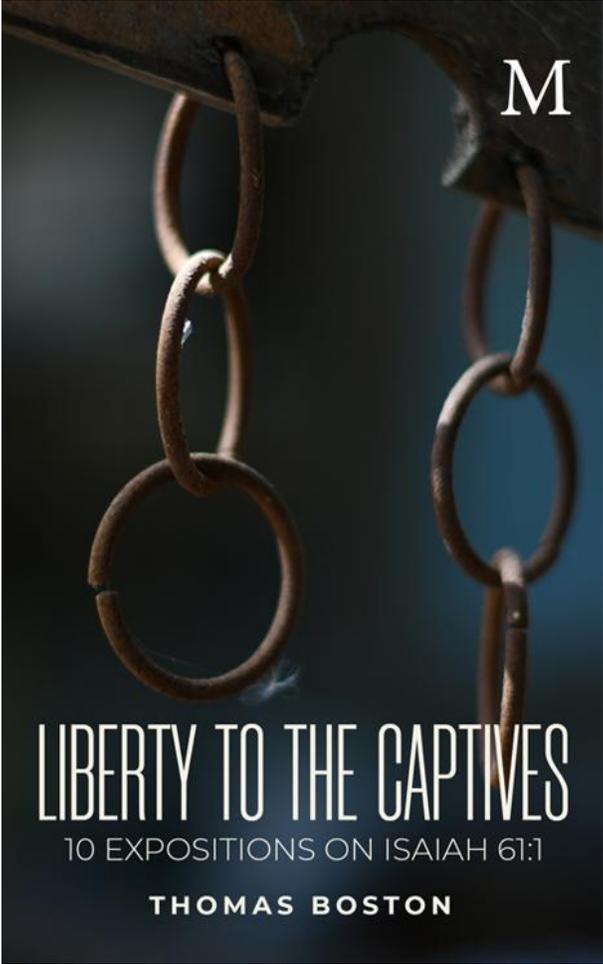


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# LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES

10 EXPOSITIONS ON ISAIAH 61:1

**THOMAS BOSTON**



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# Liberty to the Captives

by Thomas Boston

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# SERMON I

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me. ISAIAH 61:1

THIS text is that upon which our Lord Jesus himself preached to the congregation at Nazareth, Luke 4:16–19. And if we ask of whom the prophet spake, Jesus tells you, ver. 21, that it was of him. Though the prophet perhaps had an eye to himself, and to the promised deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; yet certainly Christ, and the spiritual deliverance by him, is the principal subject. Jesus is here described as the Mediator between God and man. In the words we have two things:—

1. The glorious qualifications of our Mediator: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Here are the three persons of the Trinity distinguished. The Lord God, his Son, and his Spirit. Our Lord Jesus being both God and man, the Holy Spirit, with all his gifts, was put on the man Christ. At his baptism the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, Matth. 3:16. On him also the Spirit rested, and never again departed from him, but continued filling him at all times with graces and gifts for the discharge of his great trust. So that he says the Spirit is upon me, not is come upon me.—We have,

2. The reason of these glorious qualifications. This was, because they were necessary for the office to which he was called: "Because the Lord God hath anointed me." It behoved him to be both God and man. As he was God, he could have nothing added to him; but as he was man, it behoved him to be endowed with unparalleled qualifications for this unparalleled office.—Here consider his call to the work. The Lord anointed him, as prophets, priests, and kings were wont to be, and thus were called and set apart to their respective offices; in like manner was Christ called of the Father to the Meditorial works, not with material oil, as they were, but with the Holy Spirit, which was signified by that oil.—Again, consider his

mission: the Lord sent him. He did not come unsent to the world; but his Father having called him, and furnished him for the work, sent him away to exercise his commission, and to perform his work.—Consider, next, the work he was called to, and sent out upon. Consider this work with respect to Christ himself; and it is threefold. First, As a prophet or preacher of the gospel, revealing the Father's mind. Secondly, A priest or healer, a spiritual physician, for sin-sick souls, to bind up the broken-hearted. Thirdly, As a king, to issue out proclamations, far more joyful than those of Cyrus to the captives, as the spiritual captivity and imprisonment is far worse than a corporal one.—Consider the work as it respects the different sorts of people with whom he has to deal; and it is twofold. First, Some of them have some good in them wrought by his Spirit; and of these, some are the meek, others are broken-hearted. Secondly, Some of them have no good in them, they are captives, prisoners to Satan. Both sorts are in his commission, as persons he has to deal with.—Consider this work as it respects the different cases of these sorts of persons; and it is fourfold. 1st, To the meek, he has to carry good tidings. 2dly, to the broken-hearted, he has to bind up their wounds. 3dly, To the captives he has to give deliverance, and 4thly, To the prisoners he has to open the prison doors. Thus he is, by the Father's special appointment, to give suitable help to each case. A more particular explication of these things will be given as we advance in the subject.

Now, here is a great work; and because of it, (or, as it is in the Hebrew, answerable to it), he is endowed with the Spirit, with his graces and gifts, without which he could not be qualified for it.

The subject of our present discourse, is our Lord's qualification for his work: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Here our Lord commends himself to poor sinners, that they may come to him, and be happy in him. Who can commend him to purpose but himself? He commends himself to us, from the fulness of the Spirit lodged in him, as in Rev. 3:1, "And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." As when the soul is gone, the body can move and act no

more; so where the Spirit of God is gone from men, they can do no more good. While destitute of the Spirit, they are shut up under an uninterrupted barrenness. Now, this is the natural case of the whole world. To the world, then, under the want of the Spirit, Christ here makes public proclamation where the Spirit is to be found; as if he had said, "O all ye spiritless, lifeless sinners, dead to grace and goodness, be it known unto you, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." He says as Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. 45:9, and downwards. The Spirit came upon Moses and the prophets, but they could spare none of their oil; if they could, they could not have communicated it. But the Spirit is on me, as the oil in the cistern, to be dispersed by the pipes of conveyance to poor sinners who will come to me. This is indeed a proclamation of a well-stored and cheap market, to a country perishing under famine, to which they should all resort.

That this is the true intent of these words, appears first, Because it is plain from the original accentuation, that the principal purpose of the text, is not to shew why the Spirit was on Christ, (for in that case the chief stop within the verse had been at broken-hearted), but to shew, that the Spirit is on him, (for there the great stop is.) "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," &c. Secondly, Because an amazing change is prophesied, in the preceding chapter, to come upon the church of the Gentiles; and so here follows the accounting for it: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," to be communicated for effecting this change.

From this part of the subject, I observe the following

DOCTRINE, That the Spirit of God was eminently on Jesus Christ, to be communicated to poor sinners.

This was typified by the ointment poured out on the head of the High Priest, Psalm 133:2. Compare John 1:16.

For illustrating this doctrine, we propose,

I. To shew in what eminent sort the Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ the Mediator.

II. To confirm this point, That the Spirit is put upon Christ to be communicated.

III. I will consider the reasonableness and suitableness of this glorious device, of the Spirit's being put on Christ, to be communicated to poor sinners.—And then,

IV. We shall improve the subject.—We are,

I. To shew in what eminent sort the Spirit of the Lord was upon the Mediator.—Here we observe,

1. That the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred on Christ's human nature in a singular measure: Psalm 45:7, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." What these are you may see, Isa. 3:2, 3. Others have had much of these, but never any so much of them as the man Christ, though they were not infinite, which is a property peculiar to the divine perfections. Thus his enemies were obliged to confess, that he spoke as never man spoke. And in this sense that testimony, John 3:34, "God giveth not his Spirit by measure unto him," may be applied even to Christ's manhood; namely, that God gives not his gifts and graces to him sparingly, as out of a measure, but with a full hand most abundantly.—We observe,

2. The fulness of the Spirit was upon the Mediator; and that is an infinite fulness, for he is God as well as man: Col. 2:9, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Holy Spirit is an infinite Spirit of boundless perfections, all which Jesus Christ as God doth fully possess. The divine nature, an unfathomable depth of perfections, was united to the human nature in our Mediator; so that he has not only a portion of the Spirit, but the whole fulness of the Spirit, John 3:34. Saints have, and can have, by their measure; but

the ocean of perfections, which knows no bounds, and all grace, were and was in him.—We observe,

3. That the Spirit was at all times alike on that Mediator. The Spirit came sometimes on the prophets, instructing them what to say, and exciting them to say it; but sometimes the spirit of prophecy did not blow, they had it not at their command: 1 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." See an instance, 2 Sam. 7:2–5, where the prophet Nathan knew not how to direct David, till the word of the Lord came to him. So the Spirit of sanctification in the saints, though he never departs from them, yet how often is there a dead calm in their souls, which requires them to say, as in Song 4:16, "Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." But the Spirit rested on Jesus Christ, Isa. 11:2; it dwelleth in him, Col. 2:9. He never can be at a loss for want of the Spirit, whose waters in him are never shallow, but still continue alike deep. We observe,

4. That the Spirit is upon him in the fulness of a fountain, to be communicated to those who come to him: Zech. 13:1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness:" so "Jesus breathed on his disciples," John 20:22, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." All others, even the saints in heaven, have but the fulness of a vessel, what only may serve themselves. But he has the fulness of a spring, where the waters are ever flowing, and therefore can furnish all others who come to him, and yet have never the less to himself.—We come now,

II. To confirm this point, That the Spirit was in Christ to be communicated.—We observe,

1. That this is plain from scripture-testimony: Rev. 3:1, "He hath the seven spirits of God." All the saints have the Spirit of God. He dwells

in each of them; if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. 8:9. But then this is quite another thing than the simple having of the Spirit. Christ hath the Spirit as he hath the seven stars, that is, at his disposal, to give them or take them from whom he will: Psalm 66:18, "Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them." Compare Eph. 4:8. Whence it is plain, that Christ received these gifts, received them to give them to men.—This is plain,

2. For Christ, as Mediator and surety of the new covenant, is a common person, as Adam was in the first covenant, who received the stock of all mankind in his hand, and lost it. Now, free grace has made up the stock again, and put it in a sure hand, where it never can be lost: Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." He is the second Adam, and therefore the fulness of the Spirit and of his grace is put upon him, to be communicated by him to poor sinners.—Consider farther,

3. That Christ could not have been qualified to execute the office to which the Father had called him, without communicating the Spirit to those with whom he has to deal; therefore says the text, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath sent me to preach good tidings to the meek." How shall the poor meek ones, who see nothing in them or about them to recommend them to God, believe the good tidings, without the Spirit of faith? How can the broken-hearted have their wounds bound up without the healing spirit? How can the captives and prisoners be delivered, unless the Spirit break off their fetters.—Consider,

Lastly, That it is from Jesus Christ that all who partake of the Spirit do receive the Spirit; there is no other channel of conveyance: John 1:16, "Out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John 6:63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the words that I speak unto you are spirit, and they are life." It is he who sends the Spirit, John 15:16. It is true, the Father is said to give the Spirit to them that ask him, Luke 11:13; but it is still in Christ's name, and for his sake,

John 14:29. Therefore he is called the Spirit of God's Son, whom he sends forth into the hearts of his people.—We now proceed,

III. To consider the reasonableness and suitableness of his glorious device, of the Spirit being put on Christ to be communicated to poor sinners.

1. It is most suitable to the Father's honour, that guilty criminals partake of his Spirit through a Mediator. God looked on all the fallen race of man, and could be pleased with none of them: Psalm 14:3, "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy." But behold his own Son became man! and he is well pleased with him, with his person and mediation, and therefore with sinners in him, Matth. 3:17. In Christ he meets with the sinner; and his justice being satisfied by him, he may, with safety to his own honour, communicate with the poor creatures, and they receive his Spirit, as members of his own Son, their glorious Head.

2. It is most suitable to the honour of the Son, who is appointed head over all things to the church, which is his body, Eph. 1:23. This is that honour which his Father has put upon him, that he be the great steward of heaven, the trustee for all the elect of God, the great dispenser of the Father's favours, to the objects of everlasting love. And as Pharaoh put an honour upon Joseph, by ordering his petitioners to go to Joseph; so does the Father put honour upon Christ, his own well-beloved Son, by a similar appointment.

3. It is most suitable to the honour of the Holy Spirit; for in this manner the gift of the Spirit appears to be by the infinite value of the blood of the Son of God: Rev. 5:6, "The Lamb slain hath seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." No receiving of this holy fire, but from the altar where a Saviour was slain. No communicating of that Spirit, but through the blood of the Redeemer.

Lastly, It is most suitable to the sinner's case; for Christ is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is our near kinsman, through whom we come to God boldly: Eph. 3:12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." We are not able to behold an unvailed God, his glory would dazzle and confound us; but through the vail of the flesh of Christ we may behold him and live.—We now come,

IV. To a practical improvement of the subject. And this,

First, In a use for information.

1. This lets us see the transcendent glory and beauty of Jesus Christ. Pharaoh could say of Joseph to his servants, Gen. 41:38, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" How does the firmament shine with the stars which sparkle in it! How beautiful is the earth, when decked with the variety of the gifts of nature in the spring! But what are all these to the Mediator's glory and beauty, in whom all the gifts and graces of God's Spirit do centre: Psalm 45:2, "Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips." There is no man, however well qualified, that excels in all things, there is a want in every individual, but no want in Christ; Song 5:16, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." (Heb. He is all desires).—We may learn,

2. The absolute fulness and sufficiency of Christ to make the sinner who comes to him perfectly happy; he gives them rest, Matth. 11:28. There is a fulness of the Spirit in him to answer all their necessities, be what they will. Behold the whole constellation of gifts and graces in our exalted Redeemer. Every good gift, natural, moral, or religious, comes from this Spirit. Some have one gift of him, some another; but our Lord Jesus Christ has all, which is more than all the excellencies to be found in angels and men. And what can he want to bestow, who has the Spirit to give to those who come to him?—We may learn,

3. The freedom of grace in Christ. He has all, and he communicates all freely. The spring runs freely without price or hire. It is a pleasure to have a full breast sucked: and it is a pleasure to our blessed Redeemer to do good and to communicate to undeserving sinners.— We may see,

4. The absolute need we have of Christ. Ye are ruined without the Spirit, ye will pine away in your guilt, rust away in your corruptions, and, like dead corpses, be buried out of God's sight, if ye get not the Spirit; and ye cannot have the Spirit but from Christ. This is the only market opened to relieve your necessities.

Lastly, Ye are inexcuseable if ye continue without the Spirit, for you may have the Spirit if you come to Christ; but, alas! he may say of us, as John 5:40, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." I would raise your dead souls, I would quicken you, I would make you as a well-watered garden: but alas! ye care not for the Spirit. Prov. 1:25, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."—We shall improve this subject,

Secondly, In a use of exhortation.

1. I would exhort you, then, to come to Christ, that ye may partake of his Spirit. Christ is saying to you this day, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Come, and I will pour him out upon you. Alas for the want of the Spirit this day! it appears sadly in the whole church, in the congregation, in neighbourhoods, and in families. There is enough of a selfish, devilish, carnal, worldly, profane, and formal spirit, but little of a holy heavenly spirit, to be seen this day. But we may get the spirit, if we will by faith come to Christ for it. O that we were moving to him for this spirit!—To be more particular, we would exhort you,

1. Come to Christ, O thou dead and lifeless sinner, who art lying rotting under the power of thy lusts, who hast a heart within thee which cannot repent and mourn, or let go the dead grip it has taken

of the world, and of sinful courses. His Spirit is a spirit of life, which will make the dry bones live, the withered soul flourish as an herb, the heart, which is like a clog now in duties, to be like the chariots of Aminadib: Eph. 5:14, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light."

2. Come, drooping, fainting, dispirited soul, who art harassed with terrors, pierced with fearful apprehension, whose heart is like a stone, dying within thee. His Spirit is a spirit of light, life, and comfort: he binds up the broken-hearted, makes light to arise to those who go mourning without the sun, takes off the sackcloth, and girds with gladness.

3. Come, hard-hearted sinner, whom nothing can move, neither judgments nor mercies, who canst not mourn either for thy own sins, or the sins of the generation. His Spirit can soften the heart. He will take away your stony heart, and give you an heart of flesh. An outpouring of the Spirit would melt down the heart, and dissolve it in tears of godly sorrow, this would break the bands of iron and brass: Zech. 12:10, "And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants, of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall 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."

4. Come, tempted sinner, who art harassed with temptations, and art ready to say, One day I shall fall before this great adversary. The Spirit is a spirit of power, 2 Tim 1:7. It may be, that temptations come in on thee like a breaking forth of waters, threatening to sweep all before them; but come to Christ for his Spirit, who is able to stem the tide, to create peace, and to make thee more than a conqueror.

5. Come, unfruitful sinner. The Lord is at much pains with you by ordinances and providences, yet you are barren! you bring forth no fruit answerable to the pains of the Husbandman. What is the reason the Spirit comes not with the word and providences? But you may

have the Spirit from Christ, and this would make you fruitful: Eph. 5:9, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." The blowing of that wind from heaven would make the spices flow out, Cant. 4:16, and cause you to make progress in your journey to the Zion above.

6. Come, unholy sinner. The Spirit which Christ has to give, is a spirit of holiness, Rom. 1:4. He works like water in washing the polluted soul, like fire in burning up corruption. He is the great principle of holiness, who works it wherever he comes, and makes of the very worst a vessel fit for the Master's use.

Lastly, Come to Christ for his Spirit, whatever your case be; you will find a suitable cure from him, by the fulness of the Spirit in him; he is suited for every case that is put in his hand: Col. 2:9, 10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principalities and powers." He will be eyes to the blind, light to them that sit in darkness, legs to the lame, meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked; all in all.—To prevail with you in coming to Christ for the Spirit, I would offer you the following motives:—

MOT. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is absolutely necessary for you to have, you cannot want him, you must have him. The world may as well want the sun, moon, and stars, as you can want the Spirit; for without the Spirit ye can do nothing but sin. When the soul is away, the body is dead, and can do nothing but lie and rot in a grave: and when the Spirit of God is not in a man, he is dead in sin, and can do nothing but sin: John 6:63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life." Ye cannot have a good and acceptable thought, nor perform any duty acceptable: John 4:24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." So that all pains are lost upon thee, as on the dead tree, to which summer and winter are alike.—Again, without the Spirit, ye are none of Christ's, Rom. 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is

none of his." All those who are Christ's, they are sealed and marked with the Spirit of Christ: Eph. 1:13, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Men set their mark on their sheep, and therefore says one, If such a one be one of my sheep, it has such a mark; so says our Lord, If one of my sheep, he has my Spirit in him; and so without the Spirit, without Christ, and without the Father, therefore without the Spirit, without God in the world.—Farther, without the Spirit, ye are undone for ever: for so ye are without God, and therefore without hope, Eph. 2:12. The dead corpse may be kept a while, but when there is no hope of the return of life, it is buried in a grave; so, without the Spirit, ye may be kept a while through God's patience, but the end will be, to be east into the pit, and buried out of God's sight in fiery flames.

MOT. 2. You cannot have the Spirit but from Jesus Christ. The blessed Mediator is the bowl from which this holy oil is conveyed to all the lamps which burn with it. The Spirit, Bays he, is on me: 1 John 2:20, "But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things." Ver. 27, "But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you." The Egyptians must have starved, if they had not been supplied with corn by Joseph, for he had all the corn at his disposal; and we must be for ever without the Spirit, if we receive him not from Christ. The Spirit dwells in none but as members of Christ: and whence shall the members have life but from the Head?

MOT. 3. Ye may have the Spirit, and that freely, from Christ: Prov. 1:23, "Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." And the promise is very bountiful, ye may have all free of cost: Rev. 22:17, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Spirit on Christ is that water of life which gives life to the dead, and life more abundantly to the living; and the terms are, Ask of him, and he will give thee living water, John 4:10. Not only drops of the Spirit, but the Spirit poured out, floods of the same: Isa. 44:3, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." John 7:38, 39,

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified)."

Lastly, By way of motive, if ye will not come to Christ for the Spirit, ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, ye are slights of Christ, and dreadful will your reckoning be: Prov. 1:24–27, "Because I have called, and ye have refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." It will be more tolerable for those who never heard where they might partake of the Spirit than for you.

In conclusion, I shall only add the following directions:—

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit, in the name of Christ; you have a promise of the Spirit; says God, by the prophet Ezekiel, "And I will put my spirit within you." And said Jesus, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more should your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Take courage, then, believe the promise, press it and depend upon it.

2. Unite with Jesus Christ, accepting him in the gospel-offer, and giving yourselves away freely to him. Bring your dead soul to the Lord of life, and he will breathe in it, and ye shall be like the dead man laid in the sepulchre of Elisha, who revived, and stood upon his feet, whenever he touched the prophet's bones, 2 Kings 13:21.

Lastly, Wait and look for the Spirit in Christ's ordinances, especially the preaching of the gospel. They who would have the wind to blow on them, go out into the open air; though they may for the present miss it, they wait till it blows, when in like manner exercised, then

you shall know that the ministration of the Spirit is glorious, 2 Cor. 3:8. Amen.

## **Sermon II**

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me. - ISAIAH 61:1

UNDER this part of the text, we propose to consider the necessity of the fulness of the Spirit being lodged in Christ. It was necessary, because the Lord hath anointed him unto, and sent him forth upon the mediatory work. The greatness of that work required it.—Here I observe the following doctrines:—

DOCTRINE I. That our Lord Jesus Christ was by the Father anointed to, and sent forth upon, the mediatory work.—Or, in other words,

That our Mediator, the Lord Jesus, was anointed by the Father unto this office, and sent forth by him to this work.

DOCTRINE II. That the work upon which Jesus the Mediator was sent forth, necessarily required the fulness of the Spirit to be lodged in him.—We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That our Lord Jesus Christ was by the Father anointed to, and sent forth upon, the mediatory work.—Or, in other words,

That our Mediator, the Lord Jesus, was anointed by the Father unto this office, and sent forth by him to this work,—In illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Consider the anointing here mentioned.

II. Speak of the sending which flowed from and followed upon it.

### III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to consider the anointing here mentioned. In attending to this I shall, first, shew what is meant by this anointing. Secondly, Wherewith Christ was anointed.

First, We are to shew what is meant by this anointing. Under the Old Testament, anointing was a ceremony used for consecrating kings, priests, and prophets: thus David was anointed king, Aaron was anointed priest, Elisha anointed a prophet. This ceremony signified two things:—The designation of the person to the office. It being a sign, by the divine appointment, that this was the person whom God had called to this work; it was also a discovery of the divine purpose, as thereby the person was consecrated to the office; though sometimes it was long after that he got his orders to proceed to the actual exercise of it. Thus Samuel, by the command of the Lord, anointed David king long before he assumed the government, 1 Sam. 16:13—Again, this ceremony also signified the endowment of the person with the abilities and qualifications necessary to fit him for the work. Thus, when Saul was anointed king, God gave him another heart, 1 Sam. 10:13, "And when David was anointed king, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward," 1 Sam. 16:13. Accordingly, Christ's anointing signifies two things:—

1. His designation to the mediatory office. The Father pitched upon his Son, and set him apart for this grand work, to recover a ruined world. He made choice of him to be the repairer of the great breach, and put the breach under his hand. Hence he is called God's elect or chosen one; Isa. 42:1, "Behold (says God) my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Christ's anointing signifies,

2. His being fitted and furnished for that office to which he was designed and set apart: John 3:31, "For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. Hence it is said of him, that he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make

intercession for them." It was an unparalleled work, and so unparalleled qualifications were necessary for it. He was pitched upon to be the Father's servant in the great work of recovering an elect world. He was infinitely wise who made the choice, and therefore could not but pitch on a suitable person: he was also infinitely powerful, and all-sufficient, and therefore could fully qualify him for it. We have both the choice and the furniture together: Isa. 42:1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And this is the import of the anointing.—But let us view it more particularly,

In the designation or choice made by the Father. Infinite wisdom appeared in it most conspicuously, with infinite love to an elect world. When the divine decree and purpose of man's redemption was laid down by the Trinity, the great thing next to be considered was, who should undertake the work, and be the Redeemer. No mere man could be chosen, for none could have a back to bear such a burden. All were guilty, and could not satisfy for their own sin, far less purchase salvation for others. No angel could be chosen, for even they, with their stock, could not have been able to have discharged the debt, in regard it was infinite; wherefore the Father made choice of his own Son, as a person who could undertake it; Psalm 89:19, 20, "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people; I have found David my servant, and with my holy oil have I anointed him." He being the Son of God, it doubtless became the divine perfections to pitch on him, as one who was to purchase for us the adoption of sons, and to bring many children to glory.—Let us view this anointing,

In qualifying him for the work, in which the same love and wisdom appears. Our Mediator had to die, for without shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin." The divine nature was not capable of dying, therefore he prepared him a body: Heb. 10:5, "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and

offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me." The same nature which sinned had to suffer; therefore he did not create him a body out of nothing, but prepared him one of the seed of Adam. He was chosen out of the people: Gal. 4:4, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." But farther, our nature was corrupted, and our flesh sinful flesh; therefore it could not be immediately united to the divine nature; wherefore he sanctified the substance of which that precious body was formed, and made him a holy human nature: Heb. 7:26, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," While what the human nature could do or suffer, would not have possessed sufficient virtue, if separated from the divine; therefore he unites it with it, John 1:14, "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And hence the human nature was filled with all gifts and graces necessary to it, for that part which it was to act in the great work.—Let us now,

Secondly, Inquire wherewith Christ was anointed. Not with material oil, but with the Spirit, signified by it: Psalm 45:7, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows." And while the designation of the person was from eternity, the Spirit's descending on him like a dove at his baptism was the discovery of that eternal choice, and served for the visible designation of him to the world: Matth. 3:16, 17, "And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and, lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And by the same Spirit it was that he was qualified and fitted for the mediatory work, his holy human nature being with it.—If it be inquired, how his having been anointed can be the reason of the Spirit's being upon him, when the Spirit was that with which he was anointed? I answer, That Christ's having been anointed with the Spirit to qualify him for the mediatory work, is a very proper reason why the Spirit was lodged and continues to be in Christ, to be communicated from him to the members of his mystical body.

II. We are now shortly to speak of the sending of Christ by the Father. As he anointed, so he sent him. This means the Father's calling him out unto the exercise of his office for which he had been designed, and for which he had been qualified. He was seasonably sent to the work by the Father, and he willingly came and put hand to it, for his Father's glory, and the salvation of poor sinners: Psalm 40:7, "Then said he, Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! Yea, thy law is within my heart." We may observe three periods of this sending.

The first period was at Adam's fall, when all mankind was newly ruined by the first sin; then the Mediator came and looked on the ruins of the world, Gen. 3:8; preached deliverance to the captives, ver. 15, telling them that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. He healed the broken-hearted, by covering Adam and his wife with coats of skin, ver. 21, even the skins of sacrifices, a type of the righteousness of a slain Redeemer. Thus he underpropped the world by his mediation, when all was shaken loose by man's disobedience. He began immediately to repair the breach, and kept the world from absolute and irreparable ruin.

The second period was at his birth, in the fulness of time, when he became man, being born of the virgin: Gal. 4:4, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The world was then in a deplorable condition; the knowledge of the true God was lost among the Gentiles, religion was corrupted among the Jews, some few were groaning for the consolation of Israel. Then he came in the flesh, being born of a mean woman, and laid in a manger; but at his birth the angels sung, as in Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

The third period was when he entered on the public exercise of his ministry at his baptism; then was he, in a special manner, sent out on that work to which he was called: Matth. 3:17, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matth. 4:17, "From that time, Jesus

began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Then he went about his work, preaching the gospel, to bring sinners to God; he also became obedient unto the death, according to the everlasting covenant between him and his Father.

III. We now proceed to make some practical improvement.

1st, In a use of information.

1. This subject informs us, that the salvation of sinners was the concern of a whole Trinity. How great a work must it be, when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each acted their part for bringing it about. The Father sent the Son, the Son submitted to be sent as Mediator, and by the Holy Spirit he was fitted for the work. Never, then, think little of that salvation, which required such causes and authors to bring it about.—It informs us,

2. That Jesus Christ is perfectly able to save sinners: Heb. 7:25, "He is able to save to the uttermost." He was the Father's choice to that great work, which may assure us he was an able hand for it. He has all given him to fit him for it, which the fulness of the Godhead affords. The Father had never taken him cautioner, if he had not been perfectly able to pay the debt. He had never laid the sinner's help upon him, if he had not been able to bear the weight of it.

3. See here the manifold wisdom of God, how it is displayed in the contrivance of salvation through Christ. The first creation was a work of wisdom; but the second was more so; the confused heap at first was little in comparison of the confusion sin brought into the world, but divine wisdom brought order out of this confusion. Truth meets with mercy, righteousness and peace embrace each other, sin is punished, and the sinner spared. Out of the greatest affront to God, rises the occasion of his greatest glory, his Son's obedience instead of theirs. When at the fall hell rejoiced, angels stood astonished, and men lay groveling in the depth of misery, wisdom found out a way of recovery, to the marring of the devil's joy, the dissipating man's fears,

and giving angels a mystery of wisdom to pry into: Eph. 3:10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which be purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord."

4. See here the amazing mercy of God to objects in the deepest misery. To have given rebel sinners some years' respite from their due punishment, to have locked them up in hell, to be released after some millions of years, would have glorified mercy; but for an offended God to provide a Mediator himself, proclaims the height and depth of infinite mercy.

5. See here the love of God to poor sinners. The love of the Father is wonderful, in sending his own Son to recover sinners by his obedience and death: John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Son, his only-begotten Son, unto the death, the most bitter death, even the death of the cross."—The love of Christ, which undertook that heavy work for poor sinners. Here is love admirable in all its dimensions: Christ coming in the room of sinners. If ye doubt his love, look into his pierced side, and behold its glowings there.—The love of the Spirit dwelling in Christ, as the Head, to enliven poor sinners as his members, being in him, exciting, moving him forward to the work, and fitting him for it.—I shall only add a use of exhortation.

O! sirs, let Christ be your choice, as he was the Father's. His Father is well pleased with him, be you also well pleased with him. Employ him in your every case, put all your cases in his hand, lay your help where the Father hath laid it. Receive him whom the Father hath sent, receive him for all the ends to which the Father hath anointed and sent him. He is called Messiah, and Christ, to denote his being anointed as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people; he was anointed for all these offices, receive and improve him in them all. He is anointed as the great Prophet, to declare the mind of God to sinners: Isa. 61:1, He is to "preach good tidings to the meek." Receive

him for your Prophet, and teacher; renouncing your own wisdom, submit yourselves to be taught by his word and Spirit; and go to him for direction in all cases. He is an anointed Priest: Psalm 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Receive him as your Priest, laying the weight of your souls on his sacrifice and intercession; renouncing all confidence in yourselves. Carry your guilt to him, to be carried off by his atonement, and put all your spiritual sacrifices in his hand, for only out of his hand will they be accepted. He is anointed King: Psalm 2:6, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Submit yourselves a willing people to the royal Mediator to receive his commandments, to live according to his laws, to pursue the interest of his kingdom in the world, and to fight under his banner against the devil, the world, and the flesh; since for these ends he is sent, and has come, it lies on us to receive him as such. And that this may have weight with you, consider,

(1.) Who sent him; the Father, the first person of the glorious Trinity: John 5:37, "The Father himself," said he, "that hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." And will we not welcome him whom the Father hath sent, and entertain him for the ends for which he is sent? The Father had a concern for the salvation of lost sinners, and hath sent them a deliverer, a Saviour. How will you answer if you slight him?— Consider,

(2.) Who is sent. The Father hath put an honour on man, beyond what he hath put on angels, in that he sent a Saviour for the one, not for the other. Had he sent a lower person, an angel, with what profound respect ought we to have received him as the messenger of the Lord? how much more when he hath sent his own Son?— Consider,

(3.) The errand and design on which he was sent; namely, to recover a lost world, to make up the peace between God and sinners: Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." O! may not his errand make him a welcome messenger to

the world? If we will not receive him on this errand, we are self-destroyers a second time, who having first given ourselves a dreadful wound, in the next place reject the Saviour, the Physician sent to us.—Consider,

(4.) The work he was sent upon for this end; doing-work, suffering-work. His doing-work we have in our text, it will be pleasing and acceptable to sensible sinners. His suffering-work was hard work, but was a necessary foundation for the other. He preached good tidings, but he brought them from his own death. He bindeth up the broken-hearted, but the healing medicine is his own blood; he proclaims deliverance, but the ransom was his own life.—Consider,

(5.) Whence and whither he was sent; from the Father's bosom to this earth, where he was entertained with all evil treatment, till they nailed him to a cross, and he was buried in a grave, Phil. 2:6–8. He was sent from the regions of bliss to this lower world, and refused not the journey; he was sent from the hallelujahs of angels, to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. And when he is come, will we not receive him?

Lastly, Consider the necessity of this mission: Psalm 40:6, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required; then said I, Lo! I come. "The world had universally perished without remedy if he had not come. He bare up the pillars thereof, and warded off the blow of justice, by laying his own neck on the block And now that he is come, he must be embraced and improved, else we perish; for, Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other salvation to look to: Heb. 2:3, "How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—I shall now go on to illustrate very briefly,

DOCTRINE II. That the work upon which the Mediator was sent forth, necessarily required the fulness of the Spirit to be lodged in

him.

In illustrating this, all that I intend is, to confirm the point briefly, and then conclude with a very short improvement.

To confirm this point, we need do no more but give a short account of Christ's mediatory work.

1. Christ is the day's-man betwixt God and sinners. He was employed to take cognisance of the difference between the two parties, to decide who it was had done the wrong, and on what terms they might be reconciled. Hence we read, John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." He has framed the covenant of reconciliation, as Mediator between the parties: Song 3:9, "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon." In him is found what Job so much desired, Job 9:33, "a day's-man to lay his hands upon both:" namely, to keep the dissenting parties asunder, lest they should fall foul of one another. This the Mediator had to do; this he did when he timeously step in betwixt an offended God and guilty sinners, like the ram caught in the thicket, when Isaac was lying bound on the altar, which stopped the execution, and held the hand of justice, Psalm 6:7, (quoted above).—He is a day's-man, to keep them together, lest they should quite separate, and the reconciliation of the parties blow up. Thus Christ deals with sinners, who otherwise would run away from God, and never come in terms with him. Thus he did with our first parents, whom he brought out of their hiding-place, to set matters on a new footing.

2. He is the Messenger that goes betwixt the parties, intimating the mind of the one to the other, in order to make reconciliation. And in the respect Moses was a typical mediator: Deut. 5:5, "I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount." So Christ is called the Messenger of the covenant, Mal. 3:1. He brings the Lord's mind to poor sinners, unfolds the thoughts of love which were from eternity in his breast: John 1:18, "No man hath seen God

at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Thus he brings down the covenant out of the register of heaven, and proclaims it to rebels: and if there be any among them content to come into it, and who accept of it, he reports their acceptance to his Father: John 17:8, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest unto me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me."

3. He is a Surety betwixt the parties, and therefore is called the surety of a better testament, Heb. 7:22; engaging and taking burden upon him on their behalf, that so the peace may be firm and lasting.—Christ the Mediator, is surety for man to God. In the first covenant, man had no surety for himself; and there needed none. He was able to do all that was required of him; for he was in good case, there was no flaw in his estate; but in his fallen state, God would not take his word, nor his most solemn engagement; it behoved him to have a surety to undertake for him, and that both by way of satisfaction and caution. Man was broken, was drowned in debt which he never would be able to pay, and so he needed a surety to make satisfaction, who should be able and would engage himself to pay the debt. Christ the Mediator then became surety for the broken man, undertook to pay all his debt, gave in his bond for it in the covenant of redemption, which the Father accepted: Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty;" he engaged body for body, life for life, like Judah for Benjamin, Gen. 43:9, in the fulness of time he paid the debt, and got up the discharge at his own resurrection from the dead. Man was false and fickle, and not to be trusted; so needed a cautioner who would bind for his good behaviour. Christ became cautioner for the poor prodigals, engaging himself that they shall consent to the covenant: John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." And that having consented, they shall hold by it, and never fall away totally and finally: John 10:28, "And I will give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." By his Spirit of faith and holiness, which he puts in them, he

accordingly secures them.—He is also surety for God to man. He undertook that God's part of the covenant shall be punctually fulfilled to us: 2 Cor. 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." It is true, the infinite veracity and power of the principal leaves no need of a surety, in respect of himself; but poor guilty sinners, sensible of their own unworthiness, are timorous, misbelieving, distrustful creatures; and therefore, that they may be helped to believe, there is a surety of their own nature, even the man Christ Jesus, granted unto them. That all the promises of God in the covenant shall be fulfilled to those who come into it, he has completely ensured. He has given his cautionary word: John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." He hath given his Spirit as an earnest and seal of the promise, Eph. 1:13, "In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." He has given them the first-fruits of the Spirit in themselves, Rom. 8:23. He has also given them the sacrament. He has gone to deal with it, saying, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins," Matth. 26:28.

4. He is an intercessor betwixt the parties: Isa. 53:12, "He makes intercession for the transgressors." He, by his interest, manages betwixt the Lord and poor sinners, to set matters right, and keep them so. This is that which relates to the application of his redemption, and puts life in the Mediator's death, that it may be efficacious to his chosen ones. As the high priest appeared in the holy of holies, presenting the blood of the sacrifice to the Lord; so does Christ appear in heaven to intercede for those for whom he has died. And he intercedes,—as a peace-maker, who actually makes peace betwixt God and every believing sinner; hence, Heb. 12:24, he is "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant;" and his blood is "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." By

his means, he who was before an enemy is reconciled to God, brought within the bond of the covenant of peace, and gets a right to all the benefits of it. As by his gracious Spirit he extinguishes the real enmity of the sinner against God, so by his intercession he removes the legal enmity in God against the sinner.—He intercedes as the Secretary, or favourite courtier of heaven, bringing in the sinner into the comfortable gracious presence of God, procuring him access to God, and communion with him in duties: Eph. 3:12, "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." Thus, through the vail of his flesh, the believing sinner draws nigh to God, and God draws nigh to him with his quickening, sanctifying, and comforting influences. The sinner looks on God with the confidence a child does on a father.—He intercedes as a resident at the court of heaven: Heb. 9:24, "He is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." And by this means he maintains that peace which he has made betwixt God and believers: Rom. 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God; through our Lord Jesus Christ:" he keeps the believer's trade with heaven open and free for them: Rom. 5:2, "By whom also we have access by faith, into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." He removes any emergent differences, Isa. 53:12; and so ensures, by the covenant of peace, that there can never be a total rupture betwixt heaven and them: Heb. 7:25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—He intercedes as an Advocate at the bar of God: 1 John 2:1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He pleads their cause before God, upon the ground of his own sufferings, against all their accusers and whatever is charged upon them, so that they are freed from condemnation, their right and title to heaven is still vindicated, notwithstanding their many failures; and wrath can go no farther against them than temporary strokes.—He intercedes as a Solicitor for his people before the Lord. He presents their petitions, and solicits for the granting of them. With much incense he offers the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne, Rev. 8:3. They have many wants, both as to temporal and

spiritual things. They must go to God for them, and put up their petitions. But he must present them, else they cannot be heard.

5. He is the Administrator of the covenant, God's deputy-governor, to dispose of the benefits of the covenant, and to manage the whole matter betwixt the Lord and sinners: Matth. 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." As Joseph was set over the land of Egypt, so he is set over his Father's house, all commerce betwixt the Lord and sinners being through his mediation. As they can offer nothing to God acceptably, but through him: so they can receive no benefit from heaven but through his hand: John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but committed all judgment unto the Son." He has to bring the elect to consent to the covenant; to rule and govern them in it; to protect, provide, and furnish them with all necessaries through the wilderness: and, finally, to give them the crown and kingdom at last; this is the office and work to which Christ was anointed; neither men nor angels could be fit for such a trust. Could any manage, it without a fulness of the Spirit lodged in him? therefore, as in John 5:22, (quoted above), and in ver. 23, "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him." All men should honour the Son, for none but one who had the fulness of the divine perfections could be capable of such a trust. Who else was fit to be day's-man between God and sinners? Who else could be the messenger of the covenant, for who hath known the mind of the Lord, but his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who from eternity lay in his bosom?

I conclude with a very short improvement.

1. Learn hence, that the work of the salvation of sinners, restoring them to the favour of God, and to make them happy, is a great work, and a work which was not easily accomplished. It was a work above the power of men or angels, a work not to be performed but by him who has all power in heaven and earth. Think on this ye that judge it

such an easy thing to obtain mercy; and assure thyself it is a work which can never be done but by Christ's own hand.

2. Highly esteem and honour Christ, particularly by believing in him, who is thus qualified for this great work. O what need of the fulness of the Spirit in him to support him under the load of the elect's debt,—in order to the discharging of it,—and to touch and turn the hearts of sinners unto God!

Lastly, See your absolute need of Christ. you must have an interest in him, else you cannot be saved. His mediation only can save you from the wrath of God, and from the lowest hell. Amen.

## **SERMON III**

# **JESUS A PREACHER OF GOOD TIDINGS TO THE MEEK**

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek. -  
ISIAH 61:1

IN these and the following words, we have represented the great, the important work for which Jesus was appointed, and to which he was specially called by his heavenly Father,—work for which he was completely qualified, by the Spirit of the Lord God being upon him. We propose to consider the several parts of this work, in that order in which they are set before us; and accordingly begin with that part, his having "to preach good tidings to the meek."—In which words we have,

1. The work itself in which the Son of God was employed, and to which he was called: "To preach good tidings." He was a minister by office; Rom. 15:8, "Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the

circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of God made to the fathers;" the great minister of the gospel. He was the best among men; he brought good tidings, the best of tidings; by these tidings is meant the gospel, Luke 4:18. This is the good news, the tidings of peace and salvation, which Jesus brought from heaven to earth.—We have,

2. The special object of this part of the work, "the meek." The word signifies, such as are meek, humble, and submissive, being made so by poverty and affliction. In the parallel place, it reads poor, and the one explains the other. If it is inquired, what poor ones are meant? I think it is plain, it is not those who are mean in the world, but poor in spirit, for these poor ones are meek. These meek ones are classed with the broken-hearted, and both distinguished from the captives and prisoners, by the original accentuation. So that by the meek here is meant, the poor in spirit, those who, as being convinced by the law, have seen themselves to be poor, that they have nothing in which they could stand before God as righteous, but look on themselves as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3:17. And it is remarkable, that our Saviour's sermon on the mount begins with good tidings to such persons: Matth. 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

But here there occurs a question: Was Christ to preach the good tidings of the gospel to none but these? To this I answer, The gospel was in itself good tidings unto all: Luke 2:10, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Our Lord preached to all who heard him promiscuously these good tidings, but in effect they were not good to any but to the poor in spirit among them. None but these could relish the goodness of them; to others they were tasteless, but to the poor in spirit, they sunk like a refreshing oil into their bones.—From these words I take the following

DOCTRINE, That as the tidings of the gospel will indeed be good and welcome tidings to those who are meek, and poor in spirit, so Jesus

is, by his heavenly Father, employed on the great work of preaching the good tidings of the gospel to sinners, especially to such who are meek, and spiritually poor in their own eyes.—In handling this doctrine we propose,

I. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

III. Shew how this great work of preaching is, and hath been performed by Christ.

IV. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

V. Make some practical improvement of the whole.—We are then,

1. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.—As to this, we observe, that this meekness comprehends in it,

1. A pressing scene of utter emptiness in one's self: Rom. 8:18, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." A poor man going abroad, sees this and the other thing, in the houses of the rich; but when he comes home, he sees none of them there. Thus, the meek poor soul looks through himself, and there, in himself, he sees nothing but emptiness of all goodness, no holiness, wisdom, nor strength. The heart, which should be the garden of the Lord, appears as a bare muir, a wild, a waste. He is ready to cry out, O barren, dry, sapless heart and nature of mine! Agur looks for knowledge, and he says, Prov. 30:2, 3, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." The prodigal looks to his provisions, and says, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" Paul reckons up his whole self, and the sum total is nought: 2 Cor. 12:11, "For in nothing am I

behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."—This meekness comprehends,

2. A pressing sense of sinfulness: Rom. 7:14, "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." He looks to the whole of himself, and he sees nothing on him but rags; a sinful nature, a corrupt heart, unclean lusts, and an unholy life. He must rank his righteousness with his unrighteousness, his duties with his sins, for he is defiled with them all: Isa. 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." These meek poor ones see themselves the very picture of rank poverty, having only filthy rags, death painted on their face by want, and overgrown by the vermin of filthy lusts. They see themselves not only nothing, but worse than nothing, while they look over these frightful accounts of the debt of sin, which stand against them, and for which they have nothing to pay.—This meekness comprehends,

3. A pressing sense of misery by sin. Like the prodigal, they see themselves ready to perish with hunger. Debt is a heavy burden to an honest heart, and filthiness to one that desires to be clean: Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They look about them, and see themselves in a cloud of miseries, arising from their sins. Their poverty presseth them down. They are obliged to do many things which otherwise they would not, and cannot attain to other things which they desire to arrive at: Rom. 7:19, "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." It separates them from that communion with God which they would otherwise enjoy, makes them sit within, mourning without the sun, when otherwise they might walk abroad in the light of the Lord's countenance. This presseth their souls to the dust.—It comprehends,

4. A sense of utter inability to help one's self: 2 Cor. 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." They see themselves in the mire, but unable to help themselves out;

therefore these poor men cry unto the Lord: Psalm 34:6. They see an emptiness and weakness in all their external privileges, their gifts, duties, yea, their graces, to save and help them. They count all things but loss for Christ, and wish to be found in Christ, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law. They find the sting in their conscience, but cannot draw it out; guilt is a burden, but they cannot throw it off; lusts are strong and uneasy, but they are not able to master them; and this presses them sore.—This meekness comprehends,

5. A sense of the absolute need of a Saviour, and of help from heaven: 2 Cor. 3:5, "But our sufficiency is of God." The pride of the spirit is beat down, they lie down at the Lord's feet, saying, (Jer. 31:18,) "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: tarn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." They see they will be ruined if their help come not from above. Their case appears desperate to all remedies, but those which are under the management of an eternal omnipotent hand. They say to their souls, as the king of Israel said to the woman in the time of famine, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?"—It comprehends,

6. A sense as to utter unworthiness of the Lord's help; they see nothing which they have to recommend them to the Lord's help. They dare not stand upon worth, like those proud beggars, who value themselves, on what they have been or done. Like the centurion, they say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Hence there is a word put in for them, Isa. 55:1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." They own the Lord would be just, if he should never vouchsafe his mercy and grace to them, but exclude them for ever from his presence; Jer. 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." They see a loathsomeness in the best things about them, in their reformation, mourning, their desires of Christ, wrestling, and prayers for mercy;

so that they conclude, if ever he notice them, it must be altogether for his own name's sake.—This meekness comprehends,

7. An earnest desire as to the supply of soul-wants: Matth. 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." A greedy man, we say, is always poor, because natural poverty consists rather in the desire of what we want, than in the want itself. There are many who want spiritual good things, yet are not poor in Spirit, because they are not pained with the want of them. But the poor in spirit are pained with the want of spiritual good things. They pant for them, Psalm 42:1; long for them, thirst for them, Psalm 63:1. Hence we read of the expectation of the poor, which shall not perish for ever, Psalm 9:18.—It comprehends,

Lastly, A hearty contentment in submitting to any method of help which the Lord will prescribe: Acts 9:7, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Beggars must not be choosers; these meek poor ones are content with Christ on any terms, while others stand contending about them. Necessity has no law, and hunger will break through stone walls. Whoso are thus situated, will be for a Saviour, a righteousness, and holiness, at any rate. They are content to be taught, content to be managed: Psalm 25:9, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." They are content to part with all, for the enriching pearl of great price.—We are now,

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

The poor in spirit are wounded by the law: the gospel brings a healing medicine to these wounds. It suits their case fully, and declares to them the good news of a salve for all their sores. Solomon tells us, Prov. 25:25, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Applicable this to nothing so much as the good tidings brought us from heaven in the gospel. I cannot enumerate all the articles of these good tidings, but shall take notice of the following:—

1. The gospel-tidings are tidings of a complete salvation. And are not these good tidings? Luke 2:11, "For unto us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." O! lost sinners, there is a salvation purchased for you, a great, a complete salvation, a salvation from sin, Matth. 1:21, and from the wrath of God, John 3:16. It is offered to you, and offered freely, though it was dear bought; it is offered without money and without price, Isa. 55:1. If ye ask what ye shall do to be saved?—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved. Though you are lost, though you have destroyed yourselves, yet here is help for you. Though ye are insensible sinners, the tidings are to you; it will in particular be good and welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, who see their lost and undone condition. A Saviour will be as welcome a sight to them, as a rope cast out from the shore will be to a drowning man. They will eagerly embrace the Saviour and his salvation: Song 1:3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth: therefore do the virgins love thee."—These tidings relate,

2. To a redemption, to a ransom paid: Gal. 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Sin and Satan made war upon the world, and overcame them all in Adam; so that by nature we are captives and slaves. No more God's free men, nor our own men, but slaves; and the rattling of the chains of divers lusts upon us are evidences of it. But good tidings, O captives! the King's Son, out of his princely bounty, has purchased for you redemption, he has paid a complete ransom, even his own blood: and whosoever will, may come to him. your freedom is bought; come, take the benefit of it, by following him out of the land of your captivity; Zech. 9:11, 12, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners of the pit wherein there is no water; turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." But what avails this to those who account it a kind captivity, who love their master, and his drudgery work? they will not come to Jesus. But never were the tidings of a ransom so welcome to a slave in Turkey, as these were to meek poor ones, who are groaning under their

bondage, and breathing for the liberty of the sons of God.—These tidings relate,

3. To an indemnity, a pardon to criminals who will come to Jesus: Acts 13:38, 39, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The world of mankind, God's natural subjects, have joined his grand enemy, and risen up in rebellion against their sovereign Lord. The law has proclaimed us all traitors, justice demands vengeance on the criminals, and we cannot escape by flight or by might. But good tidings, O criminals! the glorious Mediator has got an act of grace, of indemnity and pardon, passed in the court of heaven, in favour of a ruined world, bearing, that whosoever will in, and lay down their arms, shall have a full and free pardon, written, for the better security, in the blood of the Mediator. It is proclaimed to you, Isa. 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man 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." In this indemnity, there are no exceptions: Isa. 1:18, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Now, whatever this be to others, it will be welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, whose consciences are galled with the sting of sin, bowing down under a sense of guilt. Never was a pardon more welcome to a malefactor on the scaffold, than this will be to them: Isa. 33:24, "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities."—These tidings relate,

4. To a glorious physician of souls, who never misses to cure his patients: Matth. 9:12, 13, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." That forbidden fruit which was eaten by our first parents, has entailed dreadful diseases on all their posterity; so that this world is no better than an hospital, where there is not one sound

person; and the sickness is unto death. But good tidings, O sin-sick soul! There is a glorious physician come from heaven, who will cure all who will come to be cured by him. He cures infallibly, his blood cleanseth from all sin. He cures freely: Hos. 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." He rejects no patients: John 6:37, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The medicine of his blood and Spirit removes all diseases. What is thy disease? It is a stony heart? He takes it away and gives an heart of flesh. Is it blindness, deafness, dumbness, lameness? He makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. Is it the falling evil of backsliding? the consumption or decay of grace? the running issue of predominant lusts? the fever of raging lusts? the universal leprosy of the corruption of nature? All these he can cure, for he healeth all manner of diseases. They who see not their diseases, will indeed slight him; but it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are groaning under their diseases. O! then will such an one say, I will take my stony heart to him, my blindness to him, &c.—These tidings are the tidings,

5. Of a feast: Isa. 25:6, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." Since man has left God, he has had nothing to feed upon, but the dust with the serpent, or the husks of created things with the swine. He has never been satisfied, he never could get enough; still red hunger has been upon him, like those who eat but are not satisfied. But good tidings, O famished sinners! our Lord Jesus Christ has made a feast for hunger-bitten sinners, and they are all invited to it: Isa. 55:2, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is the best of feasts, where the soul may feed to the full. Jesus himself is the maker, and also the matter of it; all the benefits of the covenant are the provision which are served up at this feast, he who eats thereof shall never die. It is true, that most men put no value upon it: Prov. 27:7, "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb." But, Psalm 22:26, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." It will be good tidings to hungry souls, who are sick of

the dust and of husks, and are longing to eat bread in their Father's house, where there is plenty and to spare.—These tidings relate,

6. To a treasure: 2 Cor. 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Man was broken by his fall, he lost all his goods, and all his credit in heaven; so that absolute poverty reigns among Adam's sons, who have neither in them nor on them for the present necessity, and besides are drowned in debt to the justice of God. But good tidings, poor sinners! There is a treasure hid in the field of the gospel, which will enrich you; and by the gospel you are pointed to it. O buy the field; Matth. 13:44. In this field are the most precious things, precious promises, and within them precious Christ, with all his merits; gold tried in the fire, white raiment and eye-salve, Rev. 3:18. Here is variety of all good things, and abundance. They who are rich in their own eyes will not value this treasure; but to the meek poor ones it will be glad tidings. They will readily do as the man, Matth. 13:14, who sold all that he had, and bought the field in which the great treasure was hid.—These tidings relate,

7. To a marriage, a most happy match for poor sinners: Hos. 2:19, 20, "And I will betrothe thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The Bridegroom is the Royal Mediator, who is content to match with poor captive souls. We are naturally of the house of hell: John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This being our case, we could have no hopes of being comfortably disposed of. But good tidings, O children of the devil's family! you may be married to the Son of God, who for that end has taken on our nature; he says, Matth. 22:4, "All things are ready; come unto the marriage." This match is the most honourable, the richest, the happiest of which we are capable. There is nothing to hinder the match, he will make you lovely; and, what is more, he will make you willing. Most men despise this marriage, they prefer their farms and merchandise to it. But the poor meek ones will

as gladly embrace it, as ever a captive woman, to save her life, would match with the most desirable conqueror.—These tidings relate,

8. To a victory, a glorious victory: Isa. 25:8, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all eyes." There is no getting to the heavenly Canaan, without fighting our enemies; which would, if possible, keep us out there. We are not able for them; sin, Satan, and death are too strong for us. But, good tidings! Christ has fought that battle, and obtained a glorious victory; he offers you a share of the victory and spoils; Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Join the conqueror, come up at his back against your spiritual enemies, and ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us, Rom. 8:37. They who have not yet broke their covenant with death, and agreement with hell, will slight this victory. but it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who would fain break through the host of their spiritual enemies, but know not how to make it out. These tidings relate,

Lastly, To a peace, a most desirable peace: Eph. 2:14, "For he (Christ Jesus) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Sin made discord, and broke the peace between heaven and earth; so that God and the sinner became enemies. All access to God, all communication betwixt heaven and earth was blocked up. But good tidings! Christ has made peace by his own blood. It is offered to you, Isa. 27:4, 5, "Fury is not in me; let him take of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." It is a firm peace, on the most solid foundation, a lasting peace which will never terminate, a peace which will ere long be complete in all its parts; peace external, internal, eternal.—This will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are wounded with the apprehensions of God's anger, and affrighted with the thoughts of his wrath.—We are, then,

III. To shew how this work of preaching is and hath been performed by Jesus Christ. As to this, we observe, that he performed it under the Old Testament, and under the New Testament dispensation.

First, He performed this work under the Old Testament dispensation. Under this dispensation,

1. The first proclamation of these tidings was done personally by himself in paradise, to the compendized world, our first parents: Gen. 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Son of God, appearing in human shape, as a prelude of his incarnation, sat as their Judge, and as the first interpreter of his Father's mind, preached the first gospel to them in that promise, which contains the substance and abridgement of the whole gospel. He was absolutely the first, in all respects, who preached the good tidings of the gospel.

2. The second proclamation was by his ambassadors in his name, who were of two sorts:—Extraordinary; namely, the prophets whom he inspired infallibly to teach the people: 2 Pet. 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."—And ordinary teachers, such as priests and Levites under the law, priests and others before the law. And in respect of this preaching by men in his name, he is said to have preached to those who lived before the flood: 1 Peter 3:19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." There was also a proclamation,

3. By his written word, Deut. 30:11–14. This is his own word, where the meek poor ones may always find the glad tidings of salvation. Before it was written, they never wanted inspired men, and when it was written, though for a time they might want prophets, yet this they had always from him as an infallible rule.

2dly, He preached and preaches under the New Testament dispensation. This he did,

1. By his own personal preaching in the days of his flesh, when he went about among the Jews, preaching to them as the Minister of the circumcision: Rom. 15:8, "Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." So that he himself, by himself, did begin this dispensation. The gospel at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. 2:3, "He spake as never man spake, and taught as one having authority." He did it,

2. By inspiring his apostles to preach and write the doctrines of salvation, contained in the New Testament, on whom he poured out his spirit, and by their writings, they being dead, yet speak to us from him and by him. He does it,

3. By raising up and continuing always a gospel-ministry in the church: Eph. 4:11–13, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And with them he has promised to be present always, even unto the end of the world; Matth. 28:20. These preach in his name, as deputed by him to declare these good tidings.

Thus you see this work is performed by the Son of God, not only by himself, but by his servants in his name. And though the mistakes, errors, and unfaithfulness of ordinary ministers, both under the Old and New Testament, are solely their own, their preaching of the true doctrine of the gospel is indeed his; they are but as it were the voice, he is the speaker. For, he gave and gives the gifts whereby they are fitted to preach the gospel. All their tapers are lighted at his shining lamp: John 1:9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every one

that cometh into the world." Their wisdom and knowledge in divine mysteries is given them by him, for the good of his church, Eph. 4:8. Their commission is from him, and from him they derive their power and authority, Matth. 28:19, 20. They are his ministers and servants, sent out upon his work, and to him they must give an account. Lastly, The efficacy of their ministry is solely owing to him and his Spirit, 1 Cor. 3:7, "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He makes it effectual to his elect ones.—We are,

IV. To give the reasons of the doctrine, or shew, that none but he was fit to be employed in this work. This will appear if we consider,

1. That none but he could reveal the secrets of love, which were hid from eternity in the breast of God: John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Neither man nor angel could open up these. But he was privy to his Father's counsels, as being in the bosom of the Father from all eternity.

2. None but he was fit to be an universal preacher to all persons for whom these tidings were designed, and to whom they were to be carried, and this in all ages. Who else could have the great charge of this weighty business? This required one of infinite wisdom, and one every where present.

Lastly, Whose testimony but his could be a sufficient ground of faith in this, of all matters the most important? Here lies the weight of God's honour, and the salvation of an elect world; and this required no less solid a bottom than the testimony of truth itself.

## **SERMON IV**

### **SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED**

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek. -  
ISAIAH 61:1

HAVING gone through the doctrinal part of this subject, by offering what was intended on the several heads of method which we laid down, we shall now, as was proposed,

IV. Make some practical improvement; and this in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

We are, in the first place, to improve this subject in a use of information.

I. Hence you may learn what is the great cause of slighting the gospel, of that coldrife entertainment which it gets amongst most of its hearers, that little relish which there is for the great truths of the gospel; why so few do comply with the gracious calls which it affords. People may attribute this to what causes they will, but the true cause is the want of this meekness and poverty of spirit. Instead of this, there are pride and self-conceit, unsubdued and unmortified. I may branch these out into several particulars, as opposed to this meekness. There is,

(1.) No due sense of spiritual wants: Prov. 27:7, "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Most men are sick of a Laodicean disease, saying in their practice as they said in their hearts, that "they are rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing," Rev. 3:17. They are not mourning under their want of light, of life, and of holiness. They reign as kings with what they have, though, as with King Saul, God is departed from them. Hence they do not value that treasure which is hid in the field of the gospel.

(2.) Men have no true sight and sense of their own sinfulness. They see not the sinfulness of their nature, of their hearts, lips, and lives, but are like Samson, without his two eyes: Matth. 9:12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." They are pining away in their sins; their sickness has not yet taken them by the heart;

their wounds are not lanced; the law has not had its effect upon them, and therefore the gospel is not relished.

(3.) Their eyes are veiled, so that they see not their misery by sin, and as being without Christ: Hos. 7:9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not; and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Did they see the clouds of wrath which are hanging above their heads, the quick approaches which death with its sting is making towards them, their separation from God, and from all the privileges of the covenant, they could not be at ease. The gospel-tidings would be to them as life from the dead.

(4.) They are strangers to their utter inability to help themselves. They are like Samson, in another case, who knew not that his strength was departed from him. We may see how corrupt nature changes itself into various shapes on this point. If you urge men to ply the work of their salvation, Alas! say they, we can do nothing; they thus make it a covert for their sloth. Urge them with the necessity of reformation and repentance, they say, It is time enough, they will attend to this afterwards; as if it were in the power of their hand to do this business at any time: they thus make it a covert for their delays, and still have no relish for the gospel.

(5.) They do not feel their need of Christ: Rev. 3:17, "They need his blood and Spirit, but they are not duly sensible of their need." Their own works are big in their own eyes, and appear to them sufficient in order to obtain God's favour. Their natural and acquired abilities are also with them sufficient in order to their sanctification; they are by no means shaken out of themselves; therefore the offer of the gospel is but an offer of food to the full soul, and so is loathed.

(6.) They see not their own unworthiness of a Saviour's help; they come to the market of grace with their money in their hand. They look on themselves as worthy of what Christ should do for them, Luke 7:4. Though they be perhaps so far humbled as to see they must

have mercy and help from the Lord, yet they look on their reformation and duties as what cannot but recommend them to Christ beyond many others. They cannot see how the Lord can reject those who come so far a length as they do. Hence the doctrine of free grace is but tasteless to them.

(7.) They have no anxiety for the supply of their soul-wants. They want grace and holiness, but they can be easy without them. Like foolish virgins, they sleep on at ease, while they have no oil for their lamps: Prov. 6:10, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Their desires are keen after the world, but weak, faint, and languishing after spiritual good things. They have no hunger and thirst after them. Hence they value not the gospel, nor the fountain of living waters.

(8.) They are not content with Christ but on terms of their own making. They are like those who seek to buy a commodity which yet they can be without. If they can get it at their own price, they will take it; if not, they can want it. There are right-eye sins, yet they will by no means part with them. They are not pleased with the covenant, some things are in it which they must have out; there are some things out which they must have in, else they will not come into it. Hence they care not for the gospel, or that covenant which it reveals.

2. Hence learn, that slight the gospel-call who will, the meek, the poor in spirit will gladly receive it. They who are shaken out of themselves by the law, will be glad to creep under that shelter which is held forth in the gospel. These souls will feast sweetly on what is tasteless to others, what others tread under feet and despise. The hungry are glad of that for which the full soul has no appetite; and just it is in this case.—This subject informs us,

3. Of the dignity and honour of the work of the ministry. With Paul, we would not be ashamed to magnify that office which is conversant about those things which are most necessary for the world, which bring the highest honour to God, and the greatest good to mankind.

It is true, it is often a despised office in the world; but wisdom is justified of her children. God had but one Son, and he made him a minister, a preacher of the gospel. He is the chief shepherd and bishop of souls, and therefore the office of the ministry will be esteemed by all those who have a true esteem for Christ. It informs us,

4. Of that good-will which the Father and the Son jointly bear to sinners; since the Father put his own Son into this work, and the Son readily engaged in it. Do they not by this say, "Why will ye die?" It was good-will to men in its utmost height, that ever such tidings were to be carried, and that ever such a messenger was employed. It informs us,

5. How acceptable meekness and poverty of spirit are unto the Lord, who has put a peculiar article in Christ's commission for such. As to others, he is to humble and bring them down; as to these, he is to refresh and revive them with good news. It informs us,

6. As to the goodness and weight of the good tidings of the gospel, which are brought to us by such a hand. Surely the weight of the matter must be great, when such a messenger was sent to publish it. We are informed,

7. As to the danger of slighting these tidings, though men be employed in carrying them; for they speak in the name of the great Messenger, preach in the name, and by the authority of, the great preacher. So he that "despiseth them, despiseth him that sent them:" Heb. 2:3, "How shall they escape, if they neglect so great salvation?"

This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of trial.

Hereby we may try whether we be meek and poor or not. What relish have we for gospel truths? The meek, the poor in spirit, (and such all must be who are true Christians), have a singular relish for the word

of the gospel. It tastes to them very differently from what it does to any in the world besides. Job says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," chap. 23:12. David says, "They are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb;" Psalm 19:10.—For,

1. They are admitted to partake of the kernel of the word, while others break their teeth on the shell. It comes to them as it did to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 1:5, "Not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It has not been a dry channel to them, or a dead letter, but the ministration of the Spirit. Therefore the apostle says, 1 Pet. 2:2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." And this first taste of it leaves a relish behind it: the drawing by of the veil has discovered the treasure in the earthen vessels.

2. It is their food, food proper, and suitable to their new nature: Deut 32:47, "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." All living creatures have their proper food; thus one relishes and delights in that which another does not desire. The new creature is nourished by the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. 2:2. This is natural to them, for the saints have had their life by it, they are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God, 1 Pet. 1:23. Thus the saints have a peculiar relish for the word of God, while others do not regard it; more than the dog does the hay, which, though the ox feeds sweetly on it, yet it is not agreeable to the dog.

Lastly, All their hopes are in it; it is all their salvation, and all their desire; 2 Sam. 23:5; take this from them, and what have they more? Hence they are content to part with all to buy this field; Matth. 13:44, and to part with life itself rather than the gospel, Mark 8:35.—What wonder is it that a landed man should have delight in reading his charter, the pardoned criminal in reading the king's pardon, which another has not? As natural is it that the Christian should have a

delight peculiar to himself in reading and hearing the gospel. Here occurs a

QUESTION, Since hypocrites may have a relish of the good tidings of the gospel, how shall I distinguish between their relish and the relish of a sincere Christian, who is meek and poor in spirit?—To this I

ANSWER, Hypocrites may have some desire, and wait upon public ordinances; Isa. 58:2. Like the stony-ground hearers, they may receive the word joyfully, Matth. 13:20; but yet there are great differences betwixt their desires and those of a sincere Christian.—Such as,

1. The sincere Christian relishes the good tidings of the gospel as good, yea, as the best for him, so as that he can lay the weight of his salvation, for time and eternity, upon this word, and choose it for his portion; Psalm 119:111; whereas the hypocrite may relish them as good, but not as the best for him; so that, for all the relish he has of this word, he has another thing which he looks on as still better for him. He has something else on which he is disposed to lay at least part of his weight before the Lord; for he is never poor in spirit, nor shaken out of his own righteousness. But the Christian has no confidence in the flesh; Phil. 3:3.

2. The Christian gets his relish for the gospel, by seeing the extreme bitterness of sin; Acts 2:37, "When they heard this they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But the hypocrite comes easier by his; "When he hears the word, he anon with joy receives it," Matth. 13:20. No man can relish health at the rate one does who is brought back from the gates of death. Many relish the sweetness of the word to whom sin was never made bitter; or if it was, it was never the bitterest of all things. Hence the relish for such is very superficial. But God puts in more and more bitterness in sin to his own people, till it becomes of all bitters the bitterest; and then they truly relish the good tidings of the gospel.

3. The Christian's relish for the gospel is the most powerful and overcoming relish which he has. The hypocrite's is not so; Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." So says the Christian, but of the hypocrite it is said, Ezek. 33:31, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." The sincere Christian chooses Christ peremptorily, if they should beg with him. They see such a suitableness in him to their case, that they must have him on any terms; whereas the hypocrite gets only half a look of Christ in the gospel. Hence he has only half affection for him, a kind of hankering after him. Christ is sweet to them, but still some one lust is sweeter; so that, like Orpah, they leave him, but not without some affection for him. But the Christian-like Ruth cleaves unto him, and thereby is brought to honour.

Lastly, The Christian relishes all the tidings of the gospel in every particular of them, whereas the hypocrite has always something in them which he does not approve of. The Christian without shame has respect to all God's commandments, Psalm 119:6. He relishes the goodness of the promises, and also the holiness of the commandments. "He esteems all God's precepts concerning all things to be right," ver. 128. Herod heard John gladly till his beloved lust was touched. And so do many, they love the word, with the exception of that which strikes against their beloved lusts.

This subject may be improved,

Thirdly, In an use of exhortation.

As ever you would relish the good tidings of the gospel, labour to be meek and poor in spirit. Would you have your souls refreshed at ordinances? Would you partake of the goodness of our Lord's house,

and find that in ordinances, which is the hidden manna, which the carnal world knows not of? Well, take this course; it is the way to prepare yourselves for it.

1. Keep up always a deep sense of your own sinfulness, wretchedness, and absolute need of Christ. Our Lord was called the friend of publicans and sinners, because they who saw the least good in themselves got most of his converse; 1 Pet. 5:5, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." The low valleys have the waters running in them, when they run off the high hills as fast as they come on; Isa. 40:4, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." The man who feels his disease prizes the remedy, while he who is raving and insensible disregards it.

2. Be of a teachable disposition; this is true meekness; Psalm 25:9, "The meek will he teach his way." They who sit down to judge the word, rather than to be judged by it, may meet with what may disgust or please their fancy, but are out of the way of the true spiritual relish for the word; James, 1:21, "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls." How many a weak Christian's soul is refreshed with that word, in which men who have knowledge, but not grace, find nothing. They will be sure to profit who lie down at the Lord's feet, to learn and receive the word as the word of God.

3. Be much in reviewing and mourning over your spiritual wants. Look not so much to what you have attained, as to what you are yet short of. Imitate Paul, in "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before," Phil. 3:13. Mourn over your darkness, deadness, and unholiness. Let these be your continual burden, and you shall not want a word in season, Isa. 50:4. Jesus hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary. This would make you lie at the catch for a word from the Lord, like Benhadad's servants in another case, and receive the

Lord's message greedily, as what in one way or another will profit you.

4. Cry much to God for communion with him in gospel-ordinances. Come to ordinances in a believing expectation of enjoying it. Set yourselves to receive the gospel as the Lord's word to you, which worketh effectually in you that believe. The Lord appoints sinners to meet with him there, saying, "In all places where I record my name, I will come into thee, and I will bless thee," Exod. 20:24. Propose a meeting with him there also, and you may be sure it will hold. Like Jacob, you will prevail with God to bless you, Hos. 12:4, compare Gen. 35:1. Christ had promised the Spirit, and commanded the disciples to wait for him, Acts 1:4. They continued in prayer, ver. 14. See the fruit of it, chap. 2.

Lastly, Be thankful for the least of God's mercies, and be submissive to the Lord under every trying dispensation, as sensible of your utter unworthiness. When was it that Jacob got the blessing? Was it not when in this frame, "I am not worthy," said he, "of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." A sense of unworthiness as to the least mercies, cannot miss to produce in you a relish for the great mercies of the gospel.

There are many complaints as to the want of God's presence in ordinances. There is not that found in them which was in former times. Many lay the blame of this on ministers; and, I dare say, there is not either a godly minister in Scotland, or a godly Christian, acting as such, who dare refuse that he has a real share in it. The clean, to cast stones at the guilty, must come out from among those ministers and people who are strangers to their own hearts, and see better into others than they do into themselves. But however it be, I dare promise, in the name of the Lord, that the hungry shall not be sent empty away. The meek poor ones shall be feasted in ordinances; and their hungry souls shall be refreshed with the gospel, fare with others

as it will; Psalm 22:24, "The meek shall eat, and be satisfied," Matth. 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." O! but the spiritual relish for the word is well worth all the trouble which is necessary for having it. For,

1. This is the hidden manna peculiar to God's hidden ones on earth: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna," Rev. 2:17. We read, Exod. 16:13, 14, of the dew under which the manna lay. The ordinances are that dew; communion with Christ in ordinances, by relishing his word, is the manna under it. The ordinances are the cabinet; this is the opening of the cabinet, and the finding of the jewel, the drawing by the veil, and beholding the glory; the digging up the field, and falling on the treasure; the breaking the shell, and getting out the pearl.

2. This would make the Sabbath the most pleasant day in all the week, the hours of worship the most pleasant hours, which now to most are a weariness. See how the Gospel, felt in its power, doth affect: Isa. 9:3, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Compare ver. 2. If you had ever any experience of this relish, dare you say but that these were your golden days, even the best time ever you had in your life, and that all the world could never make up your loss since you wanted them? You who never tasted of it believe others, since you are not capable of judging in the matter: Psal. 84:10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Believe those who have got that at ordinances, which has made them joyfully embrace persecution, banishment, a scaffold, and a fire.

3. This would readily hang about you all the week, in a holy, savoury, tender disposition, and make you rejoice at the return of the Sabbath: Psalm 122:1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is good being in Christ's company in his sanctuary; wherever they go afterwards, they smell of his good ointments: knowledge is taken of them that they have been with

Jesus, Acts 4:13. Remember what is said of the Gospel, 2 Cor. 2:16, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." Alas! how rank and unsavoury are the conversations of most, because they never get a relish for the word.

4. This would make you useful Christians. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she relished the Gospel, she got another spirit. As she had been formerly a prop of the devil's kingdom, and an agent for him in the place where she lived; she now, when converted by grace, turns useful for others. This would make you naturally commend the way of God to others, would make you useful in your families, in the congregation, and in the country-side.

Lastly, This would be a heaven on earth. What is the happiness of the saints in glory? They enjoy God, and this is in the utmost perfection. You should relish that enjoyment of him, which in your measure you have for the present, as a prelude, an earnest of what shall be your privilege hereafter.

I shall have done with a word to all in general, and in particular to meek poor ones.—To all in general, I would say, Entertain the good tidings of the Gospel, slight them not, give them a suitable entertainment. Believe them as undoubted truths. When God speaks, it is reasonable we believe; for he is Truth, he is the faithful and true Witness, Rev. 3:14. The carnal mind is apt to fall into unbelief of the Gospel, which reflects great dishonour upon God: 1 John 5:10, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." And this also makes the Gospel unprofitable to ourselves: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. 4:2. Embrace these tidings joyfully and thankfully; they are tidings of great joy, and should be received with the greatest joy and cheerfulness: as a malefactor on the scaffold should receive the tidings of a pardon, or as an indemnity would be received by those who have forfeited their lives by their treason. And the greater the danger is from which the Gospel proclaims deliverance, the more

welcome should the tidings be. Finally, lay the weight of your souls on these tidings for time and eternity, fall in with the Gospel-contrivance, and embrace the covenant as well ordered in all things, and sure, Matth. 13:44. Embrace the salvation; come away with the Redeemer, accept the ransom, accept the indemnity, put your case in the hand of the great physician, and all shall be well. To prevail with you as to this, consider, for MOTIVES,

From whence the tidings come. It is from a far country, from heaven, the throne of God, yea, the depths of the counsel of God, John 1:18. Behold tidings of love and good-will from heaven, of a mercy-seat set up there for poor sinners, from whence they could have looked for nothing but wrath! Consider,

Who brings the tidings,—the Son of God. O! glorions messenger, who left the Father's bosom, and came down into this earth, to proclaim the glad tidings. And now that he is ascended into heaven, he has sent his ministers in his name to proclaim them, with his certification, That he who heareth you, heareth me; and he who despiseth you, despiseth me; and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. Consider,

What are the tidings. Tidings of a salvation, a redemption, &c. They are good tidings, the best of tidings that ever came into the world. Good to refresh and revive the spirits of those whom nothing else can comfort, even sinners depressed under apprehensions of wrath; and the more to be esteemed that they are peculiar to sinful men, not fallen angels. "Unto you, O men! I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Consider,

The need there was of these tidings in the world. Never did tidings come so seasonably to any, as those of the Gospel to the world ruined by sin. We were as Isaac, with the knife at our throat, when the tidings came of Jesus Christ, as the ram caught in the thicket. Let us but suppose the world without the Gospel, we will then have a fiery

law, flaming on our faces, and no way whatever to escape. Thus will we see the seasonableness of Gospel tidings.

To meek poor ones, in particular, I would say, O! sensible sinners, pressed with the sense of your spiritual wants, your sinfulness, misery, inability to help yourselves, you who see your absolute need of Christ, and withal your unworthiness of his help, who are longing for supply, and content with Christ on any terms, to you is the word of this salvation sent particularly; come away, and joyfully embrace these good tidings. To influence you to this, consider,

That your names are particularly in Christ's commission. He was sent to preach good tidings to the meek. The Lord knows that the poor convinced sinner will have many doubts and fears, which will be hard for him to overcome, so as to get the tidings believed. Therefore, as in Mark 16:7, the angel said unto the woman, "Go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." So here particular notice is taken of the meek. God has a special eye on the outcasts of Israel to bring them in to himself, Isa. 55:1. Again, consider,

That the grand end for which the Lord discovers to you your spiritual poverty is, that you may come to Christ for supply; Gal. 3:24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." God brought a famine on Jacob's household in Canaan, when there was corn in Egypt, that Joseph's brethren might have an errand to him. Therefore reject not the counsel of God against yourselves. Consider farther,

That Christ is able to supply all your wants: "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it," Psalm 81:10. Were your wants as great as Paul's, as Mary Magdalene's, as Manasseh's were, he has enough to supply them all, a fulness of merit and of spirit. If all the world were so poor in spirit, there is enough for them all, and to spare; there is

an infinite value in his blood, and an infinite efficacy in his spirit. Consider,

That you cannot get the supply of your wants anywhere else; Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Alas! poor sinners are ready to go to wrong doors for supply, and to seek to have their wants supplied by themselves. But all your duties, prayers, watchings, mournings, will do no good, unless you believe; John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Consider, lastly,

That our Lord makes you welcome to him and his fulness, and that freely, Isa. 55:1. I dare not come to Christ, says one. Why so? Christ is a gift, even the gift of God, John 4:10; and what is freer than a gift? Nothing is required of you but to receive it. Incline, then, your ear, and come unto him; hear, and your souls shall live.—Amen.

## **SERMON V**

# **JESUS BINDS UP THE BROKEN-HEARTED**

To bind up the broken-hearted. ISAIAH 61:1

IN these words, we have another piece of work which the Father has put in Christ's hand. He hath sent him "to bind up the broken-hearted." In the words there is, 1. The work itself, to bind up; Luke hath it to heal, chapter 4:18. He is employed by the Father as the great Physician to bind up sinners, as a surgeon does a broken bone or any other wound, and to heal them. This belongs to his priestly office. We have, 2, The objects of it; "the broken-hearted," such as are sick of sin, who have their hearts broken and cast down within them, on account of sin, and its consequences. This is a sickness which Christ is sent to cure.

From this subject, you may observe the following

DOCTRINE, Our Lord Jesus is appointed of his Father, to be the Physician of broken-hearted sinners, to bind them up, and heal them.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

- I. What is that brokenness of heart, which is here meant.
- II. What is it in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted.
- III. What sort of a heart a broken heart is.
- IV. How the Lord Christ binds up, and heals the broken-hearted.
- V. Make some improvement.—We are then,

1. To inquire what is that brokenness of heart which is here meant, and of which the Lord takes so much notice. The broken-hearted is of two kinds.

1. There is a natural one, arising from natural and carnal causes merely, which worketh death, 2. Cor. 7:10. Thus many who are very whole-hearted in respect of sin, complain that their hearts and spirits are broken by their crosses, afflictions, and ill usage which they meet with in the world. Thus Ahab, Haman, and Nabal, their hearts were broken with their respective crosses. This is nothing but the crack which a proud heart gets by God's providence, when it will not bow, and is very displeasing in God's sight. This Christ will not heal, till it is broken at another rate. There is,

2. A religious broken heart, which arises from religious causes, namely, sin and its consequences. Sin has sunk into the souls of all Adam's posterity, like a deadly poison. But most men are whole-hearted, though they carry their death about with them, because the poison has not yet begun to work. The thorn of guilt is sticking in their conscience, but they are easy, for it has not yet begun to fester. But when the poison begins to work, the heart is broken with it. Every such breaking of heart is not the sickness unto life which Christ is sent to heal. There is a twofold religious breaking of heart.—First, A mere legal one; Jer. 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" When the heart is broken by the mere force of the law, it is broken as a rock in pieces by a hammer, each part remaining hard and rocky still. As it breaks the heart of a malefactor, to hear his doom pronounced that he must be hanged for his crime; so does the law break the heart of a sinner. This breaks the heart for sin, but not from it. Thus the hearts of Cain and Judas were broken, and thus the hearts of the damned shall be broken for ever. Men may die of these wounds, and never be healed. But there is,—Secondly, An evangelical one. When not only the law does its part, but the gospel also breaks the sinner's heart; Zech. 12:10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and

supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall 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." This is that kindly heart-breaking for sin, which is an effect of gospel-grace, a sickness of which never one shall die, it is the very malady which in the text Christ is sent to cure. Sin in an ungracious soul, is like poison in a serpent, it is agreeable to their nature, it does not make them sick at all. Though it be indeed with them as a kind of serpent, from whose killing looks men defend themselves, by holding a glass betwixt them and the serpent, which reflects the poison on the serpent himself, and so kills him. Thus, Psalm 7:16, "The wicked man's mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall return upon his own pate." But in those in whom God has a gracious work, sin is like poison in a man, contrary to his nature, and so makes him heartsick. Thus the true broken-hearted sinner is as sick of sin as ever a man was of poison, which he had unwarily swallowed down, and would by all means be quit of it. We now come,

II. To inquire what it is in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted. There is,

1. The guilt of sin, by which he is bound over to the wrath of God. This, which cannot be taken away but by a free pardon, sickens the poor creature at the heart; Isaiah 33:24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." This guilt is their burden, a burden on their backs, on their heads, on their spirits, which makes them to cry out, as in Hosea 14:2, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." They find the load, and their spirits are broken under it, as a burden which they are not able to bear. There is,

2. The domineering power of sin, or its tyranny, by which they are led captives to it. This is breaking to them that lusts are so strong, and they so weak, that they cannot get the mastery over them as they would; Rom. 7:23, 24, "But I see another law in my members,

warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" For some time the yoke of sin sat soft on their necks, they walked willingly after its commandments; but now they are weary of its dominion, averse to submit to its rule, and their hearts are broken under the weight of those iron fetters from which they would now fain be delivered. There is,

3. The contrariety which is in sin to the holy nature and law of God. The commandment is come into the heart, which it is inclined to obey, and so that contrariety is breaking; Rom. 7:13, "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The love of God has so touched the heart, as to produce in him a considering sin to be bitter as death. The soul is wounded and cast down to think of its grieving the Spirit, trampling on the holy law, sinning against mercies, against checks and reproofs; and accounts itself very miserable in thus requiting the Lord. There is,

4. The indwelling of sin, and its cleaving so close to a person that he cannot shake it off; Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He sees sin to be in his heart and life, and not only so, but that it is interwoven into his very nature, and not to be totally extirpated till death. He has now a sincere love to holiness, an ardent desire of perfection, Phil. 3:13, 14; an hearty hatred against sin, and an irreconcilable enmity to it; so that it cannot but be breaking to him, while he sees the unwelcome guest still within his habitation. There is,

5. Sin's mixing itself with all he does, even with his best duties: Rom. 7:21, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." In the fairest line which he writes, sin leaves a blot; and on the purest and most sacred of God's holy things to which he puts hand, sin drops its defilement. This is breaking to a holy heart. When

he reviews his duties, and sees what deadness, what want of faith and love is in his prayers, hearing, communicating, and the like, what unwatchfulness, untenderness, and ungodliness, in his daily walk, he is loathsome in his own eyes, and sick, heart-sick of his sinful self.

6. Frequent backslidings into sin are very breaking in this case. The Lord complains of breaking by these; Ezek. 6:9, "I am broken," says he, "with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a-whoring after their idols." And, on the other hand, they are most breaking to the sensible sinner himself; Jer. 31:18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." O how heavy is it to a gracious heart, to be so often falling back into evils mourned over and resolved against! How near the heart of a sick man must it go, to be so often relapsing, after he has been in a fair way of cure. Nothing is more powerful to make one say of life, I loathe it. There is,

7. Desertions, hidings of the Lord's face, and interruptions of the soul's communion with God. See how breaking these are, Isa. 54:6, "For the Lord hath called thee, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God." Sometimes the soul is brought very low by desertions, and ready to give up all for lost: Lam. 3:18, "And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." This is a bitter root, springing up from sin, and branches forth divers ways, all of them breaking to a sensible soul. There is spiritual deadness, Song 5:2. Influences from heaven are restrained, and so the heart is bound up as with bands of iron and brass. They cannot either believe, love, or mourn acceptably. All that remains is a secret dissatisfaction with their own case, only a sigh or a groan, because they cannot believe, love, or practice, as they know to be required of them, saying, Isa. 63:17, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and harden our hearts from thy fear?" This is breaking. Next there is, prayers shut out, Lam. 3:8. "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my

prayer." While a Christian has access to God by prayer, and can pour his complaints into his bosom, whatsoever be his case, he has not so much to complain of. Thus Hannah, after she had done so, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This also encourages them to wait upon the Lord, Micah 7:7. But when the door of access seems to be shut, and a thick cloud is drawn about the throne, this is breaking: Lam. 3:44, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through." This made Zion say, Isa. 49:14, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." And Psalm 20:2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"—Again, there is wrath apprehended, the terrors of God seizing on the soul. "The arrows of the Almighty," said Job, "are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit, the terrors of God do set themselves against me," chap. 6:4. This is of all terrors the most terrible, and what heart can remain whole under it? Prov. 18:14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" See how Heman was broken under this. Psalm 88:15, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." It made Job, a grave solid man, of extraordinary piety, cry out in the congregation, as unable to contain himself, chap. 30:29, 30, 31, "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls; my skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep."—Finally, there are temptations dogging the soul, the more vile and horrid these are, the more dreadful. Sometimes the Lord looses Satan's chains, and he is let almost loose on a Christian, 1 Cor. 12:7. Hence there are fiery darts shot into the heart, extraordinary temptations as to faith or practice, Eph. 6:16; and these, though repelled, yet coming back as if a siege were laid to the soul, by an army resolved to master the town. And when, withal, one is left often to fall under these, this is most breaking to a gracious soul. There is,

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, a Christian's sinfulness, with the bitter fruits springing from his sin; these are what are breaking to his

heart. He is not what God would, nor what he would have himself to be. He is dissatisfied with himself, yet cannot right his case; Rom. 7:19, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." He brings miseries on himself by his sin, and therefore is sadly broken under the thought of his case.—We now proceed,

III. To shew what sort of a heart a broken heart is. As to this we observe,

1. That it is a contrite or bruised heart; Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Not only broken in pieces like a rock, but broken to powder, and so fit to receive any impression; so the word signifies. The heart, though before sometimes like an adamant, which mercies could not melt, nor judgments terrify, is now kindly broken and bruised betwixt the upper and nether mill-stone;—the upper mill-stone of the law, a sense of God's wrath against sin; and—the nether mill-stone of the gospel, of divine lore, mercy, and favour, manifested in word and providences. If one going to break a hard stone, would lay it firm upon another hard stone, which will not yield underneath it, then, when you strike, it will either not break at all, or if it do, it will not break in shivers; but either lay it hollow, or on a soft bed, and it will break all in shivers. Thus, lay the hard heart upon the hard law, and strike it with the most dreadful threatenings of hell and damnation, it either will not break at all, or at least it will not break small. But lay the hard heart on the bed of the gospel of mercy and love, and then let the hammer of the law strike, the heart will go asunder. Legal preaching, which casts a veil over gospel-grace, is not the way to make good Christians. Joel lays the hearts of his hearers on mercy, then fetches his stroke with the hammer of the law, and cries, chap. 2:13, "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." But it is the Spirit of the Lord that carries home the stroke, else it will not do. A broken heart is,

2. A pained heart, an aching heart; Acts 2:37, "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Bruising or breaking a living member is not without pain. God wounds the guilty conscience, that the sinner may see and find what an evil and bitter thing sin is; Jer. 2:19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." The deeper that the wound is, the sorer the heart is broken. It is pained with sorrow; Prov. 15:13, "By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." A broken heart is a sorrowful heart for sin, for the offence given to God, the dishonour put on him by it, and the evil brought on one's self. Thus the broken-hearted sinner is a mourning sinner, Zech. 12:10. The spirit of heaviness sits down on the man, till Christ bind up his wound; his joy is turned into lamentation. The heart is pained also with remorse for sin, Acts 2:37. Every remembrance of his folly gives him a twitch by the scourge of conscience. He calls himself fool and beast for so requiting the Lord. He is heartily displeased with himself on that account; Job 42:6, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He smites on his breast, as worthy to be pierced, Luke 18:13; and smites on his thigh, as worthy to be broken for what he has done. Again, it is pained with anxiety and care how to be saved from sin; Acts 16:30, "What shall I do to be saved?" It brings a burden of care upon his head, how to get the guilt removed, the power of it broken, and to get it expelled at length. Never was a man more anxious about the cure of a broken leg or arm, than the broken-hearted sinner is to get his soul-wounds healed, and to be free of sin, which is his greatest cross. The heart is pained with longing desires after grace; Psalm 119:20, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." The broken-hearted sinner, sensible of his spiritual wants, longs for the supply of them, pants for it as a thirsty man for water; and the delay of answering these desires makes a sick heart; Prov 13:12, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." A broken heart is,

3. A shameful heart. The whole heart in sin is impudent; but the broken heart is filled with shame. Ezra said, chap. 9:6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The man hangs down his head before the Lord, as not able to look up, Psalm 40:12. He sees himself stripped of his beautiful garments, and is ashamed of his spiritual nakedness, and, with the publican, he cannot lift up his eyes. He is fallen into the mire, and is ashamed to come before God in his defilement, Isa. 64:6. His vain expectations from the way of sin are baulked, and so he turns back ashamed. His reproach is discovered, he is convicted of the basest ingratitude, and so is filled with shame. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed, Jer. 2:26.—A broken heart is,

4. A soft and tender heart, for a broken and a hard heart are opposed to each other; Ezek. 36:26, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." When the spirit of the Lord breaks the heart with gospel-grace, he melts it down, and softens it, takes away that stonyness, stiffness, hardness, that cleaves to the heart in its natural state. The brokenhearted sinner, however, will very probably say, Alas! I find my heart a hard heart. To this I answer, to find the hardness of heart, and to be weighted and grieved with it, is a sign of tenderness, even as groaning is a sign of life: 2 Cor. 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." There is no heart in this world but there is some hardness in it. There may be tears where there is no broken heart, as in Esau, and there may be a broken and tender heart where tears are not. Try, therefore, the tenderness of your hearts by the following marks:—

Are your hearts kindly affected with providences? Thou meetest with a mercy, and it is a wonder to thee that the Lord should be so kind to such an unworthy wretch. Thou sayest as Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou has shewed unto thy servant," Gen. 32:10. It melts thy heart into an

earnest desire of holiness, knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Again, thou meetest with rebuke of providence, shewing thee that thou art out of the way, and thou darest not venture farther that way. This is a good sign; Prov. 17:10, "A reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool." Again, do the threatenings of the Lord's word awe thy heart, not only in respect of gross outbreakings, but in the course of thy daily walk? Isa. 62:2, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Art thou afraid of the Lord's displeasure more than of anything else, and must thou stand at a distance from these things which the world makes light of on that account? This is a sign of a tender heart. This reflection was comfortable to Job, chap. 31:23, "For destruction from God was a terror unto me; and by reason of his highness I could not endure." Now this had a tendency to keep him free from all sin.—Finally, have the Lord's commandments an awful authority on thy conscience, so that thou art tender of offending him, and trampling on them? A hard heart can easily digest an offence against God, but a tender heart respects all his commandments, Psalm 119:6. A burnt child dreads the fire; and the sinner whose heart has been broken for sin dreads sin as the greatest evil. There are some who will be very tender at their prayers, it may be that they weep and pray; but then fearful untenderness appears in their ordinary walk. But shew me the person who is in the fear of the Lord all the day long, who is afraid to say or do an ill thing; I say, this is the tender person, though his prayers should be filled from beginning to end with complaints of hardness of heart; not the other; 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."—A broken heart is,

5. A rent heart: Joel 2:13, "And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." The plough of humiliation and repentance is drawn through the heart, which tears up the fallow-ground, and pierces to the very soul. Many a man's heart is rent with remorse, or rather mangled, which is never thoroughly rent; and so their wound foes together again after some

time, and they are as before. But the truly broken heart is rent to no purpose, till the plough reach to the root of sin.

Here there may be proposed this question, What is the difference of these rendings? To this I answer, an unrenewed man's heart may be rent for sin, but it is not rent from it. The heart truly broken is not only rent for, but from sin; not only affrighted at, but framed into a hatred of it, Ezek. 36:31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." The heart is so broken that the reigning love of sin runs out of it, as water out of a cracked vessel, or as filthy matter out of a wound which is laid open. He digs deep, as the wise builder; the other, like Balaam, who professed a regard to the authority of God, but still loved the wages of iniquity. Again, the rent of the former either closes too soon, as those who quickly fall secure again, getting ease by bribing their consciences; or it never was closed at all, falling under absolute despair, like Judas. But the other is at length healed, yet not till the great Physician takes the core in hand. The wound is kept open, and the soul refuseth healing, till the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven, as in Lam. 3:50. The wound is too deep to be cured, but by his blood and Spirit, yet not so deep, but that some ray of hope is always left; there is a "who knows but the Lord will yet return?"—The broken heart is,

6. A pliable heart. The hard heart is a heart of stone, unpliant. When the spirit breaks the heart for sin, he makes it a heart of flesh, Ezek. 36:26. Hearts which the grace of God has not touched, are like young horses not used to the saddle, young bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke; they are unpliant and unmanageable, because they are not yet broken, Jer. 31:18. But if ever any good may be made of that heart of thine, the spirit of God will break it; however wild and untractable it be, the Spirit will make it pliant. He will make it pliant to the will of his commandments, saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? and what shall we do?" Acts 2:37. They had often heard before what they should do, but they would not comply, but now, since their

hard heart is broken, they are very pliable. Many a time the sinner's heart gets such a piercing thrust in his sinful course, that one would think, surely he will comply now. Yes, but the heart is not broken yet, therefore the man will not comply, according as Solomon represents it in the case of the drunkard, Prov. 23:29, 32, and 34, "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But if God have any thoughts of love to him, the Spirit of God will take the ease in his own hand; and were he as stiff as the devil and his hard heart can make him, he will break him to that rate, that he shall ply as wax ere he have done with him. Witness Saul the persecutor, who was so softened, that he cried, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Acts 9:6. The heart becomes pliable also to the will of his providence: Psalm 51:4. "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be cleared when thou judgest." An unrenewed heart is a murmuring one under the hand of God, and will readily choose to sin rather than suffer. But the broken heart will say, give me thy favour, and take from me what thou wilt: Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Sometimes one meets with an affliction, and they cry out they are broken, they are not able to bear it. God sends them a heavier one, they are stricken till they leave off weeping, and withal opens the heart-vein to bleed for sin, and so in some sort they are made to forget their affliction. And it is their great concern to get their soul's disease healed, let God do with them otherwise as he will.

—A broken heart is,

Lastly, A humble heart; Isa. 57:15, quoted above. The hard heart is a gathered boil; when it is broken, it is discussed. As soon as the heart is broken, under a sense of sin, pride and self-conceit vanish away, and the more broken-hearted that a person is, the less proud. Paul was a proud persecutor, but the Lord laid the pride of his heart, when he broke it, Acts 9:4, 5. Hezekiah, in his brokenness of heart is very humble: "I shall go softly," said he, "all my years in the bitterness of my soul," Isa. 38:16. O! if the proud and empty professors of this day

had a taste of this broken heart, it would soon lay their gay feathers, let out the ulcers of pride, self-conceit, which are swollen so big in many a poor soul. It would turn the saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," unto "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." It would make them think little of what they have been, of what they are, and of what they have done or suffered; little of what all their attainments, gifts, yea, and graces also, if they have any, are.

## **SERMON VI**

### **THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED**

To bind up the broken-hearted -ISAIAH 61:1

HAVING considered that brokenness of heart which is here meant,—what about sin the heart is broken for,—and described the nature of a broken heart, we go on, as was proposed,

IV. To show how the Lord Christ binds up and heals the brokenhearted.—The great Physician uses two sorts of bands for a broken heart, he binds them up with inner and with outward bands.

1. With inner bands, which go nearest the sore, the pained broken heart. And these are two.—The first inner band is,

Christ's own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. The hearts of the disciples were sore broken at the news of Jesus leaving them, and it behoved them to bleed a while. But he tells them, he would send a healing band for their broken hearts; John 14:16, "And I will pray the Father," said he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Our Lord breaks his people's hearts by his Spirit, and yet by the same Spirit binds them up again. In the first work he is the Spirit of bondage, and some may be long under his hand this way. Hence we read of some "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb. 2:15. The Old

Testament church had much of this spirit, "I am afflicted," says the psalmist, Psalm 88:15, "and ready to die, from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."—In the next work, he is the Spirit of adoption; Rom. 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He comes quickening, sanctifying, reviving, and comforting the soul. Therefore pray with David, Psalm 51:11, 12, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."—The second inner band is,

Faith in Christ, (the band of the covenant), which he works in the heart by his Spirit. Faith is a healing band, for it knits the soul, Eph. 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The woman with the bloody issue, when she got a touch of the hem of Christ's garments, was presently made whole. Thus the brokenhearted sinner, when he gets hold of Christ by faith, is bound up with him in one mystical body, virtue comes from him for the soul's healing. The virtue of his blood takes away guilt; the virtue of his Spirit breaks the power of sin. The apostle prescribes this healing band to the brokenhearted jailor; Acts 16:31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and the more faith that there is, the band will be the stronger, and the soul the sooner healed. Much unbelief, and little faith, keep the wounds of the soul long open; Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." A brokenhearted sinner staving off and disputing against his believing, is like a child who has a broken leg, doing what he can to tear off the bands with which it must be bound up; but he must admit them, or his leg will never heal: John 11:40, "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Peter walking on the water, was like to break and sink quite, Matth. 14:30; the cause was his unbelief, ver. 31, "Jesus said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—There are also,

2. Outward bands for a broken heart.—These also are two.

The first outward band is his own word, especially the promises of the gospel. This band Peter held out to the broken-hearted company; Acts 2:38, 39, "Repent," said he, "and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This word has a sovereign virtue for healing; Psalm 107:20, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Our Lord wraps up a promise, in a soft band of love; and he makes them lay it to with their own hands; and the more closely they tie it about their broken hearts with the hand of faith, they will be the sooner whole. Say not, What can a word do? An encouraging word from men will wonderfully raise a carnally-dejected mind; and if so, certainly the Lord's word will heal a broken heart. A promise will be, in this case, like the opening of a box of perfumes to one ready to faint away; Song 1:3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, thy name is like ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

The second outward band is his own seals of the covenant; Acts 2:38, quoted above. These seals are for our ingrafting into, and having communion with Jesus Christ, and so are most fit means to bind up hearts broken under a sense of sin, when they are partakers of these in faith. Hence many have been healed at such occasions; though indeed the water is not moved at all times, or at least the broken-hearted sinner does not always step into it. It was an ancient custom, though that will not justify it, to put a white garment on persons when they were baptised. But surely our Lord has taken off the spirit of heaviness, and given the garment of praise to many at sealing ordinances. The eunuch, after he was baptised, went on his way rejoicing. The sorrowful disciples were also made glad, when, after his resurrection, Jesus made himself known to them in the breaking of bread, Luke 24:35. All these bands are the Physician's absolute property. The poor patient has nothing of his own to be a band to his wounds. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; faith is his work; the word and sacraments are his ordinances, and their efficacy is all from him;

and thus he heals them. His kindness in this instance, we may take up in these three things:—

(1.) They are justified and pardoned: Job 33:23, 24, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." The sting of guilt is taken away, the poison is carried off, by a full and free pardon. Thus the seek man is whole; Isa, 33:24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The blood of Christ, with which by faith the soul is bound up, cleanses the wound, and heals it; 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

(2.) They are sanctified; 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Spirit is a sanctifying spirit: faith a sanctifying grace: Acts 15:9, "And put no difference between us and them, sanctifying their hearts by faith." The sacraments are sanctifying ordinances: 1 Cor. 12:13, "For by one Spirit, we are all baptised into one body,—and have been all made, to drink into one Spirit." By these the power of corruption, as to its reign, is broken; lusts are gradually killed, and grace is made to grow.

Lastly, They are comforted; Job 33:25, 26, "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth; he shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness." All these bands have a comforting and also a refreshing virtue. They bring the oil of joy sooner or later to the soul. The way of the Physician in this is, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." And thus the broken-hearted eat of the hidden manna, they get the white stone, and in the stone a new name written: Rev 2:17.

V. It now remains that we make some improvement of this subject— It may be improved in uses of information, reproof, consolation, and exhortation.

First, In a use of information.

1. This shews us the love and good-will of God to help poor sinners, especially broken-hearted ones. He has provided a glorious Physician for them, having remembered us in our low estate. O the love of the Father in investing his Son with this office! O the love of the Son in undertaking it! Especially considering what it behoved him to undergo, in order to provide the medicines: his own heart had to be broken, that sinners might be healed. We may learn,

2. The preciousness of our souls, and with all the desperateness of the diseases of sin. Surely it behoved to be a desperate disease, and the patient at the same time very precious in the Lord's sight, for which he employed such a Physician. A physician of less value than an incarnate God, would have been a physician of no value for a broken-hearted sinner. No medicine less than his blood could have been effectual, else the Saviour's heart had never been broken for blood to cure it.—We may see,

3. To whom we must go with our hard hearts. O the reigning plague of hardness of heart this day among all ranks! Ordinances, providences, mercies, judgments, cannot break them. Alas! there is little occasion to speak to broken-hearted sinners this day; it is the least part of our work, to get their hearts healed. We cannot go with whole hearts, as broken. What can we do with them? Carry them to Christ. He who can heal broken hearts, can surely break whole hearts. He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts 5:30. A look of him would do what nothing else can do. When the Lord Jesus looked on Peter, then Peter remembered his sins, and went out, and wept bitterly; Luke 22:62. We shall improve this subject,

Secondly, In a use of reproof.—This doctrine reproveth and condemns,

1. Those who, when their hearts are any way broken for sin, go not to Christ, but to physicians of no value; Hos. 5:13, "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." The Spirit of the Lord is at work with the hearts of many to break them for sin, who mar all by their haste to be healed, which carries them to other physicians than Christ, who may palliate the disease, but never can effectually cure it. These are, the law, which is now weak through the flesh; Rom. 8:3. The law may wound the soul, but can never heal it; Rom. 3:20, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Yet many go to it for healing, namely, when they go about to pacify their consciences, not by a believing application and sprinkling of Christ's blood, but by their own prayers, vows, repentance, amendment of their ways, and the like. The law indeed may give them a palliative; by these things their consciences may be blinded and bribed, but the disease is still rooted in them, and will break forth again at last, when there is no remedy, if not sooner by the mercy of God, to prevent their final ruin.—Throng of worldly business. When Cain's heart was wounded, and he could not get out the sting which galled his conscience, he went to this physician, he went from the presence of the Lord, and built a city; Gen. 4:16, 17. To this many ran at this day, who, when their consciences begin to stir within them, fill their heads and hands with business, till they get conscience quiet. This palliates the disease by way of diversion, while it will make it only like a gathered dam, which will at length break down the wall, and overwhelm the soul with aggravated sorrows; Isa. 30:13, "Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out on a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."—Jovial company. So Saul, in his distress of mind, instead of calling for his Bible to read on, calls for musicians to play to him. And it is not to be doubted, that many a man's convictions are drowned in the ale-house, hushed to silence at

revelling-meetings, these supports of the devil's kingdom people are so fond of; and many good motions are spoiled and laughed away. This palliates the disease by searing the conscience, and making it senseless. But it will awaken again on them like a lion roused up, and rend the caul of those hearts which have been so healed; Hos. 13:6, 8. This doctrine reproves,

2. Those who offer themselves physicians to the broken in heart, in opposition to Christ and his method of cure. There are such agents for the devil, who, like the Pharisees, will neither enter in themselves, nor suffer those who would to enter. Like Elymas the sorcerer, they seek to turn away men from the faith; Acts 13:8. They no sooner discern any beginning of seriousness in others, but they set themselves to crush it in the bud by their wicked advices, mockings, taunts, and licentious ensnaring examples. To these I may say, as in Acts 13:10, "O fall of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord?" The blood of the souls of such as perish by these means will lie at the door of such persons, and be required of them.

Lastly, Those are reproved, who, as their duty is, dare not go to these physicians of no value, yet do not come to Christ, which is their sin; Psalm 77:2, "My soul, refused to be comforted." It is unbelief which makes it so, and Satan will do what he can to carry it on, to deter the sinner from the great Physician. But has the Father accepted Christ a physician for broken-hearted sinners? Surely, then, they may come, and welcome; nay, they must come, or else they will never be healed. We shall now improve the subject,

Thirdly, In a use of comfort to those who are truly brokenhearted for sin in a gospel-sense. You have an able Physician, who both can and will cure you, even though Satan may be ready to tell you that your case is past cure. There is great ground of comfort for such. (1.) Your name is in Christ's commission. (2.) You know your disease, and this is a comfortable step to the cure. (3.) Never any died of your disease:

Psalm 147:3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."—Here, however, may be proposed this

OBJECTION, My heart has been long broken for sin, and yet there is no appearance of being healed; Jer. 14:19, "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we have looked for peace, and there is no good, and for the time of healing, and behold trouble." To this I

ANSWER, Thy soul may be healed of the disease of sin, and thy guilt removed, even the power of sin may be broken, though thy trouble does remain. David's sin was put away; 2 Sam. 12:13. yet he cries out of broken bones; Psalm 51:8. I would advise you to wait patiently on the great Physician, and in due time he will bind thee up. Limit him not to times and seasons, which are in his own hand; he best knows how to manage his patients. Some he keeps long in trouble, to prevent pride and security, into which they are apt to fall: others he soon cures, to prevent despair or utter despondency, to which they are most liable. It only remains that this subject be improved,

Lastly, In a use of exhortation. This shall be addressed to three sorts of persons.

I would exhort whole and hard-hearted sinners to labour to get broken hearts, hearts kindly broken for sin. To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I offer the following MOTIVES:—

MOT. 1. Consider the evil that there is in hardness of heart. It is very displeasing in the sight of God. Jesus was grieved with the hardness of men's hearts; Mark 3:5. It grieves his Spirit, and highly provokes him, so that God is ever angry with the hardhearted sinner. Suppose a man to be under never so great guilt, but his heart is broken on account of it, God is not so displeased with him as with those who, whatever their guilt be, are hard-hearted under it. It fences the heart against receiving any benefit by the means of salvation. Till the hardness be removed, it makes the heart proof against ordinances

and providences; Psalm 95:8, "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Consider, as it is with the dead tree, even in the spring, all labour is lost upon it; so is it with the hard-hearted sinner. God speaks by his word and Spirit, by mercies and judgments; but nothing makes impression on the hard heart, yea, the most softening means leave it as they found it, or most probably in a worse state. It binds up the heart from all gracious motions; Rom. 2:4, 5, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." This hardness is an iron band on the will, a stonyness in the heart, a hard freeze on the affections, so that the sinner cannot repent, mourn, or turn from his evil courses. It so nails him down in his wicked way, that he cannot move God-ward, cannot relent of his folly, though his danger be clearly before his eyes. In a word, it is the highway to be given up of God. Natural and acquired hardness lead the way to judicial hardness: Rom. 11:7, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." When men harden their hearts against reproofs and warnings, God many a time visits them with a curse, so that they shall never after have power to relent and yield; Hos. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."

MOT. 2. Consider the excellence of a broken heart. It is very pleasing in the sight of God, and precious; Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He looks to such, while he overlooks others; Isa. 66:2. He is near to them, while far from others; Psalm 34:18. It is the way to get good of all the means of salvation; and it is the root of gracious motions in the soul. However low they lie, God will take them up, and take them in; Psalm 147:3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

MOT. 3. The hardest heart will break at length, if not in a way of mercy, yet in a way of judgment; Prov. 29:1, "He that, being often

reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Heb. broken, and no healing.) Thy sins are breaking to the Spirit of God; Ezek. 6:9. Assure thyself that the stone will roll back on thyself sooner or later; if it do not kindly break thee in a way of repentance, it will grind thee to powder in the way of wrath. To such we would give the following directions briefly:—

Believe the threatenings against sin, and apply them; Jonah 3:5, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." This belief worketh fear, and fear worketh sorrow. And though this be but legal humiliation, yet this is ordinarily a mean sanctified of God to bring forward the elect sinner to Christ, as it was when Noah builded the ark; Heb. 11:7. Ponder thy manifold sins, on the one hand, and the rich mercies with which thou hast been visited on the other. This is a proper mean to bring the heart into a broken disposition; Rom. 2:4, "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Believe and meditate on the sufferings of Christ for sin. Look how he was broken for it in a way of suffering, till thy heart be broken for it in a way of repentance; Zech. 12:10, (quoted above).

We address ourselves, in the next place, to broken-hearted sinners. To such we say, Come to Christ as a Physician for binding up and healing your broken hearts. You have sufficient encouragement to put your cases in his hand. It is a part of the work expressly put upon him by the Father, to bind up your wounds.—He has a most tender sympathy for such broken-hearted ones; Isa. 63:9, "In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Therefore let us improve this sympathy; Heb. 4:15, 16, "For we have not an high priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He is very near to such, even as dwelling under one roof with them for their welfare; Isa. 57:15, "For thus saith the

high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—There is a particular relation betwixt him as the Physician, and the broken-hearted as his proper patients; and therefore he has a peculiar care of them; Ezek. 34:15, 16," I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God; I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment." You see that he will handle the broken-hearted very tenderly; Isa. 40:11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young; chap. 42:3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

In the last place, we would exhort those whose broken hearts Christ has healed, to take heed to the preserving your restored health. Indeed every one who seems to be healed, is not healed by the hand of the true Physician; but if your hearts are now eased, and your wounds bound up by the great Physician, you will know it by these three things. 1. You will have an appetite for spiritual food; 1 Pet. 2:2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." When one begins to recover in earnest, he recovers his appetite. But such a one, say we, is not well yet, for he has no appetite; so thou art not well if thou dost want the spiritual hunger.—2. Your food will relish with you; Prov. 27:7, "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Many have their qualms of conscience which they get over, but still they have no relish for spiritual things, but for the world and their lusts. But if Christ has healed thee, he has corrected thy taste. Lastly, You will be beginning to walk in the way of God. "I will run," saith David, "in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm 119:32. They who return with the dog to the vomit, show that

their disease is yet in its strength, though they are not sensible of pain.

Now, if Christ has healed you, to perceive the health of your souls, it is necessary for you to keep a good and regular diet. Beware of these things which formerly cast thee into soul-sickness. Peter went no more back to the high priest's hall, nor Judah to Tamar; Gen. 38:26. Feed there, and on these things which may tend to the soul's health. "Behold," said Jesus to the impotent man he had healed, "behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." And for this cause observe your Physician's rules in all things. —Walk circumspectly, take notice of every step you make, as one who has had a broken limb healed; Isa. 38:15, "I shall go softly," said Hezekiah, "all my years, in the bitterness of my soul." And beware of walking in the dark, of going forward there where you cannot discern your way by the light of the Lord's word. Study to increase in love to Christ, zeal for his glory, and hatred of Sin. Always keep correspondence with your Physician. Be often at the throne of grace by prayer, and keep up communion with him in the exercise of faith. "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Amen.

## **SERMON VII**

### **JESUS PROCLAIMS LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES**

To proclaim liberty to the captives. - ISAIAH 61:1

HITHERTO we have had Christ's commission as it respects those who have some good in them, the meek and the broken-hearted.

Here is his commission with respect to those who have no good in them, but are utter strangers to him, living in their natural state. He is anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives. In which words consider,

1. Man's natural state. It is a state of captivity: they are captives to Satan: 2 Tim. 2:26, "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captives by him at his will." He is the tyrant whose captives they are, who has carried them away out of the light of God's favour, and holds them fast in his territories, being the god of this world. Consider,

2. Christ's work with respect to them. It is to proclaim liberty to them, Luke 4:18, "To preach deliverance to the captives." These are indeed the same. Luke's word for liberty or deliverance, is properly dismissing or letting away, that is, giving liberty. The words for preaching and proclaiming signify properly to cry, and are used either of preaching or proclaiming. And what is preaching but proclaiming in the name of the king of heaven? and so this relates to Christ's kingly office.—From this part of the subject we take the following DOCTRINES:—

DOCTRINE I. That sinners in their natural unregenerate state are Satan's captives.

DOCTRINE II. That Jesus Christ, with the express consent of his Father, has issued out his royal proclamation of liberty to Satan's captives.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That sinners in their natural unregenerate state are Satan's captives.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. How sinners in their natural state have become Satan's captives.

II. What is their condition as Satan's captives.

III. The properties of this captivity, and then,

IV. Add the improvement of the subject.

We are then,

I. To shew how sinners in their natural state have become Satan's captives. They have become his captives,

1. As taken in war; 2 Peter 2:19, "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Satan having proclaimed war against Heaven, maliciously set on our first parents in paradise, and on all mankind in them. He set on them as the confederates of heaven, and carried his point, gained the victory. And in this respect he is still pursuing the victory, and driving the. unrenewed world before him as prisoners of war, called his lawful captives, Isa. 41:24. They have become his captives, because

2. They are born his captives, as being born of those whom he overcame and carried captive. So they are expressly called the children of hell, Matth 23:15. There were many of the captives in Babylon who had never seen Canaan, having been born in that country. These were captives no less than their parents, and that by their birth. So is it with Adam's posterity naturally; they were born under the power of Satan, Acts 26:18. When a slave, under the law, married in his master's house, though at the end of seven years he got his own freedom, yet the children were his master's, as being born in his house, and could not be free without a particular liberty for them, Exod. 21:4. Thus even the children of godly parents are by nature Satan's captives; children of Abraham, children of the devil. To the Jews our Saviour said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John 8:44. We were,

II. To enquire what is their condition as Satan's captives. Upon this we observe,

1. That every natural man is transported from his primitive soil into Satan's territories, his kingdom of darkness. Hence believers are said "to be turned from the power of Satan unto God." Acts 26:18. And again, Col. 1:13, "God has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Sinners are not now where God at first set them down; they are transported into another kingdom; like the prodigal, they have left their father's house, and gone into a far country, where they have spent their substance, Luke 15:13. They are far from God, his covenant, and his Son. Thou art in Satan's kingdom, O unconverted soul! a black and dismal kingdom, where sin, darkness, and death reign, where there is no gleam of saving light or life; and if thou wert awakened out of thy dream, thou wilt see matters so situated; a kingdom with which God will have war for ever; and thou art an unhappy subject of that kingdom.

2. They are plundered and robbed of all that is valuable, as captives used to be; Rev. 3:17, "They are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The light of the mind, the righteousness of the will, the holiness of the affections, all are lost, all has become a spoil and a prey to the hellish conqueror. Now thou art a poor captive, who hast nothing truly good left thee, nothing which the bands of hell have not made thee render up.

3. They are stripped, as has also been an ancient custom of dealing with captives. Thus, as the prophet Isaiah, ch. 20:3, 4, walked three years naked, for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia; so did the king of Assyria carry away these nations captive, naked and bare-foot. What a melancholy sight is it, to see brave men, who were glittering in shining apparel and arms at the commencement of an engagement, when fallen into the hands of their enemies, stript and driven away naked before the conquerors. But yet more melancholy to see precious souls stript by Satan of their original righteousness, and driven away before him, without any covering but rags, filthy rags, Rev. 3:17. This, O sinner, is the shameful and dangerous case which thou art in as Satan's captive.

4. They are no more masters of themselves, but under the power of the conqueror; 2 Tim. 2:26, "They are taken captive by him at his will." Their liberty is gone, and they are slaves to the worst of masters. Wonder not that many a poor sinner is at Satan's beck, over the belly of reason and conscience, to serve the devil, to their own visible ruin. Alas! they are captives, not at their liberty, but must go as he commands them; Rom. 1:23. "There is a lair in their members, which bringeth them into captivity to the law of sin and death."

5. If they get anything that is valuable, they cannot get it kept, it is torn from them by the conqueror. As the Babylonians wasted and insulted the Israelites, when they carried them away captives, so does Satan waste and insult his captives, Psalm 137:3. Sometimes the natural man gets a conviction of sin or duty darted in on him, and this produces relentings for sin, and resolutions to amendment of life; but they do not continue. Alas I how can they, while they are Satan's captives, who will not suffer them to think of entertaining them, more than Pharaoh would endure the Israelites to think of leaving his service. Nay, he rests not till they have thrown them away.

6. They are so secured as that they cannot get away, they are kept by the strong man under the power of darkness, Col. 1:13. There is a gulf fixed between them and all spiritual good, so that they cannot pass. Satan has his guards on them, whom they cannot escape to come back to the Lord. He has them fettered with divers lusts, which they cannot shake off. And, in a word, nothing less than a power stronger than all the powers of hell can make way for the deliverance of a captive.

Lastly, If they but offer to make escape, they are more narrowly watched, stronger guards set on them, and more work put in their hands; as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, so the devil does with his captives, Rom. 7:9, 10, 11. Hence many never go so far wrong, as on the back of communions, convictions, or times of more than ordinary

seriousness, the powers of hell being joined together to stop the fugitive. We now proceed,

III. To speak of the properties of this captivity. Here we observe that it is,

1. A spiritual captivity, a captivity of the soul. The soul is the most precious part of the man; and therefore the captivity of it must be the most deplorable. All the captivity of men, if they were captives to the Turks or the most barbarous nations extends but to the body. He whose body is in the power of another, his soul and thoughts are as free as those of any. But Satan lays his bands upon the inner man, and, go the body as it will, he holds fast the man, in so far as he holds fast the soul. And,

2. It is universal. It extends to all the powers and faculties of the soul, the inner man. The natural man's mind is Satan's captive; 1 Cor. 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Lord formed the mind of man in him, and endowed it with knowledge, to be the guide of the whole man in the way of happiness; to be the eye of the soul, to distinguish betwixt sin and duty; and the pilot to direct his course through the several rocks and quicksands that lay betwixt him and the shore of the upper Canaan. But in the engagement betwixt Satan and mankind, being wounded by the deceit of the tempter, Gen. 3:5, it fell into the hands of the enemy, who robbed it of its light, and shut up sinners in darkness. Hence they are said to be in darkness, Eph. 5:8. They cannot see the way to escape, and withal, there is struck up a false light in the mind, which, like wild-fire, leads the soul into pits and snares, causing it to put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet, good for evil, and evil for good. They thus "glory in their shame, and mind earthly things," Phil. 3:19. Again, the will is his captive. They have a stony heart, Ezek. 36:16. The Lord having endowed this faculty with righteousness, and straightness with his own will, for, Eccl. 7:29, "God made man upright," gave the will dominion over the

man, that nothing, good or evil, could be done by him without it. But behold it fell likewise into the enemy's hands, who hath given it such a set to the wrong side, that no created power can again straighten it; hence, 2 Thes. 3:5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." He only can do it. Satan holds it so fast, that it cannot move without the circle of evil he has drawn about it, nor can it will anything truly good in a right manner: Phil. 2:13, "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Satan hath loaded it with such heavy chains, that it cannot come to Christ at his call, no more than a mountain of brass can come to a man at his call. "No man," saith Jesus, "can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him." Farther, the affections also are Satan's captives; Gen. 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The affections being made perfectly holy, were subjected to the guidance of the mind, and the command of the will, and were set in the soul to execute its holy contrivances and will. But they also were taken in this war with hell; loosed from this bond of subjection to the understanding and will in these things, but nailed to Satan's door-posts to serve him and his work in the soul for ever; so that they have no heart for the price put into their hand to get wisdom, and can have no heart to it. But the natural man's joys and delights are arrested within the compass of carnal things, together with his desires, sorrows, and all his other affections.

3. It is a hard and sore captivity. The Egyptians and Babylonians never treated their captives at the rate Satan does his. They are held busy, and even busy working their own ruin, kicking against the pricks, digging for the grave as for hid treasures. It is their constant work to feed their lusts, to starve their souls; and the design of their master is, that the one may ruin the other. It is their daily employment, to weave snares for their own feet, twist cords to bind themselves over to destruction, and dig pits into which they may fall, and never rise again. In so far as sin is their work, they wrong their own souls, Prov. 8:36, and shew themselves in love with death. This captivity is,

4. A perpetual captivity. A few years captivity among men, how grievous is it! And men will do what they can to be ransomed. But this conqueror will never quit his captives, unless they be taken from him by Almighty power. Death at farthest looses other captives; "For in the grave," says Job 3:18, 19, "the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor; and the servant is free from his master." But those who die Satan's captives are so far from being free, that they are ensured to him for ever and ever.

Lastly, It is a voluntary captivity, and thus the more hopeless; 2 Tim. 2:26, "They are taken captive by Satan at his will." They need not to be driven. They do not only go, but they run at his call: Rom. 3:15, "Their feet are swift to shed blood." Though they were taken in war, and born captives, yet now he is their master, by their own consent and choice, while they choose to serve the devil, and cannot be brought to give themselves to the Lord. It is a bewitching captivity. The sinner once captive to Satan, never cares for his liberty, unless grace changes his heart. He glories in the badges of his slavery; loves his work heartily, and is well pleased with his condition. The gracious proclamation of liberty by Christ sounds in his ears; but he says, I love my master, I will not go out free.—We are now,

IV. To make some practical improvement,

First, In a use of conviction. Know then, and be convinced, O unconverted sinner, that thou art the devil's captive. Are there not many who have never troubled their heads about their state, who never have had anything like a work of grace or conversion upon their spirits? many in whom their hopeful beginnings have been all marred? I would say to every such one, thou hast been hearing of the case of the devil's captives, and thou art the man, thou art the woman, as fast in his power as ever prisoners of war were in the hands of their conquerors. you will not believe it, and this is your sin, and also your misery, Rev. 3:17. you will be ready to sign yourselves, and defy the devil; though you have never been, by regenerating grace, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the

kingdom of God's dear Son, Col. 1:13. But this is Satan's way with his captives, to put out their eyes; 2 Cor. 4:4. "He blinds the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" that they cannot know where they are, or who it is that has got hold of them. Do you think that it is only witches and wizards who are the devils captives? No, no, Satan may have a full possession of thy soul, though his name with thee be not Legion, Even praying people, and great pretenders to religion, to righteousness, and sobriety, and those who have turned to a strict course of life, much more to making a profession of religion, may still be children of hell, as our Saviour called the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. 23:15. And all unregenerate ones are children of wrath, and the devil's captives. He is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" and they are "the children of wrath," Eph. 2:2, 3. Will you apply what was spoken before for your conviction?—Try yourselves.

1. Art thou not, O unconverted sinner! carried off from God's gracious presence, into the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness? What knowest thou of the light of God's countenance shining on thy soul? Certainly thou wast once darkness, Eph. 5:8. Has there any spiritual saving light broke up in your soul yet? Has the long night of thy natural state had a morning yet? Or are you not in the state in which you was born? If you be not in darkness, what means your works of darkness, and your not discerning the transcendent excellence of Christ?

2. Are you not robbed and stripped of your spiritual ornaments? Where is the light of the mind, the righteousness of the will, the holiness of the affections, which man had before he fell into the enemy's hands, and which are restored in some measure to the ransomed of the Lord?

3. Are you free to righteousness? are you not under the power of the conqueror? How is it then that you have no power to resist a temptation, that Satan can so easily carry you the way you know to

be wrong, over the belly of reason and conscience! Nay are not your lusts upon you like fetters, that you cannot move away from carnal things God-ward?

4. Are you not quickly spoiled of any beginnings of good which you sometimes meet with? You hear the word, but do not the fowls pick it away from you? Have not all your convictions and resolutions gone off by degrees like a morning cloud? How quickly has all the noise within your breast been hushed, and you at much again in love with your lusts as ever!

Admit the conviction, then, for they who never saw themselves Satan's captives, are never yet made Christ's free men, John 8:32, 33, 44, 45. What think you, is the work of grace carried on in the soul as a morning dream? Are the devil's captives brought away, and never know that they were his captives? What way can a soul embrace the proclaimed liberty to the captives, who never saw itself in this condition?—Consider, that this will be the first step to your liberty. The gospel is sent "to open your eyes, and to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ," Acts 26:18. Christ's Spirit begins his work with conviction of sin and misery. He makes the captives to see where they are, whose they are, and what is their case. This rouses them out of their lethargy, makes them prize this liberty; it makes them glad to come away with their deliverer; "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."—This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of exhortation.

O captive exiles! hasten to be loosed, that you may not die in the pit, and that your bread may not fail, Isa. 51:14. Stir up yourselves to regain your liberty, and remain no longer at ease in your captive condition. Consider,

1. That a short time's continuance in this state will put you beyond a possibility of liberty: Eccl. 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Thy life is uncertain, and if death carry thee off in this condition, thou wilt be carried to the lower prison, and then farewell liberty for ever and ever; Luke 13:24, 25, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are." The servant under the law, though he refused his liberty at the end of six years, yet received it in the year of jubilee. But whoso in this life refuse to come away from Satan's service, shall never see a time after for it. And when thou art closed up in the net, it must be without remedy; it will be no comfort to think that you did not imagine it would have come to this. Consider,

2. That now it the time of liberty; 2 Cor. 6:2, "Behold now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!" Christ has paid a ransom for Satan's captives and the liberty is proclaimed in the gospel. Strike in with the season of grace, and come away with the deliverer upon the gracious proclamation. Hear what Christ is saying to you, Song 2:10, " Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

## **SERMON VIII**

### **SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED**

To proclaim liberty to the captives. - ISAIAH 61:1

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, spoke to the first of the doctrines which we took from this part of the subject, we go on to

DOCTRINE II. That Jesus Christ, with the express consent of his Father, has issued out his royal proclamation of liberty to Satan's captives. "He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

In illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew what this proclamation is.

II. Explain what liberty is proclaimed in the gospel to Satan's captives.

III. Mention some of the circumstances attending this proclamation. And then,

IV. Subjoin the improvement of the subject.

We are,

I. To shew what this proclamation is. This royal proclamation issued out by Jesus Christ, is the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation. The gospel is the proclamation of the King of heaven to poor sinners, in which he proclaims liberty to all the captives of Satan, to whom it comes. The law lays the heavy yoke of the curse upon sinners, the gospel brings the offer of liberty. Here we observe,

1. That it is a jubilee-proclamation. You have the law of jubilee, which was every fiftieth year, when seven times seven were over; Lev. 25:10, "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man into his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." It was proclaimed by sound of trumpet, on the day of atonement, ver. 9, then all the poor slaves got their liberty, whether their masters were willing to part with them or not; and all those who had been obliged to mortgage or sell their lands returned to the possession of them again. And so it was a proclamation which made many a heart glad. Now, the gospel is such a proclamation, and the time of it is the year of jubilee. Jesus

came, Isa. 61:2, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn;" compare 2 Cor. 6:2, "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!" O! good news, sinners, there was a day of atonement on the cross, and now the trumpet of the gospel soundeth, and there is a proclamation, bearing that Satan's captives may now have their liberty, though their master be not willing to part with them; that the mortgaged inheritance of heaven and God's favour, though forfeited, may be possessed; poor criminals and bankrupts may return to them again.

2. It is a conqueror's proclamation to captives. The king of Babylon took the Jews captive, and held them seventy years in captivity; but God raised up Cyrus; Isa. 45:1-4, and he overturned the Babylonian empire; the destruction of that kingdom was the deliverance of the Jews, for he proclaimed liberty to them to return to their own land. This also was a type of the gospel-proclamation. Satan warred against mankind, he carried them all captive into his own kingdom; and there was none to deliver out of his hand. But King Jesus had engaged him, routed all his forces, overturned his kingdom, and taken the kingdom to himself; Col. 2:15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." 1 John 3:8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And now being settled on his throne, his royal proclamation is issued out, that Satan's captives may again return into the kingdom of God.

We shall now,

II. Explain what liberty is proclaimed in the gospel to Satan's captives.

This is the great subject of the proclamation; and that you may see the riches of this proclamation, know that Christ by the gospel proclaims to every poor sinner to whom it comes,

1. Liberty from the power and slavery of Satan; Acts 26:18, "He turns them from the power of Satan unto God." Every one who is willing to quit their old master the devil, may come away without his leave. You are welcome to Jesus the conqueror, and the conquered tyrant shall not have power to keep you. Now, "the Spirit and the bride say Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" Rev. 22:17. He is a strong one, but there is a stronger one than he, who will break his yoke from off your necks, make his iron fetters to give way, like ropes which are burnt with fire. And though, as long as you are here, he will be molesting you, yet he shall never, never gain his former power over you, and you shall at length be completely freed from the least molestation by him; "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" Rom. 16:20. He proclaims,

2. Liberty from the law as a covenant of works; Rom. 6:14, "You are not under the law, but under grace." Satan's captives are under the law as a covenant of works, and it lays a heavy yoke upon them, namely, perfect obedience, under the pain of the curse: Gal. 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This curse they carried away with them when they went into captivity, and it abides on them always, till they be loosed from it. Now, Christ proclaims liberty from this curse, offers to bring sinners from under the dominion of the law, to be under grace, where there is no more curse; Gal. 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Here they are provided with a righteousness imputed to them, and not set to seek it by their own works! where, in case of sinning, the utmost penalty is fatherly chastisement; Psalm 89:30–33. Thus he offers to take off the law's yoke, to set you without the reach of its curse, and to lay on his own yoke, which is easy; Matth. 11:29. Jesus proclaims,

3. Liberty from the dominion and bondage of sin; Rom. 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Satan's captives are all the drudges of sin. It does not only dwell in them, as it does in the best,

but it reigns over them, fills their hearts and hands continually with its work, so that they can do nothing else but sin; Psalm 14:3, "There is none that doeth good, no not one." It lays its commands on them, which are a law which they cannot dispute, but must obey; it has its several lusts in the heart, which are chains to them as its captives, the handles by which it holds them, and drags them after it. Now, Christ proclaims liberty from this, and his Spirit effects it; Rom. 8:2, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death." He will break sin's dominion, loose the chains of unmortified lusts, and set the prisoners free; John 8:32, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And though sin may dwell for a season, as an unclean, unwelcome guest, he will at length extirpate it wholly. He proclaims,

4. Liberty from the ruining influence of this present evil world; Gal. 1:4, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." This world has a ruining influence on Satan's captives. The things of this world work their destruction, the smiles of it are killing; Prov. 1:32, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them;" their blessings are turned to curses; the frowns of it are ensnaring and destructive. The god of this world mixes every cup with poison. The men of this world are ruining one another; and therefore it is said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation;" Acts 2:40. There is a plague in Satan's family, and each member serves to infect another, to convey sin and death to his fellow. But Jesus proclaims liberty from this pest-house; you may be drawn out of it, Jesus will pluck you as a brand out of the fire; why stay in it, while he proclaims liberty to you from it? Jesus proclaims,

5. Liberty from the fear, the terror of death and hell; Heb. 2:15, "He delivers them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Satan's captives may for a time be secure, fearing nothing; but as soon as their conscience awakens, they will be filled with horror, as perceiving the approach of death and hell towards them; they can have no comfortable view of another life.

Christ proclaims liberty from this; if you will come to him, conscience shall be pacified with the sprinkling of his blood, ye shall be set beyond the possibility of perishing; he will be to you an almighty Saviour. He proclaims,

6. Liberty from the sting of death and the evil of afflictions. Though Christ, in his gracious proclamation, does not promise that such as obey his will in it shall never be afflicted; yet he promises that afflictions shall be so far from doing them hurt, that they shall do them good; Rom. 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" that though they die, death shall be to them unstinged; John 8:51, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." So that they may meet it with that triumphant song; 1 Cor. 15:55, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" It shall not be to them what it is to Satan's captives: the serpent's sting, with which it kills the serpent's seed, shall be taken away ere it comes near them. Jesus proclaims,

7. Liberty from the power of the grave; 1 Cor. 15:55, quoted above. Ver. 57, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Satan's captives are laid up in their graves as in prisons; and when they come out of them at the resurrection, death and the power of the grave will he still hanging about them; so that they shall but change one grave for a worse, namely, for the lake of fire. But Christ's ransomed ones, who come away on his proclamation of liberty, though they go to the grave, yet the power of it over them shall be broken, death shall have no more power over them for ever. He proclaims,

8. Liberty from condemnation; Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." All Satan's captives are condemned malefactors; John 3:18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." And the sentence shall be solemnly pronounced against them at the great day; and so they shall be led away "into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his

angels;" Matth. 25. This is terrible; but Christ proclaims liberty from it. So soon as thou embracest the offered liberty, the guilt of eternal wrath shall be done away, thou shalt be beyond the reach of condemnation; your standing on the right hand is secured, and the sentence of solemn absolution shall follow. He proclaims,

9. Liberty of free access to God, with holy boldness; Rom. 5:1, 2, "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 hope of the glory of God." Now, the captive exiles are banished from the presence of God; they can have no access to him, nor communion with him. But our Lord, by his death, has opened the two-leaved gates of his Father's house, and gives free liberty, by open proclamation, to Satan's captives, leaving their master to come in. They have access by one Spirit to the Father. —Jesus proclaims,

Lastly, Liberty, that is, freedom of spirit in the service of God; 2 Cor. 3:17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit of Christ is called a free spirit, because he makes free. Satan's captives may yield some obedience to God, but it is burdensome, because they act therein as slaves, from a slavish fear of hell and wrath. But Christ's freemen act from a nobler principle, love; Rom. 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father:" 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love." We now proceed,

III. To mention some of the circumstances attending this proclamation. Here we observe,

1. That the law on which it is founded was the eternal agreement of the glorious Trinity for man's redemption. The eternal law of love and good-will to poor sinners, by which it was provided, that upon the Son of God's laying down his life a ransom for an elect world,

they should be delivered from the captivity of sin and Satan, and be made God's freemen; which the eternal Son engaged to do. Accordingly, in the fulness of time he did it, and thereby purchased their liberty. We observe,

2. That the proclamation was drawn up, and is recorded in the Bible, by the Holy Spirit; Isa. 55:1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." And what is the whole Bible but a declaration of this liberty, with promises to those who accept of, and threatenings to those who refuse it. The truth and reality of this declaration is sealed by the blood of Christ; "This," said he, "is the New Testament in my blood." So that there is not the least ground to doubt its truth. We observe,

3. That this proclamation is issued out by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the consent of his Father and the Spirit. The Father has sent him to proclaim liberty to the captives. The Spirit says, Come. A whole Trinity invites Satan's captives to liberty. They have no will that the captive exile should die in the pit; Ezek. 18:23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" We observe,

4. That this proclamation is directed to men, to the sons of men; Prov. 8:4, "Unto you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to fallen angels, they are excluded from the benefit of the purchased liberty. But the captives in the land of the living, these prisoners of hope, to them is the proclamation directed, without exception of great, yea, even the greatest of sinners; Rev. 22:17, "Whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely." Isa. 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Such are invited, though, they have often refused their liberty, and though they have gone back into their captivity. We observe,

5. That the first crier of this proclamation was the Son of God in his own person. He made this proclamation first in paradise; Gen. 3:15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." Afterwards he took on him man's nature, then came and proclaimed it; Heb. 2:3, "The Gospel at the first began to be spoken unto us by the Lord." And he sealed it with his most precious blood, though there were but few who came away upon the proclamation made by him; "Who hath believed our report, and to whom bath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" is the complaint of the prophet Isaiah. We observe,

6. That, being ascended into heaven, he has appointed criers in his name the ministers of the Gospel, to publish this proclamation, and to invite sinners to accept of this liberty; 2 Cor. 5:20, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." This is our work, to proclaim it unto you, to make you sensible that liberty is purchased, and offered unto you. We are the voice of the great crier; Christ cries to you by us. We observe,

Lastly, That the place where the proclamation is ordered to be made is in this world; Mark 16:15, "Go ye," said Jesus to his disciples, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." As for those who are gone into the other world, the proclamation can reach them no more; the prisoners there are without hope. But while you are in this world, the proclamation is to you, and particularly when in those public assemblies where the Lord's people are gathered together to hear it; Prov. 1:20, 21, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words." It only remains,

IV. That we make some improvement of the subject. This shall be confined to an use of exhortation.

We would exhort you, O captives of Satan! to comply with the design of this proclamation of liberty; we beseech you, receive not this grace of God in vain. To be more particular, we exhort you,

1. To be convinced of your state of captivity; deceive not yourselves with thoughts of liberty, while you are really serving divers lusts. Till you see your captive state, what hope can there be of good to be obtained by the proclamation of liberty? We exhort you,

2. To be willing to come away and forsake your old master and his service. Ah! may not the time past suffice to have done the will of the flesh? 1 Pet. 4:3. You have been long under this captivity; had the youngest of you been as long a slave to any man as you have been to Satan, you would have been weary of your situation long ere now. O! strive that your spirits may be raised towards your being free, and walk no more contentedly in your chains of divers lusts. You will say, you are not able to come away; but if you were willing, you would not be allowed to remain in your captive state. We exhort you,

3. To be affected at the heart with the news of the proclamation of liberty. Do not hear it unconcernedly, but hear as those who are nearly concerned in the matter. Take a view of the wretched state you are in, and wonder that there is yet hope. How glad were the Israelites in Egypt and Babylon of the notice they had of their liberty! Thy captivity is a thousand times worse, and thy heart should leap within thee at the voice of the deliverer. We exhort you,

Lastly, To accept of the proclaimed liberty, and come away with the deliverer. Give up with your old master, lay by his work, bid farewell to his kingdom, as never to remain more in it. Shake off your fetters resolutely, and embrace cordially the offered liberty of the sons of God. To prevail with you in doing this, we present you with the following motives:—

**MOTIVE 1.** Consider that the captivity you are in is a most miserable bondage and slavery; Egyptian, Babylonish, and Turkish slavery and

captivity, all in one, are not sufficient to represent it. And this will appear, if you consider,

(1.) That the master is the devil. While thou art in thy natural state, thou art the devil's captive and bond servant, 2 Tim. 2:26, and that by a threefold title—as taken in war, 2 Pet. 2:19—as bought by him at a low rate, "ye sold yourselves for nought," Isa. 52:3, and—as born in his house, Matth. 23:15. Therefore ye are called to forget that house, Psalm 45:10, and to come out of his family, and touch not the unclean thing, 2 Cor. 6:17. How wretched must that bondage be where the devil is master! Sure he is a cruel and merciless master, who will take pleasure in thy miseries. Do we esteem the case of those wretches so horrible, who, by express compact, are become his? and will we yet contentedly continue in bondage to the same master? Consider,

(2.) That the work is sin, called the works of darkness, Rom. 13:12. None of his captives are suffered to be idle, he puts a task in their hands, which they must fulfil. One of two things they are always doing while out of Christ; either weaving the spider's web, working that which will not profit at the latter end, more than such a web will be a garment; or, hatching the cockatrice egg, doing mischief and wickedness that will recoil upon you, to your own destruction. This dung-hill work Satan employs his captives in, is most unbecoming the heaven-born soul. Consider,

(3.) That the provision and entertainment is bad and unsatisfying, Isa. 55:2, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" The best of this sort, which the natural man has, is to eat dust with the serpent, to suck the breast of filthy lusts, which, though it may feast one's corruptions, poisons the soul; or to eat husks with the swine, Luke 15:16, to feed on the empty things of the world, which can afford no nourishment. Thus, while you ask from him bread, he gives you a stone; while you ask a fish, he gives you a scorpion. Consider,

(4.) That the wages of sin is death: Rom. 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death." Present death, spiritual, in the separation of their souls from God, for from every natural man God is departed, whether he knows it or not. Death temporal, to come, armed with its sting, and provided with the envenomed arrows of the curse. And death eternal in hell, where they shall be ever dying, but never shall die. O! shall not the consideration of these things move you to accept of liberty, and come away from such a master, such work, such provisions, and such wages?

MOTIVE 2. The liberty proclaimed is most excellent and glorious liberty, Rom. 8:21; the glorious liberty of the sons of God; which may create the most surpassing joy in the world. The glory and excellency of it will appear, if we consider,

(1.) The purchaser of it is Christ the King of glory. He it is by whom we have the gospel-jubilee proclaimed in the text. He is the victorious Monarch, who has overcome Satan, and gives liberty to his captives. He is our near kinsman, who has redeemed us by payment of a price, a costly price, even his own precious blood. It was the honour of the Jews that they had their liberty by Cyrus; but how much more honourable is it, to have liberty by Christ! And when such an one has purchased for us liberty, will not you accept it? Consider,

(2.) The ransom paid for it; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." Never was such a ransom paid for the greatest captive king among men, as for us wretched sinners; even the blood of God. He compassionated the case of the poor captives, laid by the robes of his glory, put his neck under the yoke of the law, endured the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the rage of hell, and all to purchase this liberty for us. Consider,

(3.) The party to whom it was paid, to God, even his own Father; Eph. 5:2, "He gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Satan is but the jailor and executioner, into whose hands men fell, being condemned by the Judge, to whom alone the ransom was due. Hence, in respect of Satan, his captives are said to be redeemed without money, Isa. 52:3. They are to be set at liberty by main force, being violently wrested out of his hand, Isa. 49:25.—Consider,

(4.) The glorious privileges attending this liberty. It is not a naked freedom, which yet would be valuable, but pregnant with many precious privileges. I have told you already, that it is a liberty from the power of Satan, from the law as a covenant, &c. But besides these, many positive blessings and privileges attend it; such as, the freed captives are made free men of the New Jerusalem, they are made citizens of heaven on earth, and are burgesses there; Eph. 2:19, "They are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." They are incorporated with the society of saints and angels, of whom Christ is the head. They who had their lot before in the kingdom of darkness, have now their lot in these pleasant places.—The freed captives are made children of the family of heaven; 2 Cor. 6:18, "And I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." So it is the liberty of the sons of God, for God makes all the freed slaves sons of his house; and whatever children may expect from a father, able and willing to do for them, this they may expect from God. The freed captives are all made first-born: Heb. 12:23, "The general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." This excellence of dignity and power is put upon them, they are thus highly advanced. As it was with Joseph, he not only got his liberty but was made lord over Egypt, where he had been a slave; so the freed captive is made king: Rev. 1:6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." This is accomplished in them all, Isa. 14:2, "They shall rule over their oppressors." They get mastery over their lusts, and shall at last triumph over Satan, Rom. 16:20. They shall sit and judge him, 1 Cor. 6:3. They are made priests also,

to offer up sacrifices of praise to God, Rom. 12:1. O what a change of their work! They are all heirs of God, and receive the double portion. There is not anything which such an one gets, but it is twice as much and good as that which a captive of Satan has. The blessing is the best half; this the captives of Satan want. Lastly, When their minority is over, they shall have a perfect liberty, with the affluence of all things, to an entire completing of their happiness, Rom. 8:21. O the glorious day abiding Christ's freemen! Now they have got the word, Roll away the stone, Lazarus come forth; but then this will be added, Loose him and let him go. The great day will begin their eternal jubilee; when death the last enemy shall be destroyed, then shall soul and body return to the full possession of the mortgaged inheritance, and the perfect freedom from their captivity. Consider,

(5.) The unchangeableness of this liberty. When once a captive is freed by Christ, all the power and policy of hell cannot bring him back again into bondage: John 10:28, "And I will give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." See how Paul boasts of this, Rom. 8:38, 39. It is true, were there none to preserve this liberty but the believer himself, it might be lost; but it is infallibly guarded against the gates of hell, by the unalterable decree of God, 2 Tim. 2:19; by his unchangeable love and covenant; by the continual indwelling of the Spirit, and the prevalent intercession of Christ.

Lastly, Consider the eternity of this liberty. Death does not put a close to this liberty, but rather gives a new beginning to it; it shall continue for ever, they shall live for ever and ever in the enjoyment of it.

Thus life and death are set before you, will you accept this liberty or not? May I not say, how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2:3. Consider,

1. That it is most unreasonable to refuse it, to remain in captivity after the proclamation of liberty is issued. Would men but make their

reason judge betwixt Christ and them, there would be no fear of the cause, Josh. 24:15. Who would refuse their liberty, if they might be made free? liberty from such a master and such work &c.; liberty purchased from such a glorious person, by the glorious King, at such a ransom, &c. Consult your reason, your interest, and will you prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, to the eternal rivers of pleasures at God's right hand? Consider,

2. That every refusal makes your captivity the more firm and hopeless. Satan bores the ear of sinners anew to his door-post on every refusal. Hence none so hard to win, as those who have refused many gospel calls. Tyre and Sidon would be much easier wrought upon than Chorazin and Bethsaida, Matth. 11:21; Ezek. 3:7; wild Americans, than Scotsmen. For when the gospel does not soften the heart, it is hardened under it. Consider,

3. That by refusing this liberty, you become the murderers of your own souls. Prov. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." Hear, sinners, how our Lord expostulates with you on this point, Ezek. 18:31, 32, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." You have the poisonous cup of your sins at your head, will ye drink it? ye say, ye cannot help it, ye must drink it off; our Lord says, Throw it away, it will be your death if you do not. Come to me, and I will free you from this miserable bondage to Satan and your lusts, so that they shall not have that power over you which they have had. "Well, if you will not comply, you are murderers of your own soul with a witness, as really as if ye did wilfully drink up a cup of poison, or stabbed yourselves with a sword. Consider,

4. That if you refuse, you make the deliverer your enemy, and shall not escape, Heb. 2:3, The deliverer will turn your destroyer, for neglecting his salvation. The Lamb of God will be as a lion to you, for

slighting his offers of grace. They who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. As the sourest vinegar is made of the best wine, so the fiercest wrath arises from slighting the greatest grace, Prov. 1:24–31. Consider,

5. That ye know not how soon ye may be beyond the reach of the proclamation of liberty, Luke 13:24, 25. The voice of it is not heard on the other side of death, to which we are fast making way. Do you not see, as in Psalm 90:9, that "we spend our days as a tale that is told?" A new-year's day, and other days adjoining to it, are very ill chosen for revelling, jollity, and carnal mirth; they suit it nearly as ill as does the pretended day of Christ's birth, commonly called Yule-day. Alas! they will give themselves the loose run in these things, because they are now a year nearer the grave and eternity than they were; because they are entered on a new year, the end of which it may be they shall never see. If people will make a difference between such days and others, it would be most suitable in these days to take a solemn and serious view of eternity, and to be making preparations for that day, which will put an end to their years. However, let this time put you in mind of death's approach, and refuse not the offer of grace, which you will have no more, when once death has carried you off the stage.\* Consider,

Lastly, That your judgment will be more grievous than that of those who never heard the gospel, if you do not come away upon the proclamation; Matth. 11:22, "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you." Remember double stripes are for him who knew his master's will, and did it not; and the hottest place in hell will be for gospel-despisers. Men may have their lusts and sinful courses cheaper in the dark corner of the earth, than in a land of light.

We conclude with the following advices. Labour to get a just esteem of your souls, and a due sense of what concerns another life. The soul

is the man, as being the best part of the man, the loss of which nothing can ever counterbalance. Matth. 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The other life is the life chiefly to be cared for, since that only is the life which will have no end; and a man is happy or unhappy, as his plan for that life is well or ill laid. Be sensible of the real drudgery of sin. It is as real a servitude as ever was in the world, while men serve divers lusts. This is clear from the very light of nature: the consideration of the noble nature of the soul, with the experience of the tyranny of unruly passions, made some heathen moralists to lay it down as a principle, That a wise man is a free man. Wherefore, believe that a holy life is the only true liberty; Psalm 119:44, 45, "So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts." He, then, who has the mastery over his own corrupt will and inclinations, who walks in the way of God's commandments, is a person the most free and easy. Lastly, Come to Christ for his redeeming blood and free spirit. Renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. Receive and improve Jesus, as made of God unto you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Amen.

## **SERMON IX**

### **JESUS OPENS THE PRISON DOORS TO THE PRISONERS**

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound. - ISAIAH  
61:1

HERE is another benefit which, in the gospel, is brought by Christ to sinners who are in their natural state, namely, a proclamation as to opening the prison to the prisoners. In this there are two things.

1. The misery of a natural state, which is here laid out in its full extent, in three particulars. You have heard that unconverted sinners are Satan's captives; this is a sad case, but it is yet worse; for,

(1.) They are also prisoners. Every captive is not a prisoner, but all natural men, being Satan's captives, are held prisoners, shut up in the prison of their natural state. This is Satan's prison, crammed full of his prisoners of war. But this is not all; for,

(2.) They are prisoners in chains, they are bound in the prison. Satan has his irons on them, as malefactors under sentence of death, that they may not escape. This is still worse than being a prisoner. But worse than all this is here stated; for,

(3.) They are blinded too in their prison. For the word rendered opening, does particularly relate to the opening of the eyes; and therefore the prophet uses it to express the relieving of such prisoners perfectly. This is evident by comparing Luke 4:18, "And recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them who are bruised." It was a custom much used in the eastern nations, and retained among the Turks to this day, to put out the eyes of some of their prisoners, adding this misery to their imprisonment. So the Philistines did with Samson; Judges 16:21; and Nebuchadnezzar with Zedekiah; 2 Kings 25:7. This, in a spiritual sense, is the case of all prisoners in their natural state. To sum up all, O unconverted sinner! thou art Satan's captive, a captive in prison, and a prisoner in chains; and withal thine eyes are put out, thou art in darkness, even darkness itself. In the words there is,

2. A suitable remedy, full help proclaimed by Christ in the gospel. God has seen the misery of the prisoners, his Son has paid the ransom for them, and thereupon he is sent to proclaim the opening of the prison doors to them, opening every way to them; for this expression comprehends the affording full remedy to their case; namely, opening their prison,—opening their chains,—and opening their eyes. By his word he offers it, by his Spirit he effects it, in all his

elect.—From this subject we propose to your consideration the following DOCTRINES:—

DOCTRINE 1. That every unconverted sinner is a bound man in the prison of a natural state, with his eyes put out.

DOCTRINE II. That by open proclamation in the gospel, Christ offers to the prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, of their bands, and of their prison-doors.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That every unconverted sinner is a bound man in the prison of a natural state, with his eyes put out.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Speak of the imprisonment in which guilty sinners are.

II. Mention the bands, chains, and fetters wherewith they are bound in the prison of a natural state.

III. Point out the darkness and blindness of the prisoners in their natural state.

I. We are to consider the imprisonment in which unconverted sinners are.

This prison is the natural unconverted state; and thus that word, 1 Pet. 3:19, "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison," is by some understood. However, it is plain that this is meant in our text. Thus Peter said to Simon the sorcerer; Acts 8:23, "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Thus sinners in their natural state are said to be all concluded under sin, and shut up under the law; Gal. 3:22, 23. Concluded or shut up, that is, declared to be so. Let us consider,

then, the natural state as a state of imprisonment. Here we shall answer the three following QUESTIONS:—

1. Whose prisoners are they?
2. What are the causes of this imprisonment? And,
3. In what condition are natural men, as prisoners in this their natural state? We begin with,

QUEST. 1. Whose prisoners are they?

(1.) Unconverted sinners are God's prisoners, as the great Judge and party whom they have offended; Rom. 11:32, "God hath concluded them all in unbelief." There are two things in a natural state.—The sinfulness of it; they can do nothing but sin. Move they cannot without that circle, more than a prisoner out of his prison.—The misery of it. They are under the curse; Gal. 3:10. This last, God, as a just Judge, inflicted on mankind for the breach of the covenant of works; and while this lies upon them, there can be no communion betwixt God and them, and consequently nothing but sin in them; and so they are all concluded under sin.

(2.) They are Satan's prisoners. He acts as the jailor, and is therefore said to have the power of death, Heb. 2:14. Man, having freely yielded to Satan, and become his captive, was delivered up into his hand by the Judge. They are under the power of Satan, Acts 26:18. He keeps the keys of this prison, and watchfully marks his prisoners, that none of them escape. Nay, when the commandment is come, to deliver the elect out of his hand, he will not yield them up, till the prison-doors be broke open, and they are forcibly taken out of his hand.

QUEST. 2. What are the causes of this imprisonment? As to this we observe, that they are in prison,

(1.) As debtors to divine justice. Sin is a debt, and the worst of all debts; committing sin is contracting a debt, which sinners are unable to pay, but it must be paid; a satisfaction must be made to justice to the utmost farthing. As to natural men, their debt is not forgiven. All their accounts stand uncanceled. They have as yet no share in the Cautioner's payment. Therefore they are kept in this prison justly for their debt, and they cannot escape. They were laid up there for our father Adam's debt. This debt brought all mankind into the prison, Rom. 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The covenant being broken, we became liable to pay the penalty, and, being unable to relieve ourselves, were shut up in prison under the wrath and curse of God. They are also arrested there for their own debt, contracted in their own persons. Every sinful thought, word, or action, is a new item in our accounts. And at the instance of every broken commandment, the law arrests the natural man in the prison, clapping its curse upon the sinner; so that the longer one remains in his natural state, there is always the less hope of his delivery. Nay, his delivery is impossible, till the Cautioner loose all the arrests by paying the whole debt.

(2.) They are in prison as malefactors condemned in law; John 3:18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." There is a sentence of death passed upon all men in a natural state, they are condemned to die eternally; and therefore are committed to the jailor, to keep them in the prison to the day of execution, which they know not how soon it may be appointed, how soon death may lead out the prisoner to have the sentence fully executed upon him. I go on to,

QUEST. 3. In what condition are natural men as prisoners in this their natural state? Their condition is most dismal; for,

(1.) They are under the wrath of God, as the malefactor put in prison is under the wrath of his judge. Hence it is said, Eph. 2:3, "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." A natural state is a state of wrath. God bears a legal enmity against thee as long as thou

art out of Christ. There is a black cloud of wrath which always hovers over the head of the natural man, and never will scatter till he be a new creature. God is ever angry, never pleased with him; Psalm 7:11, "God is angry with the wicked every day." His person is not acceptable to God; Psalm 5:5, "The foolish shall not stand in his sight, and he hateth all the workers of iniquity." Nor are his performances acceptable to God, Isa. 66:3. God will have no communion nor fellowship with him; Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" There is wrath in his word, his looks, and dispensations towards him.

(2.) They are both under the dominion of the law, and also under the lash of it; Gal. 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It has him as fast in its hands as ever a prisoner was. It has him by the neck, saying, Pay what thou owest; and will never quit the hold through the ages of eternity, unless he get the Surety that is able to take it off his hand. Its demands are high, quite above his reach; perfect satisfaction for what is past; perfect obedience for what is to come. It is a merciless creditor, and will abate thee nothing. As long as thou art in its power, (and that is as long as thou art in this prison), thou must lay thy account with the payment of the utmost farthing. What though the sentence is not speedily executed? a reprieve is no pardon; Deut. 32:35.

(3.) They are under the power of Satan, as the keeper of the prison, Acts 26:18. He has a commanding and a restraining power over them, 2 Tim. 2:26, "They are in the snare of the devil, and taken captive by him at his will." They cannot move out without the bounds of his jurisdiction, more than the prisoner out of the dungeon. It is true, Satan keeps not all alike close, some have the liberty of the form of godliness, on account of which they reckon themselves secure as to the goodness of their state, and by this delusion they are held the faster in his hands.

(4.) They are in a most uncomfortable condition. If a person was in a palace as a prison, it would be uncomfortable; far more in this case, the pit wherein is no water has nothing to refresh the soul; Zech. 9:11. It is true, most natural men are stupid, they consider it not; they are blind, and they see not the shadow of death about them. But when once their eyes are opened, there is no more rest for them there; they cry, "What shall we do to be saved?" They see the filthy prison-garments of unmortified, unmortified sins about them, which they can no longer wear at ease. The scanty allowance of the prisoner's diet, unblest mercies, which can serve for nothing but to keep in the wretched life till the day of execution.

(5.) They have no security for a moment's safety; but if their eyes were opened, they would see themselves every moment in hazard of dropping into the pit of hell; see the natural man's case, Psalm 7:11–16. He is ever standing before God's bent bow, and has nothing to secure him for a moment from the drawing of it. He is condemned already, and the sentence is past; no day known for the execution, uncertain but every day the dead-warrant may be given out against him, and he led forth to execution. What can he see to put it off, but long abused patience which will wear out at length?

(6.) They are so secured, that they can never get away without satisfaction for their debts and crimes. There is no breaking this prison. Sooner may bars of iron and gates of brass be got over, than a prisoner can get out of the state of wrath without satisfying the demands of the law. And therefore the sinner will die in this prison, if he come not to Christ. There is no getting out of this pit but by the blood of the covenant.

For the improvement of this part of the subject, O! sirs, be concerned to look to the state of sin in this glass, and be ye duly affected with it, as the matter requires. Consider, sinner, where you are, and in what condition. Is the state of sin a prison-state? Then who are the men that walk at liberty? Is it not these whose consciences are purged by faith in Christ, whose guilt is removed, who walk after the Spirit, and

lead a holy, heavenly, circumspect life? Or is it those who, scorning to be bound up to the rules of a holy walk, can stretch their consciences at their pleasure, and take to themselves a sinful liberty, which others dare not for their souls, who can laugh at those things for which others mourn, and follow their lusts to the ruin of their souls? Truly no. All that sinful liberty which those do take, and all the pleasures which they have in it, is but the rattling of the chains of the devil's prisoners, while they go up and down in their prison. Is the state of sin a state in which ye can quietly sleep another night? It is a Sodom on which fire and brimstone will come down. Haste ye, and escape for your life. Ah! sinner, canst thou be at ease in a state of wrath? The world, it may be, smiles upon thee; it may be that it frowns; but what of either of these, while God is angry with thee every day? Thou hast perhaps something for many years for thy body, it may be nothing; but what security hast thou for thy soul, when death shall call thee hence, thou knowest not how soon? Is the work of conversion to God a slight business, about which persons are under small necessity to trouble their heads? Surely it is a most weighty business, which, if it be not done, there is nothing at all done for eternity. Let men in an unconverted state put on what appearances of religion they will, perform what duties they will, they are but dead works, wrought in Satan's prison, and leave the worker in a state of death. Turn, turn ye, then, from your sins unto God, cry for regenerating sanctifying grace, rest not till you get it. Will you not eagerly embrace the offer made you in the proclamation of opening the prison to those that are bound? Christ is come to your prison door, offering by his blood and Spirit to set you free. Are you willing to come away? or are you so in love with your prison as not to care for deliverance? We are,

II. To mention the bands, chains, and fetters, with which unconverted sinners are bound in the prison of a natural state. These are twofold, God's and Satan's. There are,

1. God's bands, for they are his prisoners; and these are heavier than the heaviest irons ever were on prisoners; for,

(1.) There are bands of guilt and the curse on them all, by which the law binds them over to wrath, Gal. 3:10. Guilt is a bond binding over the sinner to deserved punishment. The curse of the law devotes him to destruction. These, worse than iron fetters, enter into the soul; and while they lie on persons, they cannot stir out of the prison, nor make their escape. No sooner is the soul awakened to feel them, than it feels them heavier than can be borne.

(2.) There are the bands of judicial hardness on some. Those with whom the Lord has been long dealing, who will not hear, but harden themselves against calls, warnings, and reproofs; many times the Lord judicially hardens them, makes hardness of heart their punishment, as it is their sin; recalls the motions of his Spirit, Hos. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." He gives them over, saying, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still," Rev. 22:11; he gives them up to their own lusts, Psalm 81:12, "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels;" and he gives them up to Satan to harden them, 2 Cor. 4:4, "He hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So that under the most softening means they grow worse and worse, harder and harder, Isa. 6:9, 10. These are fearful bands: but besides these there are,

2. The devil's bands, which he puts on his prisoners in their natural state, to secure them, that they may not come out of it to Christ, may not be converted, may not be turned from their sins unto God. These are many; such as,

(1.) The band of prejudices. These are so fixed on natural men, that Jesus says, Matth. 11:6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Satan dresses up religion and true holiness in such a monstrous shape, that they are affrighted at it, they cannot wish it, they can never get a heart to it; and therefore they entertain Christ's message, as Nabal did David's, 1 Sam. 25:11, Shall we, say they, give

up with that pleasant or profitable way, in which we are, and betake ourselves to a way that must needs be a continual weariness? This is a strong band, but when the eyes are opened, and God's ways are tried in earnest, it would break like an untwined thread; Prov. 3:17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Come and see. There is,

(2.) The band of ill company. Satan does as the Romans did with some of their prisoners, he binds his prisoners together, so that one helps to hold fast another, to their ruin; Prov. 13:20, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Thus there are bundles of drunkards, swearers, Sabbath profaners, despisers of what is good, worldlings, to whom the world is the chief good; and every one of the bundle is a snare to the soul of another. With an eye to this is the terrible sentence given, Matth. 13:30, "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." Therefore is the gospel-invitation, Prov. 9:5, 6, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding." There is,

(3.) The band of earthly-mindedness. This held them fast who were bidden to the gospel-supper, Luke 14:16–20. The wretched world had its bands on every one of them, so that they could not stir to come. They must look to this and the other business, that they do not lose their advantage; and while the devil's servant is thus busy here and there, looking well to this and that, the immortal soul, with the keeping of which God charges him, is lost. The pleasures of the world, like syren songs, arrest them like iron fetters covered with silk; these secure them. The cares of the world, like a thicket, entangle them, they cannot get leisure for them to mind their souls; and the weary earth ever interposing betwixt them and the Sun of Righteousness, they are thus kept in a dark prison. There is,

4. The band of unbelief. This is such an one as no less than the arm of the Lord can take off; Isa. 53:1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Men hear the

word, but they do not believe it; they believe not the doctrine of the gospel, they count it foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23. The promises they do not believe, they count them but fair words, and will not quit their certainty in a sinful course for the hope of them, Heb. 4:1, 2, 11. The threatenings they consider as mere scarecrows, and in spite of them promise themselves peace; Deut. 29:19, "And it shall come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." They believe not their need of Christ, and therefore they slight and reject him. There is,

5. The band of slothfulness. This ties down the natural man in his prison-bed, saying, Prov. 6:10, "Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." It hangs so heavy upon his legs, that he cannot move them in the way of God; Prov. 26:13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way." "A lion is in the streets, yet his feet are swift to evil," Isa. 59:7. This band is so heavy on his head, that he cannot lift up his eyes; and on his hands, that he cannot lift them to his mouth for his soul's behoof; Prov. 26:15, "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." This is a hellish gulph on earth, that swallows up convictions, resolutions, motions of good, and the like. They could be content to be better, if God would work with them as with stocks and stones, which are at no pains for their own polishing. They can spend whole days, and even nights, for the world and for their lusts; but to spend a day, or a considerable part of a day, in clearing their accounts, and laying down their measures for eternity, this is what they cannot be troubled with. There is,

6. The band of delays. This held Felix fast, when the rest of the bands on him were like to give way, Acts 24:25. When trembling under Paul's preaching, he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." The prisoners, many of them, are not resolved not to come out, only they put it off, resolving to do it afterwards. The young put it off till they be old, the old till death come to their bed-side. Some make one resolution, and some

another, to turn to the Lord; and though the time comes which they had set, yet they still put it off again to another time; and so on, till death comes at length, and sweeps them off, ere they have power to execute their good purposes. There is,

7. The band of delusion; Isa. 44:20, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" They are under a fearful delusion as to their state, like Laodicea, Rev. 3:17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." As one is refused admission by mistake, so Christ is often kept at the door; for the poor deluded sinner thinks he is in already. They abide fast in the gall of bitterness, because they imagine themselves to be got out of it already. They remain unconverted, because they reckon themselves already converted. This is a most dangerous case, which should stir us all up to an impartial examination of our state; Isa. 50:11, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks which you have kindled. This ye shall have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." There is,

Lastly, The band of divers lusts; 2 Tim. 3:6, "Laden with sins, led away with divers lusts." They are laden with them, as ever a prisoner was with irons, so that by them Satan holds them fast. Unmortified lusts crawl up and down, preying on their souls, and keeping them in a state of death. They hang about them, crying, Give, give, so that they can get nothing done to purpose for eternity. And so many unmortified lusts as there are about a man, Satan has so many handles to hold him by. A lust of covetousness, of pride, sensuality, and the like, will hold a man fast.

This part of the subject may be improved in a use of lamentation.

This is a lamentation, and may be for a lamentation over all the unconverted, as bound men in the prison of a natural state. Thou art

little concerned with it, but the misery of the case deserves tears of blood. For thou art laid up in custody at the instance of God's law and justice, as a debtor and criminal. As a debtor, thou shalt not be let out till thou hast paid the utmost farthing. But, alas! thou hast nothing wherewith to pay; men and angels cannot help thee; their united stock is not sufficient to pay off the debt of sin. As a criminal, thou canst not be let out, till thou abide thy trial; and terrible will it be whenever God calls thee to it; when thy indictment is read, and thou art tried for thy life according to law, what canst thou say? thy crimes are undeniable. Thou canst not get out by force or fraud, slight or might. Thou art God's prisoner, as the offended party. What canst thou do or say that is not known to him who sees all things? Whither canst thou flee, where his hand will not find thee out. Thou art Satan's prisoner as thy jailor. He has malice enough to prompt him to watch and keep thee, power enough to hold thee still. His iron-bands and chains are upon thee in the prison-house, how canst thou escape? Look to the bands on thee in the prison; look on them and mourn, and lament thy case. There are bands on thee of God's laying on, and who but he then can take them off? for he shutteth, and no man can open, Rev. 3:7. Thou art bound under the curse of the law, and God has bound thee; to whom canst thou apply to loose thee? If men lay on bands, God can loose the prisoner, whether they will or not; "The Lord looseth the prisoners," Psalm 146:7. But if God lay on the bands, the whole creation may stand and commiserate the prisoner. They may drop a tear, but neither angels nor men can loose him. There are bands on thee of Satan's laying on; and these must be sad ones which are led on by that hand. He is the strong man; it must be a stronger than he who can loose them; this is beyond thy reach. Thou didst not feel God's bands, but walkest lightly under them. Thou entertainest and takest a pleasure in Satan's chains, in your company, sinful pleasures, and the like. This makes thy escape the more hopeless; while thou rejoicest in thine iron fetters, as if they were chains of gold, it is an evidence that thou art beside thyself. Finally, These bands will infallibly secure thy ruin, if thou be not loosed in time; thou wilt die in the prison, if thou be not timeously brought out. There is but one step betwixt thee and death, eternal

death. If thou die in the prison of an unconverted state, thou wilt go to the prison of hell, where the prisoners are kept without hope of any release.

This being the case, see to yourselves in time, O prisoners of hope! Labour to be loosed from your bands, that you die not in the pit. To such I would offer the following ADVICES:—

1. Awake, and feel the weight of the bands on thee; there is no hope of thy deliverance while thou walkest lightly under them. Mourn over your guilt, your unbelief, and long for deliverance.

2. Put your case in the hand of the great Cautioner, who is willing and able to relieve you. Employ the Advocate, who will certainly carry the plea in your favour. He will not do as the butler who forgot Joseph, though employed to use his interest to bring him out of prison; but by the blood of his covenant Jesus will deliver you.

3. Give in your petition to your Judge: Job 9:15, "I would," says Job, "make my supplication to my Judge." Pray, pray, ye prayerless persons; pray every day, pray always, ye who pray only now and then; a sign that ye have to begin this exercise, to pray to purpose. Pray seriously, fervently, importunately, ye that are formal in prayer. Your life lies at stake: there is no time to trifle.

4. Hasten your trial, that your plea may be heard before a throne of grace; for if you miss that tribunal, it will come before another at death and judgment, when it will be impossible for you to stand. There are two tribunals for such prisoners, the tribunal of mercy and grace, and the tribunal of justice. There is, the tribunal of mercy and grace, to which the sinner is brought in the work of conversion, in time, in this world. Hither the elect prisoner is brought, and stands trembling, while other prisoners lie still in the prison, jovial and easy. Here he is accused, convicted and condemned; he subscribes to the equity of the sentence; but, by the provision made in this court for criminals, he comes off acquitted from the sentence of death, to

return to the prison no more. There is the tribunal of justice, to which the sinner is brought at death and the last day. Here the prisoner, in his natural state, is sisted, accused, convicted, and condemned without remedy; Matth. 22:13, "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him (that wants the wedding-garment) hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And from hence he is sent into the prison of hell. At the one or the other of these tribunals, all the prisoners must appear for their trial. To the first, I would have you to hasten your cause; for it has advantages which the other has not. In the first, the law is subservient to the gospel, and condemns, to make the sinner flee to the Mediator; Gal. 3:24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." In the second, the law condemns, to make the sinner's case absolutely hopeless. The one makes the sinner sick unto life and everlasting health, the other to death. At the one, a person may have the advantage of a Surety to undertake for his debt, of an Advocate to plead for him, 1 John 2:1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." He never fails to bring his client's cause to a comfortable issue. But at the other, there is no Cautioner, no Advocate; the prisoner must act all for himself; yea, the Cautioner and Advocate is judge to condemn him. Finally, at the one, there is a covert of blood for the condemned man to flee under, where the sentence of death cannot take effect. There are horns of an altar, from which justice cannot take him, and a city of refuge, where he shall be safe. But none of these are to be had at the other: therefore haste the trial. We now proceed,

III. To consider the darkness and blindness of the prisoners in a natural state. Here it will be necessary to attend to three things. First, The nature of this blindness. Secondly, The kinds of it incident to these prisoners. And, Thirdly, The effects of it upon them. Let us attend,

First, To the nature of this blindness. And here we may observe, that it is a spiritual, and not a bodily defect. Though they have their eyes in their heads, their poor souls are full of darkness; Eph. 5:8, "Ye were sometimes darkness." Though they may have a natural and literal knowledge of spiritual things, yet they want the spiritual and saving light of life; 1 Cor. 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." How manifestly are these distinguished! Though they have the knowledge of the history of these things, yet they are strangers to the mystery of them. Thus it is said, Deut. 29:4, "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." Again, it is total blindness. They are not only dark, but darkness itself, Eph. 5:8. There is not the least gleam of saving light in their souls; they are absolute strangers to, and unacquainted with God in Christ. Their service in religion is to an unknown God. They know not Christ; there is a transcendent glory in him, but they cannot perceive it. They are strangers to themselves; they are wretched and miserable, but know it not, Rev. 3:17. They see not their sins in their own ugly colours, in their natural deformity. Let us,

Secondly, Attend to the kinds of blindness incident to these prisoners. There is a natural blindness common to all of them. All 'Adam's children are born blind; Rom. 3:11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Our minds naturally are void of saving light, we have lost saving knowledge, with other parts of God's image. Hence, whenever grace opens the eyes, people are as it were brought into a new world, seeing things they never saw before, and seeing them in that manner in which they never saw them before. Again, There is an acquired blindness, which they procure to themselves; Eph. 4:18, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The power and prevalence of lusts blind them more and more to the true interest of their souls. The light shines about them, but they hate it; it glances in their faces from the word and providence, but they shut

their eyes and will not let it in; Isa. 26:11, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." They by this means strengthen their diseases; and the longer they continue in it, there is the less hope. Finally, There is a judicial blindness; Isa. 6:9, 10, "And he said, Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." They rebel against the light, they abuse that light which they have, they will not open their eyes to clear light, and God judicially shuts them. He withdraws the common influence of his Spirit from them, and they are infatuated, so that they cannot see their own true interest, but act as fools and madmen in matters of the greatest importance. They are "delivered over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," Rom. 1:28. They are also delivered to Satan, who, as the executioner of justice, binds them more and more; 2 Cor. 4:4, "He blinds the minds of them that believe not." We are to attend,

Thirdly, To the effects of this blindness on the prisoners. These are many; I mention the following:—There is,

1. A situation truly uncomfortable and piteous. They are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, Matth. 4:16. What a melancholy case were the Egyptians in during the three days' darkness, while the Israelites had light in all their dwellings! It was among the last and worst of their plagues. Surely light is sweet; and the more excellent the light is, it must be the sadder to be deprived of it. The light of God's grace and favour is the most excellent light, and therefore heaven is called light, and hell is darkness, utter darkness; no gleam of comfort in hell. A natural state is the suburbs of hell, and no real comfort in this condition, but a possibility of help. Therefore the saints pity them, as in a most piteous condition. Jerusalem's case drew tears from our Saviour's eyes, Luke 19:41, 42. There is,

2. Unacquaintedness with their own state of sinfulness and misery; Rev. 7:17. Their misery; they are blind, they see not the hazard they are in every moment of dropping into the pit. The messengers of

death are approaching them, the sword of justice is hanging over their heads, signs of approaching ruin are on them and about them; others see it, but not themselves; Hos. 7:9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." The prodigal never saw his starving condition, till he came to himself, Luke 15:17. Their sinfulness also; of this they are ignorant; Rom. 7:9, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." As in a house, the motes flying thick there are not perceived till the sun-beams enlighten it; so, till the Lord open the eyes of the blinded sinner, he sees not those swarms of living lusts which are preying on his dead soul, the innumerable evils which compass him about, those multiplied pieces of guilt which are binding him over to destruction.

3. They are easily ensnared and deceived in matters of the greatest concern. Our Lord Jesus pronounces a woe to the world because of offences, Matth. 18:7. Because stumbling-blocks laid before the blind cannot but have most pernicious effects. The world is full of snares laid by Satan and his instruments; and the blindness of the mind exposes men to the utmost hazard by them. How easily are they cheated out of their greatest interests for another world, and made to hug a shadow instead of the substance, and embrace a scorpion instead of a fish, and stones instead of bread; because, though they be eagle-eyed in the things of time, they are like bats and owls as to the light of life. Like Esau, for one morsel of meat they sell this birth-right, Heb. 12:16.

4. They get no good of the light of the gospel, but stumble at noon-day, as in the dark. They receive this grace in vain. The night and day are alike to the blind, winter and spring to the dead tree. And hence men live under the gospel as loosely, profanely, and carelessly, as if they were living in the dark corners of the earth. The light of the gospel, like a shining sun, has arisen, teaching us, that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. 2:12. But instead of going like

men to their proper work, they like wild beasts go to their dens, and lie at ease, neither working out their own salvation, nor doing any good to others. The light is set up to them, but their works are works of darkness, and so they hate the light.

5. They are precipitating themselves into the utmost hazard to their souls, without fear; Psalm 36:1, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." How fearlessly do men venture themselves into the forbidden ground, rush in the way of sin on the sword-point of justice; Jer. 8:6, "I hearkened, and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." They drink up iniquity as the ox the water, being in that case as blind men drinking up a cup of poison, which they know not to be such. There is,

6. Deep security in the most dangerous condition, as not seeing what is before them. They go on in their courses, as the sinners did before the flood, Matth. 24:38. They are exposed every day to the utmost hazard, yet they are secure. They stand before God's bent bow, as a mark to his arrows, yet they are at ease. Wrath is pursuing them, yet they are not concerned to flee from the wrath to come. They are jovial while about the pit's mouth, and even though they are in hazard every moment of falling into it.

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, this blindness fills the whole man in heart and life with darkness and confusion; Matth. 6:23, "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness; if, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" A person can do nothing which is good in this case, he lies open to all evil both of sin and misery. And this darkness, unremoved, will make way for eternal darkness.

Having, as we proceeded, made some practical improvement, in conclusion, we shall only exhort you,

1. To be convinced, of this your natural darkness; believe it from the Lord's word, and believe your hazard from it, though otherwise ye do not see it.

2. See your need of Christ to open your eyes. Pray for the Spirit; say, with the blind man, " Lord, that mine eyes may be opened."

Lastly, From what has been said on the several parts of Christ's commission with respect to natural men, unconverted sinners may get a broad view of their misery. Ye are Satan's captives, yea, prisoners, God's prisoners, the devil's prisoners, prisoners in bands, and blinded prisoners. Be deeply affected with your condition, and be persuaded, as prisoners of hope, to return to your strong-holds, while you have access to them. While it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, but hearken to his voice, proclaiming that he is "anointed to open the prison to them that are bound."

## **SERMON X**

### **THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED**

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound. - ISAIAH  
61:1

HAVING attended to the first doctrinal point on this subject, we now go on to

DOCTRINE II. That, by open proclamation in the gospel, Jesus offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, a loosing of their bands, and a bringing them out of their prisons.

We shall illustrate the different parts of this doctrine, under the following heads:—

I. We shall show, that Christ offers to such an opening of their eyes, the recovery of their spiritual sight, and to bring them from darkness unto light.

II. We shall show how Christ takes off the devil's bands from these prisoners.

III. We shall show, that Christ offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their prisons, and a bringing them out of these.

The improvement of each will be added as we proceed. We are then,

I. To shew, that Christ offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, the recovery of their spiritual sight, and so to bring them from darkness unto light.

What, do such say, is in this offer! Certain it is that saving illumination is hereby offered to you; Rev. 3:18, "I counsel thee," says he, "to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." This is a glorious and most necessary benefit, a thousand times more necessary than light to those who are naturally blind. The unrenewed world lie in darkness, they will not, they cannot see. There is a long and dark night upon them. Christ offers to bring a morning unto their souls, to make the day-star arise there; yea, the Sun of righteousness to shine there. There is a thick mist about you, so that you cannot see your way, but spend your life in endless wanderings among deep pits. He will, by the spirit of his mouth, dispel it, and make light to arise up, that ye may see clearly about you. Your eyes are clouded and blinded; he will make the scales to fall off from them; and this will give you a threefold sight. There is,

1. A sad and melancholy sight, the saddest ever you saw, which will make the lightest heart among us all heavy; and this is a sight of yourselves in your universal sinfulness and defilement. This pricked Peter's hearers to the heart, Acts 2:37. It struck Paul with the paleness of death; for "I was alive," said he, "without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Rom.

7:9. Men naturally are strangers to themselves, but when the prisoner's eyes are opened, he gets a broad view of his sinful self. He sees a corrupt nature, from which no good can come; averse to good, and prone to evil; not to be changed, but by a miracle of grace; Rom. 8:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He sees a corrupt, desperately wicked heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. 17:9. There is an emptiness of all good; a fulness of all evil, the seed and root of all abominations which are done in the world, living lusts of all kinds, like so many vermin in their nest, Mark 7:21; a continual steam of actual sinning and lusting, arising from hence on the steam of a dunghill. Further, he sees a sinful life and conversation, woven into one continued piece of sin, where the parts sometime thought good will appear even black as hell, like the rest; unclean lips, all over defiled with vanity or vileness; an unclean life, which is unfruitful and unprofitable for God and for themselves; full of sins against the holy law of God, committed against much light and love, as well as checks by word and providence, &c. When the Lord comes to the prisoner, and opens his eyes, he takes him and leads him through his heart and life; then what a sad sight does he get! then will he cry, as in Job, 40:4, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." Then is accomplished these words, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts," Jer. 2:19. There is,

2. A terrible and frightful sight, which will make the stoutest heart to tremble, so that they shall say, as Moses did at the burning mount, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And this sight is threefold. There is a sight of an absolute God, in the glory of his holiness and justice, Lev. 10:3. Men's eyes are naturally withheld, so that they see not what a God they have to do with, Psalm 50:21. They think he is altogether such an one as themselves; but says he, "I will reprove thee, and set them (your sins) in order before you." When their eyes are opened,

they are cured of their fatal mistake; Hab. 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." They see him on a throne of justice, angry with the wicked every day; a hater of every sin, a severe avenger of sin from the least to the greatest, with whom no sin is accounted a small thing. There is a fiery stream issuing out of his mouth, to devour his adversaries, as engaged, by his word and nature, to magnify the law and make it honourable. This terrible sight will give the sinner experience of the psalmist's case, Psalm 73:3, "I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed;" and hence make his heart cry out within him, as in Isa. 33:14, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Again, he gets a sight of the fiery law in its absolute purity, extensiveness, and severity; Rom. 7:9, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law, to the blinded sinner, is like a looking glass covered over with dust, in which the man never sees the true shadow of himself. But when the sinner's eyes are opened, the glass is rubbed clean, and shines bright, to his terror and astonishment. Then it discovers the damnable nature of some things he thought good, the heinousness of what he reckoned small faults, and makes all his sins greater than ever he thought them. He sees the threats and curses of the law, no more as scarecrows, or as the shadows of the mountains, but more sure than heaven or earth to have their effect. And then one word of it will go deeper with him than a thousand used to do. Further, he gets a sight of himself, in his miserable, lost, and undone estate. Like the prodigal, he comes to himself, and sees that he is perishing with hunger. He sees himself to be ruined, to be a self-destroyer; a dead man in law, devoted to destruction by the curse of the law; under sentence of eternal death, pronounced by the Judge of all, and registered in the Bible; bound with the threatenings of the law, as so many cords of death; and withal, utterly unable to extricate himself out of this gulph of sin and misery; Rom. 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

3. They get a comforting and heart-reviving sight, the most comfortable they ever saw, which will make the most heavy heart joyful. And this is a sight of Christ in the glory of his mediatory office; Isa. 33:17, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off." They see Jesus standing as a Prophet, discovering those thoughts of love, which were from eternity in the breast of Christ's Father, toward these prisoners. Standing as a priest as he had been slain, at the Father's right hand, making intercession for the prisoner's freedom. And as a King, having the sovereign command of life and death, and having the keys of the prison in his hand, to take out the prisoner when he will. O glorious sight for the prisoners! when their eyes are opened. It is a threefold sight. It is a sight of the transcendent excellency and loveliness of Jesus, Isa. 33:17, (quoted above.) While the prisoner lay in darkness, he was ready to say to every lover of Christ, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. 5:9. There was then to him more glory in a vain world, in the lust of the eye and the pride of life, than in Christ. But now that his eyes are opened, he sees a glory in him, which darkens all created excellency, as the rising sun makes the stars to hide their heads. He appears now as the pearl of great price, Matth. 13:46. All the perfections of the divine glory shine forth in him; these appear in the face of Christ, as in a glass, of which the prisoner now gets a view. And then none but Christ for him; Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Again, he gets a sight of his fulness for, and suitableness to, the case of the prisoner. Like the prodigal, Luke 15:17, he sees that in his father's house there is bread enough and to spare. He sees then that he needs look to no other quarter for help; that there is an all-sufficient fulness of it in Christ. Does the prisoner consider his vast debts? Christ is a cautioner, a mighty one. Does he consider his crimes? Christ died to satisfy for them. He has power over the jailor, and can bind the strong man, loose and bring out the prisoner. Is he defiled in his prison-garments? Christ has white raiment to put on him, in exchange for these. Are there iron gates in the way? yea, irons on the prisoner's legs? He breaks the bars of iron, and brings out the prisoner. Once more, he gets a sight

of the willingness and readiness of Christ to communicate of his fulness; Heb. 4:15, 16, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He now sees the truth and reality of gospel invitations and promises, that they are not only fair words, as he sometime thought them, but sure and tried words; Psalm 12:6, "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." This revives the fainting heart, is the great cordial for a soul ready to perish; so that the prisoner resolves to venture himself, and lay his whole weight on the glorious Deliverer.

Before leaving this head, it may be of importance to inquire, what ground the blinded prisoner has to rest upon and embrace this offer in the proclamation of the gospel? As to this we observe,

1. That there is nothing offered but what our Lord can perform and make good; Numb, 23:19, "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Jesus is the true light, the light of the world; the star that came out of Jacob, Numb. 24:17; the bright and morning star, which puts an end to the dark night in the soul, Rev. 22:16, the sun of righteousness, Mal. 4:2. He has a fulness of the spirit of light in him, to communicate to dark souls, Rev. 3:1. We observe,

2. That there is nothing offered but what he has already performed in the experience of thousands, who have been Satan's close prisoners as well as you; Isa. 35:4, 5, 6, "He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Paul was a blind Pharisee, but O how wonderfully were his eyes opened! There have been many who were

as stupid, secure, and blind as any, whom the day-spring from on high hath visited; who sat in darkness, but are now turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We observe,

3. There is nothing proposed to us but what he has his Father's commission to offer and make good; Isa. 49:6, "And he said, Is it a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." Ver. 9, "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth? to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in their ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." Again, to the same purport, see Isa. 42:6, 7. And therefore his coming into the world is compared to the day-spring, Luke 1:78, which comes at its appointed time. We observe,

4. That what is offered is offered unto you. Ye are all comprehended in the proclamation; Isa. 55:1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Whatever be your case, though you be in the innermost room of satan's prison in the world, ye are men, ye are sons of men: Prov. 8:4, "Unto you, O men! do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And the offer is very particular, Eph. 5:14, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." We observe,

5. That there is the greatest reality, truth, and sincerity in the offer; Rev. 3:14, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Never one embraced this offer who was refused. It grieves his Spirit that sinners do not fall in with it. He wept over Jerusalem for this; and he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven.

This part of the subject we would improve, by urging you to embrace the offered light, the saving illumination proclaimed in the gospel;

and to come to Christ with this errand, That your eyes may be opened. And here I would exhort you to the following things:—

Be convinced of your natural darkness and blindness in the things of God. Say not, with the Pharisees, Are we blind also? The less thou seest of this darkness about thee, the greater is the darkness upon thee. The best see but in part, and most men see none at all in a saving manner. Love darkness; 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 are evil." As the owl loves not the shining sun, so men wedded to their lusts hate the light, and love to be in darkness. They do not know God, nor his law, nor his Son, nor themselves, and they care not for the knowledge of them; Job 21:14, "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They are at little pains with their Bibles, and far less with their hearts and lives, to make them agreeable to the light of the word. Do not resist and rebel against the light, Job 24:13, "They are of those who rebel against the light; they know not the way thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Let not your lusts carry you over the belly of what light you have, lest ye be judicially blinded. What light God offers you by his word, by providences, or by inward motions and convictions within your breasts, beware of fighting against it, beware of resisting and putting it out. Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord begins to throw in beams of light into the soul, at a sermon, under a rod, or some rebuke of providence. But the sinner cannot be easy till this be again darkened. Be satisfied with no light, which has not a sanctifying and a purifying heat with it. The true light is called the light of life, John 8:12. When the Spirit of the Lord fell on the disciples, Acts 2, there appeared tongues of fire, enlightening and warming. Dangerous is the case of men who keep truth a prisoner; Rom. 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Lastly, Go to the Lord for the Spirit of illumination. Pray, search for the same as for hid treasures, and believe for it in the Lord Jesus. Look to him that ye may be enlightened with this saving illumination of his word and Spirit. To

prevail with you in all these points, I would mention the following MOTIVES:—

MOT. 1. This illumination is absolutely necessary for salvation. A sinner will never prize Christ, nor come to him, till his eyes are opened to see his sin and misery, what a just God and a strict law he has to deal with, what a precious and suitable Saviour Christ is; John 4:10, "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." While Satan keeps his prisoner bound, he will hold him fast. That which the eye sees not, the heart receives not. The danger may be very great, but when unknown the sinner is secure.

MOT. 2. Blindness under the gospel is most inexcuseable; John 9:41, "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see; therefore your sin remaineth." It is wilful blindness. Those who live in the dark corners of the earth, where the light of the gospel is not known, what wonder is it that they walk on in darkness? But the light of the gospel shines about us. Christ offers to enlighten us by his Spirit, Eph. 5:14. If we choose darkness rather than light, we must lay our account with our choice being our ruin, John 3:19.

MOT. 3. Saving illumination is the only way to true comfort, and the want of it the way to utter misery; Col. 1:12, 13, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." At the binding of the soul, Satan completes the security of the prisoner; and at the enlightening of him, Christ begins his deliverance. In them who are saved, the light is carried on to the light of glory. In them who are lost, the darkness is continued, till they come to endless and utter darkness. We are now,

II. To shew, that Christ offers to the prisoners a loosing of those bands wherewith they are bound.

Here it will be necessary to shew,—1. How he looses God's bands from off the prisoners. And, 2. How he takes off the devil's bands from them. Let us then,

1. Shew how he looses God's bands from off the prisoners. The unconverted sinner is God's prisoner under the bands of guilt, and of the curse of the law, which bind him over to destruction. These he looses and takes off the sinner by the application of his own blood; Zech. 9:11, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Here we observe,

(1.) That Jesus purchased their freedom from these bands by his death and sufferings. Guilt is a strong tie, the curse is a heavy chain on the prisoner; in these the power of spiritual death lay. But Jesus, by his death, procured the sinner's relaxation; Gal. 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." His compassion for the prisoners made him pay for them a ransom of his own blood. He took their bands of guilt and the curse upon himself, that he might loose them from off them. Now he has ransomed the prisoners, who will accept of his delivery, and has a right to loose them from their bands; justice and the law having nothing to object. We observe,

(2.) That Jesus comes in the gospel to the prison door, proclaims and makes offer of liberty to the prisoners. This he does in the text. In his name the offer is made by his messengers; his authority to loose the prisoners is asserted, Matth. 28:18, "Jesus came and said unto them, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." His ability and willingness to do it is confirmed, Heb. 7:25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." They are pressed to

consent to the offer; charged upon their peril to comply with it; and all this to make them willing to come away out of the prison with the deliverer. We observe,

(3.) That though the most part give a deaf ear to the gospel-call, will not believe their danger, but sit at ease in their fetters, yet some are made a willing people in a day of power; Psalm 110:3. By the word, faith is wrought in their hearts; Rom. 10:17; even that faith whereby the soul lays hold upon, and unites with Christ, flees in under the covert of his blood, lays over the weight of all its guilt upon Jesus, believing his blood to be sufficient to take it all away, and, renouncing all other pleas, betakes itself to this; Rom. 3:25, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Thus this blood is applied. We observe,

(4.) That when this blood is thus applied, the chains are ordered to be taken off the prisoner; Job 33:24, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Yea, the chains fall off of course, since, as in Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The Cautioner's payment is pled for the debtor, and he is discharged; the criminal's cause is carried by the Surety and Advocate, and he is absolved. He is under the covert of blood, therefore neither law nor justice can reach him. He is brought into the bond of the covenant of grace, and so the guilt of eternal wrath, which is the bond of the first covenant, can hold him no longer; guilt and the curse being removed, judicial hardness has no place.

2. Let us shew how Christ looses and takes off the devil's bands from the prisoners. The unconverted sinner is also the devil's prisoner; he likewise lays bands on the sinner. These are in themselves sinful lusts and practices, &c. by which he holds them as by bands. Christ looses from these by the powerful workings of his Spirit, giving them grace, which breaks their bands asunder. He gives them,

(1.) Awakening grace, which rouses them up, and bursts the bands of sloth, wherewith they were held, Eph. 5:14, (quoted above), and cures them of the fatal delusion which they were under as to their state. Like the prodigal, they come to themselves, Luke 15:17. The sinner sleeps securely in his sins and in his chains; but the Spirit of God gives him a sound awakening, so that his rest in sin is disturbed, and he can no longer get lived at ease in his former courses. His conscience sets upon him, and sounds a terrible alarm of wrath in his ears, which ceaseth not till he has fled to Christ for refuge, and he flees without delay. Jesus gives them,

(2.) Enlightening grace, Eph. 5:14, by which the sinner gets a discovery of himself, and a discovery of God and Christ. He is brought, as it were, into a new world, in which every thing appears in other colours than it did before. The mask which Satan put upon the ways of God and the ways of sin, is pulled off, and he sees the beauty, and the excellence of religion. Thus the band of prejudice is broken, the evil and danger of the ways of sin are exposed to them, so that the sinful company he before delighted in becomes a terror to him, and he says, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping," Psalm 6:8. He sees the vanity and emptiness of all time's things, so that Satan can hold him no longer by this pitiful handle. Jesus gives them,

(3.) Quickening and regenerating grace, by which they receive a new principle of spiritual life; 2 Pet. 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." So that the bands of death in which they were held give way, and they become new creatures; 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." They are endowed with a new nature, having new motions and inclinations heaven-ward; so that the band of earthly-mindedness is broken; their will is renewed; Christ becomes their choice above all, and they lay hold upon him with heart and good will, so as that the bands of

unbelief give way; their hearts are softened; they get the heart of stone removed, and a heart of flesh given unto them; their affections are changed, so that they now love the things which they before hated, and now hate those lusts and sinful courses which they formerly loved. Jesus gives them,

(4.) Sanctifying grace, by which the power of sin is more and more weakened in them, and the divers lusts with which they were held are mortified, so that lusts cannot command them as they were wont to do. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. The new principle stirs in them to the practice of holiness in all manner of life and conversation. Thus Christ, entering into the soul, strikes off the devil's bands, and sets the sinner at liberty.

As an improvement of this part of our subject, it may just be observed,

That this lets us see that none are so fast bound under guilt, or the power of sin and Satan, but they may be loosed. And therefore we have ground of hope in the most hopeless case. A sight of guilt is ready to make the awakened sinner despond; but the blood of Christ is sufficient to remove it, whatever it be; "This blood cleanseth from all sin," 1 John 1:7. Though the cords of guilt be manifold, which cannot be loosed from off the conscience by floods of tears, the most bitter mournings; yea, though above the power of men and angels; yet the blood of Christ is of infinite value and efficacy; Isa. 1:18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In like manner as to the power of sin. The awakened sinner shall see that it is as easy for the leopard to change his spots, and the Ethiopian his colour, as for him to change his heart, or free himself from the power of sin. He will see that it is hard to get out from under the power of Satan and his own lusts. But remember, Christ is the stronger man, he can bind Satan and spoil him of his goods. There is nothing too hard for him to do. Grace is

powerful, and will always be victorious where it once begins; it converted Paul from a persecutor into a preacher; Manasseh, who was like a lion, was changed into a lamb. Therefore look to him that ye may be loosed.

We proceed now, with the

III. General head, to shew that Christ offers to the prisoners, in a natural state, an opening of their prisons, and to bring them out.

Here I shall shew what is in this offer, 1. More generally; and then, 2. More particularly.

1. More generally, it is the bringing the sinner into a state of grace. There are two things in it. The Lord Jesus opening the sinner's prison brings him,

(1.) Out of the state of condemnation, in which he lay from his birth till that happy hour; Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The sentence of the law condemning him to eternal death is annulled, is taken off, and can affect him no more. He is made a free man, delivered from the curse by him who was made a curse. He is brought out from under the law as a covenant of works: Rom. 6:14, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Though it continues to be a rule to him, yet he is neither left to seek life by his obedience to it, nor can he any more be doomed by it to eternal death for his disobedience; the law being dead to him, and he to it, in this respect. Jesus brings him,

(2.) Out of that state of sin in which he lay all his days before, incapable of doing any thing truly good, capable of nothing but sinning. But now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death, Rom. 8:2. The prisoner in his natural state, with the rest of the world, lieth in wickedness, 1 John 5:19; like a dead man in his grave, rotting and consuming. Christ quickens the sinners, opens their graves, and brings them out from under the reigning power of sin. In the day of conversion,

Christ comes to the prison door as to the grave of Lazarus, and says, as he did to him, Come forth. So the dead man lives, the prisoner comes out of the dungeon, out of a state of sin into a state of grace.

2. Let us consider what is in this offer more particularly. There are several great benefits which it proposes to us; such as,

(1.) The prisoner's debts are discharged, even to the last farthing; Col. 2:13, "And you being dead in your sins, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." They were God's prisoners, and could never come out without payment of that debt for which they were imprisoned. But the Deliverer takes all the debt on himself; he says to his father, as in Philem. 18, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." And so it is accounted as if they had paid it.

(2.) The prisoner's crimes are forgiven, which otherwise would have taken away his life; Isa. 33:24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The prisoner's pardon is written in the blood of his Redeemer, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Heb. 8:12, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The King's seal is appended to it, so that neither law nor justice can quarrel it; Eph. 1:13, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." This is the white stone given to him that overcometh, of which none knows the sweetness but those who have it.

(3.) The prisoner is delivered from the power of Satan, Acts 26:18, they are turned from the power of Satan unto God." The jailor has no more power to keep the prisoner, nay, nor ever to bring him back; because he is not delivered by fraud, but in a legal way, by the sovereign authority of the King's Son, who has all power in heaven and earth. The demands which law and justice had on the prisoner

have all been satisfied by the deliverer, therefore he can be no longer held. As to the prisoner,

(4.) His prison-garments are taken away, and he is clothed with change of raiment. The rags of his own righteousness are thrown away, and he is clothed with the fair white raiment of Christ's righteousness put on by the hand of faith, "I counsel thee," says Jesus, as in Rev. 3:18, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." The old man, with his deeds is put off, the body of sin is destroyed, and the new man is put on. The prisoner stands before his deliverer, like Joshua before the angel; Zech. 3:3, 4, "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel; and he answered and spake to them that stood before him, Take away the filthy garments from him; and unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

(5.) The prisoner is brought forth into the light of God's countenance, Isa. 49:9, "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." God is in Christ reconciled to him. He is no more his enemy, but the sinner's friend, his confederate in the covenant of peace. The peace is made up through the great Peace-maker, Rom. 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Though the world henceforth may hate him, and become his enemy, he has friendship with heaven, which may support him under all their hatred.

(6.) The prisoner is restored to all his forfeited privileges; Eph. 2:17, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." As Joseph, being a slave, was brought out of the dungeon to Pharaoh's court, and made the ruler over Egypt; so in that day in which the soul is brought to the state of grace, he is freed from his slavery, brought out

of prison, and advanced in the court of heaven. Like the poor and wise child out of prison, he comes to reign, as in Eccles. 4:13, 14, for they are all made kings who are delivered by Christ. We shall shut up this subject with a practical improvement of the whole.—And this,

1. In an use of instruction.

This subject affords some lessons to us all; as,

(1.) To be living in a state of sin is the most miserable life in the world, the most miserable life out of hell. Why are all those similitudes used, of a captivity, an imprisonment, and this of the worst kind, but because no captivity, no imprisonment is sufficient to express the misery of this captivity? Therefore these similitudes are multiplied, that what is wanting in one may be made up by another. And whenever the sinner's eyes are opened to see his misery, he will see that the worst case of captives and prisoners on earth comes infinitely short of the miserable state he is in, so soon as eternity succeeds time. For,

(1.) Of all persons in the world, an unconverted person has the least ground to be joyful: John 3:36, "And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Some think they are young and in their bloom, and therefore they may be allowed a pleasant jovial life. Some think like him who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Every one who is not held down with worldly cares or crosses, is ready to take his ease, though a stranger to Christ and a state of grace. But I would say to thee as Jehu did to Joram, 2 Kings 9:18, "What hast thou to do with peace?" Let them live joyfully, whose prison doors have been opened; they are set free, to whom God is a friend, and who are beyond the hazard of eternal condemnation. But what reason have you to live joyfully, who are captives, prisoners, condemned criminals, and know not but this day you may be led out to the execution? If there were a drawn sword hanging over your heads wherever you went, would it not mar your

mirth and jollity? The sword of God's justice is thus suspended over all those who are out of Christ.

(2.) It would be impossible for one to live at ease in an unconverted state, if they were not blind to their own hazard and misery; Luke 19:41–43. Ye may as well bid a malefactor be easy under the sentence of death, and the sight of the gibbet, or a man hanging over a deep gulf by a slender twig, as to bid an awakened sinner be easy in his case, before he get out of it. But many are posting to destruction down the hill, and yet are very easy, because they see not the frightful case they are in. And why do they not see it, but because they shut their eyes? It is told them, but they will not believe it; so after all they are as easy as if they had been hearing an idle tale. We are instructed,

(2.) That the delivery of the sinner out of the state of nature into a state of grace, from under the guilt and reigning power of sin, is no easy business, but business of the greatest weight and difficulty, which ever the world was witness to. Consider the ransom which had to be paid for the captives and prisoners; the greatest ransom ever given by men is not once to be named with it. Silver and gold crowns and kingdoms, would not do here, but blood, even the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; angels nor men could not furnish it. Consider the power by which the deliverance is to be effected, no less than an infinite power can do it. What is the storming of towns, the breaking down of iron gates, and the recovering the prey from a lion, to the recovering a sinner from the power of the devil? No less than an omnipotent power can do this, Isa. 49:24, 25. For,

(1.) What way can men think ever to be delivered in that careless thoughtless way with which most part satisfy themselves? Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Will drowsy wishes and sluggish desires, unaccompanied with suitable endeavours, do it? Will the leading of a careless life, and then begging mercy from God when they come to die, be sufficient? Will these things serve instead

of the work of grace, to pluck the prey out of Satan's month, to knock the devil's chains off the prisoners, and set them free? By no means.

(2.) With what face can sinners delay the work of conversion to God? Is it not work hard enough to get out of Satan's grips, begin as soon as we will? Will men venture to stay till he has loaded them with heavier chains, till stronger fetters of guilt be wreathed about their necks? Up, and be doing, lose no time, you will find the work already hard enough. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. We are instructed,

(3.) That there is no deliverance out of the state of sin and wrath but through Jesus Christ, Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Had there been another name, another person, Jesus had not been employed in this work. There was none but he who could do it; and we may add, that the worst of sinners may be delivered in and by him. There is no guilt above the efficacy of his blood, no power of sin above the efficacy of his Spirit. At the same time, without him the most blameless person who lives will be ruined for ever; John 14:6, "I am the way," said Jesus, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Death will prey upon them in time, though insensibly, and devour them for ever, to their everlasting misery. This subject instructs us,

Lastly, That none are delivered by Christ, but those who are made willing to come away with the deliverer out of their sins, and who, with the most solemn seriousness, embrace the covenant. He does not say that he will break open the prison-doors, and bring away the prisoners, sleeping or waking, willing or unwilling, careless or careful to be away. No; he deals with them in a rational way, proclaims the liberty; if they accept of it as he offers it, well and good; if they will not have it but on terms of their own making, they must remain in prison, and perish; John 5:40, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Then,

(1.) If any be careless as to their getting out of this state, Satan is in no danger of losing them. Though the liberty be proclaimed, they trouble not themselves about the matter, further than to hear it. Satan keeps his prisoners, and Christ will never bring them away who are not made desirous to come. Having the offer of liberty, Jesus will leave the soul still in bonds, if there be not a compliance with it.

(2.) It concerns all who would be saved, deliberately to consider the gospel-offer and their own case, and make the most solemn, serious work of closing with Christ, of entering into the covenant, and transacting with the Deliverer, as upon a matter of the utmost importance. Here eternity lies at stake; if they manage it to purpose, they are happy for ever; if they mismanage it, they are undone. If the prisoner manages his business right with this Deliverer, he will be got out of prison; if he altogether miss this opportunity, he must lie still there for ever.

This subject instructs particularly those who are under bonds of which they would fain be rid, what course they are to take.

1. Those who have sometimes walked at liberty, having had their souls brought out of prison by the Redeemer's blood and Spirit; but seem to themselves now to be carried back into Satan's prison again, and feel his chains heavy upon them. The Lord sometimes suffers his own people to fall into this case, because of their careless walking, their grieving and vexing his Holy Spirit, whereby the Spirit is quenched, corruption is strengthened, and Satan gets advantage; Isa. 57:17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." What should they do in this case, but own the justice of the stroke, apply themselves to the Deliverer, who alone can loose spiritual bonds? This is the design of the dispensation; Hos. 5:15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Make new application of this blood by faith, and breathe after the communications of his Holy Spirit; Isa. 57:18, "I have seen his ways,

and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and his mourners." He delivered them out of a miserable state, and will also deliver them out of their present uncomfortable condition.

2. Those who feel the bands of guilt strong upon their souls, and are ready to despond under them as bands which can never be loosed. Such should consider, that there is no exception of bands from which Christ is sent to loose; be they weak, be they strong bands, with which the sinner is bound, Christ proclaims liberty from them; and it is an intolerable affront to the Mediator's dignity, to entertain a thought of bands from which the infinite merit of his blood, and the all-powerful efficacy of his Spirit, cannot loose. The dead corpse cast into the prophet's grave was restored to life; and shall not the soul bound with the strongest fetters of death, be set free so soon as quickening virtue comes from a crucified Christ. Such, then, should labour to believe, that they may thus see the glory of God.

3. Those who feel the bands of raging and unruly lusts so strengthened by Satan and their own corruptions, that they are ready to think that there is no breaking of them. Such should consider, that our Lord often singles out those in the most hopeless condition, to make them monuments of his rich grace. Such was the case of the Corinthians, 1. Cor. 6:9, 10, 11. In the text, those who are blinded in the prison have opening proclaimed to them. Though the heart may be agitated like a raging sea with temptations and corruptions, it will cost Jesus but a word to still them all in a moment; Isa. 57:19, "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him." The strongest lusts shall yield to the power of his grace, and the strong man flee at the rebuke of the stronger. We shall only add,

Secondly, A use of exhortation.

You who are delivered, and have been made partakers of the liberty proclaimed in the gospel, we exhort you to walk suitably to the great deliverance. If you be thus distinguished, you will prize the Deliverer

above all; 1. Pet. 2:7, "Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious." You will say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire beside thee." And the more you look back on the hazard to which you were exposed, you will love him the more. You will prize the deliverance above all which you ever met with, or can meet with in this world; "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." Look on this time as the time of love. You will long for the perfecting of this deliverance, and be endeavouring to get it advanced and carried on, till you be completely freed from indwelling sin; Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If thus distinguished, it is your duty to walk humbly and thankfully, to the praise of your Deliverer; to carry yourselves as children of light, in a holy and heavenly conversation, and to have no fellowship with the works of darkness. In short, it is your duty to be concerned for those who are still prisoners, to pity them, to pray for them, and help forward their deliverance.

As to you who are yet Satan's captives and prisoners, hasten to be loosed; while the proclamation of liberty sounds in your ears, accept of deliverance. Consider that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Now liberty is in your offer, but it will not always be so; the day comes for transporting the prisoners into another prison, where there are no offers nor possibility of escape; and how soon this may be, you know not. Refuse the liberty to-day, delay it but till to-morrow, and ye may be beyond hope. But now the captives may be loosed, the prisoners enlarged, and thus be blessed with an eternal freedom, Kiss, therefore, the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way; when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him\*.

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