dearly beloved, you are dearly beloved; the love that Christ bears you cost him dear indeed; it is a strong enforcement. Saint Peter's argument to this effect is very strong: 'You are not bought with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ are we redeemed from our vain conversation,' 1 Peter 1:18. You see, then, I give you but a taste of it, what strong motives here are to live a

holy life, and all fetched from particular assurance; because Christ loved me, and gave himself for me. Hereupon, by the way, we may have a strong argument against the papists, who hold we cannot have particular assurance, for that which is brought as an argument to stir up to holy duties must be known of us. The arguments in this case which serve to persuade must be known. We do not persuade another to a duty by those arguments he is ignorant of. Here he speaks to Christians, as taking it for granted that they knew they were elected of God, and dearly beloved in Christ. That which is an argument stirring up to duty must be known better than the duty, because therefore this is an argument that stirs us up to all kind of duties whatsoever; therefore we may be assured. But here a question may be asked,

Quest. Doth not a holy life and holy actions sometimes proceed from a soul not fully assured? Then what shall we think of those good works that proceed from a Christian without strong assurance? If all obedience in doing and suffering, that is pleasing, comes from faith and assurance, then what shall we think of such works as proceed not from it? If you ask many a good Christian, what assurance have you that Christ hath given himself for you? they will perhaps stagger at it; for a humble broken-hearted Christian is subject to speak worse of himself than there is cause, though he be diligent in good works. What shall we think of such works then, when therewith they are not assured of Christ's love in particular?

Ans. I answer, There can no holy life proceed but from faith; from the first act of it. There must be that; but sometimes we know not our faith, because the reflect act is hindered; we know not we believe when we believe. There may holy duties proceed from a man when he knows not his grace and estate: in which time let him but examine himself, why doth he duties, whether out of love to God or no? Yes. Can he endure God to be evil spoken of? No. Will he allow himself in any known sin? No. In this case, though he dares not say he is assured, yet the things he doth are from some love and desire of glorifying God. Christians do not know their estates often in such cases. They do work from a secret persuasion of God's love, though they know it not. He hath that he thinks he hath not, he works from that he thinks he doth not work from. He works from love to God, when he thinks he doth not, because he thinks he hath not so

much as he would have: he works from grace, when he thinks he hath none. A child lives when it knows not that it doth live; a child when it draws nourishment from the mother's breast, doth not know it lives itself, but the lookers on do, because they see the actions of life: so a Christian doth not know that he lives the live of grace, when the lookers on do, because they see spiritual hunger in him, and attending upon the means. Now he himself doth not see it, because of some spiritual covetousness, temptation, or desertion which is upon him. Yet that is a true and gracious action, which issues from a soul that discovers faith, however itself cannot be assured of its estate, there being for the time a suspension of it, through ignorance or other causes; but certainly in such there is faith in the first act of obedience, and some assurance, where there are actions of spiritual life, though they have not that they covet to have.

The best way is to labour for both, for assurance and for the act itself; for howsoever those who have the act only perform good obedience, yet it is not so large, so thorough, so cheerful as it would otherwise be. We ought to desire both that God would give us a spirit of faith, and discover himself unto us, that our sins are pardoned, and that we are accepted to life, to give us strong assurance, that so we may be more plentiful in the work of the Lord. There is no Christian who hath a good heart but he will labour for the second as well as the first; he will labour to make his calling and election sure by all means, that God may have more glory, and smell a more sweet sacrifice from him, and that he may have more comfort in this world. Howsoever without assurance much good may be done, yet not so much as when there is full assurance, for then the soul is carried amain* in obedience to God; doing and suffering is nothing then.

Use 1. Now for the uses of this, seeing that the persuasion of Christ's love to us in special is the spring of all holy life, this serves, in the first place, to free this doctrine of assurance from scandal. Assurance then is not the ground of presumption or security. These spring not from a particular faith, for a holy life, the clean contrary, springs from it. None can live a holy life but by a particular faith; and whosoever in particular doth believe the forgiveness of his own sins, will live a holy life, and not put himself into former bondage. It is a sign he is not that person for whom Christ gave himself, that doth enthrall himself into his former courses,

unless he repent. We see those of the Israelites who had a mind to go back again into Egypt, did all perish in the wilderness; and those in Babylon's captivity who would not come out when they were called, did perish. It is pity they should ever be delivered that are in love with bondage. Those that will serve and be slaves still, it is pity but their ears should be bored to perpetual servitude. Some will live in their sins, and yet think that Christ died for them. No; whom Christ loves in particular, he gives them grace to lead a holy life, and to be freed from the bondage of their former corruptions. Those that are not redeemed from their vain conversation, are not redeemed from hell and damnation, unless God give repentance. Those both go together. Therefore let it be also a rule of trying and discerning, whether we truly believe that Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, by our care to live to him, and to give ourselves to him back again by a holy life. Wheresoever the one is, there is the other. This is that which may stop the mouths of many, and will shame them at the day of judgment, notwithstanding all their boasting that God is merciful, and Christ died for them. Oh!—their hearts will tell them,—but I have not cared to have the fruit of Christ's death in the governing of his Spirit; I would not have him my king; my conscience tells me I would not have Christ upon those terms: he offered himself to rule me; the minister told me of the danger, but I have preferred some base lust or other, such and such a course, before Christ; I hated to be reformed, I flattered myself with hope of mercy on no ground at all; therefore I never had any benefit by him.

Use 2. To make another use: if particular faith and assurance be the ground of a holy life, let us labour for it by all means; and let those that are in the state of grace, let them come to this fire if they will be kindled: if they find themselves dull to holy duties, let them come to this fire. Are we dead spiritually? Are we not so enlarged as we should be? Why, come and consider of the infinite love of God in giving his Son for thee, and the sweet love of Christ in giving himself for thee; and dwell in the meditation of this love. Do not let thy heart go off the consideration of Christ's sweet love, in stooping so low, not only in becoming man, but so low as hardly ever creature was, and all in love. Should not this kindle love in us again? So much the more dearer he should be unto us, the more base he was for us. When we have warmed our frozen hearts with the consideration of his

particular love towards us, then we add fire to holy duties. Iron, when it is warm, is fit for any impression; so our cold hearts, though stiff of themselves, being warmed and fired by the love of Christ, are fit to receive any impression, and to do and to suffer any thing.

When we find ourselves backward to suffer anything for Christ, consider that Christ gave himself; or, if we be not thankful and fruitful enough, consider what was the end of Christ's giving himself, that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives without fear; and being freed from the fear of death, damnation, and slavish fear, that we should serve him cheerfully in the spirit of adoption and love. I beseech you, in all indispositions of soul, let us make use of this, to come unto Jesus Christ. Experience teacheth any one when they are fittest for suffering, doing of any duty, to resist a sinful temptation to discontent or murmuring, even when they enjoy the assurance of Christ's love, and can read their own evidence that they are God's children, and the members of Christ. Then they are fit for anything. Therefore we should, as the apostle Peter exhorts us, 'give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. 1:10. It is a thing which requires all diligence. And the reason why we have it no more, is because we do not give all diligence to attain it. It requires our utmost endeavour, being of the greatest consequence, by which God hath most honour, and we most comfort, because it makes us most fruitful in our conversation.

Obj. But you will say, what then shall we say unto those who cannot say in particular that Christ loved them and gave himself for them? What course shall they take who have not this particular assurance and faith? What grounds have they to come to Christ if they be willing?

Ans. I answer, Those that have it not should labour to have it by all means whatsoever.

Obj. But what ground have I, who have been a wretched sinner, an unworthy wretch, what ground have I for to meddle with Christ, and to believe that he loved me, and gave himself for me?

Sol. 1. Consider, even the vilest that can hear me have the gospel offered unto them. Again, consider that Christ took thy nature, and how many

inducements are there in this, for thee to take degrees of this particular faith, to come to it, that thou mayest be in this estate, to glorify God and to enjoy comfort.

Sol. 2. Hath not Christ taken thy nature, not the nature of angels? Oughtest not thou to think that he loves mankind, and why not thee, if thou wilt come in and cast thyself upon him? He is Jesus, a Saviour; and Christ, anointed of God; and Immanuel, to reconcile God and man together.

Sol. 3. Besides, thou sayest thou art a sinner. Why, but alas!* what are thy sins? Is not his righteousness above them? His righteousness is the righteousness of God-man, of a mediator that is God, therefore far above thy sins. Considering then the excellency of his person, believe that the blood of Christ is able to purge thee from all.

Sol. 4. For a further ground for this particular faith, we may think of this inviting of all those who are unworthy: 'Whosoever will, let him come and drink of this water of life freely,' Rev. 21:17; yea, those that think themselves farthest off he bids them come: 'Come, all that are weary and heavy laden,' &c., Mat. 11:28. If thou findest sin a burden, then Christ invites thee, and sends his minister to beseech thee to be reconciled. Those that stand at the staff's end, he desires them to lay aside their weapons and come in.

Sol. 5. If that will not do, he lays his charge and command upon you to believe. If you will not believe, you add this sin unto all the rest. This is his commandment, that you should believe, or else you are rebels to his commandment. Nay, he counts it a sin worse than the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, a crying sin, not to come in when the gospel is proclaimed. Therefore never pretend your sins are great and many, but because of his offer, invitation, and command, it being without all restraint of person, sin, and time; even now, whatsoever thou hast been and art, seeing at whatsoever time a sinner repenteth there is no restraint of any sin but the sin against the Holy Ghost; if thou therefore come not in and cast thyself upon Christ, to be ruled by him hereafter, thou hast nothing at all to pretend. It is not the greatness of thy sins, but thy willingness to be still in thy sins, which hinders thee, for the greater thy sins have been, the

greater will his glory be in forgiving: 'Where sin abounded, there,' saith the apostle, 'grace superabounded so much the more,' Rom. 5:20. Is it not for the honour of the physician or surgeon, to cure great diseases and sore wounds? A mighty God and Saviour loves to do mighty things: 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' Did Paul find mercy? Who then should despair when such find mercy? He had sinned against the first table by blasphemies, and against the second by oppression and persecution. Who shall despair then when such as he and Manasseh shall find mercy? Therefore in any case come in, and the greater glory Christ shall have by thy coming. Do not flatter thyself with this, as if thy sins and unworthiness were such as God cannot shew mercy to such a wretch as thou art, or at least will not. No, no; deceive not thyself. Examine thine own false heart, and thou shalt find thou art in love with thy sins and wilt not leave them; and this will be alleged at the day of judgment against thee by thine own conscience, that thou wast more in love with thy sins than with the mercies of God in Christ, and therefore didst willingly remain in thy infidelity. This is the true cause, indeed, of thy backwardness, and not the greatness of thy sins. You see then that there is ground sufficient for any sinner to come in and labour for this particular assurance.

Obj. But put the case, I be not one that Christ redeemed, and God elected.

Sol. Away with disputing, and fall to obey. Put this question out of question, by believing and obeying. Come in and stoop unto Christ, and then it will appear that thou art one that Christ died for; for he gives himself for all that believe in him. Do thou thy duty, bring thou thy heart to rest upon Christ, and to be ruled by him, and then thou wilt put this question out of question, that thou art one of God's elect. The devil holds many in a state of darkness by this delusion.

Obj. If I knew that I were elected, or that Christ died for me, then I could believe.

'Secret things belong unto God, revealed things to us,' saith Moses. Thy duty is, when thou art sought for, invited, entreated, and commanded to be reconciled, then to come in and yield obedience, and in yielding thereof, thou shalt find the fruit of Christ's redemption, that thou art one

for whom he gave himself. Thus much is for those who want this particular assurance.

Well then, to draw to an end, for those that pretend they have a particular faith and assurance of salvation, by this they shall know it. These things will follow.

1. Then thou hast a care to live by faith in the Son of God daily, and in all estates and conditions; and where this faith and assurance is, it is with care and conscience of duty always. Herein it is distinguished from a false conceit. Where there is no conscience of duty, there is no assurance of particular faith. This particular hath its ground from the general, from the word of God. The word saith that Christ gave himself for all believers; now I know I do believe: he loves all those that love him; and I know I love him, therefore I am beloved of him. Thus true faith goes to the conditions of the word. Those that live in courses contrary to the word have not this faith. 'Be not deceived,' saith the Scripture: 'neither whoremonger, adulterer, nor unclean person, shall inherit the kingdom of God,' 1 Cor. 6:9. But I am such a one, saith a wicked man, and yet I think to enter into heaven, and that God will be merciful. No; in this case he will not be merciful, because one thus concludes wrongly, by a diabolical persuasion, contrary to the word.

2. Again, This is with conflict. You may know particular application where it is, to be good, because it is with conflict against temptations. A man never enjoys his own assurance of Christ's particular love, but with a great deal of conflict. There are two grounds that faith lays:

(1.) That general truth, that whosoever casts himself upon Christ shall be saved.

(2.) The particular application hereof—but I cast myself upon Christ, therefore I shall be saved.

This particular application, which is the work of faith, is mightily assaulted, more than the general. The devil is content that a man should believe the former, but he troubles us in the application, 'but I believe.' He hinders, what he may, the reflect act, that we may not say, I know I

believe. Thus, wheresoever the sense of Christ's love is, there is a mighty conflict before it comes. The devil labours by all means to hinder application, for he knows that particular faith brings Christ home, which is all in all. But false Christians go on in a smooth course, are not thus assaulted from day to day. They hope well, not considering that whilst the strong man keeps the hold, all things are in peace; whereas there is no Christian but he finds his particular faith strongly assaulted, more than his general: which is the reason why these two equal truths are not equally believed, because Satan doth hinder the application, the minor part assuming more than the general. Those who have no conflict may fear they have no faith at all, God in wrath and justice suffering them to go on in a smooth uninterrupted state. But all who have experience know what this spiritual conflict with an unbelieving heart means, when it comes to application.

3. Again, a man may know his faith to be true by his willingness to search himself, and to be searched by others. He that hath a true sound faith, and particular assurance from thence, is willing oftentimes to search his heart. He would be better and better, labouring to examine himself and to be examined of others. Those who are willing to go on in a still smooth course, because they will not break the peace of their own deluding false hearts, rather thinking all well than to put themselves to the trial, we may know this is but presumption. Where there is true application there is always willingness to search our own evidence; nay, a Christian will be willing, when he cannot find his own evidence, to have the help of other Christians to read his evidence for him, and to tell him of his estate, and is inquisitive, especially when he meets with the skilful in those things.

4. Again, This particular faith it is with a high prizing and admiration of the love of God in Christ, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.' It is a sign that he hath no interest in this love, that prizes and values other things above it. If one had any assurance of this, he would value it above all other things in the world. He knows that howsoever Christ gives other things, riches, kingdoms, and honours to castaways, that yet Christ gives himself to none but his dear children. Therefore when he knows that he hath interest in Christ, he values him above all things in the world; will part with all rather than with his interest in him, when others go on with

a general conceit that Christ died for them and loves them, or howsoever, that yet come what will, they will go on in their pleasures and profits, though their hearts tell them there is something higher in their souls than Christ and his love. You see then that we may all come in who will. There is ground enough to draw them on, if they be not false to their own comfort, and how we may try whether we be assured or not.

Exhortation. I beseech you, therefore, as we desire to do anything that may please God, labour for particular faith and assurance. Would we have our whole course of life to stink before God? I tell you, without this faith it is not possible to please God. Would we have all our life to pass fruitfully, and nothing to run upon our account when we are to die? Oh pray that the Lord would increase our faith; above all, labour for particular faith and assurance, for there is nothing Satan opposes us more in. It is a happy estate, a heaven upon earth. If Satan doth oppose it most, and it be the greatest happiness we can enjoy, it is worth the labouring after.

Let especially those that have ground and cause to be assured, humble broken-hearted Christians, let them by all means not yield to Satan, so much as to obscure the beauty of a Christian life, and to weaken the good things in others; who see them so mopish and cast down as though Christianity were a life of perpetual sorrow, and not rather of perpetual rejoicing, Ps. 32:10, 11. Our blessed Saviour indeed shews that mourners are blessed, but it is chiefly because it tends and ends in joy. There is a command to 'rejoice evermore,' but nowhere is it written, 'mourn continually.' Every one, therefore, ought to express by all means this assurance in the beauty of a holy life. Therefore those who make conscience of holy duties and of their ways, let them not yield to temptations of this kind. If we be in such darkness, let us not trust unto our own judgment, but let us trust the judgment of others. Oftentimes others know more by us than we by ourselves. We ought to yield much to the discerning of Christians in this kind. It is an easy matter when all things go well with us, in a right current, having some feeling, then to have comfort and to be fruitful; but when we are in our dumps, and in the hour of temptation, then it is not so easy. When a tree bears a great deal of fruit, and abounds with leaves, it is an easy matter to say, This is a

fruitful tree; but when in winter the sap falls to the root, is covered with snow and frost, the leaves shaken off, and the root that is unseen lies hid, then it requires some judgment and former experience to say, This tree hath life, and is fruitful, though now there appears none. So a Christian may be in such an estate, that he requires the judgment of some others to look upon him. When in such a case, he must go to former times, for God's love is constant, always like himself.

And go to the secret working of grace; when outwardly there appears little, go to the pulses. As, if we would know whether a man who is in a swoon hath life and breath, we go to feel the pulses, to see if there be any breath remaining; so in a case of desertion, or seeming deadness of spirit, try which way goes the soul in the desires of it. Is there not a desire to please God? Are there not groans and endeavours with those desires? Are not those desires restless, and thy soul unsatisfied? Thou dost not content thyself with a little faith, but thou desirest more and more, and thou art ashamed, because thou hast so little. This is the pulses beating, and the breathings of a living soul. Yield not to Satan, who tells thee there is no ground for thee to be assured of thy estate. Where we find these evidences of a living soul, we ought to believe there is true life there; which I speak to those, who, without cause, are carried to doubt of their estates.

Obj. And do not tie Christ to thy conditions: If I had feeling and joy, I could believe, and be cheerful; if God would send a messenger from heaven, an interpreter, one of a thousand unto me, or if I had those supernatural suavities that some others have found, and those joys; or were not corruption so busy with me, and I so prone to be overtaken by them.

Sol. But I say unto thee, know this for thy comfort, that whilst thou art clothed with flesh, two fountains will have two streams; that which is born of the flesh will be flesh, and which is born of the Spirit will be spirit still. Inform thy judgment, mistake not, neither say thou wilt not be comforted unless thou find such a thorough mortification of thy corruption, as admits no strong combustion.

Quest. Shall St Paul, that chosen vessel, have cause to cry out, 'O

wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. 7:24, and canst thou think to be freed from them?

Ans. No; deceive not thyself. Thy comfort stands in this, with St Paul, not to allow the evil that thou doest; that sin shall not have dominion over thee, as the apostle speaks, thou not being under the law, but under grace; for saith he in another place, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary, so that ye cannot do the things which ye would,' Gal. 5:17. Comfort thyself rather from this self-combat, and thence even gather thy assurance, that now sin and thou are not one lump; that a heavenly light hath discovered this thy darkness unto thee; only be sure, sin hath no quiet possession in thee. Complain of thyself, and of thy corruptions, unto thy Christ as fast as they come; lay the burden upon the strongest, and then fear not the issue: that which thou allowest not of, complainest of, and repentest of, shall not, cannot undo thee, but the Spirit at last shall have a final victory. So much for thy corruptions.

And for thy joy and feeling: tie not thy Saviour to thy conditions and qualifications; look to thy desires, thy constant walk, not thy straying fits and thine infirmities; remember that this is Christian perfection, not to live in any gross sin, nor allow of any smaller sin; and for thy imperfections, look up unto that infinite fulness of thy Saviour, and storehouse of all grace, whence we receive grace for grace: 'who is made unto us of God the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. 1:30. And then, whatsoever thy emptiness be, a part of his riches being fetched and applied by the hand of faith, will make thee up complete with the best. And know, that as in the state of innocency under the first Adam, his comfort came from within himself upon his obedience or disobedience, so now under the second Adam, the true and substantial ground of thy comfort is without thyself, in thy justification, and application of his all-sufficient merits and righteousness to thy trembling soul.

Walk on therefore in the obedience of faith, having a respect unto all God's commandments, and then assure thyself the promise is so, thou shalt not be ashamed. Labour as much as thou canst for an higher measure of sanctification and mortification, for this will assure and

confirm thy justification the more it is; but with these cautions.

Caution 1. Be not discouraged at thy small measure whatsoever, if in truth, so as to fly off from applying the riches of thy Saviour and sweet husband unto thee; in whom, whatsoever thy poverty be, if married to him, thou art complete and rich with the best; for the weaker thou art, thou hast so much the more need of a stronger helper to uphold and sustain thee: it being the law of marriage for the wife to be endowed with all the husband's riches, who is to pay her debts, whatsoever she be, being once married unto him.

Caution 2. Again, Whatsoever pitch of sanctification or mortification thou obtainest, rest not in that, but on the all-sufficiency of thy blessed Lord Jesus, who is thine, and so with him all his obedience, righteousness, and merits of his life, death, and resurrection; for there is nothing so exact in thee, but in the time of tentation the devil will find a hole in it, and so make his advantage thereof for thy discouragement; whereas it is clear, 'the prince of this world being come,' as our Saviour says, 'found nothing in him,' John 14:30.

Caution 3. And for the remainder, in those eclipses which damp thy spirit in this thy pilgrimage, by desertion, afflictions, or howsoever, know that precious faith, that it may shine the more, must be tried. Make then a virtue of necessity, buckle thyself to this business of most importance; strive to obey whatsoever thou feelest; in sense of thy misery believe thy happiness in Christ; in sense of God's anger believe his love, and that he will not be angry for ever. Faith, where it is, is of a victorious nature. Therefore, as in contraries thou wouldst have an evidence of any goodness in thee, in contraries strive against contraries. When thou feelest nothing but matter of discouragement, know the commandment is to believe, and thy duty is to obey. No service can be performed comfortably without some persuasion. Strive then to get all the arguments thou canst of a good estate; and when thou thyself art not able get others to read thy evidences for thee, believe the judgments of others who can tell thee, that these things found in thee come not from a corrupt and false heart.

And withal, pray for the spirit of revelation, as St Paul doth, Eph. 2:17.

Pray that God would vouchsafe thee his Spirit, to discover unto thee that love he bears thee, and the riches thou hast in Christ; to shew thee the height, and breadth, and depth, and length, with all the dimensions of his love in Christ more and more; that so the more we grow in the sense and feeling of his love to us, the more we may be inflamed to love him again; for we cannot love him unless we find him loving us first. So beg of him to give us the spirit of revelation. And attend upon the means that doth beget faith, which is especially the word, which is called the word of faith, and look to the examples of others, how God hath brought them from a wicked course of life into a sweet state of grace. Take benefit likewise by the example of those we live with. Use all means to take notice of Christ's particular love. It is the main thing we should labour after in this world. Can we know how long we have to live in this world? What will make us die willingly, but when we know that Christ will have a care of our souls? What made David to commend his soul into God's hands, but this, 'Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth?' Ps. 31:5. What will make us die in the faith cheerfully? Why, Lord, thou hast redeemed my soul; when at the hour of death we can commend our soul to Christ, Take my soul, blessed Saviour: thou hast redeemed me, thou hast loved me, and given thyself for me; look upon that soul in mercy that thou hast sprinkled with thine own blood. Strive we then for this particular faith, without which we cannot resign up our souls comfortably unto Christ at the last.

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